

# Performance report - Quarter 2

Finance & Audit Committee

1 July - 30 September 2022



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE**

## Priority: Making every penny count

### KLOE (Key Lines Of Enquiry) 6: How well do we use resources to manage risk?

#### KLOE 6 Summary

The Service's community risk management planning is well supported by the delivery of the Strategic Assessment of Risk. This document helps ensure that the Service is fully aware of its internal and external landscape, as well as understanding the current level and future estimates on operational demand. This document is used to steer Service planning and supports the delivery of the Community Safety Plan and its subsequent strategies. During 2022 the Service has begun to develop an updated Strategic Assessment of risk, which is on track to go out for stakeholder engagement in the last quarter of the year.

The corporate risk management arrangements for the Service have been assured by internal audit, with the Service recently awarded 'substantial' assurance. Through risk management the Service has a robust understanding of the current and future risks to the Service, which aids in the areas of focus and priority. Through risk management the Service has a well-established and embedded approach to business continuity management. Business continuity plans continue to be robust, ensuring maintenance of service delivery through challenging times. These business continuity procedures, plans and testing regimes received a 'substantial' assurance from internal audit. Plans are exercised on a regular basis, as a requirement of the business continuity arrangements, and, where identified, exercises are undertaken to prepare for emerging threats and challenges, to ensure full awareness and preparedness.

Procurement procedural and managerial arrangements remain in a good position, with a significant amount of collaboration taking place to support our approach to value for money. Officers are working with both internal and external stakeholders, including suppliers, to continue to strengthen relationships and planning to meet the ongoing challenges resulting from the pandemic, European Union exit and the general uncertain economic position. The Service is currently strengthening its pre-engagement activities in support of the current challenges and to, hopefully, enable a wider level of interest in tender applications. Furthermore, the Service is continuing to work with legal teams and national leads to further assure and strengthen our procurement approach during this volatile period.

In the first quarter of this year the Service implemented its new Asset Management System, replacing the two previous legacy systems. As part of the delivery of this system staff are receiving ongoing training and support, to enable the embedding of the system. As this is a complex system, used across the Service, this support is planned to continue. The Service is also engaging with other Fire and Rescue Services, who also use the system, to share learning.

The Service is continuing to strive to achieve the ISO55001 accreditation. Over the coming months the Service will be strengthening arrangements to support a formal stage 1 British Standards Institute review in January 2023, which forms part of the formal accreditation process.

The Service has a clear medium-term approach for environmental sustainability that encompasses areas such as waste, fleet and transport, water, purchasing and procurement, energy, carbon emissions, maintenance and improvement projects, and communication of environmental issues. Work is currently being undertaken to insert commentary here.

The Service continues to develop its work in terms of environmental sustainability, aligned to the Service's strategy. The tender for the procurement of solar panels, which will be installed at five key sites across, is currently out to the market. It is expected that, following the procurement process, that the implementation will commence in quarter 1 of 2023-24. The Service is part of several environmental forums to aid learning and support the delivery of our programmes. This quarter the Service has signed up to the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group Charter. Unfortunately, the Service was unsuccessful in its grant funding bid to support the delivery of a longer-term environmental programme. The Service is now reviewing opportunities to develop a heat decarbonisation plan and energy audits, to support the progression of the environmental programme.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent are business continuity arrangements in place and how often are they tested?**

The Service has well embedded and assured business continuity and significant event arrangements to meet the requirements within the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), which include assessing the risk of emergencies occurring to inform contingency planning and to have in place emergency plans and business continuity arrangements.

The Service's business continuity arrangements have been audited and assured and are aligned to industry best practice, through the Business Continuity Institute's Good Practice Guidance (2018). These were last reviewed by the internal auditors in October 2019, where substantial assurance was awarded. These robust arrangements have been key to supporting the resilience and continuity of the Service during some really challenging years. This includes the protracted coronavirus pandemic and its concurrent risks, the subsequent major incidents, for example Wareham Forest fire, severe weather events and the Fisherton Tunnel rail crash, along with the supply chain challenges and impacts from the current crisis in Ukraine.

Each year the Service undertakes a horizon scan to review the emerging threats and risks posed to the Service, along with the community and national risk registers. The last horizon scan took place in April 2022, which helps to shape and inform the annual programme of work set for the internal business continuity team. The programme of work for 2022 includes strengthening,

embedding, and testing plans for a national power outage and loss of telephony. Furthermore, with the current economic situation the business continuity team is currently focused on reviewing industrial action planning arrangements, due to the impending risks in the fire sector and wider public sector.

The Business Continuity team continue to work with both Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum and Dorset Local Resilience Forum to strengthen the arrangements for these highly ranked risks and threats. In support of this, the Service has undertaken and attended several exercises and training events. These include a Service industrial action tabletop exercise, a multi-agency national power outage exercise, an exercise at MOD Corsham with a tactical coordinating group and a Chemical, Biological, Radiation, Nuclear and Explosives tabletop in Exeter.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we show sound financial management of non-pay costs, including estates, fleet and equipment through benchmarking, contract renegotiation and procurement?**

We have effective financial management processes in place. During quarter 2, South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) have completed an internal audit review of our processes for Budget Preparation & Management and provided a 'substantial' assurance rating. The quarterly financial performance reports to Finance & Audit Committee are an important part of this overall process.

The Finance Team has recently added a new monitoring process to more effectively track savings and efficiencies at a departmental level. This requires Heads of Department to provide a quarterly update on savings and efficiencies achieved.

The Service makes extensive use of national procurement contracts and actively promotes and partakes in collaborative/joint procurements, particularly within the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP). The Service is participating in collaborative procurements for:

- business travel with Southwest Police Procurement Department (led by Devon and Cornwall Police), other police services in the South West and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service;
- command and control system with the NFSP partners led by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. This is currently in the very early stages of the process;
- equipment for mobilising stations with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service leading; and
- e-tendering system, including contract management, as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council and Bluelight commercials led procurement for a new system.

The Service is using national frameworks for several upcoming procurements including training, information and communication technology, property, estates, and fleet.

The coronavirus pandemic, the UK's exit from the European Union and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine has provided challenges with suppliers, supply chains, delivery schedules and an increased likelihood of future price increases. Officers continue to work with our suppliers, contracting authorities, our procurers, and buyers, as well as our legal team and internal officers to build and strengthen positive relationships and effectively plan to further mitigate these issues.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we understand what assets we are responsible for across the Service and how do we demonstrate effective management of these assets?**

In line with the Authority's policy, the Service is working to the principles of the ISO 55001 Asset Management standard. The Service is currently committed to achieving the full accreditation, with support from the British Standards Institute (BSI). Over this year the Service will be strengthening arrangements identified through a gap analysis, ready for a formal stage 1 to be undertaken in January 2023 by BSI. A stage 2 will be undertaken later in 2023.

The new Asset Management System (AMS) is now implemented and has replaced the two legacy systems. This encompasses all 75,000 pieces of equipment across the Service. The Service is continuing to work on embedding the new system and supporting users, whilst they continue to get used to the new approach. Positive progress is being made with support received from the supplier.

Following the procurement process for the 2022-23 cyclical refurbishment programme, the tender prices exceeded the original estimates, due to the impacts of inflation and global cost increases. This slightly delayed the work on site due to a thorough review of costs, however work to award the contracts has now been undertaken and work is now programmed to begin in quarter 3. This may mean that projects will slightly overrun into 2023-24.

The Estate teams along with procurement and finance are keeping abreast of the economic situation with material and labour costs increasing significantly, along with supply chain challenges. The capital screening review for 2023-24 budget has already been undertaken with revised costs identified. This will enable the Service to undertake the procurement process earlier with a view to securing costs and avoiding any further delays.

This year's Fleet plan is well underway. The Service is to replace four fire appliances, two Enhanced Rescue fire appliances, as well as a number of operational cars.

Keeping abreast of the supply chain challenges, across the sector, the Service is ordering appliances in advance of the programme, to ensure timely delivery.

A business case has been approved to purchase an electric vehicle into Service to commence feasibility trials across some corporate departments. In addition, a hybrid flexi-duty officer car has been ordered, to trial the technology and capability. The intention of this is to support the Service to begin its transition to a greener fleet.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we understand and manage our impact upon the environment?**

The Service has an Environmental Sustainability Strategy. This includes areas such as waste, fleet and transport, water, purchasing and procurement, energy, carbon emissions, maintenance and improvement projects, and communication of environmental issues. This strategy highlights the focus and priorities for the Service over the next three to five years. Furthermore, the Service is part of the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group, with other fire and rescue services and police forces, and has committed to their charter, which will further support and focus the Service's approach.

Within the strategy the Service has committed to reviewing opportunities to reduce carbon emissions and becoming more sustainable. As part of this the Service is investing in photovoltaics (solar panels) at five keys stations. It is expected that the installation of these will not only be positive for our carbon footprint but also reduce energy costs and provide sites with resilience from national power outages, which is a high risk on the national security risk assessment. The procurement for this work is now live and it is expected that the completion of work should be in place in spring 2023.

Unfortunately, the Service was unsuccessful in its bid to secure grant funding for an energy audit and heat decarbonisation plan, therefore it is now reviewing alternative opportunities to progress this work. An energy audit and heat decarbonisation plan will support the Service to understand the areas for positive investment, where quick wins are identified and enable the delivery of a more longer-term environmental plan. It will also open up further grant opportunities for the Service.

The Service is committed to reducing waste; through this work the Service has sustainability champions across the Service at our sites. During the next few months, the Service will be monitoring further waste levels and our waste contractor will be carrying out waste audits at locations where the Service believes further support is required. All sites have mixed dry recycling facilities and posters are being developed to provide clarification on what can be recycled.

Furthermore, the Service is exploring opportunities to reduce environmental impact further through supply chains for goods and services procured. For example, requesting for suppliers to provide their environmental charters and their net zero carbon targets.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do our plans address the risks identified in the integrated risk management plan?**

The Service undertakes a Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR) to make sure we understand the operating landscape locally, regionally and nationally. This process ensures the Service's Community Safety Plan (CSP), and associated priorities, enable prevention, protection, response, and resilience arrangements to be effectively prioritised and resourced, through the Service's Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP). The SAR is open to external challenge and feedback through the consultation process from interested parties. These strategic planning arrangements received a 'substantial' audit from internal auditors, providing good assurance of the approach.

The most recent SAR was agreed by Members and published in April 2020 following consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders and partners. The document was developed taking account of local documents such as the local Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Community Safety Plans, Police and Crime Plan and Community Risk Register. The 2020 SAR ensured that the priorities and planning within the 2021-24 CSP were current and informative, and that the subsequent Service delivery plans remain focused on maximising the impact the organisation has on improving public safety, health, and wellbeing.

The Service is currently writing its latest version of the SAR which will be published in early 2023. This document will aid decision making and planning across the Service and support the development of the next iteration of the CSP. The document has been enhanced by developing and delivering a comprehensive risk analysis within each of our four community groups.

#### **KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we demonstrate effective management of Information and Communication technology?**

Information and communication technology (ICT) capital and revenue programmes are all on track, following a review of organisational priorities. Some amendments to the programming of activity have been required to accommodate worldwide ICT supply issues impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the Ukraine situation.

The Service has achieved improvements such as:

- ongoing server upgrades and network reviews, including upgrades of historical systems to assure compliance with security and increase access to information;
- the ICT Health Check was completed in June 2022 with further positive evidence of assets and security;
- the Security Information and Event Management Tool is in place and working well in identifying security vulnerabilities;
- increased storage to ensure sustainability for increased use of Office 365 purchased and implemented;
- continued communications audits across all Service sites to rationalise and align hardware, increase security and assure consistency;
- fallback processes are being reviewed in the event of a cyber-attack or ICT issue, to continually assure alignment to business need and make best use of any new opportunities to increase our effectiveness;
- ongoing reviews of software with system owners to ensure upgrades and security is being maintained;
- the replacement telephony project is underway with end user delivery expected in quarter 4 2022-23; and
- the server/storage area network project phase one downtime is completed.

#### **KLOE 7: How well are we securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?**

##### **KLOE 7 Summary**

The Authority was able to set a balanced budget for 2022-23, with the help of a slightly improved funding picture and continued hard work to deliver savings identified through the Resourcing and Savings Programme. The Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) approved by Members showed reduced, but still large deficits in future years, with the continued absence of local council tax flexibility for all fire and rescue authorities.

The medium-term outlook has now significantly worsened. The budget and MTFP included provision for 2% pay awards each year for all staff groups and assumptions about price inflation, based on economic conditions predicted towards the end of 2021. During the course of 2022 inflation has increased significantly, is now well ahead of our budget assumptions, and is likely to continue at higher levels for longer. General economic uncertainty is significantly increased. Clearly this impacts on both the revenue and capital budgets, where we are seeing some significant cost pressures across many budget lines. Wage growth will far exceed the 2% allowance made in the budget. The current offer to corporate staff averages out at about 6% and for



operational staff the offer recently increased to a flat 5% for all staff. The overall impact of these awards is an estimated £1.65m increase in costs compared to the MTFP provision. The quarter 2 financial report shows the impact on this year, but the major concern is the medium-term impact, particularly as there are no guarantees of additional funding.

Through the Resourcing and Savings Programme, Officers are currently working on identifying options for further savings to deal with these financial pressures. Based on current expectations of funding and other cost pressures officers have set a target to make a further £3m of budget reductions.

#### **KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we understand and take action to mitigate our main or significant financial risks?**

For some time now, the Service have been engaging with local Members of Parliament (MPs), the Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services and, in particular, lobby for council tax flexibility. This has included briefing sessions for local MPs and letters from the Chair and Chief Fire Officer to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury putting our case of local council tax flexibility. All of our local MPs were also encouraged to contact the Secretary of State. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022-23 included only a general 2% referendum principle for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) but did offer flexibility for a £5 increase in precept for the lowest eight charging FRAs, all of whom agreed increases at that level. We continue to argue for this flexibility to be extended to all FRAs and have written again to Ministers in recent weeks. Unfortunately, even if a £5 flexibility is granted for 2023-24, cost pressures, particularly those arising from pay awards, will require the Service to make substantial budget reductions. Officers have set a target of £3m in reductions.

The draft financial statements for 2021-22 have been prepared and are now subject to external audit. The formal deadline for approval of the audited statements is 30 November 2022. We have been working with our auditors, Deloitte LLP, to meet these timescales and hope to sign off just after the December committee meeting.

South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) have completed their scheduled internal audits for 2022-23, reviewing creditors and debtors in quarter 1 and budget management in quarter 3. Both reviews gained a 'substantial' assurance opinion.

#### **KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent do we have a track record for achieving savings and avoiding any residual future budget gaps?**

Members approved the 2022-23 budget and new Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) in February 2022. Although the MTFP continued to show a forecast future deficit, there was an improved position over the previous MTFP. The deficit forecast was £1.1m for 2023-24, rising to £1.8m for 2025-26. The improved position resulted from the work of Officers, which delivered budget reductions of just over £1m, and some improvement in the funding position.

Since the budget and MTFP were approved the economic situation has become markedly worse, particularly since the conflict between Russia and Ukraine commenced, and the significant inflationary pressures in the economy. Our revenue and capital budgets are coming under increasing pressure as a result of cost increases and wage demands. Without an improvement in funding significant additional savings will need to be found in order to balance future budgets and move the Service on to a more sustainable financial footing. Officers have set a target for £3m in further budget reductions.

#### **KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic**

##### **To what extent is our use of reserves sustainable and promoting new ways of working?**

The current reserves plan and general balances risk assessment were reviewed and updated for the 2022-25 Medium-Term Finance Plan. The strategy includes the movement of some surplus funding to support future investment in updated training facilities. The plan was approved by the Authority in February 2022.

Reserves and general balances have been reviewed further in compiling the 2021-22 Statements of Account.

The Reserves Plan will be reviewed and updated again through the 2023-24 budget setting process, ready for approval in February 2023.

## **KLOE 12: How effective is the Occupational Health and Safety management system in the Service?**

### **KLOE 12 Summary**

The Service continues to exhibit a strong health and safety performance. There are no strategic issues to raise with Members. The total number of Accident/adverse Occurrence Reports (AOR) reported in quarter two has decreased from 140 to 96, when compared to the same quarter last year. This can be attributed to cases of coronavirus no longer being required to be reported. The work-related absence due to “physical” injuries or ill health quarterly trend is down from 151 days to 121 days. In this quarter, five people (incidents) are contributing to these figures. The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) has increased over the same quarter last year from one up to four.

### **KLOE 12 sub-diagnostic**

#### **How well structured and embedded is the Health & Safety policy, practices, and culture to ensure a safe and legally compliant Service?**

The Health and Safety Committee, and the associated department, continue to monitor the robust arrangements in place, which aims to keep our staff and the public we serve safe. Health and Safety arrangements across the Service continue to operate well, with no causes for concern to raise, and in accordance with externally accredited standards. The next audit by British Standards Institute auditors is due in November 2022.

The work-related absence due to physical injuries or ill health quarterly trend is down from 151 days to 121 days. In this quarter, five people (incidents) are contributing to these figures. Of the five people (incidents) two are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost are 83% of the quarter two total.

Manual handling is one of the highest injury categories within the report, over a half (69%) of the days lost are due to this category. The next highest category of injury is ‘slip, trip, falls’ making up over a quarter of the rest of the days lost for this quarter.

The total number of AORs reported in quarter two has decreased from 140 to 96, when compared to the same quarter last year. This can be attributed to cases of COVID 19 no longer being reported on the AOR database. When looking at just the injury or harm category, a large reduction can also be seen, during this quarter the Service had 19 injuries compared to 69 (including COVID reports) when compared to the same quarter last year. The Covid 19 pandemic has influenced the Service’s reports over 24 months, therefore it will take 12 months to level up when comparing against the same quarter of the previous year.

Our 'near miss' events reporting sees a continual increase in the reporting. The Service can gain the greatest amount of learning from the investigations following any occurrence of a 'near miss.' Our training in the use of the AOR database has given most staff a good understanding of the requirement to complete reports as required by procedures. This has reduced under reporting and supports the AOR submission process. There appears to be no real pattern emerging from these events and control measures have been implemented where possible to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) has increased over the same quarter last year (one up to four). These regulations require employers, the self-employed and those in control of premises to report specified workplace incidents. Three RIDDOR reports this quarter were reported within the 'over seven days' category, two were manual handling injury's and one was a hand injury. A further RIDDOR report was made under the "major injury" category. This injury was caused by a slip, trip and fall on the same level. All incidents are fully investigated and when appropriate actions are taken in pursuance of limiting the chances of the incident happening again.

### **KLOE 13: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place?**

#### **KLOE 13 Summary**

The Authority and Service has sound governance arrangements in place that are working well. Both have been audited through a peer review and internal audit mechanisms with good levels of assurance being awarded.

The Service has aligned its governance, from performance through to assurance to the key lines of enquiry from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services. This was positively received by the inspectorate during their recent inspection, which took place between February and April 2022. The Service will receive the results of this inspection in December 2022.

The Statement of Assurance for 2021-22 was prepared, along with its supporting information, for the Fire Authority meeting in September 2022. During this meeting Members approved the document and this has subsequently been published on the Service's website.

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001 and are detailed in the supporting documentation associated with the Statement of Assurance.

Information management and security arrangements are operating well, and the Service has been accredited to the national Cyber Essentials security standard, giving assurance of the robust arrangements in place.

The Digital Transformation Programme is progressing well and is on track to deliver migration of files and systems to Office 365 against the agreed timescale. This is enabling the Service to review and streamline its processes and systems to maximise efficiency and productivity in terms of workloads and licence costs, as well as strengthening data management.

### **KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic**

#### **How well does the Fire and Rescue Authority have oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the Service is appropriately effective and efficient in ensuring the safety of communities from fire and other risks?**

The Authority has five key priorities and performance against these are overseen and scrutinised by Members on a quarterly basis. Priorities one, two and three are reviewed at the four Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meetings which took place in August and September 2022 for quarter 1 performance and are due to take place in November and December 2022 for quarter 2 performance. Priorities four and five are reviewed at the Finance & Audit Committee. The September meeting was cancelled due to the period of national mourning and business will be covered at the December meeting.

The performance reports and presentations at these meetings provide details on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service, as well as looking at how the Service is supporting, developing and ensuring the health and wellbeing of its people. The annual report is approved by Members and published each year in September, along with a Statement of Assurance providing assurance of the previous year's governance, finance and operational matters. The process of developing the Statement of Assurance received a 'substantial' assurance from internal audit and was commended by the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review team led by the Chair of the Authority.

The internal audit annual report, from South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), awarded the Service with an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' following delivery of the 2021-22 audit programme.

The Authority oversees and scrutinises the development and delivery of the Community Safety Plan (CSP), which includes the Service undertaking consultation and community engagement. A presentation of overall performance against each priority is provided to the Authority at six and 12-month intervals, with the former delivered at the full Authority in September 2022.

The Authority's governance arrangements have been assured through an independent peer review by the LGA, who confirm that the Authority have appropriate arrangements. The Authority's arrangements have been aligned to the LGA's revised code of conduct.

The Authority has adopted a set of financial planning principles and assumptions on which to base its revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This supports the budget planning process, with the principles kept under review and was last updated in February 2022 following the final settlement and local council tax financial collection rates and details. The MTFP is developed and aligned to the learning and outcomes within the Strategic Assessment of Risk, is used to support the development of the CSP and is scrutinised by the full Authority. Members seminars are held to examine and discuss core issues before being presented to the Authority.

The 2022-23 programme of Member development seminars approved by Members is in place, mostly following the Authority meetings. The focus as we come into the autumn and winter months will be on our financial position.

### **KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic**

#### **How effective and efficient are our governance arrangements?**

The Authority and Service have robust and well aligned governance arrangements with performance management, reporting and scrutiny arrangements well established. This has been assured through the Local Government Associations Peer Review in 2019. Performance reporting is linked through from the Community Safety Plan and the Authority's five priorities, through to team and watch level. This is developed through our performance management system and through our comprehensive station level performance dashboards.

The Authority and Service have ensured that from policy through to operational level, the Service is well aligned to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services methodology. This is highlighted through our key lines of enquiry, which are aligned to the inspectorate's judgement criteria and their 'good' rating. Performance reporting then ensures the continuation of appropriate evidence to support the Service in achieving 'good'. This approach was audited by our internal auditors, South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), who awarded 'substantial' assurance.

The assurance arrangements for the Service are robust, with a significant approach undertaken through inspection, internal audit, British Standards Institute audits, external audit and peer reviews. This, plus other internal assurance mechanisms, are

undertaken on an annual basis to support the development of the Statement of Assurance. In September 2022, the Authority approved the 2021-22 Statement of Assurance, which for the first time, provides assurance against the inspectorate's methodology. The 2022-23 Statement of Assurance and supporting information will be reviewed for approval in September 2023.

The internal audit annual report, from SWAP, awarded the Service with an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' following delivery of the 2021-22 audit programme. Furthermore 'substantial' assurance has been awarded individually against several areas included within the governance arrangements, such as project management and business case approach as well as the performance management frameworks.

### **KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic**

#### **How effective and efficient are we at managing data?**

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001 and are detailed in the supporting documentation associated with the Statement of Assurance, which was approved by Members in September 2022.

The annual information communication technology health check was completed last quarter, aligned to our Emergency Services Network code of connection renewal. Although some high risks were identified, there is a reduction in the number of high and medium vulnerabilities found since the previous check in January 2022. A remediation plan is now in place and progress against this regularly monitored to ensure that the high risks are prioritised

There were 29 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests due for response in quarter 2, all of which were responded to within 20 working days. The average response time was seven working days. One total exemption was applied, and partial exemptions were also applied on three occasions. There were no notable requests or particular FOI themes identified in this quarter.

Three Subject Access Requests were responded to in quarter 2, all of which were received from current or previous members of staff. All disclosures were either made in full or with redactions made for third party personal data.

In quarter 2, 16 complaints were due to be responded to. Of these 81.25% were resolved within 14 days (or within the date agreed with the complainant). 68.75% of complaints were not upheld and none needed referring to senior management.

There were also a significant number of compliments this quarter (35), five of which related to the fire at Studland. In the main the compliments were to crews attending a range of incidents.

There were four security incidents reported this quarter, all of which had a low rating. We continue to monitor progress against our cyber action plan and this is on track.

Work has now commenced to renew our Cyber Essentials submission. This will be on a new question set as a result of recent changes to the standard.

We have also tested our arrangements to respond to a ransomware attack using the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC's) Cyber Exercise in a Box and confirmed that we have a good level of controls in place.

All staff are expected to complete Information Security/Data Protection e-learning to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities regarding data. The Service monitors the completion rate of this e-learning and escalates to Officers if required. As of 30 September 2022, 86% of all employees had completed their mandatory data protection and cyber security e-learning.

Progress against the General Data Protection Regulations action plan is progressing well and the concept of privacy by design is being embedded into Service processes, through data protection and information risk impact assessments. Work is continuing to manage retention periods for information held in archive and legacy systems and ensure these are applied to new systems and processes going forwards.

The Digital Transformation Programme is progressing well and is on track to deliver migration of files and systems to Office 365 against the agreed timescale. The programme is enabling the Service to review and streamline its processes and systems to maximise efficiency and productivity in terms of workloads and licence costs, as well as strengthening data management.



## Priority: Supporting and developing our people

### KLOE 8: How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

#### KLOE 8 Summary

Long term absence was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 2 across wholetime, on-call and fire control staff groups whereas short term absence was the largest contributing factor for corporate staff.

Musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for the wholetime staff group this quarter. The main causation for fire control was respiratory and on-call staff (whose sickness is recorded by calendar days) was musculoskeletal. Respiratory was the highest causation of absence for corporate staff. A range of support mechanisms remain in place to support staff including, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative actual shifts/days lost for quarter 2 is 5.7 shifts per person (wholetime/corporate/fire control) against the cumulative quarter 2 target of four shifts lost per person.

As the Service did not achieve the corporate target last year (predominantly due to coronavirus related sickness), coupled with the fact that we enjoyed exceptionally low sickness in the year 2020-21, which contributed to the decreasing trend, the current rising sickness levels will continue to have the opposite effect as demonstrated again this quarter. As a result, the long-term absence trend is showing an increase.

Sickness absence is well managed through our dedicated health and wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and HR Business Partners. Sickness procedures are robust and are augmented by support mechanisms such as counselling and physiotherapy treatment. Funding for private investigations is considered on a cost benefit basis if NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery, particularly when continued absence could have a significant impact on broader service delivery issues.

In quarter 2, 95% of staff passed their fitness test and 10 members of staff were on fitness improvement plans, which include advice and guidance on fitness improvement, including weight management and nutritional information.

## KLOE 8 sub-diagnostic

### How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

The Service has a robust and audited health and wellbeing programme to support staff which is overseen by Officers. Health and wellbeing procedures are available to all staff which outline all the support mechanisms available to staff including mental health support, peer support and other external self-service provisions.

We have 26 staff who provide peer support and promote national campaigns such as World Mental Health Day, International Stress Week and the Time to Talk campaign. Mental Wellbeing sessions are integrated into the supervisory managing performance and wellbeing training.

Absence management continues to be a key focus for the Service with robust monitoring arrangements in place. Long-term absence was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 2 across wholetime, on-call and fire control staff groups whereas short term absence was the largest contributing factor for corporate staff.

Musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for the wholetime staff group this quarter. The main causation for fire control was respiratory and on-call staff (whose sickness is recorded by calendar days) was musculoskeletal. Respiratory was the highest causation of absence for corporate staff. A range of support mechanisms remain in place to support staff including, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative actual shifts/days lost at quarter 2 is 5.7 shifts per person (wholetime/corporate/fire control) compared to the cumulative target of four shifts lost per person.

As the Service did not achieve the corporate target last year (predominantly due to coronavirus related sickness), coupled with the fact that we enjoyed exceptionally low sickness in the year 2020-21, which contributed to the decreasing trend, the current rising sickness levels will start to have the opposite effect as demonstrated this quarter. As a result, the long-term absence trend is showing an increase.

Sickness absence is managed through the Health and Wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and HR Business Partners. Robust sickness procedures and support mechanisms are in place to provide advice, guidance and support to staff and managers. Management of long-term absence is more complex than short term absence as the illness/conditions may be serious and involve surgery and recovery time. With any long-term absence, staff are referred to occupational health from day 28 of the absence for advice and recommendations.

The Service has a Key Performance Indicator to reduce the number of working days lost to non-physical work-related ill health by 5% each year. In the year to date 295 days have been lost compared to a target of 179 days.

In quarter 2, 95% of staff passed their fitness test and 10 members of staff were on fitness improvement plans and were provided with advice and guidance on fitness improvement, including weight management and nutritional information.

The Service participates in two regional groups: the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Northern and Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services Occupational Health Group who discuss topics such as long covid and medical standards. We are also active members of the NFCC National Occupational Health Practitioners Group who deliver evidence-based approaches that promote, prevent and detect workplace health issues known to impact on employee wellbeing including physical, psychological and societal elements.

### **KLOE 9: How well trained and skilled are staff?**

#### **KLOE 9 Summary**

We continue to carry out training delivery in accordance with the Annual Training Action Plan and on-call quarterly training programme. All operational training continued at standard class size in quarter 2, maintaining the hygiene measures that were introduced during the coronavirus pandemic. Our training delivery is supported by additional e-learning modules and virtual delivery.

Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has successfully embedded with competence levels monitored by Officers.

#### **KLOE 9 sub-diagnostic**

##### **How well do we understand the skills and capabilities of our workforce?**

All operational members of staff are required to maintain competence for their respective roles. Operational competence is demonstrated by satisfactory performance at real incidents, during simulations, exercises, drills or centrally run training courses. The operational training programme has continued in standard delivery format in quarter 2. Training delivery continues to be supplemented by additional e-learning and virtual course delivery.

Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has been successfully embedded. Competence levels are monitored by Officers to ensure that staff are allocated to appropriate operational license courses. Maintenance of skills training is delivered through localised training in line with the training planners and the needs of the station.

There are currently no new Service firefighters scheduled for training, but the training of on-call recruits continues as per the Annual Training Action Plan.

### **KLOE 10: How well do we ensure fairness and diversity?**

#### **KLOE 10 Summary**

The opportunities for feedback from our staff are aligned to the internal communications and engagement plan and has included a range of channels and methods to ensure the involvement of all parts of our workforce. Communication plans are a standard element of the project management process to ensure that stakeholders are involved in Service projects.

The diversity of our workforce is monitored on a quarterly basis and our corporate target to improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole compared to the last five years continues to make positive progress, with our actual workforce diversity in quarter 2 being 23.2% against a target of 21.8%.

We continue to use social media as a key part of our positive attraction work. Community profile information is available to crews, and will strengthen our community engagement activities, enabling us to better target our recruitment and social media campaigns.

The Service's promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. The new process is embedded and the number of people entering the promotion process continues to increase.

There are no significant trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief identified in relation to those leaving the Service during quarter 2. Robust workforce and succession planning arrangements are in place and in quarter 2, Heads of Department and Area Managers completed department succession plans to aid future organisational planning.

There have been significant delays in the development of the new online leavers process. In the intervening time a key objective of the Service's Digital Transformation Programme is to maximise use of Office 365. Accordingly, the leavers process is to be progressed as part of that programme. Leaver's discussions continue to take place in their existing format and the procedure will be updated to ensure that completion of exit discussions are mandatory.

## KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

### How well do leaders seek feedback and challenge from all parts of the workforce?

The Service has a structured approach to staff communications and engagement. An internal communications engagement plan is in place to ensure there is opportunity for all parts of the workforce to provide feedback and challenge to leaders which was a focus for the latest Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services inspection.

In quarter 2, our communications and engagement has involved:

- supervisory manager engagement days which took the themes from our leadership programme for senior managers around what support these managers need to be more effective in their role, as well as dealing with unacceptable behaviour. A lot of positive feedback was received about the format and content of these events and senior managers are now reviewing what follow up action is needed.

We also continue with regular 1:1s and team meetings over the phone, in person and using video calls in line with our smarter working approach.

Communication plans for Service projects are developed and monitored as part of the project management process – the current focus has been on the training centre proposals with the communication and engagement programme starting to be delivered during quarter 3.

The Service continues to engage with representative bodies on a regular and structured basis through liaison meetings attended by the Director of People and Director of Community Safety. This enables effective and timely two-way dialogue between the Service and staff representatives. The focus of this has been around key projects such as the training centre, our financial challenges and the potential for industrial action as a result of recent pay offers. Good local relationships are being maintained.

## KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

### How well do we identify and address potential disproportionality in recruitment, retention, and progression?

The Service's recruitment processes are transparent and reviewed to ensure there are no unintentional barriers to joining the Service. There are many initiatives already in place to support a diverse workforce, including:

- interviewers receiving unconscious bias training via Bitesized Leaders Forum sessions and e-learning packages;
- developing station level demographic profiling to enable better targeting of on-call recruitment;
- attending a range of community and partnership events to demonstrate the diverse roles undertaken by the Service;
- stations taking part in school visits and careers fayres to help change the messaging around female firefighters;
- providing reasonable adjustment during the recruitment process and employment for those living with a disability to ensure equal access;
- positive attraction tools such as Facebook live sessions, #BeOneOfUs and #NeedMore campaigns on social media and 'have a go' days;
- representatives from our staff networks providing 'buddy' support to potential applicants;
- staff testimonials on the Service's website to promote the benefits of working for the Service; and
- an e-recruitment system with an improved user experience.

Promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. The process is embedded with good numbers of staff entering the process having been supported by their line managers. Staff entering the process this quarter reflected the diversity profile of the operational workforce.

The diversity of our workforce is monitored on a quarterly basis and our corporate target to improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole compared to the last five years continues to make positive progress, with our actual workforce diversity in quarter 2 being 23.2% against a target of 21.8%.

Of the 25 leavers this quarter there were no significant trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief; 32% of leavers (eight leavers) were due to retirements and 28% (seven leavers) obtained employment elsewhere. Workforce and succession planning arrangements are in place and in quarter 2, Heads of Department and Area Managers completed comprehensive and robust department succession plans to aid future organisational planning.

There have been significant delays in the development of the new online leavers process. In the intervening time a key objective of the Service's Digital Transformation Programme is to maximise use of Office 365. Accordingly, the leavers process is to be progressed as part of that programme. Leaver's discussions continue to take place in their existing format and the procedure will be updated to ensure that completion of exit discussions are mandatory.

### **KLOE 11: How well do we develop leadership and capability?**

#### **KLOE 11 Summary**

All joiners are invited to a corporate induction with two corporate inductions taking place in quarter 2.

The 1:1 personal review process is embedded with completion monitored to ensure that all staff have at least one personal review during a 12-month period.

The Service apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Operational Firefighter, Emergency Contact Handler (Control Firefighters), Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management. Figures for quarter 2 show that 35 Service personnel are undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.3% of staff. The public sector apprenticeships target was set at 2.3% but the target came to an end on 31 March 2022, however the Service will continue to monitor and report on this performance.

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role. The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully carry out their role. Middle and strategic managers attend our Leaders Forum which consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis and cover a range of cultural and leadership topics aligned to our Strategic Assessment of Risk.

Supervisory managers undertake their initial incident command training using the facilities at the Fire Service College, which enables them to be assessed at a range of incidents. A comprehensive and structured rota group training programme is in place for Flexible Duty Officers. This ensures skills are refreshed and provides a good practice forum to share and learn from incidents recently attended.

Our coaching procedure also supports staff in their development. The Service have several coaches qualified at the Institute of Leadership & Management level 3 and level 5. Our Learning Hub provides a one-stop blended learning resource and is widely used by staff having achieved over 60,000 views since its launch.

### **KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic**

#### **How well do we manage and develop the individual performance of our staff?**

Two corporate inductions were held in quarter 2 and a survey of attendees rated the induction sessions as either having 'met' or 'exceeded' expectations. Probation reviews also act as a measure of how successful the induction period has been. In quarter 2, one probation was extended, and no staff contracts were terminated during their probation period.

A new starters network is in place and after individuals have been employed for six months we ask for feedback on their experiences within the Service and seek their views as to what we could do differently to improve our 'employment offer'.

The personal review process ensures that a discussion and appraisal take place at least once a year and focusses on wellbeing, performance and development. People development including the personal review process has been awarded 'substantial' assurance by internal audit.

### **KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic**

#### **To what extent are the career pathways of all staff effectively managed?**

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role. Relevant courses, mentoring, coaching and e-learning programmes are highlighted and progress against their development pathway is monitored. For those at Station Manager level these have included a role induction and a period of being shadowed for operational deployments. The role induction programme for supervisory managers has been developed but delivery has been delayed.

The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully carry out their role and was recently awarded 'substantial' assurance by internal audit. The Leaders Forum which consists of all middle and strategic managers, now consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis. The programme includes cultural and leadership topics identified in our Strategic Assessment of Risk as well as topics highlighted through an attendee survey.

Incident command training also continues using the facilities at the Fire Service College, enabling our supervisory managers to be assessed at a range of incidents. Structured rota group training for Flexible Duty Officers ensures the opportunity to refresh



skills and knowledge as well as providing a forum to share and learn from incidents recently attended. This occurs every Friday morning to coincide with the on-coming duty group.

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