
To: POLICE AND FIRE & RESCUE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

On: 21 AUGUST 2018

Report by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND PLANNING SERVICES

**Heading: REFORMING THE SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE – AN AUDIT
SCOTLAND UPDATE**

1. Summary

- 1.1 In May 2015, Audit Scotland published its report, 'The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service', which provided an overview of the merger of the eight former fire and rescue services to form a single Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
 - 1.2 An update report by Audit Scotland on reforming the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service was published in May 2018. This report assesses progress made by the Service, since 2015, on creating a single national organisation and the ongoing process of integration and transformation.
 - 1.3 The report concludes that the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service continues to deliver emergency and prevention services while progressing a complex and ambitious programme of reform. However, the pace of progress with integration and transformation has been steady but slow.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Police and Fire & Rescue Scrutiny Sub Committee notes the content of the Audit Scotland report, "Reforming the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service" – an Audit Scotland Update.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service was formed in April 2013 and has statutory responsibilities set out by The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 as amended by the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. These statutory responsibilities include:
- provision of advice and guidance relating to fire safety;
 - responsibility to respond to fires and road traffic collisions;
 - response to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents;
 - response to serious flooding;
 - response to serious transport incidents; and
 - response to urban search and rescue in incidents of building collapse.
- 3.2 As well as responding to emergencies, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service has a significant focus on prevention and works closely with national and local partner organisations to identify the risks faced by communities and make plans to improve their fire safety. It delivers advice and training to individuals and groups to promote fire safety, through visits to individuals' homes and community safety education programmes.
- 3.3 Audit Scotland previously published a report in 2015, 'The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service', that provided an overview of the merger of the service from eight former fire and rescue services to the new national service. The 'Update' report assesses progress made on the merger since 2015 and the integration and transformation still required if it is to meet the needs and challenges of the 21st century.

4. Audit Scotland key messages

- 4.1 There are seven key messages arising from the report published in May:
- The integration and transformation process since 2015 has been steady;
 - The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service board is working effectively and has clear ownership of the issues facing the Service;
 - Progress in developing and implementing the plans for transformation has been steady but slow, due to a range of factors;
 - Full integration of different ways of working has not yet been achieved;
 - The Service has developed a strong approach to financial management and planning but has inherited a capital backlog relating to maintenance and investment in its property, vehicles and equipment;
 - The Service has made slow progress in developing a performance management framework; and
 - Partnership working with national and local partners is needed to make the best use of public resources.

- 4.2 The following paragraphs provide an overview of these key messages and highlights, where relevant, links to this sub-committee.

Integration and transformation since 2015

- 4.3 The report notes that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is continuing to deliver emergency and prevention services while progressing an ambitious reform programme. This includes integrating the resources, policies and practices of the eight former services into one, and transforming the service to meet current and future priorities and risks. These include, the needs of an ageing population, changes to how we live and work, and the greater threat of terrorism and increasingly severe weather. The overall progress is seen to have been steady but slow.

Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Board

- 4.4 The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service board is seen by Audit Scotland to be working well, with real strengths being highlighted in the quality of discussion and scrutiny and challenge of management. The board and management display mutual respect, a constructive tone and genuine shared ownership of the issues facing the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4.5 The quality of reporting to the board and its committees is seen by Audit Scotland as generally being of a good standard with financial planning and management highly commended. However, performance information provided to the board is seen as a major weakness.

Implementing transformation plans

- 4.6 The report stresses that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has an ambitious vision that involves significant changes to make it a more flexible, modern service. Audit Scotland report that there has been steady but slow progress made in developing and implementing the plans for transformation, due to a range of contributing factors:
- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has taken a cautious approach with the aim of securing and maintaining political, staff, trades unions' and public backing for its vision;
 - The need for sufficient funding to begin the implementation of change; and
 - Limited capacity and continuity for leading transformation projects; experienced officers' skills and time are in high demand, and changes in the leadership of projects are common through changes in role, promotions and retirement.
- 4.6 Audit Scotland also highlight the consultation process currently being carried out by the Service on its Transformation Strategy entitled, "Your Service ... Your Voice". The Police and Fire & Rescue Scrutiny Sub-Committee approved the Council's response to the consultation at its meeting on 22 May 2018.

Integration of working practices

- 4.7 The report notes that the Service has continued to make progress with the integration of

different ways of working but has not yet achieved full integration. The main barrier to achieving full integration has been the standardising of the terms of condition (T&Cs) of employment for uniform staff.

- 4.8 Standardised T&Cs have recently been agreed (April 2018) with the Fire Brigade Union but not having these in place has restricted progress in establishing a fully integrated single service. Audit Scotland believes this agreement places the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in 'a good position' to complete integration of the service.

Financial management and planning

- 4.9 Audit Scotland acknowledge that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has strong financial management and has developed an effective approach to long-term financial planning. This places the Service in a strong position to progress its transformation process. It has, however, inherited a capital backlog from the eight former services of £389 million needed to maintain and invest in its property, vehicles and equipment. This backlog is viewed by Audit Scotland as being 'insurmountable' without transforming its current model for delivering services and additional investment.

Performance management

- 4.10 The Scottish Government's 2016 Scottish Fire and Rescue Framework requires the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to report progress on outcomes for communities. The report indicates that the Service has made slow progress in developing a performance management framework (PMF). A new PMF was approved by the board in February 2018 but Audit Scotland has highlighted that considerable work is required to establish a fully operational performance management system to underpin the PMF.

Partnership working

- 4.11 The report highlights that work at a local level with partners and communities continues to be well received. Audit Scotland note that the Service has successfully maintained effective relationships at a local level through local senior officers (LSOs) who liaise with all Scottish councils and community planning partnerships.
- 4.12 Scrutiny arrangements are described, by Audit Scotland, as being variable between local areas. However, in Renfrewshire such scrutiny arrangements have traditionally been strong with regular performance reporting being received by this sub committee. In addition, there has been a strong input from the Service in daily tasking, the Community Protection Steering Group and the wider community planning process.
- 4.13 It is noted that community safety and prevention work, e.g. the Home Fire Safety Visits, continue to be well received but that their overall impact needs to be evaluated.
- 4.14 In 2014, the Reform Collaboration Group was established to improve collaborative working between the emergency services. The report notes that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been proactive in promoting partnership working with its national partners, particularly Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service, but progress is needed collectively to make the best use of public resources.

5. Audit Scotland recommendations

5.1 The report makes five recommendations:

1. Increase the pace of reform and implement plans for transforming into a more flexible, modern service. In particular:
 - agree as soon as possible, revised terms and conditions for uniform staff that reflect the changes to the role planned as part of the programme for transformation
 - ensure through comprehensive and up-to-date workforce planning that the Service has the right skills and capacity in place to deliver its programme of transformation effectively
 - agree a long-term strategy for asset management and a medium-term asset management plan by December 2018, that reflect the aims of transformation
 2. Ensure that well-developed performance management systems are effectively implemented by October 2018, so that the board, strategic management and local management can access good quality information to effectively drive progress towards its priorities and those set out in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Framework
 3. With national partners and the support of the Scottish Government, establish and begin implementing plans by December 2018 to progress the Reform Collaboration Group's strategy and vision for partnership working
 4. Progress plans to develop and implement a framework for monitoring, evaluating and reporting the impact of community safety activity by December 2018
 5. Include Equality Impact Assessments with papers to inform board decisions and set out in its workforce planning how the Service plans to eliminate the gender pay gap.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community Planning** –

Our Renfrewshire is safe – By focusing on key areas of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and setting their vision and transformation process, Renfrewshire should be a safer place to live, work and visit.

4. **Legal** – None.

5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None.

List of Background Papers - None

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