

Our Priorities

2 Protecting Staffordshire and its people

Reduce and remove risks in our communities using a combination of prevention, protection and response activities and help make Staffordshire a safer place to live, work and visit.

We will work with businesses and other non-domestic premises to help them comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. We will use intelligence systems and data provided to form a risk profile of non-domestic premises within Staffordshire. We plan our inspection programme around those premises that are at most risk of having a fire, and where a fire is likely to create a risk to life.

We will also use information gathered from visiting premises to plan our response should an emergency occur. Our fire safety teams aim to reduce the risk those premises pose to both members of the public and our firefighters. Where fire safety deficiencies pose an obvious risk to life, we will take formal enforcement action, which can include prosecuting irresponsible business owners.

We will continue to review the findings and outcomes of the independent enquiry following the Grenfell Tower fire. We use any learning from this and other recent incidents to inform and improve our fire safety strategy

and policies and ensure that our teams are suitably trained and resourced. We will continue to work with planning authorities, local authority building control, approved inspectors and architects to ensure buildings are designed with fire safety in mind. This includes ensuring that the potential risks presented by buildings constructed using modern methods of construction such as cladding or timber framed are addressed.

We will promote the use of sprinklers at every opportunity and consider how new technologies and modern methods of construction, e.g. timber framed buildings, can influence building stability and integrity. Sprinklers reduce the risk of large-scale fires developing or spreading, helping to safeguard both residents and firefighters. Our Community Sprinkler Project aims to have sprinklers fitted in all mid to high-rise buildings in Staffordshire by 2026. Our fire engineers will work with the owners of premises housing those most at risk in case of fire to promote the use of sprinklers.

We will continue to develop ways of assessing how we perform operationally, identifying learning to ensure that where appropriate any changes to policy, guidance, equipment and training are implemented in a co-ordinated way. Stations and crewing arrangements will be based on analysis of risk and demand within our communities and taking into account the needs of the whole county. We will explore more flexible ways of working and continue to review how we prepare for and respond to emergencies, including working and learning with others and making the most of technology.

We propose to look at the way we crew our fire engines and review our on-call firefighter duty system to see how we can maximise our availability for responding to emergency calls. Currently, we require on-call firefighters to live or remain within five minutes of a fire station whilst on-call. This restricts the pool of talented people we can recruit. We would like to expand the areas we recruit from, as this will help us to keep our fire engines available.

We will plan to respond to all reasonably foreseeable events and ensure that when we experience periods of high demand we can meet the expectations of the public and sustain our efforts without increasing risks to our firefighters. We have arrangements in place to share fire engines and crews across our neighbouring county's borders if the need arises; each arrangement ensures that our neighbours will also help us if our demand rises.

We currently have a range of different vehicles, equipment and crewing systems. We would like to increase the range of options available to us so that we can tailor our approach to best suit each emergency. We believe this would make us more efficient and effective.

We support the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit, which co-ordinates multi-agency training, planning for and response to complex incidents that would have a large impact on our county, e.g. pandemic illnesses, wide-scale flooding or terror-related incidents. We have robust business continuity plans in place to deal with major disruption such as floods, cyber-attack, pandemics and loss of a building. We test these regularly to ensure we are resilient and able to respond and carry on should a catastrophic event occur.

The national resilience programme was developed to provide equipment and trained staff which could be sent anywhere in the country to incidents that would otherwise overwhelm local resources. We have high-volume pumping equipment, and enhanced logistical support vehicles (used most recently at the Whaley Bridge dam incident) and detection identification and monitoring teams (to identify unknown chemicals). We also have trained waste fire and wildfire tactical advisors who provide expertise within Staffordshire and can respond nationwide if needed.

