

# An Overview of the Home Office Fire Reform Programme

**Police and Crime Panels fire scrutiny workshop -  
12 September 2017**

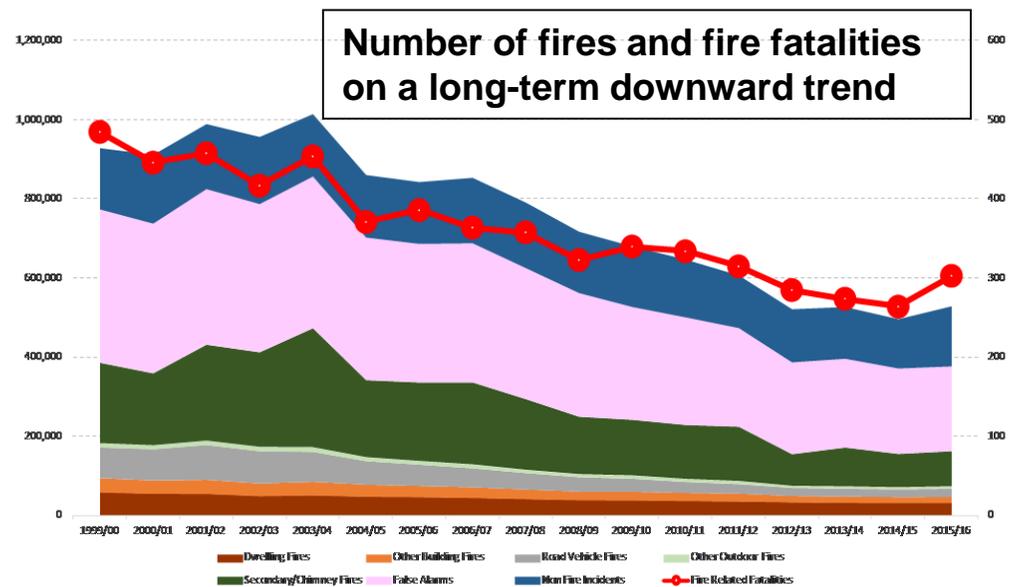
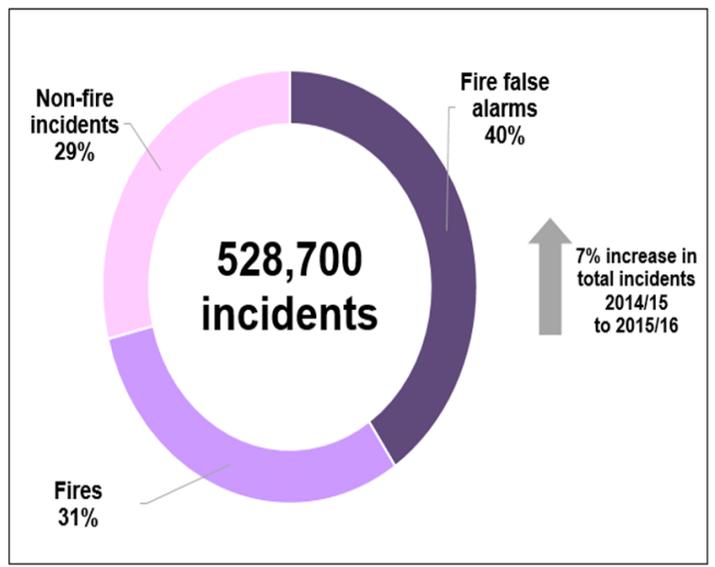
Nick Chard – Chairman Kent & Medway Fire and Rescue  
Authority

# The fire and rescue service is a well respected service

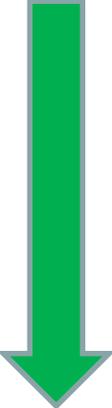
- The service makes a major contribution to building safe and resilient communities as well as responding to national and international incidents
- The service provides a key humanitarian role including protecting those who are most vulnerable
- They are a well trusted brand – a recent study found fire fighters were the second most trusted profession behind doctors
- A large national employer: over 44,000 fire fighters

## But it is changing with a long term downward trend in demand: number of fires, incidents and fire fatalities

- Since 05/06, number of:
  - fires: down 52% (but a 5% rise last year to 162,000)
  - incidents: down 37% (but a 7% rise last year to 528,700)
  - fire-related fatalities: down 22% (but a 15% rise last year to 303)
- non-fire incidents highest proportion they've ever been – this has been driven by a rise in co-responding

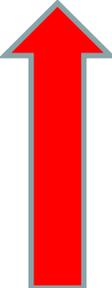


# There are a range of hypothesis for the long-term reduction in the number of fires



Possible downward factors include:

- more targeted prevention activities
- effective building and furniture regulations
- societal change: less smoking, greater use of smoke alarms, reduction in chip pan use
- recent wet summers: the wetter the summer, the less outdoor ('secondary') fires seen, for example: high number (295,000) of secondary fires during the hot/dry summer of 2003 and very few (72,000) secondary fires during the very wet summer of 2012



Possible upwards factors include:

- An aging population
- More older people living alone
- Continued chaotic lifestyles within some parts of the population
- Rise in chronic ill health

**Despite real achievements, Home Office believe there is real need for reform, for example: poor governance, workforce challenges, limited transparency and accountability**

Siloed and inefficient procurement

Need for more local collaboration

A bullying culture within some FRAs

Inflexible working practices adopted by many FRAs

Lack of transparency

Narcissism of small differences

Resource outstrips demand

No independent scrutiny of services, nor chance to compare – peer view system has many flaws

An aging workforce – 1/3 will retire in 5 years

Workforce challenges

Workforce lacking diversity: 96% white and 95% male

Sector leadership needs improvement

Poor governance

Opaque local governance mechanisms

## So what do Home Office intend to do about it? The previous Home Secretary outlined a ‘radical and ambitious’ package of reforms in May 2016

- Previous Home Secretary outlined her vision for fire and rescue services in May
- Approach supported by new Home Secretary and Fire Minister
- High level of ambition:
  - “Over the course of this Parliament, I intend to work with fire and rescue services to deliver a programme of reform that is as radical and ambitious as I have delivered in policing since 2010”.

# The reform agenda is made up of 3 distinct pillars

- 1: efficiency & collaboration
- 2: accountability & transparency
- 3: workforce reform
  
- The reform agenda needs to be owned by the sector – not Whitehall
- The sector is empowered to shape and deliver reforms and become self transforming
- Ambition to help professionalise the sector

## **Pillar 1: seeking greater efficiency and collaboration with efficiencies possible across the sector**

- Aim: to drive deeper collaboration between fire and rescue and other local services - including through the statutory duty in the Policing and Crime Act – and support CFOA/NFCC and the sector deliver commercial transformation, including procuring more collaboratively, efficiently and effectively.
- 2013 Knight Review found that:
  - i) significant scope for efficiencies - forecast savings of £196m p.a. from FRAs; and
  - ii) large variations in use of on-call fire fighters with possible annual savings of £123m by increasing proportion of retained from 30% to 40% .

## Home Office seeking deeper collaboration between fire and rescue and other local services and have seen some progress

- Break down siloed working, fully utilise all local assets and latent capacity.
- Statutory duty to collaborate in the Policing and Crime Act
- Collaboration projects underway – including supported by transformation funding - and co-responding agreements now in place between fire and rescue services and health and policing

# Home Office working with the sector to transform the commercial behaviours of FRAs

- Supported NFCC produce a new commercial approach
- They have commissioned (Bravo) an analysis of all FRA spend for 15/16
- Using funding as a strategic lever by offering four year funding settlement in exchange for robust efficiency plans – deadline for plans is this month
- Exploring future funding models

## **Fire reform pillar 2: seeking greater accountability and transparency, including enabling PCCs to take on the fire function locally**

- Aim: to enable the public to fully hold their service to account by replacing opaque governance and inspection arrangements and publishing more comparable performance information.
- In the Policing and Crime Act enabling PCCs to take on responsibility for FRA functions where there is a strong local case
- This will result in a directly elected person being accountable for fire and rescue services locally, allowing the public to hold them to account

# Home Office creating a new independent inspectorate for fire and rescue

- Current peer review system not an inspection. It is an inadequate driver of sector-led improvement or assurance
- Aim for the new inspectorate to be fully operational by 1 April 2018
- 2017/18 used for planning, development, testing
- Considering options for delivery: HMIC/NFCC developing proposals
- Working with LGA to develop a remodelled peer review system to complement new inspection regime

## **We will provide the public more information and data to be able to hold their service to account**

- Builds on work of independent inspection
- Data to include:
  - enhanced workforce diversity statistics published in this month's operational statistics
  - comparable procurement data
  - removing old GOV.UK content to make GOV.UK more accessible

## **Fire reform pillar 3: working with the employers to drive workforce reform**

- Published independent ‘conditions of service review for fire and rescue staff in England’ by Adrian Thomas.
- Recommendations are for the sector and Government to deliver and are based around 5 broad themes:
  - the working environment including diversity of workforce
  - documented conditions of service
  - industrial relations
  - retained duty system and
  - management

## **Home Office working with the sector to create a coherent, comprehensive set of professional standards**

- Sector driven
- Gap in the landscape in relation to building the evidence base ('What works'), defining effective practice, and owning professional development frameworks
- Should work hand in glove with new inspectorate and be one of the key elements they inspect against
- Look to the experiences of the College of Policing

## And the result?

**A fire and rescue service which is more:  
professional, accountable, self-transforming,  
transparent and robustly held to account**

**New delivery function:  
National Fire Chiefs'  
Council**

**New professional  
standards body**

**New independent  
inspectorate**

# Questions?