

*Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg*

## **AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU**



### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**A meeting of the EXECUTIVE PANEL will be held MONDAY 15 February 2021.**

**The meeting will be held via Zoom commencing at 10.00am.**

Yours faithfully

Colin Everett  
Clerk

### **AGENDA**

**1. Apologies**

**2. Declaration of Interests**

**3. Notice of Urgent Matters**

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

**4. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020**

**5. Matters arising**

**6. COVID-19 Update (verbal update)**

**7. Performance Monitoring April to December 2020**

**8. Firefighter 'Future Leader' Apprentices**

**9. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**

**10. Safe and Well Checks**

**11. Post-Transition Brexit (verbal update)**

**12. Urgent Matters**

To consider any items which the Chair has decided are urgent (pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972) and of which substance has been declared under item 3 above.

### **PART II**

It is recommended pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**None**

Report to	<b>Executive Panel</b>	
Date	<b>15 February 2021</b>	
Lead Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)</b>	
Contact Officer	<b>Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager)</b>	
Subject	<b>Performance Monitoring April 2020 – December 2020</b>	

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with information relating to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service activity, and performance against improvement and well-being objectives during the first three quarters of the 2020/21 reporting year.

## SUMMARY

- 2 The Service attended 3,600 emergency incidents during the first three quarters of 2020/21. This was slightly fewer than in the same three quarters of 2019/20, reflecting reductions in road traffic collisions (RTCs) and deliberate fires, but also an increase in small outdoor fires.
- 3 The reduction in RTCs can be attributed to fewer vehicles on the roads during lockdowns. Interestingly, however, the percentage of those RTCs where the Service was called upon to extricate or release people from vehicles remained consistent with previous years, at 37%.
- 4 The reduction in deliberate fires combines the continuation of a steady downward trend in deliberate primary fires achieved over the past five years with a 36% reduction in deliberate secondary fires. However, calls to small fires in gardens and loose rubbish during lockdowns contributed to a 39% increase in accidental secondary fires.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 5 That Members note the contents of the performance monitoring report.

## INFORMATION

- 6 **All incidents**  
During the first three quarters of 2020/21 the Service attended 3,600 emergency incidents and false alarms – 3.7% fewer than in the same period in 2019/20.

- 7 **Fires**  
The Service attended 1,408 fires between April and December 2020, compared with 1,499 fires between April and December 2019. This overall total comprised 629 primary fires, 690 secondary fires and 88 chimney fires.
- Although fewer primary fires were recorded in both deliberate and accidental categories, this was not the case for secondary fires. For these predominantly smaller, outdoor fires, there was a 36% reduction in those started deliberately but a 39% increase in those that had started accidentally.
- 8 **False alarms**  
The Service attended 1,777 false alarms during the reporting period – slightly more than in the same months in 2019, but within the total there was a small reduction (from 934 to 916) in the incidence of false alarms caused by automatic fire alarm systems.
- 9 **Special service (non-fire) incidents**  
The Service attended 416 non-fire emergency incidents during the first three quarters of this financial year, compared with 487 in the first three quarters of last financial year. These included 81 RTCs, 37% of which involved extrication or release of people. During the same months last year the Service attended 144 RTCs (43.8% more), with the same percentage involving extrications or releases.
- 10 **Accidental fires in dwellings (ADFs)**  
The Service attended 283 ADFs - fifteen more than in the first three quarters of 2019/20. These ADFs resulted in nineteen people sustaining slight injuries, two sustaining serious injuries and four people losing their lives (the final number of deaths will be subject to coroners' verdicts).
- 11 **Safe and Well Checks**  
9,064 Safe and Well Checks were completed during the period, of which 3,039 (34%) were in response to a referral from a partner agency.
- 12 **Smoke/heat detectors**  
The majority (84%) of residential dwellings that the Service attended in response to a fire had at least one smoke/heat detector fitted. However, the remaining 16% had no detectors present.
- 13 Appendix 1 provides further information and comparisons against the same three quarters in previous years.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Helps the Authority to monitor its performance against the improvement and well-being objectives set in the combined improvement and well-being plan 2020/21.
Budget	Helps to highlight any potential impacts on budget due to unanticipated incident activity.
Legal	Assists the Authority with ensuring that there are sufficient resources to meet the altering demands placed on it with changes in incident activity.
Staffing	No implication identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	No implication identified.
Risks	Not satisfying legal requirements to report on and monitor performance that may impact on the ability to ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet demand.

# **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Fire and Rescue Service**

## **PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

**For the nine months**

**April – December 2020**

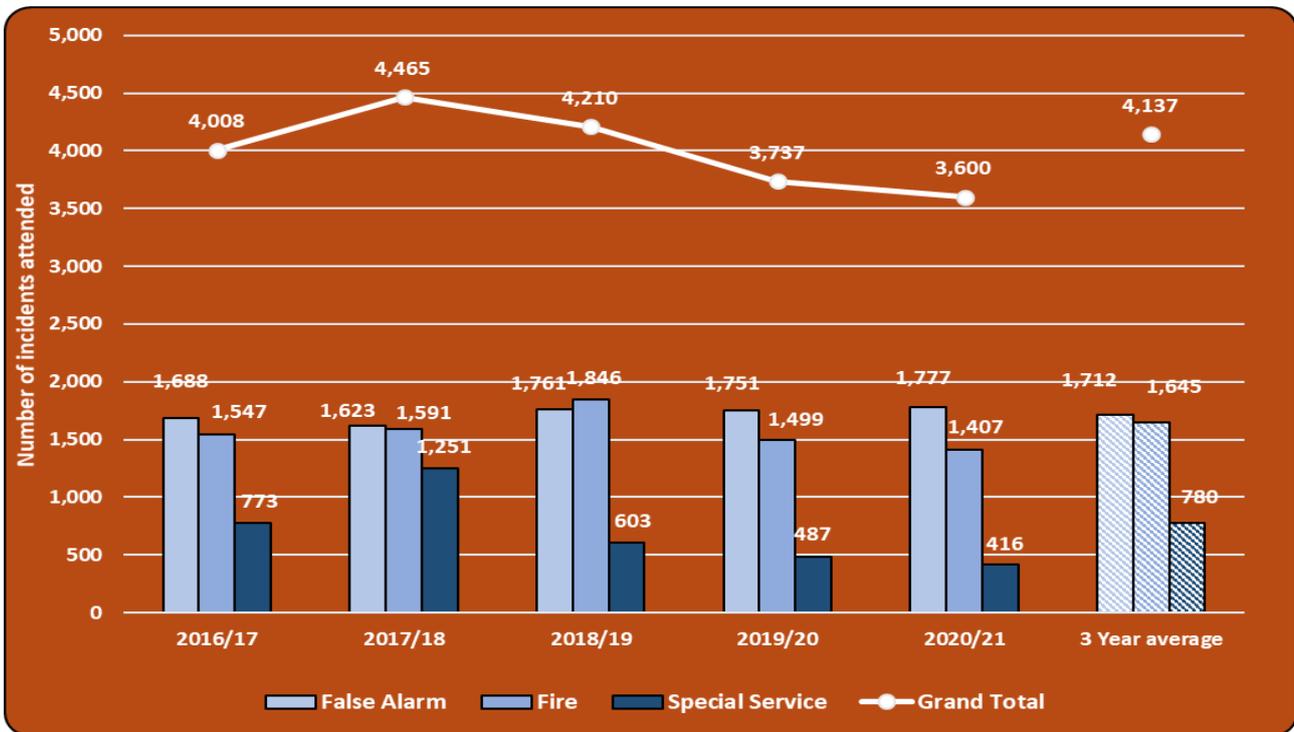
**Figures are provisional and may be subject to minor amendment.**

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## 1.0 All Incidents

1.1 During the first nine months of 2020/21 the Service attended 3,600 emergency incidents and false alarms, a decrease of 3.7% on the same period in 2019/20.



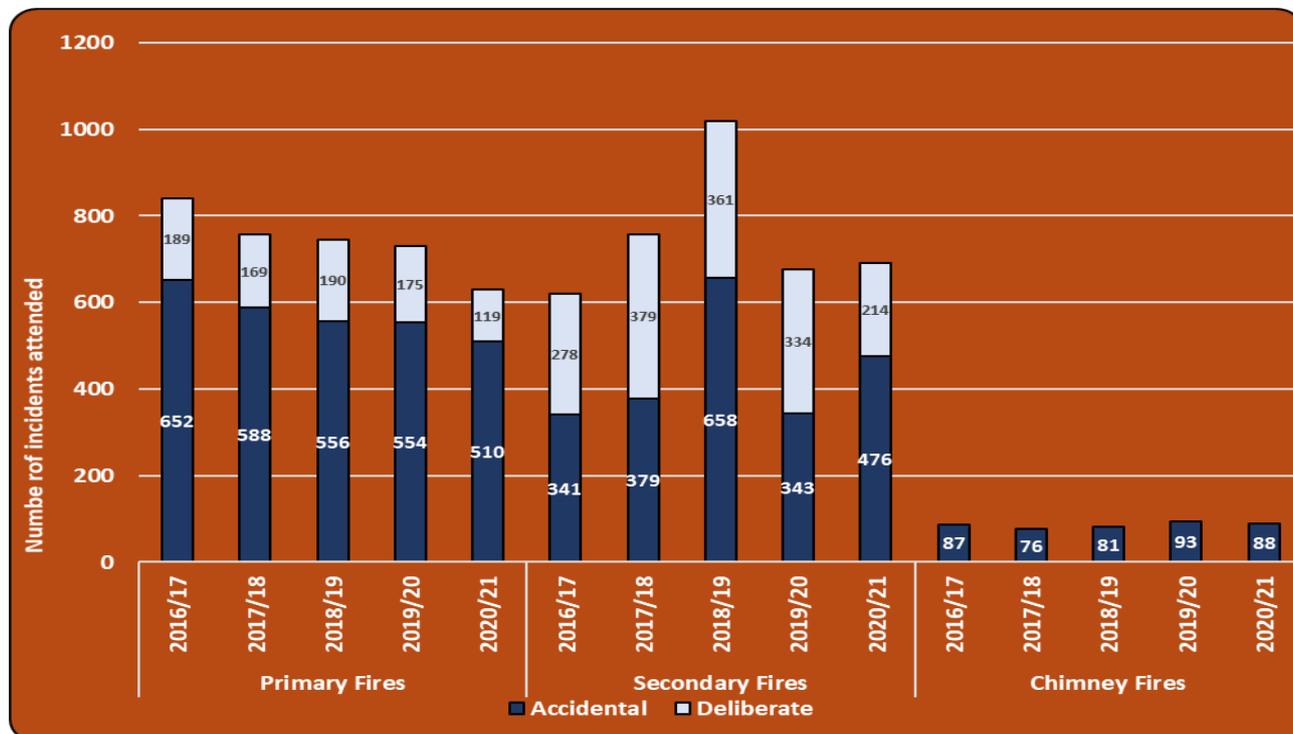
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total incidents attended	2020-21	1,379	1,228	996		3,600	↓ 3.7%	4,137	↓ 13%
	2019-20	1,330	1,329	1,078		3,737			
Total fires	2020-21	654	433	324		1,407	↓ 6.14%	1,645	↓ 14.5%
	2019-20	586	521	392		1,499			
Total special service incidents	2020-21	98	181	137		416	↓ 14.6%	780	↓ 46.7%
	2019-20	171	175	141		487			
Total false alarms	2020-21	627	614	535		1,777	↑ 1.4%	1,712	↑ 3.8%
	2019-20	573	633	545		1,751			



## 2.0 Fires, by Category and Motive

2.1 **Primary fires** – During the reporting period, there was a reduction in primary fires of 13.7% to 629 from 729 in the previous year.

2.2 **Secondary fires** – There was a 1.9% increase from 677 to 690 in the overall number of secondary fires compared with the same period in 2019/20. The average number of fires for the three previous years has increased to 818, which is up 18.4% of the 2020/21 total of 691 fires.

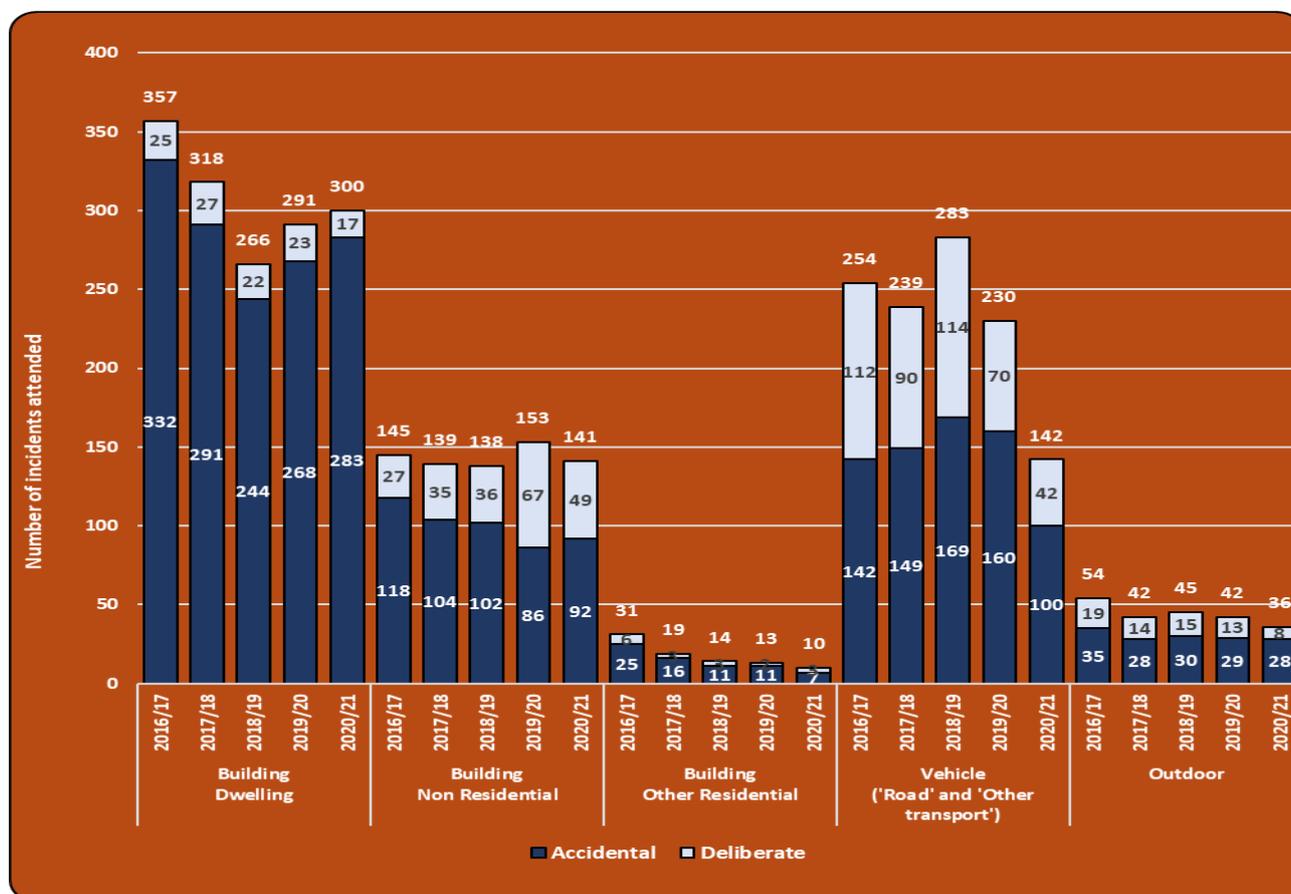


Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Primary fires	2020-21	225	217	190		629	↓ 13.7%	744	↓ 15.5%
	2019-20	238	267	224		729			
Secondary fires	2020-21	394	202	95		690	↑ 1.9%	818	↓ 15.6%
	2019-20	319	245	113		677			
Chimney fires	2020-21	35	14	39		88	↓ 5.5%	83	↑ 6%
	2019-20	29	9	55		93			



### 3.0 Primary Fires, by Property Type and Motive

- 3.1 During the reporting period 119 primary fires were started deliberately at non-residential buildings compared with 175 during the same period in 2019/20.
- 3.2 Of the above deliberate fires, 32 occurred at HMP Berwyn compared with 49 the previous year.



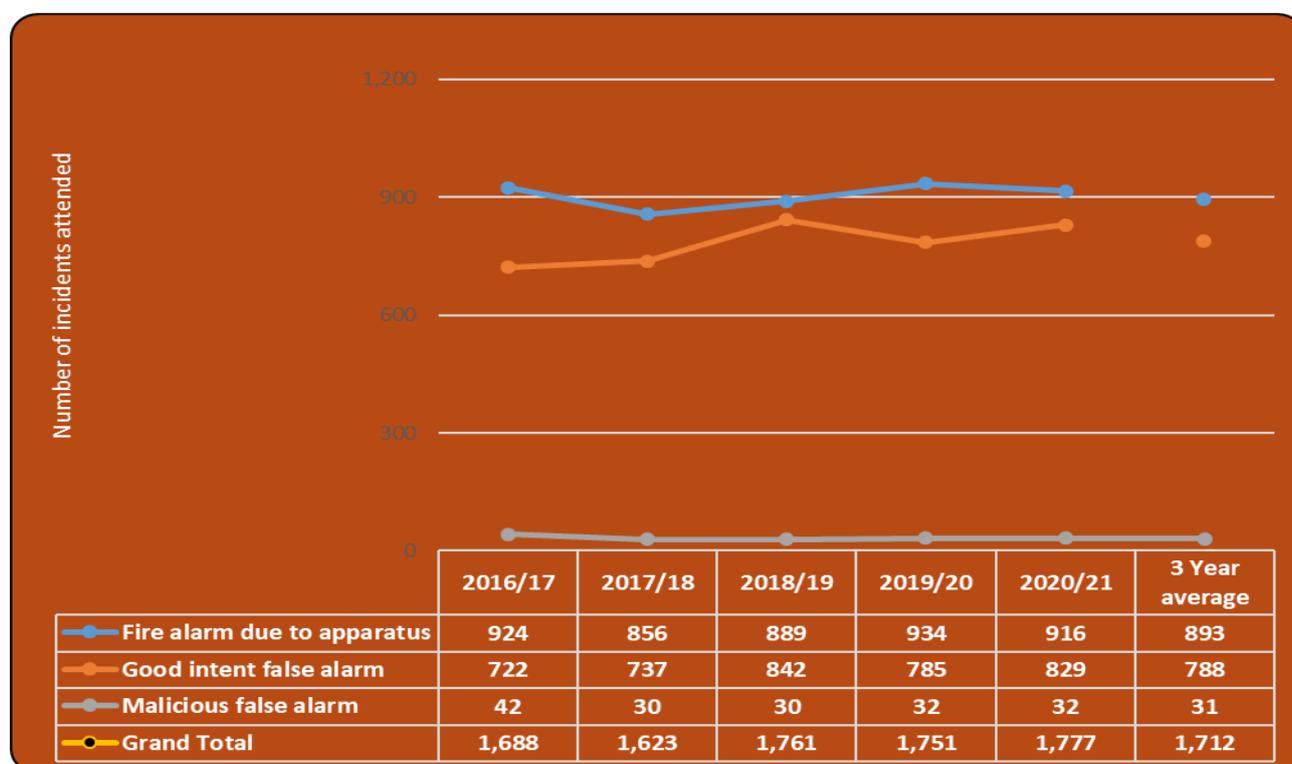
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD
All deliberate primary fires	2020-21	39	46	34		116	↓ 33%
	2019-20	43	66	66		175	
All accidental primary fires	2020-21	183	171	156		510	↓ 7.9%
	2019-20	195	201	158		554	

Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
178	↓ 34.8%
566	↓ 9.9%



## 4.0 False Alarms

4.1 Comparing figures for the first three quarters of 2020/21 with the same period in 2019/20, there were 1,777 false alarms - a slight increase of 1.5% (from 1,751). There was a 1.9% reduction in AFA false alarms (from 934 to 916). False alarms made with good intent increased by 5.5% from 785 to 829.

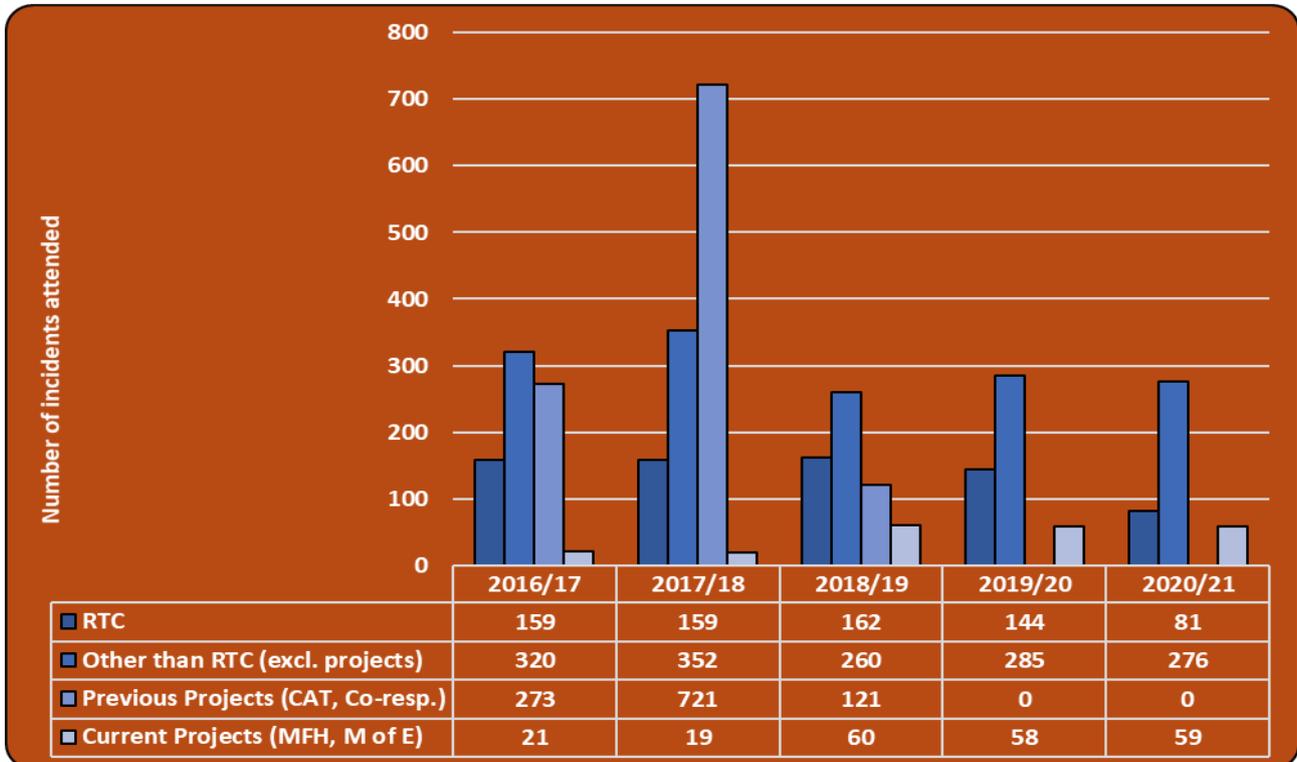


Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total false alarm	2020-21	627	614	535		1,777	↑ 1.5%	1,711	↑ 3.9%
	2019-20	573	633	545		1,751			
AFA	2020-21	282	331	303		916	↓ 1.9%	893	↑ 2.6%
	2019-20	288	339	307		934			
False alarms made with good intent	2020-21	328	282	218		829	↑ 5.5%	788	↑ 5.2%
	2019-20	273	283	229		785			
Malicious	2020-21	17	1	14		32	→ 0.0%	31	↑ 3.2%
	2019-20	12	11	9		32			

## 5.0 Special Service Incidents



- 5.1 Special service incidents reduced by 14.6% to 416 during the reporting period compared to 487 during the same period in the last financial year. Road traffic collisions recorded a significant decrease of 43.8% from 144 to 81 for the three quarters April to December 2020/21 compared to the same period in 2019/20. This could be attributable to less traffic on the roads due to national lockdowns.



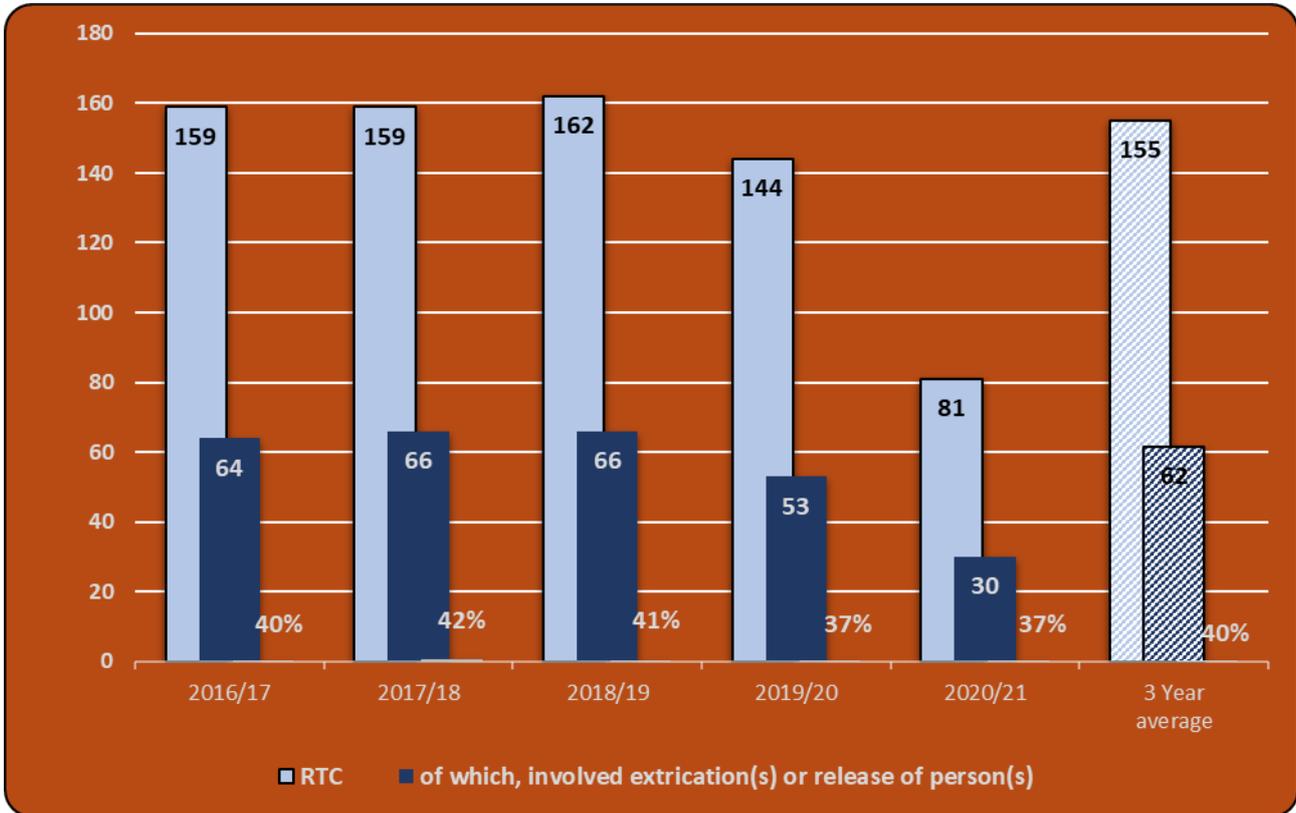
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD
Total special service incidents	2020-21	98	181	137		416	↓ 14.6%
	2019-20	171	175	141		487	
Road traffic collisions (RTC)	2020-21	17	32	32		81	↓ 43.8%
	2019-20	53	58	33		144	
Other than RTC	2020-21	81	149	105		335	↓ 2.3%
	2019-20	118	117	108		343	

Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD/Average of 3 previous years
780	↓ 46.7%
155	↓ 47.7%
299	↑ 12%

## 6.0 Road Traffic Collisions and Extrications/Release



6.1 Of the 81 road traffic collisions attended in the first three quarters of 2020/21 37% involved the Service using equipment to extricate at least one casualty from the vehicle whilst 41 resulted in injuries, although the majority of casualties sustained only slight injuries.



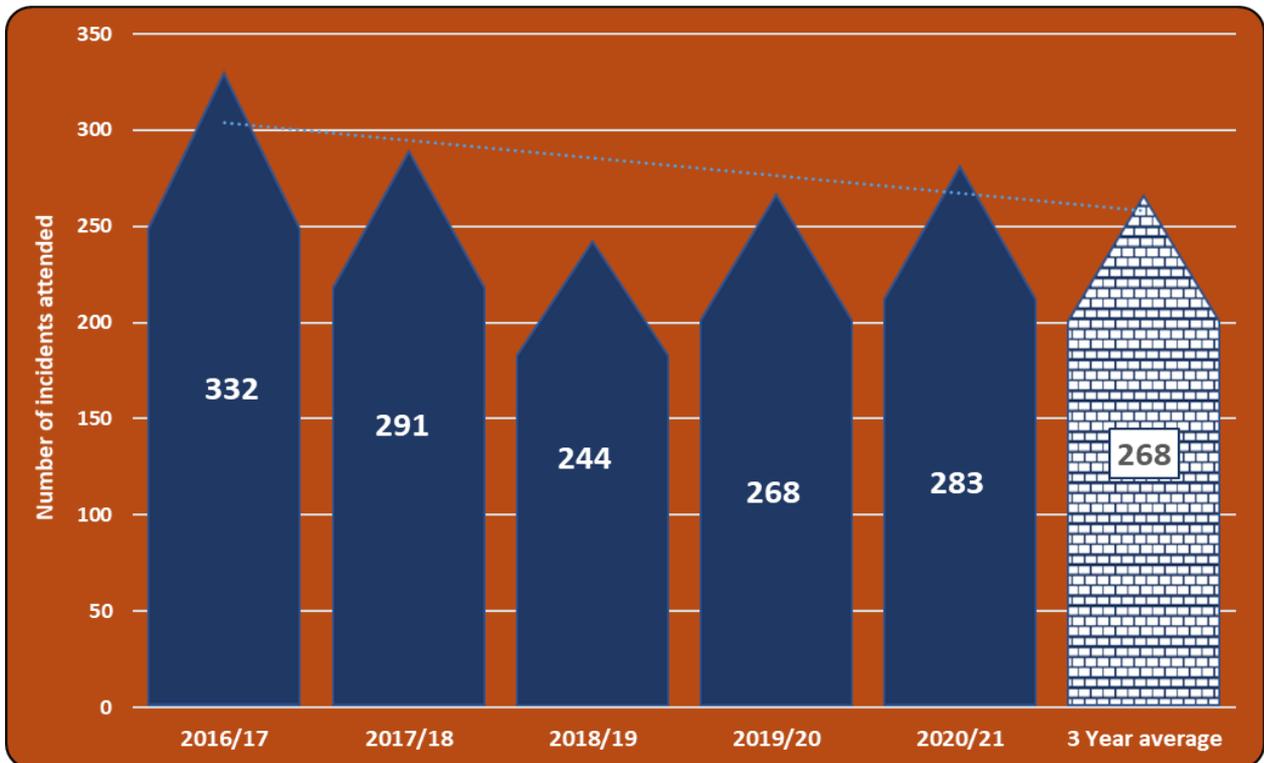
<p><b>81</b> RTC incidents attended</p> <p><b>41</b> Incidents where people sustained injury or were killed</p> <p><b>30</b> Incidents involved extrication / release</p>	<b>Severity of Injury*</b>	<b>Number of People</b>
	Precautionary Check	10
	First Aid	6
	Injuries – Slight	26
	Injuries – Serious	18
	Fatality	4
	*RTC injuries – where available – are recorded in the IRS in the same categorisation as fire injuries.	

**7.0 Monitoring against Improvement and Well-being objective A:** *To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur.*



**7.1 Accidental fires in dwellings**

The Service attended 283 accidental dwelling fires during the first three quarters of 2020/21 - fifteen more than in the first three quarters of 2019/20 (268 ADFs). This small increase places the total slightly above the three-year average.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD
Accidental fires in dwellings	2020-21	104	83	96		283	↑ 5.6%
	2019-20	98	88	82		268	

Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
268	↑ 5.6%

## 8.0 Fatalities and casualties from accidental fires in dwellings

8.1 There was one further fatality and 2 serious injuries in accidental dwelling fires during the third quarter of 2020/21. The number of slight injuries was slightly less than during the same period in 2019/20. Whilst the number of precautionary checks increased from 14 to 23, the number of people requiring first aid at the scene decreased from 32 to 21.

Severity of injury	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Precautionary Check	41	24	10	14	23
First Aid	29	20	17	32	21
Injuries - Slight	18	35	11	20	19
Injuries - Serious	6	2	2	3	2
Fatality	3	1	5	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>69</b>

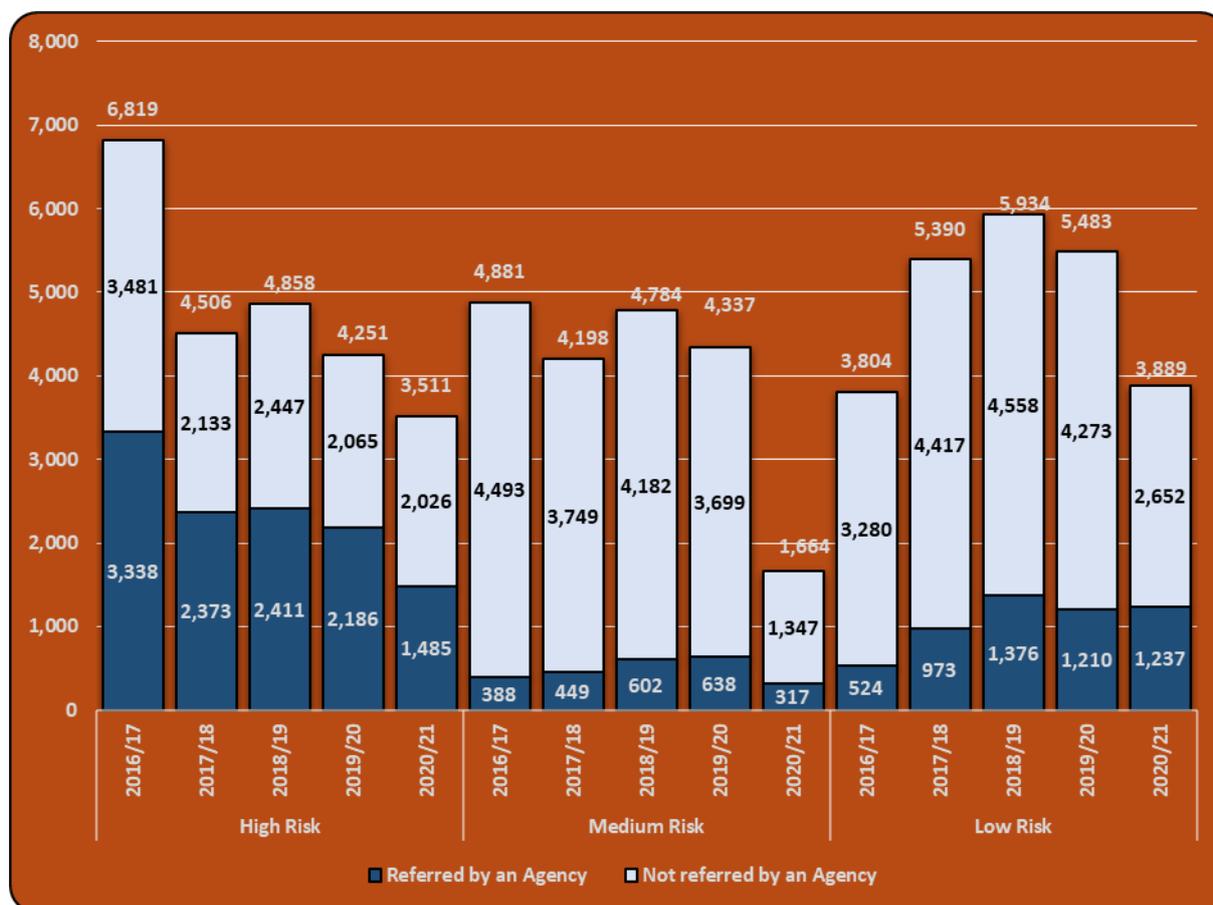
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	Change YTD
Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	2020-21	26	15	24		65	↓ 4
	2019-20	32	14	23		69	
Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	2020-21	3	0	1		4	↑ 1
	2019-20	1	0	2		3	

Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
66	↓ 1

## 9.0 Safe and Well Checks



9.1 9,064 Safe and Well Checks were completed during the period, of which 3,039 (34%) were undertaken in response to a referral from a partner agency.



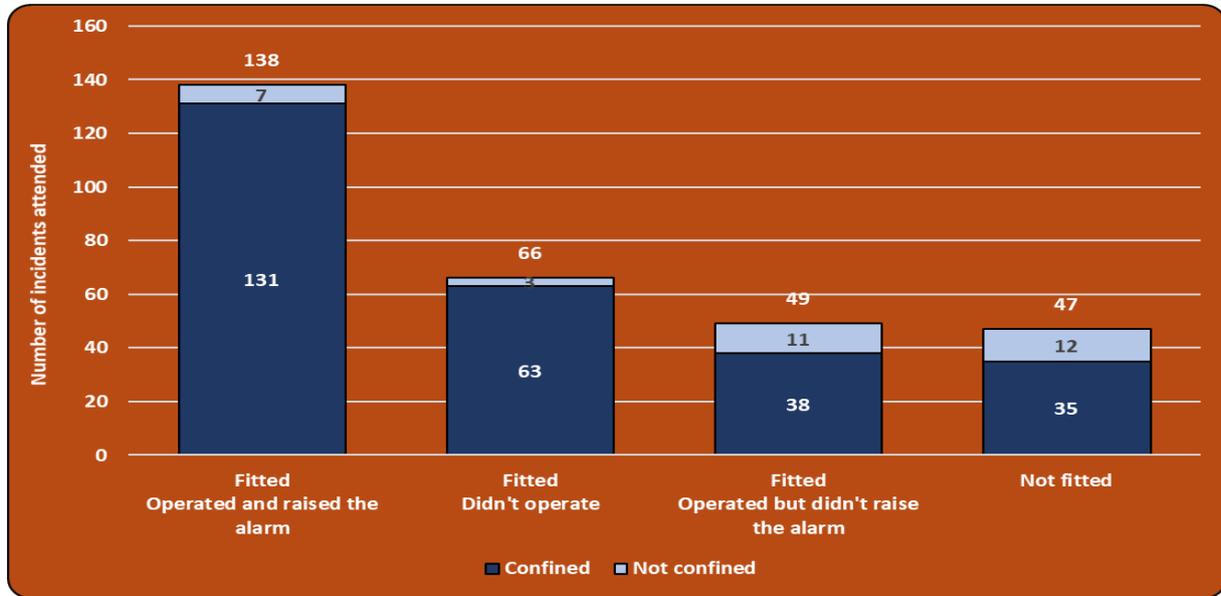
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	Change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
% of all Safe and Well Checks undertaken that originated from a referral from a partner organisation	2020-21	30%	37%	34%		34%	↑ 5pp	34%	→ 0pp
	2019-20	28%	31%	29%		29%			

## 10.0 Smoke Detectors - Dwelling Fires



10.1 Smoke/heat detectors were present at the majority of dwelling fires, though not all went on to operate; at 47 of the 300 dwelling fires reported from April through December, no detector was fitted.

10.2 Of the 300 dwelling fires, (accidental and deliberate) 267 were confined to the room of origin, the item first ignited, or there was heat/smoke damage only.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Smoke detector fitted which operated and raised alarm	2020-21	50	37	51		138	↑ 6.2%	129	↑ 7.0%
	2019-20	55	42	33		130			
Smoke detector didn't operate	2020-21	23	23	20		66	↑ 3.1%	69	↓ 4.3%
	2019-20	18	28	18		64			
Smoke detector fitted which operated but didn't raise the alarm	2020-21	19	16	14		49	↓ 12.5%	53	↓ 7.5%
	2019-20	22	14	20		56			
Smoke detector not fitted	2020-21	17	15	15		47	↑ 14.6%	41	↑ 14.6%
	2019-20	12	11	18		41			

## Glossary

Fires	All fires fall into one of three categories – primary, secondary or chimney.
Primary Fires	<p>These are fires that are not chimney fires, and which are in any type of building (except if derelict), vehicles, caravans and trailers, outdoor storage, plant and machinery, agricultural and forestry property, and other outdoor structures such as bridges, post boxes, tunnels, etc.</p> <p>Fires in any location are categorised as primary fires if they involved casualties, rescues or escapes, as are fires in any location that were attended by five or more fire appliances.</p>
Secondary Fires	<p>Secondary fires are fires that are neither chimney fires nor primary fires. Secondary fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.</p> <p>Secondary fires are those that would normally occur in locations such as open land, in single trees, fences, telegraph poles, refuse and refuse containers (but not paper banks, which would be considered - in the same way as agricultural and forestry property - to be primary fires), outdoor furniture, traffic lights, etc.</p>
Chimney Fires	<p>These are fires in occupied buildings where the fire is confined within the chimney structure, even if heat or smoke damage extends beyond the chimney itself.</p> <p>Chimney fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.</p>
Special Service Incidents	<p>These are non-fire incidents which require the attendance of an appliance or officer and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Local emergencies e.g. flooding, road traffic incidents, rescue of persons, 'making safe' etc;</li> <li>b) Major disasters;</li> <li>c) Domestic incidents e.g. water leaks, persons locked in or out etc;</li> <li>d) Prior arrangements to attend incidents, which may include some provision of advice and inspections.</li> </ul>
False Alarm (general guidance)	<p>Where the FRS attends a location believing there to be an incident, but on arrival discovers that no such incident exists, or existed.</p> <p>Note: if the appliance is 'turned around' by Control before arriving at the incident it is not classed as having been attended and does not need to be reported.</p>
False Alarms - Malicious	These are calls made with the intention of getting the FRS to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.
False Alarms – Good Intent	These are calls made in good faith in the belief that the FRS really would attend a fire or special service incident.
False Alarms - AFA	These are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment. They include accidental initiation of alarm apparatus or where an alarm operates and a person then routinely calls the FRS as part of a standing arrangement, i.e. with no 'judgement' involved, for example from a security call centre or a nominated person in an organisation).

Report to	<b>Executive Panel</b>
Date	<b>15 February 2021</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (01745 535286)</b>
Subject	<b>Firefighter 'Future Leader' Apprentices</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To describe to Members the measures taken to both develop our existing staff and to recruit new starters with the potential to progress into more senior positions in the future.
- 2 To inform Members of the progress made to recruit firefighter 'Future Leader' apprentices.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3 A reduction in both the numbers and quality of candidates engaging in promotional processes in recent years has led to an inability to permanently appoint to posts at various levels of the operational service.
- 4 The issue is complex and without a single solution, however a number of different measures have been deployed in order to address this problem.
- 5 Whilst many of these measures are targeted towards the identification and nurturing of talent from within the existing workforce, others relate to the recruitment of new starters who have the potential for development at an accelerated pace, whilst still achieving all of the required competencies.
- 6 For the first time, the Service will be running an apprenticeship programme designed to recruit apprentices with an increased potential to progress beyond the firefighter role and into supervisory, middle and senior manager positions.
- 7 The recruitment of 'Future Leaders' apprentices has been undertaken in line with the Fire and Rescue Authority's objective to maintain a suitably diverse, resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce.
- 8 By the end of the three year apprenticeship, those who have completed the programme will have experienced working in different stations and departments across the Service.

- 9 The 'Future Leaders' apprentices will be able to demonstrate a high level of technical and practical ability, supported by vocational experience and academic qualifications. Following this they will be prepared for onward career progression into managerial roles.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10 That Members note the information provided in this report.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 11 In order to provide the appropriate levels of supervision and management for the operational workforce it is necessary to select the right people, who not only possess the necessary technical and operational knowledge, but also have the potential for onward progression into more senior positions.
- 12 In recent years fewer people have been engaging with the qualifying elements of promotional processes and as a result the number of staff members who possess the requisite skills to be considered for promotion, has been far lower than in previous years.
- 13 Those who have achieved the requisite qualifying elements and attended for interviews at both supervisory and middle management levels often were not able to demonstrate an understanding of wider organisational awareness and the corporate requirements of an operational officer.
- 14 The problems of both fewer candidates engaging in promotional process and a reduction in the quality of candidates applying for promotion, has led to an inability to permanently appoint, with a number of staff members currently occupying temporary positions.
- 15 To better understand why there has been a reluctance for staff to engage in promotional process and to increase engagement a suite of proactive measures have been deployed.
- 16 Measures have included engaging with staff; promoting the many benefits of career progression; encouraging greater engagement with the promotional process and running workshop events to provide staff with a better understanding of how to be successful in the qualifying elements of that process. In addition, the number of opportunities for staff to achieve the requisite qualifying elements has been increased from one to two per year.
- 17 Additionally, there have been a number of measures taken to develop those with talent so that they are able to not only achieve the standards required to access the final interview but also to be better prepared when they do. This has included identification of members of the Service who are considered to have 'high potential' and providing them with development opportunities bespoke to their individual needs.

- 18 There have been several workshop and masterclass opportunities that have been developed and cascaded to those who are engaging with promotional processes. Some of the areas covered in masterclasses have been written communications, media relations, finance, having difficult conversations, the requirements of a corporate officer and political awareness.
- 19 In recent years apprentices have been an integral part of the Service's strategy for operational firefighter recruitment.
- 20 The Service has previously been successful in recruiting and developing two cohorts of apprentices enabling them, once qualified, to apply for permanent appointment. All previous firefighter apprentices have been appointed into permanent firefighter positions.
- 21 Building on the success of the first two cohorts of apprentices, and also to proactively address the need to recruit those with the potential to progress into more senior positions with a higher degree of certainty, the concept of a 'Future Leaders' apprenticeship was born.

## **INFORMATION**

- 22 The recruitment process began in early 2020, with a brief pause due to COVID restrictions. Suitable control measures have now allowed restrictions to be overcome and the process has now been completed.
- 23 'Future Leaders' apprentices will undertake additional training experiences during their three year apprenticeship. Achievement in not only the accreditation requirements for the traditional firefighter apprenticeship, but also in relation to leadership, technical tests and assessment and development centres, as well as working in a variety of supporting departments will become a contractual requirement, all preparing the apprentices for their career progression pathway.
- 24 Previous academic achievement is a reasonable predictor of a candidate's ability to cope with the intensity of development required in the three year period. Because of this, the entry requirements for 'Future Leaders' apprentices were at a higher level than previous apprentice cohorts.
- 25 Prior to opening recruitment, a series of positive action events took place. These activities were successful in that they helped achieve far more diversity in the group applicants than has been achieved in previous recruitment campaigns.
- 26 After a successful multi-stage recruitment campaign, ten candidates, have been selected for appointment and subject to them passing all pre-employment checks including a medical examination, they will begin their apprenticeships on 19 April 2021.

- 27 The group that has been selected is diverse and well-balanced in terms of gender, age profile and level of Welsh speaking ability.
- 28 For the first time, the achievement of Welsh language level two within the period of probation and level three prior to the end of the course, is a contractual requirement for all firefighter apprentices to achieve.
- 29 The first part of their training will focus on the operational firefighter role and will take 11 weeks to complete. After initial training is completed, the apprentices will continue their development journey and commence the first of a number of rotations into different departments across the organisation. A number of courses and qualifications will be achieved along the way.
- 30 After the completion of a three year programme, apprentices will be ready to progress into the first tier of line management, but also have many of the skills and experiences to enable them to move from supervisory management into middle management soon after.

## IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The Authority's fifth well-being objective relates to maintaining a suitably diverse, resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce. Apprentices are a fundamental part of achieving this objective. The 'Future Leaders' programme will build on the successes of previous apprenticeship programmes.
Budget	These roles have already been considered and included in the Authority's budget setting for 2021/22.
Legal	The Authority has a duty to provide a suitably trained workforce and to plan for future resourcing requirements.
Staffing	All staffing requirements to support the delivery of the 'Future Leaders' apprenticeship programme will come from the current workforce.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Prior to the recruitment process beginning the Service sought to engage and encourage applicants from across all parts of society and who are most representative of the communities of North Wales. The apprentices are required to achieve level three Welsh language prior to the end of the course.
Risks	None identified.

Report to	<b>Executive Panel</b>
Date	<b>15 February 2021</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer</b> <b>01745535286</b>
Subject	<b>Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report advises Members of the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and outlines some of the possible implications for the Fire and Rescue Authority.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 This report provides detail on certain provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It notes the repeal of the Local Government Measure 2009 and the introduction of new performance and governance arrangements for fire and rescue authorities in Wales. It notes also the removal of the requirement for the Welsh Ministers to hold an inquiry if they vary a fire and rescue authority's combination order, except in certain limited circumstances. New rules about electronic broadcasting, remote attendance and documentation of fire and rescue authority meetings are also described. It also notes the complexity of some aspects of the Act, and the need for additional regulations to be introduced to bring some sections into effect.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3 That Members note the contents of this report.

## BACKGROUND

- 4 On 20 January 2021 the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act of Senedd Cymru.
- 5 The Bill was introduced in November 2019 by Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government with the stated purpose of providing for the "*establishment of a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, performance and governance*".

- 6 Provisions in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) relate to a range of matters including:
- i. electoral arrangements for local government, including extending electoral cycles for councils from 4 to 5 years;
  - ii. a general power of competence enabling qualifying councils to act “in their communities’ best interests” without the need to identify specific powers to undertake a particular activity;
  - iii. the role of principal councils in encouraging public participation in local democracy;
  - iv. the rights of certain employees and office holders of a local authority (or a connected body) to stand for election to that authority without having to resign unless they are elected;
  - v. regional working mechanisms, including voluntary mergers or the restructuring of principal councils;
  - vi. performance and governance arrangements;
  - vii. local government finance including non-domestic rates and council tax;
  - viii. ‘miscellaneous’ matters relating to:
    - information sharing between regulators,
    - heads of democratic services,
    - community polls,
    - the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales,
    - public services boards,
    - combined fire and rescue authorities: inquiries,
    - performance and governance of fire and rescue authorities, and
    - the Local Government Measure 2009.

## INFORMATION

7 As its title suggests, the 2021 Act applies to local government. However, not all its provisions apply to all bodies falling within the broader definition of local government. Whether, and how, each section applies to a fire and rescue authority (FRA) is not always immediately evident, and a number of provisions will rely on separate regulations being made by the Welsh Ministers.

8 Some of the changes for FRAs relate to:

- **Performance and governance (section 167):**

Amendments to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which give the Welsh Ministers power to make regulations requiring FRAs to develop strategic plans and to specify what those plans should contain. Such regulations may also specify the arrangements that would be used to assess the Authority’s performance against these plans and against the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Performance and governance arrangements for principal councils will be subject to different regulations based on self-assessment and peer review.

- **Local Government Measure 2009 (sections 168 and 169)**

The 2021 Act repeals the Local Government Measure 2009, therefore removing the Authority's improvement planning duties as a "Welsh improvement authority". The Authority will no longer be required to set improvement objectives under this Measure but it will still be required to set objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. The Authority will also need to publish one more retrospective assessment of its performance against 2020/21 improvement objectives under the previous regulations, by 31 October 2021.

The repeal of the Local Government Measure 2009 also means that the Auditor General will no longer have a duty in 2021/22 to assess whether the Authority met its continuous improvement obligations during 2020/21. Nevertheless, Audit Wales has indicated that it is considering incorporating this work into its programme of audit during 2021/22 in order to certify the Authority's October 2021 assessment of its performance against 2020/21 improvement objectives.

- **Combined fire and rescue authorities: inquiries (section 166)**

This section of the 2021 Act relates to inquiries into finance and governance arrangements of FRAs that were established by combination orders under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The 2004 Act is amended so as to remove the requirement for the Welsh Ministers to hold an inquiry if they vary a combination order, except if the variation either alters the area covered by the FRA or revokes the combination order with a view to creating a wholly different configuration of FRAs.

- **Electronic broadcasts of meetings of local authorities (section 46)**

This section relates to duties on principal councils to broadcast council meetings as they happen, and also to make recordings of broadcasts available for a reasonable period after the meeting. Although this section does not currently apply to FRAs, the Act gives Welsh Ministers the power to make regulations that would extend similar requirements to FRAs.

- **Attendance at meetings (section 47)**

This section makes provision for local authority meetings (in this case, a local authority does include FRAs) to be held on a fully, or partially, virtual basis.

Welsh Fire and Rescue Service Circular W-FRSC(2020)11 issued in November 2020 explained that for FRAs this would mean that as a minimum attendees would be able to attend via an audio connection only, for example a phone conference, but that this would not prevent FRAs from using video connections if they wish.

- **Notices of meetings and other documents (sections 49 and 50)**

This section gives the Welsh Ministers powers to make regulations regarding making meeting notices and documents available.

9 Other aspects of the 2021 Act are less clear in terms of their actual effect on FRAs. For example:

- **Public Services Boards and Regional Working**

Section 165 (merging and demerging public services boards) clearly relates to FRAs because they are statutory members of public services boards (PSBs). The framework for regional collaboration and corporate joint committees (Part 5 of the Act), however, relates only to principal councils, although public services boards are listed in Part 5 as having to be consulted at various stages. How these arrangements will work in practice, therefore, remains to be seen.

10 Next steps: Over the coming weeks Officers will be working with the Clerk to identify and confirm those areas of the 2021 Act that apply to the Authority, and the changes that will need to be incorporated into relevant Authority documents and Service policies and/or procedures. Further reports will be provided to the Executive Panel, Audit Committee, Standards Committee and/or full Authority as appropriate.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The FRA has already taken a blended approach to its Improvement Objectives and Well-being Objectives. However, as the FRA will no longer be subject to improvement planning duties under the Local Government Measure 2009, its focus will be on setting and working towards Well-being Objectives.
Budget	The cost of implementing any part of the 2021 Act will be determined as part of the planned next steps (paragraph 10 above).

Legal	The FRA will need to ensure that it identifies and ensures compliance with all aspects of the 2021 Act that apply to it.
Staffing	No implications identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The development or amendment of policies, procedures and other arrangements will need to be assessed in relation to these aspects during their development and implementation.
Risks	The risk of failing to correctly identify and implement those aspects of the 2021 Act that apply to the FRA.

Report to	<b>Executive Panel</b>
Date	<b>15 February 2021</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Paul Scott, Senior Fire Safety Manager</b> <b>01745 535286</b>
Subject	<b>Safe and Well Checks</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the impact that recent COVID 19 restrictions have had on the number of Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs) carried out by the Service this year, and the possible effect on the Authority's annual target for delivering SAWCs.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 COVID-19 restrictions have meant that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) has had to amend its delivery model for SAWCs by carrying out the majority via telephone. The reduced number of visits that have been undertaken in person during this time have been limited to the homes of people at particularly high risk from fire. All such visits have been subject to stringent risk assessments in order to safeguard both the householder(s) and the Service's staff.
- 3 Consequently, the end of year projection for the number of SAWCs delivered during this financial year indicates a potential 40% shortfall against the Authority's annual target of 20,000 checks.
- 4 While COVID-19 restrictions remain in place and even when restrictions are lifted it is likely that the Service will need to review and potentially find alternatives to its normal delivery model for SAWCs. The Authority may therefore need to consider amending its annual target for delivering these checks in future years.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 Members are asked to:
  - a. note the possible shortfall in the number of Safe and Well Checks delivered in this financial year against the target of 20,000 that was set before the COVID-19 pandemic; and

- b. note that there is potential, dependent on COVID-19, for the Service to be unable to achieve its annual target of 20,000 SAWCS in 2021/22.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 6 Members will be aware that following the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group Report in 2007 (reviewed 2009), North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority adopted an annual target of delivering 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC). On the basis that there were around 300,000 dwellings in North Wales, the strategy was based on the potential to visit every home within a ten year period.
- 7 A reduction in the capital funding from the Welsh Government in 2015 for single point smoke detectors meant reducing the annual target from 30,000 to 20,000.
- 8 Since that time the capital funding has remained the same but the unit cost of detectors has increased, so reducing the number that can be purchased.

## **INFORMATION**

- 9 With the announcement of the first COVID-19 lockdown in Wales in late March 2020 the Service stopped carrying out face to face SAWCs to comply with the lockdown restrictions and to protect both the community and staff who would otherwise carry out SAWCs.
- 10 As an alternative to visiting homes in person the Service began to carry out more SAWCs by telephone. If it was identified that smoke detectors were required arrangements were made to leave these at the property. Some of the staff who would normally carry out SAWCs in person have been deployed to other duties including supporting the multi-agency response to COVID 19.
- 11 In August 2020, with strict risk assessments in place, the Service reviewed its decision and re-commenced face to face delivery of SAWCs to individuals who had been assessed as being particularly vulnerable and at a high risk from fire.
- 12 Between 1 April 2020 and 31 January 2021 the Service carried out a total of 9,919 SAWCs. Of those, 2,229 were carried out in person at the property, and the remaining 7,690 by telephone. Of those conducted by telephone, 2,512 required the delivery of a smoke detector to the property. This year to date, over 33% of the SAWCs completed have been undertaken in response to a referral from a partner agency.

- 13 It is estimated that the total SAWC figure for 2020/21 will be in the region of 12,000 with approximately 9,000 of these being phone based. This does not meet the target of 20,000 SAWCs that was previously set by the Authority, but as the pandemic continues it is considered appropriate to continue with the current method of delivery.
- 14 In the event that restrictions are lifted later in 2021 the Service will consider returning to delivering all SAWCs face to face whilst taking into account the learning developed during the period of the restrictions. The benefit of delivering SAWCs by telephone to those householders assessed as being at 'low risk' has been recognised and may well form part of the SAWC delivery strategy in future years. It is however, unlikely that restrictions will be fully lifted from April 2021 so the Service will keep delivery methods under review during 2021/22 with the aim of limiting 'face to face' delivery to those households assessed as being at highest risk from fire.
- 15 Despite the reduced number of SAWCs delivered in 2020/21 and the revised delivery model, the Service's focus continues to be on providing SAWCs to those people at highest risk of dying in an accidental dwelling fire. We will continue to work with partners to identify the most vulnerable in our communities and provide appropriate SAWCs to those households.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	There will be an anticipated shortfall in SAWCs delivered against the target this year. The longer term objective of working towards making improvements to the health, safety and well-being of people in North Wales remains.
Budget	Potential for the grant funding to be reduced in coming years.
Legal	None identified.
Staffing	None identified. Some staff normally delivering SAWCs in person have been deployed to other duties temporarily.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The focus remains on delivering to those at highest risk from fire, which includes within the assessment consideration of personal characteristics such as age and disability. SAWCs continue to be available through the medium of English or Welsh.
Risks	Potential community risks of increased fires and fire casualties addressed by continuing to deliver SAWCs in a more targeted way.