

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

7 JULY 2025

Report Title	Review of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is required to publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Fire and Rescue Statement must be reviewed by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel, resulting in the production of a report to the Commissioner. The Panel reviewed the Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25 at a public meeting held on 19 June 2025.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire:
- a) Considers this report by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel arising from its review of the Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25 carried out in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 28(4) and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 Schedule A2 Section 8.
 - b) Provides the Panel with a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 7 in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 12 Paragraph 4(a).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are required to complete the Panel's review of the Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25 published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, in accordance with the Panel's statutory responsibilities.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out government priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the National Framework in carrying out its functions. Every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the National Framework, referred to as "the Fire and Rescue Statement." This requirement applies to Police and Crime commissioners who take on the functions of a fire and rescue authority under the provisions of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, as is the case in Northamptonshire.
- 5.2 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (sections 12 and 28) as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017 Schedule 1 requires that the Fire and Rescue Statement published by a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is subject to scrutiny by the relevant Police, Fire and Crime Panel.
- 5.3 The Fire and Rescue Statement must be sent to the relevant Panel as soon as practicable following its publication by the Commissioner.
- 5.4 The Panel must arrange for a public meeting of the Panel to be held as soon as practicable after it receives the Fire and Rescue Statement.
- 5.5 The Commissioner must attend the relevant meeting of the Panel to present the Fire and Rescue Statement and to answer such questions from the Panel about it as the Panel members think appropriate.
- 5.6 The Panel must then review the Fire and Rescue Statement and make a report outlining any recommendations to the Commissioner. The report or recommendations of the Panel must also be published.
- 5.7 The Commissioner must provide a response to the panel and must also publish that response.

6. Review of the Fire and Rescue Statement

- 6.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire has produced a Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25, which is available to view at: [PFCC Fire and Rescue Statement 2024-25](#). The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel met in public on 19 June 2025 to review the Fire and Rescue Statement. The meeting was webcast live and a recording is available to view at: [West Northamptonshire Council - YouTube](#).

- 6.2 In presenting the Fire and Rescue Statement, the Commissioner highlighted that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was now in a stable position after a challenging period. The Chief Fire Officer understood the service and was carrying out significant work to assess and respond to its key challenges. Prevention was an important area of activity for NFRS and this was reflected in a declining number of large fires in the county. Northamptonshire remained the worst funded fire and rescue authority in the country. There were also challenges relating to recruitment and retention, particularly for on-call firefighters. It was difficult to recruit sufficient on-call firefighters when people no longer worked close to home. The Commissioner had recently written to North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils about supporting recruitment of on-call firefighters from their staff.
- 6.3 The Panel then considered the Fire and Rescue Statement and questioned the Commissioner about her confidence in the level of assurance it gave regarding the effectiveness of services provided to the residents of Northamptonshire and the delivery of strategic priorities.
- 6.4 A Panel member noted that the Fire and Rescue Statement showed that the total number of fatalities due to primary fires and non-fatal casualties in fires per 100,000 population had increased in 2024/25 compared to the previous year. The number of home fire safety visits completed during 2024/25 had declined compared to the previous year. The Commissioner was challenged about the reasons for these changes. The Commissioner responded that the reported position reflected that local population growth was producing increased demand whilst the resources available for prevention activity remained the same. The Panel was further advised that the actual number of fire fatalities remained very low. Fire safety visits were targeted to have the most impact rather than prioritising simply increasing the number conducted. The Chief Fire Officer maintained a strong focus on prevention, for which she had a national lead portfolio.
- 6.5 Panel members sought reassurance that NFRS would be able to address the areas for improvement identified in its last HMICFRS inspection and about the Commissioner's confidence that the next inspection would produce a better outcome. The Commissioner advised that inspectors had already visited. The three areas in which NFRS had received a requires improvement rating were promoting the right values and culture; ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and preventing fires and other risks. A significant amount of work on culture change had since been done through the Serving with Pride Programme. There had also been positive engagement with local communities to promote career opportunities in fire and rescue. The Panel was further informed that NFRS was on the way to achieving improvements relating to preventing fires and other risks. It was on a good trajectory overall compared to the national picture. The Commissioner emphasised that the last inspection of NFRS had taken place at a very unsettled time and it was remarkable that the outcomes had been as good as they were. The Chief Fire Officer had now been in the role for a year. She was committed to service improvement and had a track record of delivery. She also had the confidence of NFRS staff members, who had bought in to the direction being taken. The Commissioner expected this to be reflected in the outcomes of the next inspection.

- 6.6 A Panel member raised concern about the level of funding available to NFRS given that it was already a very lean organisation and questioned how this affected the provision of equipment and training and the level of risk to which firefighters were exposed. The Commissioner emphasised that NFRS was in a better position now than when Northamptonshire County Council was the fire and rescue authority and had given priority to other statutory services. The transfer of governance responsibilities to the Commissioner had allowed financial pressures to be relieved and positive actions taken such as the development of shared enabling services. New appliances had been purchased to support the commitment that a minimum of 14 would be available at any time. The Commissioner advised that training for firefighters was continuous. Support was also provided for firefighters' physical and mental health and wellbeing. Two new fire stations due to be constructed in Moulton and Kettering would be state of the art, including in relation to the facilities provided for firefighters.
- 6.7 Panel members sought further information about actions being taken to support long term staff retention by NFRS and to understand and address declining availability of on-call firefighters. The Panel was advised that long term staff retention was not a particular issue for NFRS and the Serving with Pride Programme would assist it to be an employer of choice. The Commissioner outlined that two main factors affected on-call recruitment. People generally worked away from their home area far more than in the past and employers were also not as supportive of this kind of outside commitment. This was why the Commissioner sought to encourage large employers such as the two local authorities to support staff members in becoming on-call firefighters. Assessing current and future demands and the best way to meet them was a key focus for the NFRS senior leadership team. An emergency cover review was underway and could be shared with the Panel. A Panel member highlighted that the RNLI relied on on-call personnel and there might be ways in which NFRS could learn from their experience.
- 6.8 A Panel member questioned the level of confidence that could be placed in performance data included in the Fire and Rescue Statement given the accompanying note that it was subject to revision at any time. It was also questioned whether major recent fires in the county had reduced overall performance. The Panel was reminded that the Fire and Rescue Statement was a retrospective document covering the previous year. The need to include the note about data would be checked as this seemed like a procedural matter that was not helpful for a document of this kind.

7. Outcomes of the Review

- 7.1 The Panel considered any conclusions or recommendations that it wished to make on the Fire and Rescue Statement. The importance of presenting clear performance data, which should include relevant targets so that progress could be measured, was emphasised.
- 7.2 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved that:
- a) The Panel notes the Fire and Rescue Statement for 2024/25.**

- b) The Panel recommends that in future the Fire and Rescue Statement sets out the targets relevant to the key performance indicators included, to enable progress towards intended outcomes to be measured more clearly.

8. Background Papers

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing and Crime Act 2017

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Terms of Reference