

## **SFRS Ministerial Annual Performance Review Meeting 2019/20**

**Monday 5 October 2020**

**Attendee list at Annex A**

**Ministers Speech at Annex B**

### **SFRS Chair, Kirsty Darwent, Opening Remarks**

Welcome to our first virtual holding of the Annual Performance Review. A virtual review is new territory for us all and I think this reflects something of the challenge the entire country is facing at the moment.

Given those challenges the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have had a constructive year during the 2019/20 reporting period. We have continued on our journey to improve services for the people of Scotland and have adapted to the challenges of COVID, making sure that our communities are kept safe whilst supporting our staff while they go through these difficult times.

We know there are significant challenges ahead, one of which is public finance and managing our capital backlog, the challenge of climate change and the consequences that this brings of wildfire and flooding and the uncertainty of Brexit and the current pandemic. Despite all that, as I'm sure you would expect Minister, we are looking for opportunities through these challenges and intend to ensure we continue to develop in a way that increases the safety of the people of Scotland and we welcome your questions this morning.

We are joined by our Board Members and our Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). Once you have asked a question I will initially respond and then ask the most relevant Board Member and SLT members to continue. The Board will deal with the more strategic and governance aspects and the SLT will focus on the more operational implications and performance.

### **Minister for Community Safety, Ash Denham MSP, Opening Remarks**

**Ministers Speech at Annex B**

#### **Question 1**

#### **SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL PROGRAMME**

Progress continued to be made on aspects of Transformation throughout 2019-20 including in the Station and Appliance Review, the Retained Duty System (RDS) Review and Demand Based Duty Systems (DBDS). However, the failure to reach agreement with the FBU on an overarching pay deal for expanding the firefighter role has again delayed progress in delivery of service modernisation.

**QUESTION.** What impact has COVID and no pay deal being reached on expanding the firefighter role had on the Service Delivery Model Programme (SDMP)? What aspects of this important work can be delivered in 2020-21?

## **Response Fiona Thorburn, Chair, Transformation and Major Projects Committee**

Primarily this is about gathering and analysis of data to provide us with a very robust evidence based decision making capacity going forward with the overarching objective of having the right resources in the right place and the right time. From a Governance perspective this is managed through the Transformation and Major Projects Committee (TMPC). The Committee has regular updates and the program is subject to robust scrutiny during those updates, the Committee looks at the plans and progress against each milestone included in the plans. Phase 1 was completed successfully in December 2019, we are currently in phase 2, which is taking the data and developing the strategy and then move to Phase 3, implementation, aiming to be completed by March 2023.

## **Response Ross Haggart, Deputy Chief Officer**

As outlined in the Annual Report, the Programme commenced in 2019 and its overall aim is to provide short, medium and long term scenario planning which informs risk analysis across Scottish communities allowing SFRS to identify where they are working within the confines of their resources and in partnership, can deliver a balanced prevention, protection and response model that will contribute to eliminating, reducing or mitigating known or predicted community risk.

The Programme covers 4 interlinked projects which cover the previously named SFRS Future Visions Project which is to be renamed as the Community Risk Index Model (CRIM) and this is an assessment of known and predicted risk across the country within the Fire and Rescue Service operating context over the next decade.

A second project is the Station and Appliance review, using the CRIM a review will be undertaken of the current stations that SFRS have across Scotland. The current station locations will be overlaid with the outcome of the risk review to determine whether assets are in the best locations to maximise community benefits in an efficient and effective manner.

Another project is the DBDS project. Operational demand varies across the 24 hour period however resourcing tends to be fairly static at all times. This project is looking to provide a means whereby more firefighters are on duty during busy periods and less during quieter periods which allows for redeployment of capacity.

Finally, there is a review of the Retained and Volunteer Duty System (RVDS), that entails the creation of an overarching strategy to identify initiatives and improvements that can be implemented to further support and strengthen these systems across Scotland. This project is focusing on recruitment, response and retention.

Moving forward will be the commencement of Phase 3 which is the implementation of Phases 1 and 2 and will involve the testing and implementation of agreed change options which will be developed as part of phase 2 (which SFRS are currently in). It is anticipated the overall programme will be completed by March 2023.

As mentioned previously scrutiny is provided at the TMPC but there is also further scrutiny by a dedicated Programme Board, Senior Management Board, SLT and the SFRS Board.

**Minister – Follow up questions**

What will be the Greatest Challenge for the Future Visions project in achieving that transformational change?

**Response – Ross Haggart, Deputy Chief Officer**

The normal expected management challenges of managing such a large programme with so many overlapping interdependencies, but also having skilled resources to make that achievable. The sheer scale of the work, working on a national basis and the impact on how the service looks in communities. Good communication and understanding at a local level and tailoring services to meet local needs and risks.

**Response – Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

Notwithstanding the technical and operational challenges there may be significant reputational and political challenges and this will need very strong focused communication. We intend to ensure that there is regular communication with Scottish Government and organisational stakeholders so that we can offer assurance as we work to deliver safer outcomes for communities, and we recognise that it will not be without challenges.

**Question 2**

**COVID AND EU EXIT**

COVID is likely to remain part of our way of life for a potentially considerable period of time. Therefore, many of the changes and new processes that SFRS have implemented in response to COVID may require to be maintained. I know you recognise that a reset and renew phase is an important element of the overall process and have set up a strategic group responsible for overseeing and coordinating all activity related to Reset and Renew arrangements associated with COVID. At the same time SFRS is moving back into a pre-planning phase for EU Exit and reviewing and updating Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario information, existing documents and processes, as well as the impact that concurrency of events may have.

**QUESTION.** I would be interested to hear some more detail on the work undertaken in the last year and how well prepared SFRS is to deal with and respond to a potential scenario that involves multiple concurrent events for example another wave of COVID, season flu, adverse weather and EU exit?

**Response - Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

We are as prepared as we can be for a 'No Deal' scenario and have put significant preparation into arrangements for service continuation if we were to be challenged by multiple events in the community and also to make sure we support our staff through that difficult process.

**Response – Martin Blunden, Chief Fire Officer**

The scenario that you described could happen. We started planning for the first EU Exit date and when that was postponed we undertook a strategic and operational

debrief to make sure we identified any lessons from the initial EU Exit preparation and considered concurrent events in that planning such as severe weather, bonfire night, a flu pandemic the ongoing preparation for COP 26 and now including COVID all of which are significant.

Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) and Internal Audit have both helpfully reviewed SFRS EU Exit preparations and deemed them as satisfactory.

We are in the best possible position that we could be to ensure that our services continue to operate over the winter period. Concentration has particularly been around fuel, equipment and our supply chain so we have good resilience in place.

In terms of supporting our own staff we held three regional events last year to make sure those staff who are EU Nationals were supported in applying for residential status and to discuss any queries. This has been supported by a suite of comprehensive information and guidance on our dedicated internal intranet site.

### **Question 3**

#### **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

The annual report covers various partnership initiatives such as Asset Sharing and the Emergency Services Network in addition to the Reform Collaboration Group.

**QUESTION.** The Christie principles of our public bodies working collaboratively and sharing assets has been in place for some time now. Some good work has been done but what do you think we can do collectively to inject new vigour into this area? With public finances likely to be under sustained pressure in the next few years, what partnership working can deliver real and lasting efficiencies in SFRS?

#### **Response – Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

We see SFRS as leaders within Christie starting from the original reform of the SFRS back in 2012/13 where we came together as one service. We have strengthened our relationships with local authorities and other key partners and those strengthened relationships are something we continue to develop through the Reform Collaboration Working Group which is a key three emergency service grouping and allows us to explore some of those changes. We have 48 shared sites across Scotland, shared with Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and other key partners and it was a pleasure to have you open our shared Shetland base with the SAS. We have seen there that working in a shared building is about far more than sharing assets it's about building new teams and ways of working. We are looking for further opportunities to do more work of that type.

#### **Response – Martin Blunden, Chief Fire Officer**

We are excited about the success of our partnership working and we have demonstrated how SFRS are at the centre of communities across the whole of Scotland. The following are some examples:

- The joint Police and Fire station at Kirkcudbright in Dumfries and Galloway is a great example of a joint emergency services hub.

- Looking at how we can deliver flu vaccinations in partnership with Highland Health Board at Dornoch and Dingwall fire stations and are working to consider how in those locations the vaccine for COVID could be delivered.
- The Shetland Islands Watch Commander who has developed an online fire safety package for children of all ages on how to detect, prevent and escape from fire and this is being delivered in partnership with the Local Authority in producing an education pack.

On a more strategic level we are looking at what our future digital strategy should be and how we share data to identify those most at risk. In respect of our fleet we are working with Police Scotland to establish a joint electrical charging network across Scotland that all three emergency services can benefit from. We are continually applying the principles of Christie to that work and our wider asset sharing work as we go forward.

#### **Question 4**

##### **UNWANTED FIRE ALARMS SIGNALS (UFAS)**

In the last year SFRS have invested in concerted work to reduce unwanted fire alarms signals (UFAS) and road risk, including establishing a UFAS Review Working Group and that UFAS numbers will be reported in the Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics in October indicating the impact of this work. I understand that the early response to COVID, with fewer people in offices and schools, reduced the number of fire alarms being activated when there is not fire. I know that from May 2020, you changed your response model at Automatic Fire Alarm calls whilst keeping this under constant review.

**QUESTION:** Is there learning from the lockdown experience that you can continue as part of the concerted work to reduce road risk from UFAS and road risk?

##### **Response – Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

We are putting a concerted effort into this area and the Board, supported by the SLT are considering the significance of the recommendations from the UFAS stock take report. The challenges this year with COVID have also offered us opportunities to assess the impact of changes to pre-determined attendances.

##### **Response – Nick Barr, Chair, Service Delivery Committee**

COVID has given the Service a unique opportunity to look at the response to UFAS given the change of environment we are now working on and putting the safety of firefighters and the public at the fore. Unoccupied buildings provided some rich data around the human interface of human factor elements around UFAS. For some context there were approximately 30,000 UFAS calls last year and this forms a critical aspect of the Service's response. A wide ranging and honest review of UFAS related matters was presented to the Board and the Service Delivery Committee (SDC) in the summer and we expect a full options appraisal to be presented back to the Board by the end of the financial year.

There has been a fantastic amount of good work across Scotland and this review has pulled together this work into one place and helps form the UFAS Review Group to develop the future strategies nationally for reducing and responding to UFAS calls.

Vastly reduced building occupancy during lockdown led to a 30% reduction in UFAS calls and reduced blue light journeys and associated road risk. This also meant a reduction in the risks of COVID transmission within operational crews and onto the public.

This information will now be gathered and analysed and will form a vital step in informing, with confidence, the future recommendations arising from the review.

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

To provide a more operational view of progress and expand on the UFAS Stock Take Report. This was the first comprehensive and detailed study that has been conducted on UFAS. Based on the findings of this report a total of 20 recommendations have been proposed by the UFAS Working Group. These have been approved by the SLT and the SDC and include a range of recommendations for improvement and change. This work will be carried out by the UFAS Board which as mentioned has now been created and a detailed action plan has been produced. Work to deliver this action plan is being taken forward at pace with ongoing oversight and scrutiny by both the SLT and the SDC. Part of this will include more detailed performance indicators including indicators which will help better tell the story about the challenge which we face with UFAS.

Around UFAS and COVID response, in the first quarter of the year UFAS calls were down 10% for the year to date and 32% compared to the same period of last year. This again highlights the human behaviour element of UFAS calls and the impact of certain types of premises.

The default response is now 1 appliance except where there is sleeping risk where a full attendance is still sent. From 6 May to 31 August SFRS attended 4673 automatic fire alarms with amended 1 pump attendance. Due to this it is estimated that UFAS blue light journeys have reduced by 55%. There have been clear benefits which will be explored through detailed evaluation.

**Ministerial Supplementary Question**

What is different about this Review than previous ones in terms of seeing real results?

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

It is important to note the complexity involved in dealing with UFAS and the increase in both new automatic alarm systems and also the aging of other existing systems. The Stock Take Report has identified the need for a fundamentally different approach to be taken working with partners, business and the Responsible Person for the buildings.

**Question 5**

**HOME FIRE SAFETY VISITS**

In the SFRS Strategic Plan 2019-22 there is the commitment to deliver targeted prevention activities to reduce economic and social inequalities. Community Safety Engagement activities, including Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV), are an important part of this and over 69,000 were carried out in 2019/20. These were generally suspended in response to COVID, to protect the public and SFRS staff. They were

continued for very high risk individuals. SFRS developed an online assessment form and using this people deemed medium/low risk given online, tailored safety advice.

**QUESTION:** Has the lockdown experience influenced how SFRS will target and deliver the home fire safety visit programme going forward – so as to contribute effectively to reducing inequalities?

**Response – Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

Addressing inequalities is a key aspect of our work as we know that although fire can affect everyone in a community, there is a higher risk for some and that is associated with inequalities and deprivation. We prioritise high risk households during this process making sure that those that are most vulnerable are protected.

**Response – Nick Barr, Chair, Service Delivery Committee**

HFSV continue to be the key element of the Service's strategy in reducing fires and moving on from focusing on overall numbers of visits to prioritising high risk homes and vulnerable people.

COVID has forced the SFRS to maximise effectiveness whilst reducing the risk to the public and firefighters. Partnership working was used to identify the people most at risk and in need of intervention, and the use of media messages and campaigns which had to be developed quickly and flexibly alongside the use of telephone consultations and on-line questionnaires.

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer**

There is a need to shift focus from outputs to outcomes with a targeted approach and will be even more important as the Service shifts into Safe and Well visits.

The Service also needs to consider the implications of new detection standards that are being rolled out, and again my thanks go to Scottish Government for providing funding to the SFRS to support us fitting to the new standard.

Alongside the SDMP, data sets and mapping are being developed to map community risk which can be used by frontline staff to target visits more intelligently.

COVID Response – the HFSV programme was suspended from 18 March 2020 to prioritise virus suppression, protect communities and the SFRS workforce. There were 2 exemptions, where there was a risk of fire related crime or where premises had faulty or no smoke detection.

In response to increase in fire deaths a strategic case conference was held and this included Scottish Government representation. This led to identification of common risk factors and a 6 point action plan developed which included the establishment of the “make the call” campaign. This also involved local and national partnership working and use was made of the COVID specific partnership arrangements such as local resilience partnerships and humanitarian assistance hubs in order to access the most vulnerable including those who were ‘shielding’.

**Question 6**

## **RACE EQUALITY**

SFRS has introduced various initiatives around recruitment to ensure a wider representation of candidates, including a positive action strategy. However, change of this type can only happen at the pace of new people joining the Fire and Rescue Service. SFRS also undertakes diversity awareness training.

**QUESTION.** The Black Lives Matter campaign has been a wake-up call. I know SFRS takes equality and diversity seriously and has well established strategies in place. However, I would be interested to hear of any new initiatives, either in place or planned to ensure that SFRS can be held up as an exemplar organisation in how it treats both its staff and the wider public, particularly from the Black and Ethnic Minority groups?

### **Response - Primrose Stark, Chair, Staff Governance Committee**

SFRS aims to be a Best Practice employer and continues to strive for that through all policies and practices, Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments are carried out on all aspects of decision making. The Service is starting to consider the wider aspects of race and ethnicity as a norm so it becomes part of the normal practice of the organisational culture.

It's important to the Service that the workforce profile more closely reflects the communities it serves and through Staff Governance one of the key objectives is to develop positive action initiatives to improve attraction of the service to candidates from underrepresented groups during recruitment. The Service has been successful in beginning to address gender equality through its previous recruitment campaign. The next campaign will focus on Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) profile.

### **Response – Liz Barnes, Director of People and Organisational Development**

As mentioned, our next recruitment campaign will focus on attracting BAME members of Scotland's communities to join the Service and we are aligned to a number of initiatives in support of Black History Month.

We have recently strengthened our training for new and current staff and this is now on a rolling cycle of mandatory training which includes race awareness and unconscious bias.

SFRS is contributing to the Cross-Justice Working Group on race, the first meeting of which takes place in October 2020.

Introduced into the SLT BAME champions at SLT level and they will be working to raise the profile of the BAME community within SFRS.

## **Q7**

### **EVALUATION TOOLKIT**

SFRS have an evaluation toolkit to help ensure worthwhile initiatives are fully considered and rolled out across the country if appropriate.

**Question.** I was interested in seeing some examples of new initiatives including work on preventing Human Trafficking in Glasgow and the use of virtual reality technology to help with Road Safety in South Lanarkshire. I'm interested to hear

more about how SFRS uses the Evaluation Toolkit to ensure these potentially life changing initiatives are rolled out across Scotland?

**Response Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

We are excited about these developments and the use of technology and toolkits to keep people safe.

**Response – Ross Haggart, Deputy Chief Officer**

The evaluation toolkit ensures SFRS can learn from every experience across the organisation. Initiatives are run at a local level and the evaluation framework allows these to be framed in response to something that is happening locally that SFRS would like to positively influence and the toolkit helps to understand what needs to be done and how it can be done. Personnel across the country can access the toolkit to help inform local decision making. All completed evaluations are accessible to all SFRS personnel via a dedicated section of the iHub intranet system. They can then consider if an initiative could be successfully implemented within their local area.

**Question 8**

**OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE**

SFRS has a well-developed system in place to debrief staff after all significant incidents. However, it can be a challenge in converting lessons identified into actual operational improvements.

**Question.** The process of identifying lessons is well established in SFRS. I was interested to read the case study about the major fire at the school in Dunfermline. Can you provide some specific examples in that case or others where lessons identified in debriefs have resulted in operational changes which have benefited firefighters or the communities they protect?

**Response - Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

Learning from operational incidents and using operational assurance systems to improve how we deliver safety is a key aspect of what we do.

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

Every major incident we attend an operational assurance process is carried out. SFRS has well developed processes to ensure operational learning is identified from incidents. Learning from recent incidents such as Dunfermline High School has informed reviews of our standard operational procedures, operational tactics, knowledge of the built environment and our mobilisation protocols and the impact of social media. A more recent example of that operational assurance and debrief process that has been instigated was following the Stonehaven train crash.

**Stakeholder Submitted Questions**

**Stakeholder - Health Facilities Scotland submit the following question on behalf of NHS Scotland Boards.**

National Health Service (NHS) Scotland has been working alongside SFRS colleagues to minimise the number of UFAS in our healthcare premises. One particular

aspect has been the strengthening of procedures to ensure a 999 call is made in support of automatic calls through Alarm Receiving Centres. This ensures that oncoming fire crews are alerted as to the nature of an incident and can reduce their attendance if it is a confirmed UFAS. However this is not considered as a reduction in unwanted signals in SFRS recording system. It is noted in the Annual Performance Review 2018-2019 that a new UFAS recording system had been implemented with the capacity to identify blue light mobilisations.

**Is there a proposed mechanism whereby 999 calls that result in a reduced attendance at an incident are recognised as a reduction in UFAS activity?**

**Response –Kirsty Darwent**

We are delighted to have a question from NHS Facilities Scotland who are one of our key partners.

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

We welcome follow up 999 calls from premises as this allows for a reduction in the attendance at UFAS incidents and we can inform the responding crew that they can mobilise at normal road speed rather than a blue light response. Whilst it reduces the number of blue light journeys it does not impact on the headline figure of UFAS as it would still be counted as an UFAS incident. It does highlight the importance of staff alarms as these can prevent the call coming through to the Service altogether and that would impact on the number of UFAS calls.

**Stakeholder – Health Facilities Scotland – Statement for note**

Although not directly related to the performance review, NHS Scotland would take this opportunity to thank the SFRS for their support throughout the COVID crisis in ensuring radical changes to the NHS Estate, which were necessary to facilitate patients with the virus, were achieved without compromising safety. In particular the support of SFRS teams is greatly appreciated during construction and occupation of the NHS Louisa Jordan hospital.

**Stakeholder – Her Majesty’s Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI)**

What do you think will be the greatest challenges for the SFRS Future Vision project in achieving transformational change?

**Response - Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

We thank the HMFSI for his questions and some of that has already been discussed in the first question of the Review today.

**Response – Ross Haggart, Deputy Chief Officer**

The main challenge of Future Vision is not technical difficulties it is more about clearly developing the narrative and explaining the benefits to stakeholders. This requires clear communication and extensive engagement both with SFRS staff, stakeholder and communities, SFRS are engaging with staff to hear their ideas.

**Stakeholder HMFSI**

There has been some positive successes with the introduction of rural full time posts in supporting the RVDS workforce. What further successes do you expect the new

RVDS project, which is part of the SDMP, will achieve, that the many previous reviews of this part of the Service have not so far produced?

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

Rural full time posts have been a success. 36 are in place and a further 18 are being recruited to start in early 2021. These are showing to have a great impact within the areas they are placed and are enhancing community safety activities, supporting training and maintenance of competence and also supporting availability within rural areas.

A specific element of the Service Delivery Model Programme (SDP) is focused on the RVDS with a number of recommendations. This includes the creation of an RVDS Leadership Forum which will look at policy development, recruitment and retention.

**Stakeholder HMFSI**

What has been the learning from the introduction of Rapid Response Units (RRUs) and “cold-cut” technology? Has any further thought been given to rolling these out in urban areas?

**Response – Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair**

You will recall that RRU’s and Cold Cut technology were two of the very early introductions as part of the Transformation project.

**Response – Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Service Delivery**

A full evaluation of RRUs has been undertaken and has been presented to the TMPC. At the moment there are no plans to roll these out to urban areas but the work being undertaking on the delivery models and station footprint may identify areas for a business case to use these in other areas.

**Response - Sarah O’Donnell, Director of Finance and Contractual Services**

Our fleet strategy includes environmental considerations and RRU’s have been particularly useful in that regard but vehicles have to be the most appropriate for the communities that they serve. The Service Delivery Model Programme will help identify the most appropriate assets for communities.

**Closing Remarks**

**Kirsty Darwent**

Thank you Minister for the questions today. We are very proud of the SFRS and the way it has performed through the challenges of the last year and, in particular, the last 6 months since the performance year was completed. COVID has presented significant challenges and also opportunities to reflect, and it has been helpful to reiterate that and to share that story with you

**Minister for Community Safety**

Thank you Kirsty and thanks to everyone who has taken part today. You have provided me with detailed answers to my questions that I’ll now take away and consider more fully and then write to you and the Board with my comments in due

course. We will also provide the stakeholders who submitted questions today with a written reply as well.

## ATTENDEES

Minister for Community Safety, Ash Denham

### **SFRS Board**

Kirsty Darwent, Board Chair, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

### **Board Members**

Bill McQueen  
Marieke Dwarshuis  
Sid Patten  
Anne Buchanan  
Primrose Stark  
Fiona Thorburn  
Nick Barr  
Brian Baverstock  
Tim Wright  
Mhairi Wylie  
Lesley Bloomer  
Malcolm Payton

### **Strategic Leadership Team**

Martin Blunden, Chief Fire Officer  
Ross Haggart, Deputy Chief Officer  
John Dickie, Assistant Chief Officer, Director Training, Safety and Assurance  
Stuart Stevens, Assistant Chief Officer, Director Service Delivery  
Paul Stewart, Assistant Chief Officer, Director Service Development  
Liz Barnes, Director of People and Organisational Development  
Sarah O'Donnell, Director of Finance and Contractual Services  
Mark McAteer, Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications

### **Other SFRS Attendees**

Richard Whetton, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance  
Marysia Waters, Head of Communications and Engagement  
Alasdair Cameron, Group Commander, Board Support Manager  
Debbie Haddow, Executive PA to Chair of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board

### **Scottish Government**

Tom Hardy, Head of Fire and Rescue Unit  
Derek Smith, Team Leader, Fire and Rescue Unit  
Lynn Mills, Policy Officer, Fire and Rescue Unit  
Erin O'Connell, Private Secretary, Minister for Community Safety

**Minister for Community Safety- Opening Remarks**

Thank you Kirsty for those opening remarks to what is a somewhat different Annual Review than any of us has previously experienced. I trust that the technology will not fail us but if it does then I am content that we continue the Review by correspondence.

As always I am delighted to be conducting what is now the seventh SFRS Annual Performance Review and to take this opportunity to reflect back on the last 12 months of SFRS's business and discuss certain aspects of performance with the Board.

As we know this meeting allows Government and members of the public to look at the Service's performance and is an opportunity for the Board to update us on all of the positive work that has been done. It would also normally give our communities and stakeholders the chance to put their questions directly to the SFRS Board and gives us the chance to show our recognition of the vital service the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service performs to keep us all safe.

Having said that, this year due to the consequences of COVID-19, we have been unable to have the public facing element of the review. This is still an important part of this meeting and we have invited questions from stakeholders in advance of today's session and officials will ask them on behalf of those stakeholders later in the agenda.

Although this Review covers the reporting year April 2019 to March 2020 I think it would be impossible to not discuss some aspects of COVID-19 both in terms of preparation and response. I accept that discussion may stray into areas not technically within the time of the Report and Review but given the exceptional time we find

ourselves in I think that is understandable and helpful to include in our conversation today.

In that context I would like it to be officially recorded how impressed I have been in the last 7 months by the SFRS and also the wider public sector. The SFRS's reputation for a can do attitude both from frontline operational and support staff right through to your Senior Leadership Team and the Board can have been no more tested than it has in these last months. These have been unprecedented times and I know there will be lessons to learn for the future but we should recognise the immense amount of professionalism and energy that SFRS has brought to its COVID-19 response.

We will discuss partnership working later but no greater example of this could be seen by the work you carried out alongside the NHS in the creation of the Louisa Jordan and other healthcare buildings, ensuring they were fire safety compliant. I know the demands placed on you at this time were great but I hope as an organisation you can be immensely proud of the work you carried out.

Now I'll turn to the content of the Annual Report for 2019/20, within which I noted a number of points.

Looking back at 2019-20 one of the biggest disappointments was the rejection of the pay deal in support of a broadened role for firefighters in Scotland. You worked incredibly hard at reaching an offer which came close to being accepted. The benefits of SFRS doing more to deliver better outcomes for our communities is still an ambition both of this Government and me personally. I know you are continuing to explore

other options for delivering this outcome and hope that, despite COVID, progress can be made soon.

You will recall last year we discussed the delivery of your single Command and Control Mobilising System and you updated me after the review on some delays towards completion. I noted the progress being made detailed in the report with you anticipating that a phased go-live at the three Operations Control Sites will take place between May and September 2021. I hope to keep updated on this at my regular meetings.

You discuss your continued work on reducing Unwanted Fire Alarms Signals, which I'm sure you know given my last two Annual Reviews I am bound to ask about! I was pleased to read of the UFAS Review Working Group which is now in place and we can discuss more around this later.

Although I don't have a specific question on the response to the Grenfell fire I do want to take a moment to note the work you detail has been ongoing. A good example being the White Goods Safety campaign, which in the longer term with the increase in registration of appliances will hopefully lead to a reduction in fires. It was encouraging to read that the Electrical First have seen a significant rise in website visits to check whether white goods were required for a recall, an early indication that the white goods campaign was successful in raising awareness. I am particularly aware of the essential contribution SFRS makes to the Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety and to deliver the resulting actions. Most notably this was the fire safety leaflet delivered to all residents in high rise buildings in Scotland and producing both the Practical Guidance for Existing High Rise Domestic Buildings and for Specialised

Housing. This continues with close working on the Scottish Government response to the Grenfell Inquiry phase 1 recommendations that will be completed soon.

Finally I want to note the impressive level of work that you have taken forward in response to the climate emergency. I know you have always taken your environmental responsibilities seriously but in the last year we have seen the establishment of your cross functional Environmental and Carbon Management Board and significant work on installation of electric vehicle charging points in 10 key sites. This all sets a positive example to other public sector organisations and the Scottish public in how seriously we are taking issues of climate change.

These are just a few of achievements of the Service in the last year. I look forward to further discussing other aspects of the Service and Boards performance over the next hour.

**ENDS**