



Questions and Answers

Why do you want to change?

The decade ahead presents opportunities and challenges for Scotland and its public services. We already provide value to communities but think we need to adapt to changing needs and modern risks whilst evolving and improving how we support our staff and work as a Service. We think it is important to engage with all our stakeholders to gauge their views on this.

What are the changing needs and modern risks facing Scotland?

We are now seeing less household fires but more severe weather-related incidents such as flooding and wildfires; we also have an ageing population needing support to stay safe within the home; and, the threat from terrorism remains substantial so our Service must be prepared to respond. We also need to do more work around harm prevention, in its many forms.

Are you just responding to changing needs, then?

No. We also want to evolve. That means being committed to our staff and working more closely with partners and communities; seeking out opportunities to work smarter through advanced technology; striving to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for all; doing more to promote diversity and inclusion in our workforce and across communities; and, playing a key role in the public sector's response to climate change.

So, what essentially is your 'Long-Term Vision' and how will this work?

It is our route map to the future. Our vision sets our high-level aspirations and we are consulting with you on this now. We will then deliver these through our three-yearly strategic plan, which will also deliver the Scottish government's priorities for the Service, consulting with staff and stakeholders as each of these are developed. The first plan to support our Vision will be in October 2022. We will then achieve change in stages over the next decade.

How can you predict what will happen in the next decade – will this vision still be relevant?

This vision sets our ambition for the kind of Service we want to be 10 years from now, and the principles should remain the same. How we achieve them may vary but one of our key aspirations is to make sure we can be flexible enough to adapt quickly and successfully to any changing factors.

Is this a cost cutting exercise and will we see firefighter redundancies?

No. Our Long Term Vision is not proposing any cuts to our budget. We are fully committed to maintaining our frontline resources. SFRS has a no compulsory redundancy policy.

But you want to change how firefighters respond to protect communities?

Yes. We believe that we can develop our Service Delivery Model to better manage demand peaks and troughs, freeing up capacity to do more for communities when demand reduces. We also want to appropriately support the Scottish Government's Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy and work with our partners in responding to Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests and enhance Safe and Well services whilst looking at how we mobilise to forms of terrorist attack. We also want to look at freeing up capacity by reducing unnecessary blue light journeys to false fire alarms. More widely, we want to share property and develop jointly funded posts with a wide range of partners. There is still a lot of work to be done but these roles will complement the existing firefighter role – not replace it. We want to scope all of these possibilities with our staff, the public and our key partner organisations.



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How is this Vision different from the SFRS transformation plan three years ago?

Transformation was linked to changing firefighter Terms and Conditions and to do that we needed to secure a pay offer. This offer was rejected by the members of the Fire Brigades Union in February 2020. This ambition is far wider and based on extensive staff feedback. It also encompasses our aspirations as an organisation, including our commitment to tackling climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how we can work more effectively with partners to protect communities. We want to ensure our stakeholders agree and that is why we are consulting. The Vision also builds upon our reflections and learning over time about how change is managed within the Service. It embodies our commitment to fully engaging with our staff, stakeholders and communities on how we bring change about in positive ways and how by working together we can realise our collective ambitions in promoting the safety and wellbeing of communities.

How is SFRS intending to adapt to the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic?

The lessons we have learned over the course of the pandemic will be used to improve how we work, particularly in terms of being a more efficient, flexible and agile employer for all our staff. We will also apply the lessons learned to the climate change emergency - our ambition is to become net zero by 2045.

What are your plans to tackle climate change?

We have already published our Climate Change Response Plan 2045 to become net zero by 2045. We will use electric and other non-fossil fuel vehicles across the whole fleet and modernise energy systems in our buildings to reduce the carbon we consume. We will also strengthen our approach to preventing wildfires whilst changing our operational and training equipment to low carbon equivalents to eliminate environmental pollution.

What are you doing to make sure remote and rural communities are protected?

Scotland is diverse and each community unique so it is imperative that we work to meet their precise needs. We are striving to make improvements for our Retained and Volunteer Firefighters who protect our rural communities through more flexible contracts. This will allow more people to join our RVDS workforce, gain an income and new skills whilst supporting our staff to achieve a work/life balance.

How will you work to protect the least digitally connected in our communities?

We believe that more connected communities make for safer communities. How those communities are supported and how public services are resourced to support them will be a feature in the public service reform agenda, safeguarding the most vulnerable people in their homes through digital technologies.