Justice Committee

Post-legislative scrutiny of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012

Written submission from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

1. Introduction

1.1 The creation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in 2013 has brought positive benefits to the people of Scotland. The Service has continued to improve the safety and wellbeing of communities while benefiting from the operational and financial efficiencies of bringing eight legacy services together into one. We have delivered on the key benefits of reform and the policy objectives set out in the 2012 Act and proven that we are an organisation capable of delivering major reform. We have laid the necessary foundations for future transformation and we continue to put first the safety and wellbeing of the communities we serve.

1.2 The people of Scotland now have more equitable access to the vast resources and capability of the UK’s largest (world’s fourth largest) fire and rescue service. We understand that the public turns to us in their times of need. The creation of SFRS means we can ensure we have the right resources in the right place at the right time – we respond to every emergency call that we receive. We have invested in improving firefighter and community safety through equipment, facilities and training.

1.3 The role of the fire and rescue service has always been to protect life, render humanitarian aid and protect property and the environment. We fundamentally believe that the creation of the SFRS has protected and enhanced our ability to do so. We maintain 356 stations, utilising 618 operational vehicles, including 422 pumping appliances. Between 2013/14 and 2016/17 we responded to 350,000 emergency incidents including over 106,000 fires; conducted around 280,000 home fire safety visits and installed over 226,000 smoke alarms.

1.4 We are directed by the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland (2016) which sets Service priorities in meeting the Scottish Government’s overarching objectives and in meeting the outcomes and priorities of the Justice Strategy for Scotland. We deliver on the Framework through our 3 year Strategic Plan and Annual Operating Plans. These are scrutinised by the Scottish Government in an Annual Performance Review chaired by the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs. We are also externally scrutinised by Her Majesty’s Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI). HMFSI has undertaken 10 national level inspections and 11 local inspections since 2013, none of which has highlighted fundamental problems in the Service. We have positively responded to each report by generating an improvement plan to deliver on the recommendations made and each plan is fully scrutinised by the SFRS Board and Board Committees.

2. Questions set by the Committee

Q1. What have been the consequences of the 2012 Act for the fire and rescue service?

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1 Annual Performance Review reports can be found at: Annual Performance Review 2016-17; Annual Performance Review 2015-16; Annual Performance Review 2014-15; Annual Performance Review 2013-14
2.1 Fire reform has had a positive impact on how the Service works to keep communities safe. It has increased our organisational capability, improved the distribution of resources across the country and protected frontline services. We have been designed as a national service, that is locally delivered, and a service that achieves an economy of scope in protecting the people of Scotland.

2.2 The Financial Memorandum to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 set a target for SFRS to achieve savings of £328million by 2027/28. In its Best Value review Audit Scotland (May 2015) noted we were on track to exceed this figure. We have done so within a context of reducing budgets; our budget has reduced from £291m in 2013/14 to £264m in 2018/19. As communicated in our last set of audited accounts (2016/17) we are operating with the equivalent of a £47.2m reduction in our cost base compared to the legacy services. This reflects the combined impact of an 11% real terms budget reduction, while absorbing significant additional cost pressures of £15.7m, most notably in relation to pay inflation and government policy changes e.g. employers national insurance. These figure have been rebased to eliminate any impact of VAT which became recoverable from 16/3/2018.

2.3 Our Resource Budget is set out below and includes the total resource budgets of the legacy services in their last year of operation for comparison purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Resource Funding (£m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>290.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>277.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>265.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>259.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>259.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>259.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>264.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Our Capital budget has been variable since 2013/14, our current Capital Budget is £32.5m. In contrast, in 2016/17 we received a Capital Budget of £10.8m, this was a reduction of around 57% on the previous year. This variability in Capital allocations has made financial planning more challenging as has the inability of the Service to operate a financial reserve.
2.5 Around 80% of our annual Resource Budget is spent on Employee Costs, of which 97% is fixed, covering salary and related employer costs. 58% of savings to date have been found in this area of expenditure, through actions such as creating a single Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), which reduced the number of principal officers within the Service and our cost base by £1.9m; creating a national Incident Command System which saved £1.7m; developing a new support staff structure which saved £5.8m and implementing a Resource Based Crewing model which reduced our cost base by £21.7m. The balance of savings has come from asset and contract rationalisation. Terms and conditions of operational personnel were harmonised in April 2018 following an equivalent exercise for support staff that concluded in August 2015. We operate a “no compulsory redundancies” policy and any reductions in employee numbers are limited to voluntary resignation/retirement. Our current staff numbers at April 2018 is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Grouping</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Staff</th>
<th>% of Staff Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Time Fire Fighters(^2)</td>
<td>3654</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained Duty System</td>
<td>3207</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7794</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q.2 Have the policy intentions of the 2012 Act in relation to the fire and rescue service been met?**

\(^2\) Of our 3,654 Firefighters, this breaks down as 3021 station personnel, 377 off station personnel and 256 flexi duty managers
2.6 **Yes.** The 2012 Act was summarised in the Policy Memorandum and established 3 key aims of reform. As a single national service we are better placed to meet these challenges without damaging front line outcomes. To achieve this we established an initial Transformation Programme containing 63 projects to deliver the requirements of reform; 50 of those projects are complete and a further 11 are due to close in the near future. Each transformation project was aligned to our Strategic Aims set out in the Strategic Plan (2013 – 16). Our second Strategic Plan (2016-19) continued to drive the aims of reform forward while focusing our actions on the next stages of development for the Service. We have also set out a Long Term Financial Strategy that demonstrates how we will manage cost and demand pressures over the next decade. We recently concluded a public consultation on a new Transformation Programme, the intent of which is to reshape the Service for the future and ensure is sustainability in keeping people and communities’ safe while enhancing their wider wellbeing.

**Aim 1 - improving outcomes and protecting front line services.**

2.7 While delivering the efficiency savings asked of us we have still achieved significant improvements in front line service outcomes, the details of which are set out in our annual statistical publications. In presenting operational statistics we use a moving 3-year average to control for seasonality impacts on our operational activity. In comparing the last pre-merger year (2012-13) to the 3 year average from 2013-14 to 2016-17 as demonstrated below there has been ongoing improvement in key outcome areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2012/13 to 2016/17</th>
<th>Total Fires</th>
<th>Fire Fatalities</th>
<th>Non-Fatal Fire Casualties</th>
<th>Accidental Dwellin g Fires</th>
<th>ADF Fatalities</th>
<th>ADF Non-Fatal Casualties</th>
<th>Home Fire Safety Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numerical Change</strong></td>
<td>-6,387</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-163</td>
<td>-127</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-114</td>
<td>-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Change</strong></td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-17%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-27%</td>
<td>-11%</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8 Of the fatalities we see in ADF’s the majority occur in the over 65 age population. This has led us to work ever more closely with partners, such as Health and Social Care, to enhance our efforts at identifying the most vulnerable members of our community. We plan to improve their safety by redesigning our home safety interventions to better manage household risk from fire and wider harm.

2.9 To ensure these outcome improvements continue we have focused our efforts on protecting the frontline by addressing matters of system, process, technology and property change. Below are some specific examples of how we have achieved this.
a) **Strategic Intent Programme**: this developed a Critical Savings Pathway (CSP) that has generated £21.9m of capital receipts which have been reinvested back into the Service. This included spending £688,000 in repurposing our National Training Centre as our Corporate Headquarters at Cambuslang, allowing us to dispose of other unused parts of our estate and reinvest that into the frontline. The CSP also guided our approach streamlining business processes and consolidating support services and systems.

b) **Investment in Training**: to ensure our frontline staff are trained to the highest level we have undertaken significant investment in developing world class training facilities. Our national campus at Cambuslang is supported by training centres in Portlethen and a new regional training centre at Newbridge which will open in 2019 at a cost of £12m. We have also continued to invest in local area training facilities as part of our training strategy.

c) **Fleet investment**: since 2013/14 we have invested £44.1m in our fleet. This includes £25.9m on new pumping appliances, £4.1m on high reach appliances and £1.2m on water rescue vehicles.

d) **Station Improvements**: to ensure our Community Fire Stations remain fit for purpose we have undertaken a sustained investment programme. Since 2013/14 we have spent £23.6m on improvements across the country, including spending £2.9m on Stornoway Community Fire Station.

e) **Safe and Well House**: we spent £26,000 to kit out a safe and well house to train firefighters and partner agency staff in identifying a wide range of home safety risks including those arising from issues such as sensory impairment and dementia. The building work in developing the house was carried out with the support of a wide range of partners including the Scottish Government Technology Enabled Care, Glasgow City Building and a social enterprise body, Spruce Carpets.

f) **Service Delivery Headquarters**: to maintain strategic operations in all 3 Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) we invested £4.1m in developing the North SDA Headquarters at Dyce and the East SDA Headquarters at Newbridge.

f) **Operational Intelligence System**: we invested £1.08m to develop a standard Operational Intelligence system, to ensure the most up to date intelligence is available to all frontline crews operating within Wholetime, Retained and Volunteer duty systems, to allow them to better protect property and enhance Firefighter safety.

h) **Command and Control Futures**: we reviewed the number of control rooms across Scotland, resulting in 3 regional Operations Controls being formed from inherited sights. By investing over £2.8m in establishing a new Dundee Control, £675,150 in Edinburgh Control and £503,000 in Johnston Control we have ensured the best advice, information and technology is available to support frontline fire crews.

i) In August 2015 we harmonised our Pay and Reward Framework for support staff by evaluating every support role to avoid duplication of effort and ensured all support staff are paid equally for the roles they undertake.

j) In April 2018 SFRS achieved full harmonisation of the Terms and Conditions for all wholetime firefighters, in agreement with the representative bodies.

k) **Human Resources Payroll System**: by rationalising 19 legacy payroll systems into a single system we significantly reduced costs in paying all staff.
l) Working Together Framework: as a partnership between the SFRS and staff representative bodies this allows for positive engagement between the service and all representative bodies on a wide range of matters

**Aim 2 – equal access to specialist resources and national capacity**

2.10 Ensuring all the communities of Scotland have equal access to the skills and capacity of the SFRS is a priority for the Service. To deliver on this we have undertaken the following key actions:

a) **Review of Specialist Equipment** (ROSE) Phase 1 and 2; identified the most effective and efficient way of using SFRS resources. This included increasing water rescue coverage from 16 stations to 20 and the development of a new specialist line rescue station in Aberdeen, taking our number across Scotland to 4.

b) **New Carbonaceous Training Units** have been developed in partnership with Highlands and Islands Airports. At Kirkwall Airport we opened a new unit at cost of £1.2m in May 2018. We also invested £967,670 in similar facilities at Sumburgh Airport and £948,547 at Stornoway Airport.

c) **Community Asset Register**: this is operated by SFRS and is a register of volunteers and community assets that can be deployed to increase capacity and resilience during emergency incidents. It was extensively used during the severe weather in February 2018.

d) **Asset Resource Centre** (ARC): we analysed our business needs in fleet maintenance, stores requirements, communications and personal protective equipment. We developed 3 new ARCs located in Inverness, Dundee and Newbridge at a total expenditure of £5.9m, thereby improving our operational support throughout the country.

e) Fire Investigation: we developed a **Fire Investigation Framework** and revised operating model to build 3 SDA teams to support the delivery of fire investigation by providing a consistent approach and enhanced level of specialist advice throughout the country.

f) Business Regulation and Fire Engineering: we developed a **Fire Safety Enforcement Framework**, **Fire Engineering Technical Support Procedure** and Fire Engineering Framework. This enabled businesses across the country to receive consistency in support on fire safety legislation and building planning regulations. We also revised our structure in this field of expertise to ensure a better distribution of these skills across the country.

**Aim 3 – strengthen connection fire services and communities**

2.11 Reform has strengthened the governance and scrutiny of SFRS, nationally and locally. We are governed by a **Board**, appointed by the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, which currently comprises of 9 members plus the Chair. This is below the maximum number of 15 permitted in the 2012 Act; plans are in place to recruit new members to bring the Board up to 14. The Board provides strategic direction, support and guidance to SFRS, ensuring that we discharge our functions effectively and that Ministerial priorities are implemented. It also scrutinises SFRS plans and proposals and holds the Chief Officer and senior management to account. In its report in 2015 Audit Scotland noted the importance of the role of the Board and how the quality of engagement with it and senior management marked a positive change for the Service.
To ensure the Service remains firmly rooted in local public service delivery SFRS is required by the 2012 Act to appoint Local Senior Officers (LSOs). LSOs are accountable to the Chief Officer, and locally managed by 3 SDA Deputy Assistant Chief Officers (DACOs). The LSOs are responsible for building strong local partnership working and developing Local Fire and Rescue Plans in conjunction with local partners and communities. These plans set out local priorities, including our prevention focus, and each is agreed by the local authority. LSOs support local scrutiny committees; provide performance reports to the committees and are our lead in local Community Planning. As a direct consequence of how we work locally, more local elected members now directly interact with the Fire and Rescue Service than ever. This ensures we operate in a more visible, open, transparent and accountable manner to local communities than prior to reform.

Some of the specific actions and initiatives that have strengthened our local focus include:

a) We routinely undertake Board meetings in different areas of the country to ensure our Board is more visible to local communities. We arrange local engagement events around these Board meetings to allow local communities, stakeholders and partners to directly engage with the Board and also members of the SLT. This enables local stakeholders to directly discuss with the Service local issues that are of importance to them as well as ensuring the local perspective is heard on national issues.

b) The Chief Officer and Chair of the SFRS Board undertake an annual series of meetings with local authority partners. Since 2013 they have formally met twice with the Leader and Chief Executive of each Council. They also undertake a series of meetings with other partner bodies such as the NHS.

c) Reform Collaboration Group: the Scottish Emergency Services National Collaboration Strategy sets out the collective vision, strategic direction, objectives and working principles which will guide the ongoing development of effective collaborative working across the 3 services in Scotland. Its core purpose is promoting emergency service collaboration in improving local outcomes.

d) Strategic Approach to National Risk Reduction: analysed the inherent risks facing the population of Scotland and resulted in a SFRS Strategic Assessment that informed our Strategic Plan. Additionally, it provided information to support the development of Local Plans and priorities.

e) Local Fire and Rescue Plans: for our second iteration of Local Plans we adopted a more localist approach by aligning more coherently with Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs). Each Local Plan was subject to a formal consultation, generating over 230 local responses from the public and partner organisations. 94% of LOIPS refer to the SFRS with around half directly referring to the work of the SFRS within the local Community Planning Partnership, evidencing the level of our local partnership working.

f) Community Action Teams: represent a new approach to Community Safety and Engagement: by focusing on the development of dedicated assistance in the provision of prevention interventions in meeting local needs.

Q3. Are there any other issues you would like to raise in connection with the operation of the 2012 Act?
2.14 The ability to hold a financial reserve fund to undertake longer term resource and capital planning would be a key change that would benefit the Service and through that communities.

SFRS
24 May 2018