Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Corporate Services Strategy 2019-2022.

The Corporate Services directorate brings together a range of functions which work collectively, and in conjunction with the Service Delivery Support directorate, to support employees and enable the Service to function efficiently and effectively. My team provides professional advice, skills and knowledge across a wide range of specialities including Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Performance Information, Information Technology, Finance, Property Services, Data Protection, Procurement and Corporate Assurance.

The Corporate Services Strategy is primarily meant as a point of reference to identify and focus on key priorities over the next three years and to help my staff deliver successful outcomes. Sitting underneath the strategy each unit has detailed delivery plans. I also hope this strategy will be useful to all our internal and external contacts by providing them with an informed overview of our objectives for the period of this strategy.

It is a busy, challenging but exciting time of change and Corporate Services play an important role in modernising how we work, making our Service stronger and shaping and influencing the corporate priorities now and in the future.

A key priority for the year ahead will be completing the improvement plan arising from the statutory Best Value review and continuing to move forward on our improvement journey, taking account of the outcomes of the HMICFRS inspection and our cultural review.

The Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service has also clearly set out the ‘three pillars’ of the Fire Reform agenda, these being: efficiency and collaboration (including procurement and standards), accountability and transparency (including inspection) and reform of the fire and rescue workforce. Our new Service Plan 2019-2022 has been carefully developed to reflect the Government expectations and we have an ambitious work programme ahead of us to deliver the Fire Reform agenda locally.

During this period it will be important that the Corporate Services directorate takes a leading role in managing change, continues to support the delivery of business-as-usual activities for the organisation while at the same time transforming and modernising our functions.

Finally, I am immensely proud of all the staff in my Directorate who are all incredibly hard working, knowledgeable and passionate about the Service and the work they do. I would like to thank them for their fantastic efforts and their contributions to making Avon Fire & Rescue Service such a valuable and essential part of the communities we’re so proud to serve.

Angela Feeney

April 2019
Our values

Respectful, honest, courageous, ambitious, inclusive and transparent

Guided by the standards of behaviour captured in our values, we will support our staff to embrace challenges, recognise achievements and live out our values in making our communities safer and exceeding expectations. The public expect their emergency Services to be there when they need us, but also role model the very best standards of behaviour. When we make decisions and work together, our values are the things we keep in mind every time. They are important to us, and non-negotiable.
Corporate Services Directorate

The role of Corporate Services (CS) Directorate is to ensure the organisation and its people are prepared and resilient to deliver the key priorities of making our communities safer and our organisation stronger. Its main function is to create more efficient and safe ways of working, facilitate continual improvement and to realise the benefits from the Services investments and resources.

We will continue to work closely with the political and managerial leadership, external partners from across the public sector including the Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Executives of the four unitary authorities and members of community groups.

This work will take place against a backdrop of significant and fast-moving pace of change, as the Fire Authority continues to explore new delivery models, partnership arrangements and collaboration opportunities.
Our purpose

Our Service Plan 2019-2022 provides two strategic aims: to make our communities SAFER and to make our Service STRONGER. As well as ensuring compliance with our corporate legal and financial duties, the key role of Corporate Services (CS) Directorate is to ensure the organisation has the resources, equipment, products, services and facilities needed to deliver the key priorities of making our communities safer and our organisation stronger and enable individuals, teams and units to be the very best that they can be.

Through our work on data, assurance and business planning CS also helps the Service monitor and manage its corporate risks and performance in order to achieve continual improvement, value for money and realise the benefits from our investment in technology and business solutions.

Being able to provide an effective Service depends on having motivated, healthy, and well trained staff and making sure they have the right equipment and premises to do the job. Working with the Service Delivery Support Directorate we are committed to ensuring that the health and wellbeing of staff is a key priority, strengthening our workforce through diversity and inclusion in recruitment, employee engagement and partnership working, and using new and innovative technology to enhance the delivery of front-line services and corporate staff functions.
Our key functions

The CS directorate consists of a diverse range of business units which provide specialist expertise and knowledge. Each unit contributes to the work of the Fire Authority, Service Leadership Board, sub-committees, ensuring compliance with statutory legislation and effective internal control arrangements operate throughout the organisation.
Key responsibilities include:

• Assisting in the management and provision of support and advice to the Fire Authority, sub-committees and the Service Management Board.

• Developing and managing the provision of functional units, including liaison with HMICFRS, the Home Office, external agencies, legal services and health providers.

• Overseeing the development and management of financial reporting processes, working alongside our contracted auditors to prepare monthly, quarterly and annual financial accounts in support of the budget process.

• Preparing a medium term financial plan.

• Recruitment and selection of staff, ensuring we attract and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce.

• Working with the health, safety and welfare unit and Occupational Health to support and promote staff welfare.

• Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and reporting to the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee.

• Implementing the General Data Protection Regulations and undertaking the legal responsibilities of the Data Protection Officer and Senior Information Responsible Officer.

• Managing and monitoring compliance with procurement whilst achieving best value on goods and services.

• Developing, monitoring and reporting of the Corporate Risk Register including reporting to Service Management Board, Senior Leadership Team, the Fire Authority and Sub-Committees.

• Implementing an integrated approach to the delivery of the corporate business planning process.

• Delivering external and internal communications and support community events.

• Monitoring, analysing and reporting our corporate performance.

• Developing and implementing our Estates Strategy.

• Continually developing our approach to environmental and sustainability issues.

• Seeking opportunities to collaborate.

This strategy is underpinned by robust unit plans, along with the appropriate scrutiny and monitoring processes to ensure we deliver the directorate aims and objectives.
In order for us to achieve the strategic priorities, each of the unit objectives we will focus on five key themes.

**Theme one - Business development**
We will refine our business processes, develop new ways of working and introduce technological solutions to enhance the service we provide to our internal and external stakeholders.

**Theme two - Collaboration**
We will collaborate with our internal and external partners to provide an inclusive and integrated service.

**Theme three - Our people**
Working with the Service Delivery Support Directorate we will ensure our people have the appropriate training, resources and support to maintain their health, safety and wellbeing and to contribute to helping the service become stronger.
We will create efficiencies and savings by working jointly with our partners to procure goods and services and the sharing of our premises.

**Theme four - Economic efficiencies**

We will put the communities we serve at the centre of everything we do and ensure we are open, transparent and provide effective channels of two-way communication.

**Theme five - Our communities**

We will put the communities we serve at the centre of everything we do and ensure we are open, transparent and provide effective channels of two-way communication.
Theme one - business development
We will refine our business processes, develop new ways of working and introduce technological solutions to enhance the service we provide to our internal and external stakeholders.

Why is this a key area of focus?
The Service has committed to a significant Improvement Programme and has introduced a Change and Transformation team specifically to focus on refining our business processes, developing new ways of working and using new and developing technology to improve the services we provide.

What will we do?
• We will review the effectiveness of our unit structures, core systems and ways of working to ensure they are fit for purpose, support effectiveness and efficiency and make best use of our people’s skills and talents.
• We will explore innovative use of technology to streamline business processes.
• We will take steps to ensure compliance with GDPR to ensure the data we hold is stored and used appropriately.
• We will introduce a structured approach to identify strategic aims and objectives which align to the Service Plan and other strategic strategies.
• We will review the business planning process and create a suite of standardised documents which will support managers and staff when formulating their Directorate, Unit and Station plans.
• We will use insight data and work collaboratively with Service Delivery to target those groups most at risk of Fire, such as children, young persons and the elderly.

Why are we doing it?
This will enable us to take a structured approach to the business planning process and focus our activity on areas which strengthen our internal business processes. We will also enhance our understanding of the functionality of core systems and identify technological solutions which will aid the work of the Corporate Services directorate and across the organisation and build capacity.
Theme two - collaboration

We will collaborate with our internal and external partners to provide an inclusive and integrated service.

Why is this a key area of focus?

In response to the Police and Crime Act 2017 and our duty to collaborate with other emergency services and partners, we will explore the opportunity to work jointly with our colleagues in Police, Ambulance, the wider NHS functions and also the voluntary and third sectors. Our aim is to use an integrated approach across the various agencies to support efficient and effective ways of working that bring mutual benefit.

What will we do?

• Consider opportunities to share estates and assets with other emergency services or partners.
• We will develop our Estates strategy to include a clear approach to shared premises.
• We will consider opportunities to share functions with other emergency services or partners.
• We will actively seek opportunities to work collaboratively with partners and the voluntary and community sector in the joint procurement of goods and services.
• Where appropriate we will share data information with our partners in order to achieve a holistic approach to supporting vulnerable people in our communities.
• We will actively seek opportunities to work with our partners on joint communications and marketing messages in particular on community safety.
• We will collaborate with partner agencies to share best practice, achieve cost efficiencies and to target those areas identified as most in need.
• We will work holistically across departments and collaborate with partner agencies to help deliver mental health and wellbeing awareness training and information.
• We will record all our work to seek and build partnerships and collaborations.
Why are we doing it?

Our overall approach is to consider opportunities for collaboration and implement those which would improve the efficiency or effectiveness of all parties involved. The main aim is to find the right balance between our aims and objectives, realising efficiencies and our ability to support collaborative working. Proposals for collaboration can come from any member of staff regardless of background, role or experience. We welcome collaboration ideas and want to encourage staff to have true diversity of thought and feel empowered to make suggestions.
Theme three - Our people

Working with the Service Delivery Support Directorate we will ensure our people have the appropriate training, resources and support to maintain their health, safety and wellbeing and to contribute to helping the service become stronger.

Why is this a key area of focus?

To continue to deliver a high quality service to all our communities it is essential that we recruit, retain, engage and look after the welfare of our employees and achieve a more diverse workforce.

Working with Service Delivery Support Directorate our aim is to provide a skilled and diverse workforce and a positive and caring environment for staff.

What will we do?

- We will ensure the directorate is properly resourced in order to deliver its functions.
- Work will continue our work to improve the diversity of our workforce through our recruitment and the `Yes You Can' campaign.
- We will work with our Staff Engagement Network and the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality committee to embrace and value diversity and acknowledge individual difference through our work plans, practices, policies and procedures.
- We will review and streamline our key policies, continuing to ensure legal compliance but also putting people, rather than the process, at their heart.
- We will engage staff in our new values and our behavioural framework to help ensure a work environment free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- We will help provide guidance, training and tools to our managers and leaders enabling them to act promptly, sensitively and appropriately to employee issues.
- We will improve our succession planning to ensure that skills and knowledge are not lost and become part of the Transfers, Appointments and Promotions Panel.
- We will work with the Service Delivery Support directorate to review our approach to attendance management and ensure we help prevent sickness by providing excellent support in relation to fitness, mental and physical health and the challenges arising from an aging workforce including awareness raising and communications, access to our fitness, occupational health, rehabilitation and confidential counselling provisions.
Why are we doing it?

A change in culture takes time and some of the objectives in this strategy will take a while to be felt on the ground. However, by continuing to embed our Service values in everything we do, reinforcing our behavioural framework and Service Leadership Charter, we will empower staff at all levels to be responsible for their work aligned to service priorities, make appropriate decisions and create healthy and engaging work environments which value diversity and are free from bullying and harassment.
Theme four - economic efficiencies
We will create efficiencies and savings by working jointly with our partners to procure goods and services, to share data, key information and access to our premises.

Why is this a key area of focus?
It is clear that we continue to face challenges ahead as the pressures on future funding remains uncertain. It is important for us to ensure the financial health of our organisation by creating economic efficiencies through the use of joint working arrangements and the sharing of information.

What will we do?
• We will use medium term financial planning to ensure we effectively plan for our future.
• We will seek new opportunities to procure goods and services jointly with partners where this creates efficiencies and savings.
• We will identify opportunities to share premises, where this will realise efficiencies and savings and is mutually beneficial to both organisations.
• We will review our Procurement strategy and processes to ensure these are effective in achieving best value.
• We will improve our approach to contract management to ensure we achieve cost savings and efficiencies from our suppliers.
• We will review how we provide our financial services to ensure modernisation and efficiency and decentralise some of our budgets to empower trained local managers.

Why are we doing it?
We recognise that it is vitally important for the public and our communities to have confidence in the quality of the services we provide and that we are making the best use of our resources. We are committed to implementing a programme of improvement which will result in financial savings and will provide additional efficiencies in the joint procurement of goods and services.
Theme five - Our communities

We will put the communities we serve at the centre of everything we do and ensure we are open, transparent and provide effective channels of two-way communication.

Why is this a key area of focus?

In order to make our communities safer we must ensure we provide effective, respectful, two-way communication to all members of our community including those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and differing faith communities.

We also recognise the need to provide opportunities for members of the public to engage with us in order to provide feedback on Service consultations and surveys.

What will we do?

• We will work with Service Delivery to develop and deliver a programme of safety campaigns targeted at areas of highest risk.

• We will continue our work to improve our diversity and better represent the communities we serve through effective and targeted communication of our recruitment campaigns and long-term engagement with under-represented groups.

• We will ensure staff and the public have access to relevant information via our intranet, website and social media.

• We will ensure our communication is open and accessible to all by maximising the use of available mediums and channels. This will include supporting staff across the service in the use of social media to improve community engagement.

• We will continue to explore the development of new communication channels such as Live streaming of public facing forums to the social media portal YouTube.

• We will further develop the existing Home Fire Safety Visit tablet app to improve community skills and access to digital technology and support the move to Safe and Well visits using integrated data systems to target visits to vulnerable groups.

• We will work with all stakeholders to promote and strive for cultural change by promoting our values and demonstrating positive behaviours within the workplace.
Why are we doing it?

We are committed to meet the needs of all our diverse communities, to helping improve quality of life for the communities we serve, engaging with local businesses and making our area a better place to live, work and visit.

• We will explore the use of the Social Value Act to procure services which could improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities we serve.

• We have already adopted the Living Wage for our employees and we will consider further encouraging this approach in our communities through our procurement of goods and services and appointment of external contractors.

• We will increase the support we provide to improve access to our procurement opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) including local businesses, third sector bodies and supported businesses.

• We will continue and enhance our commitments to environmental benefits through water consumption management, implementation of our Environmental policy, reduction of gas and electric usage in all service premises, reduction in waste to landfill through recycling schemes and carbon reduction through the use of electric pool cars and other forms of transport.
So what happens now?
This strategy covers the three-year period from April 2019 to March 2022 and will be reviewed in line with our corporate planning cycle, to ensure that it keeps pace with changing conditions and remains current. We recognise that our workforce will need to be adaptable and flexible to the changing landscape in order to deliver our priorities and ambitions. There this strategy will be subject to an annual review to ensure it can respond to emerging risks effectively and efficiently.

Our next steps.....
We will produce comprehensive unit plans further detailing how the objectives within our five key areas of focus will be delivered. Each unit plan will be assigned a designated owner from our Senior Leadership Team and will be programmed with a start date, completion date, milestone reporting points, and timelines adopting programme management techniques.
Progress against the plans will be performance managed within the Corporate Services management structure.