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# Portfolio Strategy

01 April 2025 to 31 March 2028



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## 1 Introduction:

Avon Fire and Rescue Service (AF&RS) is committed to continuous improvement to ensure the highest standards and best value are delivered for our communities. In addition to our mission to improve public safety through Prevention, Protection, Response and Resilience, the Service also has a statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

AF&RS has experienced a significant amount of change over recent years, and following His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection in 2023, AF&RS were issued two Accelerated Causes of Concern, and later a further two Causes of Concern. There were also 31 Areas for Improvement across 10 of the 11 diagnostics. This resulted in AF&RS being placed in Engage, which is an enhanced phase of monitoring.

In the HMICFRS inspection report, reference was made to the Services ability to succession plan, noting *“During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should assure itself that it has the **capability and capacity** it needs to achieve future change. The service has made limited progress in this area, so this area for improvement will remain...”*

AF&RS recognises transformation, and improvement is broad and inclusive of the whole Service and our communities. To date, and in recognition of future known major programmes of work, a focused temporary improvement directorate of Portfolio has been created. This strategy however recognises transformation and continuous improvement by definition can take time, and so while the strategic programme principles have been developed to align with the Service Plan ending in 2028, it is purposely agile to allow for flexibility both within the directorate and wider service, now and in the future.

This strategy details AF&RS high level approach to transformation and improvement, led by the Portfolio directorate. Underpinning this strategy, each programme has their own strategies and/or plans as applicable which are more detailed and tactical, and will drive the Service transformation and improvement journey. This approach further supports and enables agility across the Service, should there be organisational changes in this time.

## 2 Drivers:

AF&RS has a clear direction and plans in place to continuously improve and transform the Service. These applicable strategic priorities for improving our Service are within our Service Plan and are drivers for Portfolio programmes of work. These include:

- We will prioritise and accelerate progress to address recommendations from HMICFRS and meet the national standards.



- We will make the most of our premises and resources so we can continue to deliver and improve the services we provide, in line with our medium term financial plan (MTFP) to ensure financial sustainability and affordability.
- We will demonstrate our commitment to our staff and communities by ensuring our culture and core values align with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.

AF&RS has some significant programmes of work aligned to these priorities, including that of HMICFRS addressing the Causes of Concern and Areas for Improvement, and in March 2028, we will exit our Joint Training Centre Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which we have with two other fire and rescue services.

Following a gap analysis, we further identified some overarching strategic drivers which informed our approach. This included enhancing communication and engagement to better share good practice, ensuring we use data to feed intelligence and organisational learning, the need for excellent leadership, and making sure we embed AF&RS values and behaviours framework and the Core Code of Ethics. To do this, we need good governance.

We also have legal and statutory requirements to ensure a balanced budget:

[Local Government Act 1999](#)

*“A best value authority must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”* and,

[Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide for best value authorities](#)

*“...strong governance, culture, and leadership underpin effective partnerships and community engagement, service delivery, and the use of resources. Continuous improvement is the outcome of all the themes working well together.”*

### 3 Vision and Mission:

Our drivers help set direction of where we want to get to. Portfolio programmes are more tactical, and the projects within these ensure the strategic priorities. Therefore, while we support the Service mission and vision, we have our own focused aims and objectives aligned to this strategy.

**Portfolio’s vision:** For AF&RS to be the best we can be.

**Portfolio’s mission:** To transform and improve the Service through effective strategic programme and project management aligned to the Service Plan.



The directorate's purpose is to support ongoing and sustainable improvement and help the Service achieve the objectives. Portfolio guides and enables the Service to deliver the highest standards and best value projects and initiatives, through a coordinated, collaborative, and creative approach to change. Furthermore, Portfolio supports our commitment to new ways of working, bringing skills and experience together, providing more clarity across the organisation, so we can focus our efforts and energies on our priorities, and maintain the pace of our improvement journey.

## **4 Principles:**

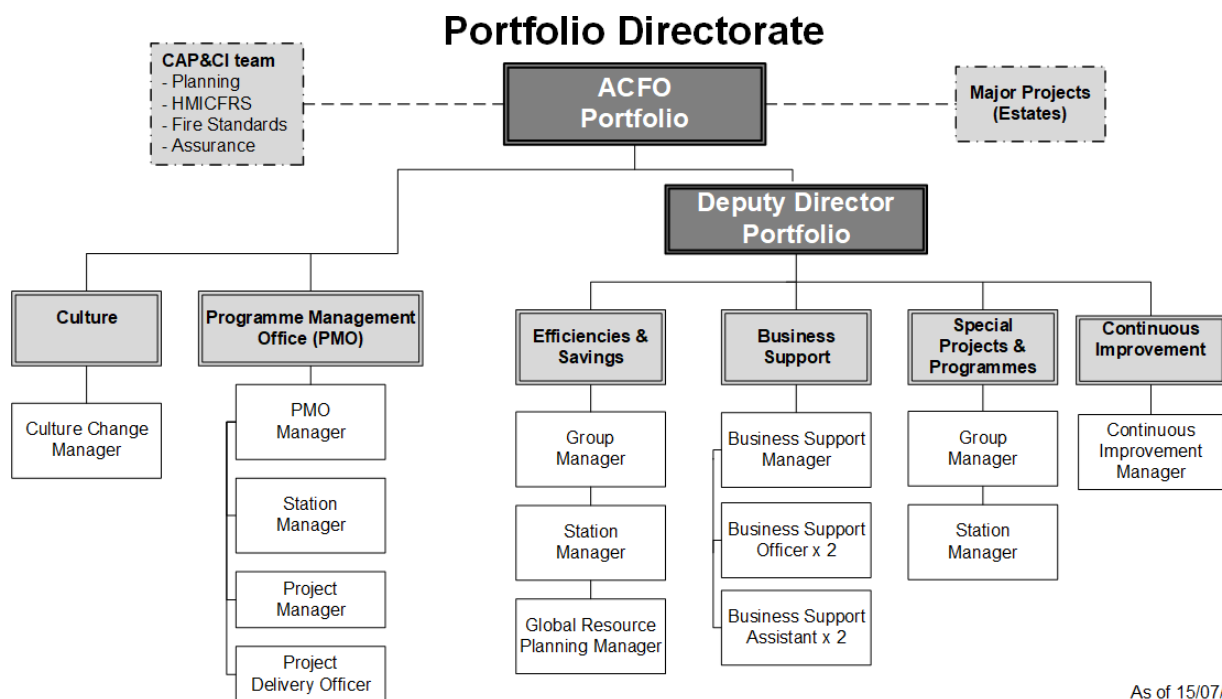
Portfolio encourages that where applicable individual programmes within the directorate and beyond align to the Service Continuous Improvement Framework, in addition to their own principles and methodologies. Furthermore, there is an expectation that the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics is embedded, and Fire Standards applied where appropriate.

Overarching principles however make up Portfolio's vision, mission and direction. To guide our outcomes, each programme within the directorate:

- Will be strategically aligned and sustainable
- Will be transformative and progressive
- Will be co-ordinated and methodical
- Will be collaborative and cohesive
- Will be engaging with empathy

## **5 Programmes:**

Whilst a directorate, members of Portfolio work across the organisation with to ensure a holistic and systems approach to transformation and organisational learning, to enable continuous improvement. Working with Risk and Planning, it will be influenced by both internal and external factors and will be agile and able to adapt as required.



Programmes of work include:<sup>1</sup>

- Culture
- Business and Project Management Support (BPMS)
- Efficiencies and Savings (E&S)
- Programme Management Office (PMO)
- Special Projects and Programmes Support (SP&PS)
- Continuous Improvement (CI)

<sup>1</sup> Culture – Key initiatives to address the HMICFRS causes of concern and to continue to improve the organisation’s culture going forward. BPMS– Administrative support across the Service. E&S – A programme of work to evaluate potential financial and efficiency savings. PMO – Oversight and scrutiny of the Service’s key projects and programmes. SP&PS – To support the PFI exit and proposed HQ relocation projects. CI – HMICFRS inspection programme, Fire Standards and oversight of new initiatives for continuous improvement.



Portfolio will therefore work closely with and collaborate with People Services on cultural change and evolution, and with Corporate Services to review AF&RS's internal Governance and Assurance.

## 6 Outcomes:

We have a vision of where we would like to get to, and in the time, we would like to achieve this. Outcomes of Portfolio and associated programmes of work, therefore, include but are not limited to, improved consistency, pace, efficiency, and governance applied to workstreams, resulting in progressive, sustainable and data led change. To ensure we remain agile, these commitments align to each Portfolio programme, allowing for flexibility across the Service.

We will:

- continue to work towards closing our three remaining HMICFRS Causes of Concern,
- ensure a focus on improvement with dedicated strategic oversight and reduced the likelihood of the Service regressing,
- have made succession plans with a commitment to continuous improvement through the resourcing and restructure required to drive change aligned with the MTFP,
- have clear and effective governance structures promoting a culture of accountability, responsibility, and collaborative working across projects, programmes, and other activities.



- have accessible strategies and plans in place detailing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound objectives.
- have an evidence and data led approach to transformation, organisational learning and continuous improvement.
- have undertaken line management appraisals and regular meetings to monitor and progress programmes and ensure wellbeing of staff.

In addition, each programme will:

- have clear plans supporting continued progress addressing existing and new HMICFRS report findings, with equal focus on maintaining good practice,
- have undertaken a review to identify lessons learned and assure the Service has succession plans for capability and capacity to sustain future change are effective,
- have evidence and data to ensure an agile and progressive approach to transformation, organisational learning and continuous improvement, horizon scanning for opportunities and threats,
- have made advancements in the utilisation of technology and systems to increase efficiency and effectiveness, enhancing governance and resilience within the Service.

By 31 March 2028 each programme will:

- have implemented action to ensure the Service has capability and capacity to sustain future change and improvements assured by good governance.
- AF&RS will have exited the Joint Training Centre Private Finance Initiative.



**Version control**

Date	New Version Number	Changes
	0.1	First draft
	0.2	Format changes
	0.3	Format changes
	0.4	Format changes
	0.5	Format changes
30/06/2025	0.6	Format changes
02/07/2025	0.7	Format changes
31/07/2025	0.8	Approved by the PRC for publication
06/08/2025	1.0	Minor amends to directorate structure