Corporate Risk Management Summary

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Simon Hardiman,
Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Karen Gowreesunker Assistant Chief Fire
Officer.

1   Executive Summary

This update is for the Fire Authority's Audit and Standards Committee. It
gives a clear picture of the main risks that could affect how the fire service
operates and serves the community.

2   Recommendations

a) The Committee is asked to note and consider the contents of the report;
   and
b) The Committee is asked to approve the refined Leadership and Culture
   Risk in Appendix A.

3   Background

This report explains the current status of key risks that could affect how well
the fire service delivers its work. These risks were reviewed and updated in
September and October 2025. The new risk - about leadership and
workplace culture – has been revised following Member feedback and needs
approval to be added to the official list. The Service will be undertaking a
review of the corporate risk process to further help embed the new process
and reporting format following recent feedback from Members.

4 Why Risk Management Matters

Risks are things that could go wrong and stop the fire service from doing its
job properly. Managing these risks means spotting them early, keeping an
eye on them, and taking action to reduce their impact. This helps the service
stay prepared and focused on its goals.

In 2024, an inspection found that the fire service wasn't managing risks well enough. Since then, improvements have been made, and new risks have been added to reflect current challenges.

How risks are managed by the Service:
- Risks are reviewed every month by senior managers.
- The Performance and Risk Group checks the risks.
- Updates are shared with the committee every three months.
- A full report is shared once a year.

5 Understanding Risk Levels

Not all risks are equal. Some are more serious than others. The fire service uses two levels to help decide how much attention a risk needs:

- **Acceptance Level**: If a risk is very low, it does not need much attention.
- **Tolerance Level**: If a risk is above this level, it needs action and resources to bring it down.

These levels which are shown in the table below.

Risk Acceptance and Risk Tolerance Levels	Acceptance	Tolerance	Unacceptable

Impact		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
	Very High	5	10	15	20	25
	High	4	8	12	16	20
	Medium	3	6	9	12	15
	Low	2	4	6	8	10
	Very Low	1	2	3	4	5
		Likelihood				

6 Current Risk Highlights

Three risks are currently rated as high and need close mitigation:

1. Staff Engagement (CR1) – Concerns about staff morale, communication, and workplace culture.
2. Digital Systems and Cybersecurity (CR3) – Risks related to system failures or cyber-attacks.

3. Data and Digital Capability (CR4) – As this risk has occurred and is impacting the Service already, the likelihood has been raised since the last reporting period and the overall risk rating has increased from 16 to 20 (very high likelihood and high impact).

These areas are key to enabling the delivery of services and were also identified during the HMICFRS inspection as needing improvement.

The new risk of Leadership and Culture (CR8) has been initially assessed with an overall score of 12 which makes the risk tolerable.

7   Refinement of New Risk: Leadership and Culture

The new risk that was taken to the last meeting around leadership and workplace culture has now been refined to include clear reference to the Authority. These are shown in red highlight and underlined in Appendix A. If approved, this risk will be formally added to the register and tracked going forward. An initial assessment of this risk is added to Appendix A. With the introduction of this risk, officers will review the staff engagement risk to identify whether there is any repetition between the two.

8   Supporting Considerations

- There are no financial, legal, environmental, or health and safety issues directly caused by this report.
- The report doesn't affect partnerships or public services directly.
- Corporate Risk training is being scheduled for Fire Authority members to support ongoing responsibilities for assuring how these risks are being managed. Following discussions with the Member Risk Champion, Councillor Kerr, once this training has taken place there will be engagement with Members of the committee to provide an overview of the risk management process and approach within the Service. This will be provided by the ACFO Corporate Services and Transformation and Collaboration team.

9   Conclusion / Next Steps

The committee is asked to approve the revised leadership and culture risk. The Service will continue monitoring and updating the existing risks. There will be further improvements how risks are tracked and managed.

9   Appendices

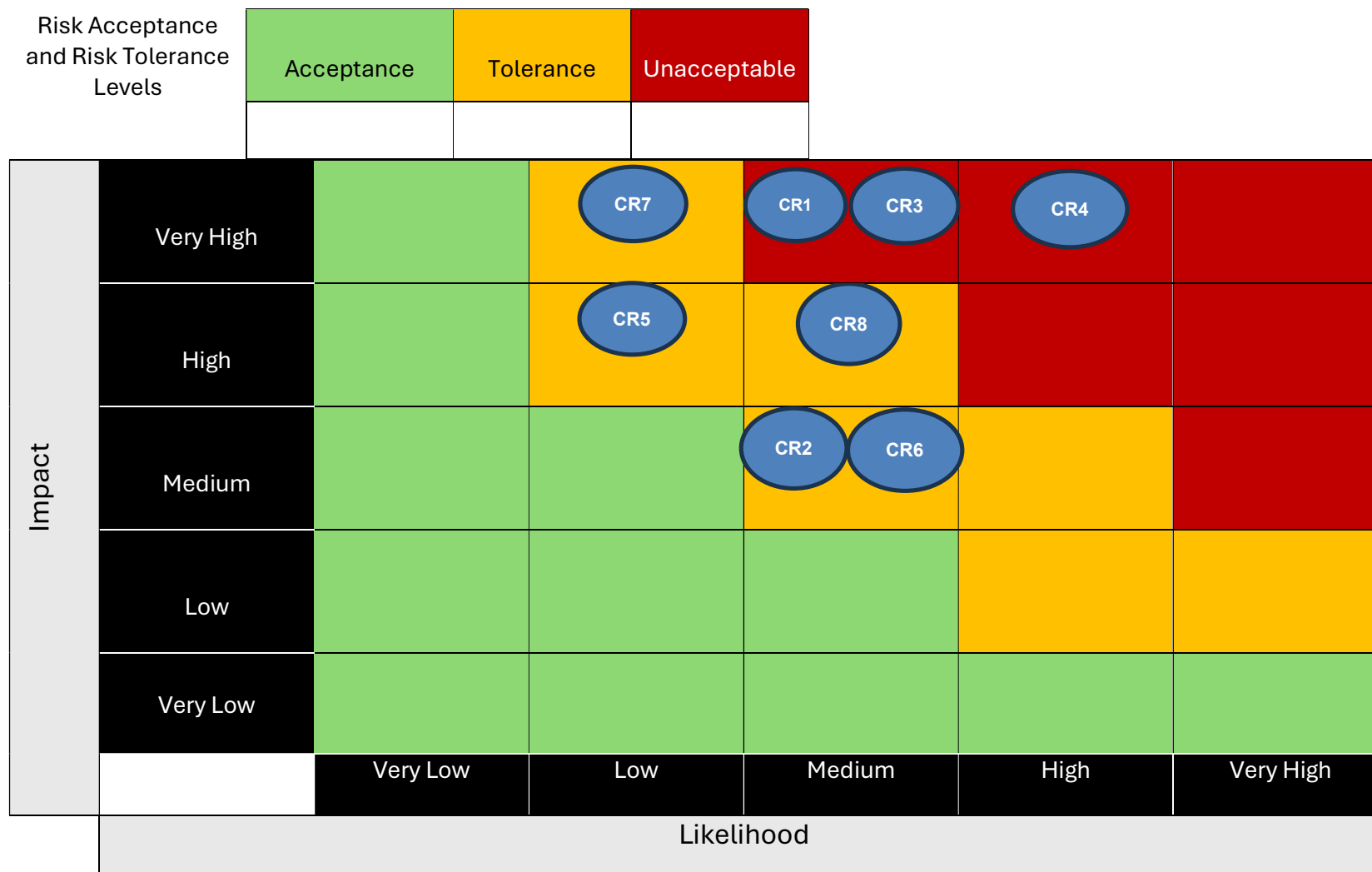**Appendix A** – Refined Corporate Risk Register Entry
Appendix B – Heatmap of Corporate Risks
Appendix C – Summary of Corporate Risk Register Entries

Appendix A to report on
Corporate Risk Management Summary
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Audits and Standards Committee
16 December 2025

Refined Corporate Risk Register Entry (additions marked in underline and red text)

Risk Number	Risk Title	Risk Description	Risk Triggers
CR8	Leadership and Culture	There is a risk that ineffective leadership of the Fire Authority and Service will damage organisational performance and reputation, thereby impacting on the culture, values and behaviours expected from all staff, as well as the ability for and pace of change. If leadership direction, visibility and actions of all Fire Authority members, leaders and managers do not demonstrate the services shared values, beliefs and practices that influence employee behaviour and decision making, this could lead to a poor risk culture, a lack of transparency, reduced trust in leaders and organisational performance. The Service will be less resilient in times of change, and this could result in reduced staff engagement, increased staff turnover, sickness absence and dissatisfaction. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to deliver its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	Lack of clear visible leadership aligned to strategy Leaders do not role model expected behaviours aligned to service values Lack of staff engagement and recognition of staff (aligned to CR 8) affecting Staff wellbeing and or retention is poor A breakdown in effective relationships with trade unions Gaps in the development of staff and leaders Performance is not managed effectively, and decisions lack transparency External scrutiny reflects poorly on leadership and or decision making

Appendix B to report on
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Heat Map of Corporate Risks

Risk Acceptance and Risk Tolerance Levels	Acceptance	Tolerance	Unacceptable

Impact

	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Very High		CR7	CR1 CR3	CR4	
High		CR5	CR8		
Medium			CR2 CR6		
Low					
Very Low					

Likelihood

Appendix C to report on
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Summary of Corporate Risk Register Entries

Corporate Risk	Risk Descriptor	September – November Status	Risk rating with no control measures	Risk Rating with control measures	Owner
CR1 - Staff Engagement	There is a risk that low staff engagement and dissatisfaction within the workforce could impact operational effectiveness and service delivery. Changes to terms and conditions, including pay, pensions and shift patterns may lead to discontent, reduced morale and potential industrial action. If communication and engagement strategies are ineffective, staff may feel undervalued, leading to a decline in trust and employee relations between leadership and frontline personnel. This could result in increased absenteeism, lack of progression, higher staff turnover, resistance to change and reduced commitment to organisational objectives. A disengaged workforce may also impact public confidence in the service, effective recruitment and retention efforts.	**Mitigations** Feedback from staff is supporting a change in approach to the new staff engagement forums so these are easier to engage with and understand. Engagement with trade unions in reviewing the Services employee engagement framework continues, and there is an agreed approach to support the development of this and an employee relations agreement. A draft will be ready in Dec 2025. Culture programme workshops for all staff have now completed. Feedback from staff at this stage has been positive with an overall score of 4+ out of 5. The openness of the sessions, the value of being listened to and of SMT being present meant staff felt this was a different kind of conversation. They liked how the sessions were run. A more detailed feedback report is being prepared for November by Future Works. This will support the next stages of work (Strategic Management Team and Manager workshops) and begin to design how we	20	15	Karen Gowreesunker

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	This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to delivery its services to the public in line with its CRMP and a risk of not complying with Equality and Diversity legislation.	address gaps and areas for improvement staff will have highlighted. A Managers workshop has been scheduled due to feedback from operational officers. The progress of the culture programme is demonstrating a slow confidence in members of staff speaking up about concerns or issues. It is also highlighting areas of celebration that the Service needs to communicate more effectively. Following the request of Fire Authority Members, Future Works have engaged at Chair's brief on 6th November with a proposal for Authority consideration. **Risk rating**: The impact and likelihood assessment remains L3 I5 as mitigating factors continue to progress. Overall score of 15.			
CR2 – Political and Organisational Change	There is a risk that political decision, local government reorganisation (LGR), or changes in governance structures could impact the fire service's strategic direction, funding, and operational effectiveness. Mergers, changes in oversight bodies, or increased diversification of	**Mitigations** This risk has been reviewed each month and remains unchanged in terms of risk factors. However, the following elements have been considered when reaching this conclusion: The Service are awaiting announcements regarding fair funding however it anticipates	12	9	Simon Hardiman

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	responsibilities (e.g., broader community safety roles) may lead to a dilution of core fire and rescue priorities, creating uncertainty in long-term planning and resource allocation. The loss of funding or shifts in financial priorities could reduce service capacity, impact investment in training and equipment and place additional pressure on operational delivery. If decision-making is influenced by political priorities rather than risk-based assessments, it could result in misaligned strategies, inefficiencies, and a lack of clarity in leadership direction. Additionally, the pace of change – if too rapid or uncoordinated – could create disruption, staff disengagement, and resistance to new structures or ways of working and industrial action. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to delivery its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	this will have a detrimental impact on funding and has potential to impact upon delivery of Services. To raise awareness Officers are lobbying 5 MPs to challenge these potential reductions. Responses have been received with support. Work is already underway to scenario plan our response to settlements to support budget planning for Feb Fire Authority. This includes identifying how any shortfalls will be managed next year and in future years. To strengthen the relationship and raise awareness, 6 monthly MP briefing sessions will enable the Service to communicate Service progress barriers to this such as funding and legislation. The review of existing governance arrangements will be implemented from 1st October 2025, changes implemented will incorporate 2 new Fire Authority Members from October. Future changes will also introduce/adapt committees for the following: Strategy and Resources, Performance and scrutiny and Audit and Standards. Adverts are currently live for the recruitment of independent persons to sit on the Performance and Scrutiny committee.			

A&S 16.12.2025

Corporate Risk	Risk Descriptor	September – November Status	Risk rating with no control measures	Risk Rating with control measures	Owner
		Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation have not impacted the Service to date, however the recent (November) announcements regarding the removal of Police and Crime Commissioners in 2028 may signal a changing picture for the fire sector. The Service continue to monitor developments at Shropshire Council due to funding challenges and the potential impacts upon the Service in terms of partnership working and core responsibilities.			
CR3 – Cyber Security Threats and System Resilience	There is a risk that a cyber-attack, system failure, or data breach could compromise the fire service's ability to respond effectively to emergencies, protect sensitive information and ensure firefighter and public safety. A loss of access to critical IT systems – such as emergency dispatch, command and control, and mobile data terminals – could delay response times, disrupt incident coordination, and put lives at risk. A data breach could expose personal, operational or confidential information, leading to reputational damage, regulatory penalties, and loss of public	**Mitigations** Whilst the impact of this risk occurring would be significant, the mitigations now in place are reducing the likelihood of attack to a 3 out of 5. This is due to action taken in previous updates such as the ICT Health Check which has supported remedial work to our systems and is being monitored monthly. The development of the new website which is due for implemented and launch in January 2026. Recruitment within the ICT team is progressing to remove single points of failure and support overall capacity to manage systems resilience.	20	15	Chris Haigh

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	trust. If systems are not adequately protected, malicious actors may exploit vulnerabilities, resulting in operational paralysis and increased financial costs for recovery. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to delivery its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	Cyber awareness training is ongoing and has identified gaps in awareness of the workforce. This training progresses to support awareness and testing and will be adapted to the trends identified Tighter controls on access to systems, enhanced security policies, and replacing hardware that was out of security support also supports the current rating of this risk. The likelihood and impact of this risk remain the same as the September assessment due to actions still taking place and resilience within the ICT team.			
CR4 – Data and Digital Capability	There is a risk that inadequate access to accurate, timely, and well-managed data could impact strategic decision-making, operational effectiveness, and compliance with data protection regulations. Without the right data, the fire service may struggle to assess risk accurately, allocate resources efficiently, and drive evidence-based decision-making. A lack of investment in modern digital systems and data analytics tools may hinder innovation, slow response times, and reduce	**Mitigations** As this risk has occurred and is impacting the service already, the likelihood has been raised to a 5. Despite this, significant progress has been made in the past 2 months. A refreshed Digital Strategy has been written and approved, a Data Strategy is in progress, due by the end of the year. An external data consultancy is working with the team to identify key data analytic areas of improvements.	20	20	Chris Haigh

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	overall service effectiveness. Additionally, if the workforce lacks the necessary digital skills or capacity to manage and interpret data effectively, this could lead to inefficiencies, poor decision-making, and missed opportunities for service improvement. The rapid pace of technology change, coupled with evolving regulatory requirements such as GDPR, presents further challenges in ensuring data security, system integration, and ongoing compliance. Failure to address these issues could result in optional disruptions, financial losses, reputational damage and risks to firefighter and public safety. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to delivery its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	Whilst skills capacity remains an issue, transparency and prioritisation of workloads is now in place, helping the service to plan better going forwards. Opportunities for qualifications in data and AI have been offered across the service to help bridge the skills gap. This activity aligns effectively to the response to the HMICFRS cause of concern. Recruitment has also begun for key roles, with further vacancies scheduled to be filled at the start of 2026.			
CR5 - Finance	There is a risk that the fire service may face challenges in delivering a cost-effective, high-quality service to the community due to financial pressures, resource constraints, and increasing demand. Ensuring value for money requires efficient use of personnel, equipment, and funding	**Mitigations** A job evaluation process on the new Procurement Officer role is now complete, this will now be advertised. The support package with West Mercia Police being finalised and work has already commenced.		12	Joanne Coadey

Corporate Risk	Risk Descriptor	September – November Status	Risk rating with no control measures	Risk Rating with control measures	Owner
	while maintaining high operational standards and public safety. Budget reductions, rising costs and the need to invest in new technologies and infrastructure may create financial strain, leading to difficult decisions around service provision. Inefficiencies in resource allocation, procurement, or workforce management could result in wasted expenditure, reduced service capacity, or failure to meet public expectation. If financial and operational planning is not effectively aligned, there is a risk that strategic priorities may be compromised, impacting emergency response times, firefighter safety and long-term sustainability. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to delivery its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	A position regarding potential procurement exercises has now been established and this will be linked across to Service priorities and goals and department plans. **Risk rating:** this rating has remained at 12.			
CR6 - Environment	There is a risk that the fire service may face barriers in achieving its goal to reduce its carbon footprint and overall environmental impact. Transitioning to more sustainable	**Mitigations** Following the appointment of the Head of Resources on 1st September initial work has started on both the Estates and Fleet		9	Andrew Stirling

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	operations requires investment in green technologies, infrastructure upgrades and changes to fleet, equipment, and working practices. Constraints such as budget limitations, supply chain challenges, and regulatory complexities may slow progress. Additionally, balancing sustainable goals with operational effectiveness – such as ensuring electric or alternative-fuel fire appliances meet emergency response requirements-presents logistical and technical challenges. Failure to meet environmental targets could lead to reputational damage, missed government sustainability commitments, increased operational costs due to inefficient resource use, and potential non-compliance with environment regulations. The pace of change in green technologies may also create challenges in procurement, workforce adaptation, and interoperability with existing infrastructure.	Strategies and their links and alignment to the Community Risk Management Plan. With regards to the Fleet, opportunities are being taken to replace small vehicles with either hybrid or electric powertrains as part of the Fleet replacement programme. In parallel with preparation of the Estates Strategy a full condition survey is going to be undertaken across the Estate to identify opportunities for targeted repair and maintenance to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and to reduce costs in use. **Risk rating**: remains at 9.			

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CR7 – Health and Safety	The Fire Authority fails to meet statutory obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Environment Act 1995, and Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, due to gaps in policy implementation, ineffective governance, or a weak assurance framework. This could lead to criminal prosecution, civil litigation, regulatory enforcement, and reputational damage. There is a risk of significant physical harm to staff, contractors, or members of the public arising from systemic weaknesses in the design, management, or oversight of safe working practices, training environments, or operational response. This includes the cumulative impact of inadequate infrastructure, exposure to hazardous environments, or failure to maintain a strong safety culture across the organisation.	**Mitigations** Independent assurance carried out by Worcestershire Internal Audit Service was positive overall and we have been given a reasonable level, which means the Service has a generally sound system with some areas of improvement. These areas of improvement have been noted and rated by internal audit: 1 Lack of centralised H&S communication - Low 2 Outdated or broken links in Brigade Orders (policies) - Low Both were considered low priority in audit. A new system is being procured and will be implemented. The new Health and Safety Manager role is being shortlisted and is planned to commence in post this quarter. This lowers the level of risk and mitigates present critical issues such as having a single point of failure in the current H&S Officer role. **Risk rating:** This risk has reduced from 15 to 10.	25	10	Mark Price

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CR8 – Leadership and Culture	There is a risk that ineffective <u>leadership of the Fire Authority</u> and <u>Service</u> will damage organisational performance and reputation, thereby impacting on the culture, values and behaviours expected from all staff, as well as the ability for and pace of change. If leadership direction, visibility and actions of <u>all Fire Authority members, leaders and managers</u> do not demonstrate the services shared values, beliefs and practices that influence employee behaviour and decision making, this could lead to a poor risk culture, a lack of transparency, reduced trust in leaders and organisational performance. The Service will be less resilient in times of change, and this could result in reduced staff engagement, increased staff turnover, sickness absence and dissatisfaction. This could result in an inability for the Fire Authority to deliver its services to the public in line with its CRMP.	**Mitigations** This is a new addition to the corporate risk register, and this is therefore the first update provided. Work is underway to improve and enhance Service culture through the cultural transformation programme, with staff workshops now completed and development with the Service Management team scheduled. this will ensure that individuals views have been heard and a course of action to understand and action the findings will be developed. An update aligned to this is cited in corporate risk 1. Work also continues in Service with addressing areas for improvement linked to culture and leadership identified by HMICFRS, with regular updates being shared with Members. Recent feedback in relation to reporting has been considered and will form the basis of future reports, that will enable greater scrutiny, challenge and assurance.	Rating to be confirmed when revised risk descriptor approved.	12	Simon Hardiman