STATES OF JERSEY

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (R.36/2026): EXECUTIVE RESPONSE (R.36/2026 RES.) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 20th November 2026
by the Public Accounts Committee

STATES GREFFE

FOREWORD

In accordance with paragraphs 69-71 of the Code of Practice for engagement between 'Scrutiny Panels and the Public Accounts Committee' and 'the Executive', the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) presents its comments on the Executive Response (R.36/2026. Res.) to the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) Report entitled: Fire and Rescue Service (R.36/2026, presented to the States Assembly on 6 March 2026).

Deputy K. Wilson
Chair, Public Accounts Committee

COMMENTS

The Public Accounts Committee welcomes the Executive's acceptance of the majority of the recommendations made by the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to the Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee recognises the importance of the improvement activity outlined within the Executive Response and the commitment to addressing the issues identified by the review.

However, the PAC notes that many of the proposed actions are currently due for delivery by Q4 2026 and that the Executive Response provides limited detail regarding progress achieved to date, supporting evidence, or the extent to which implementation remains on track. The Committee therefore considers that further assurance is required, particularly in relation to the management of high and extreme risks, progress towards implementation of National Operational Guidance (NOG), and the delivery of actions described as currently underway.

National Operational Guidance and Operational Capability

The PAC notes that implementation of National Operational Guidance (NOG) is repeatedly identified throughout the Executive Response as a key dependency for improvements relating to operational capability, assurance, competence, training and risk management. The Committee accepts the importance of NOG and recognises its role in supporting service modernisation. However, whilst NOG is presented as fundamental to the wider improvement programme, the Executive Response provides limited information regarding current compliance levels, progress achieved to date, outstanding actions or anticipated completion dates.

The PAC is concerned that NOG has become a recurring dependency across a range of actions without equivalent visibility of progress against its delivery. The Committee also notes that, despite its importance, implementation of NOG does not appear as a distinct action within the improvement plan itself.

The PAC recommends that the Executive provide a detailed update on progress towards implementation of National Operational Guidance, including current compliance levels, milestones achieved, outstanding work and anticipated completion dates.

Delivery of Actions and Progress Reporting

The PAC notes that a significant number of actions within the improvement plan are due for completion by Q4 2026. As these deadlines are now imminent, the Committee would expect clear evidence that delivery remains on track and that meaningful progress has already been achieved.

Whilst the Executive Response frequently refers to work being underway, the Committee has been provided with limited detail regarding completed actions, achieved milestones, or measurable improvements arising from that work. The PAC considers that stronger evidence of delivery is required if the Committee is to assess whether the intended improvements are being realised.

The Committee further notes that a number of actions are linked to areas highlighted by the C&AG as requiring urgent attention. In these circumstances, assurance regarding implementation is particularly important.

The PAC recommends that the Executive provide a written progress update on all actions due for completion by Q4 2026, including evidence of delivery, outstanding milestones and revised completion dates where applicable.

Risk Management and Governance

The PAC welcomes the Executive's commitment to strengthening governance and risk management arrangements. However, the Committee notes the C&AG's finding that the Service continues to operate with a significant number of high and extreme risks and that there remains a high level of tolerance for some risks pending implementation of strategic improvements.

The Committee is concerned that the Executive Response acknowledges the existence of significant risks whilst providing limited evidence regarding how those risks have reduced since publication of the report. Whilst the PAC accepts that some improvements will require time to implement, acceptance of risk cannot become a substitute for timely mitigation. The Committee therefore seeks greater assurance regarding current controls, progress already achieved and the trajectory of risk reduction.

The PAC would also expect to see clear evidence of challenge and oversight from senior leadership where actions intended to reduce significant risks are not progressing as planned.

The PAC recommends that the Executive provide an updated position on all risks currently assessed as Extreme, including mitigating actions undertaken, progress achieved and evidence that risk exposure is reducing.

Performance Management and Strategic Planning

The PAC notes the Executive's commitment to strengthening strategic planning, performance management and reporting arrangements. The Committee recognises that effective performance measurement is essential to demonstrating whether service improvements are being delivered and whether risks are being reduced.

However, the PAC is concerned that limited evidence has been provided regarding progress in developing performance measures, key performance indicators and arrangements for tracking benefits arising from improvement activity. Without this information, it remains difficult to assess whether improvements are delivering measurable outcomes.

The Committee considers that robust performance information will be particularly important as actions reach their target completion dates and as the Service seeks to demonstrate progress against the concerns raised by the C&AG.

Resources and Workforce Planning

The PAC notes the C&AG's findings that additional funding was approved to support workforce growth and progress towards implementation of NOG. However, the report identified significant underspends in staffing budgets alongside overspends in operational non-pay expenditure. The C&AG concluded that, in overall terms, budget funding was not being used to address identified service delivery risks.

The Committee remains concerned that, despite additional funding and acknowledged workforce pressures, vacancies remained unfilled whilst significant operational risks persisted. In the PAC's view, it is important that the Executive demonstrates how public funding has contributed to improving capability, resilience and service delivery.

The Committee would welcome greater clarity regarding recruitment outcomes, workforce growth, vacancy levels and the impact of these measures on addressing the issues identified within the report.

The PAC recommends that the Executive provide evidence demonstrating how additional funding has been utilised, the extent to which funded posts have been filled and the impact this has had on reducing identified service delivery risks.

Training, Competence and Emergency Services Control Centre

The PAC notes the findings of the C&AG regarding operational training, competence management and workforce development. The report identified concerns relating to training expenditure, procurement arrangements and uncertainty regarding the funding of future training requirements.

Whilst the Executive Response indicates that work is underway in these areas, the Committee considers that greater assurance is required regarding outcomes achieved to date and the extent to which current arrangements are strengthening operational competence and preparedness.

The PAC further notes the importance of implementing recommendations arising from the Emergency Services Control Centre review. Given the potential implications for operational resilience, service performance and public safety, the Committee considers that clear evidence of delivery should be available.

Digital, Data and Technology

The PAC notes the C&AG's finding that progress on key digital projects has been slow and that delays may affect the management of operational risks. The Committee further notes the Executive's acknowledgement that digital services remain a key component of wider service improvement.

Whilst the Executive Response references ongoing activity, limited information has been provided regarding completed milestones, current delivery status or remaining barriers to implementation.

The PAC would expect senior leadership to maintain active oversight of these projects and to ensure that delays are appropriately escalated where they may contribute to ongoing operational risk.

CONCLUSION

The PAC welcomes the Executive's acceptance of the majority of the C&AG's recommendations and recognises the commitment to improvement set out within the response. However, the Committee considers that further assurance is required regarding progress achieved to date, particularly where actions are due for completion by Q4 2026 and where recommendations are intended to address high and extreme risks.

The Committee remains particularly concerned by the extent to which implementation of NOG underpins the wider improvement programme and considers that greater transparency is required regarding progress, compliance levels, delivery milestones and anticipated completion dates.

The Committee will be requesting a further briefing from Accountable Officers on the matters raised in these comments.