

Outcomes 2024/25

Reimagining the office estate of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Background

Like many public sector organisations, the **Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS)** faces growing pressure to optimise its property estate in response to changing workforce needs, budget realities, and new ways of working. While SFRS had already been transitioning legacy buildings into a more efficient, right-sized estate, the **Covid-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated the shift to hybrid and distributed working models.**

This changing landscape raised critical questions:

- How much office space does SFRS really need?
- What kind of environments best support staff and service delivery?
- How can surplus space be reimagined to add value?

To answer these questions, SFRS needed accurate data, strategic insight, and a robust decision-making framework.

The challenge

Post-pandemic, SFRS faced a number of interrelated challenges:

- **Hybrid working** and **partner co-location** altered space requirements
- There was uncertainty around what constituted 'business as usual' going forward
- Underutilised or vacant office space posed a risk to efficient estate management

Understanding future occupancy assumptions and planning for underused space became essential for **effective asset management** and long-term strategy.

PRIMARY OUTCOME



1

A clear picture of Scotland's future infrastructure needs



CORPORATE PRIORITIES



NET
ZERO



SUSTAINABLE
PLACES



INCLUSIVE
GROWTH

The solution

SFRS engaged our **Asset Strategy and Workplace team**, who guided the organisation through a comprehensive office review. The team also supported the appointment of an **independent advisor** to critically assess key office locations.

Throughout the project, the team provided hands-on strategic guidance on four key fronts:

1. Workplace typologies

Defining the mix of spaces needed, from individual workstations to collaborative and group-focused environments

2. Data-driven opportunities

Analysis of current occupancy and utilisation patterns to identify where SFRS could **invest, disinvest, or reconfigure**

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OUTCOME

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Evidence-based outcomes

3. Shared space potential

Exploring the viability of **partner co-location** to make better use of space and promote collaboration

4. Scalable solutions

Documenting lessons learned and insights to inform **wider estate strategies** across SFRS's portfolio

A set of tailored **investment choices** was developed for each office site, offering SFRS a flexible decision-making framework built on robust data:

- **Maintain the status quo**
- **Reconfigure space for internal alternative use**
- **Open space for external partner use**
- **Exit or dispose of underutilised buildings**

These options were directly informed by utilisation trends and an understanding of **task-based work**, ensuring spaces supported staff in performing their roles effectively.

Notably, the review uncovered opportunities to:

- **Reclaim space** currently used inefficiently, such as single-person offices in high-demand zones
- **Introduce decontamination areas** and **dignified facilities for female firefighters**
- Enable **co-location with partner organisations**, adding value without additional estate investment



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The impact

The project has empowered SFRS to think differently about its estate, moving from a reactive model to one that is **proactive, evidence-led, and future-focused**.

Stuart Free, Asset Governance and Performance Manager, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, said: *"I am really pleased with the output; it is really useful data. We are using the data to help make informed decisions on the future of our office estate and what our agile framework may look like going forward."*

The findings were shared with internal governance boards and met with strong support. The **insightful investment choices and scenario planning** are now key inputs into SFRS's agile working framework and long-term estate strategy.

Looking ahead

By embracing data, collaboration, and smart estate planning, the **Scottish Fire & Rescue Service** is positioning itself to deliver better outcomes for staff, partners, and the communities it serves, **with a leaner, more agile office estate fit for the future**.

SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

