



DEVON &  
SOMERSET  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

# Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority

2016-17 Annual Statement of  
Assurance

Corporate Governance Group

Devon and Somerset  
Fire & Rescue Authority

22/05/2017

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## 1. Introduction

The Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) recognises that good governance leads to effective management, sustained performance, accountability of public money, continued public engagement and helps to deliver outcomes for citizens. Through good governance the Service can deliver its vision as well as ensuring there are effective mechanisms for control and the management of risk.

The Annual Statement of Assurance details the approach for how the Authority has developed and applied its governance framework in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

## 2. Governance

### The Purpose of Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance comprises:

- the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled; and
- those activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community.

Corporate Governance enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant and integral part of the governance arrangements designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. While it cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, it should nonetheless provide a reasonable level of assurance of organisational effectiveness in this area.

The governance arrangements have been in place for the Authority up to the year ended 31 March 2017 and up to the date of consideration of the statement of accounts.

### Code of Corporate Governance

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/ Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. A copy of the Code is on the Authority’s website at [DSFIRE website](#) can be obtained from the Clerk to the Authority. This Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Code.

## **Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 Requirements**

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to 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.

The *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015* require authorities to prepare an annual governance statement in support of their Statement of Accounts. The governance statement is an expression of the measures taken by the authority to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance.

## **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England Requirements**

The revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish an annual Statement of Assurance. It says:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual Statement of Assurance’.

One of the principal aims of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority’s performance.

The Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State’s biennial report under section 25 of the *Fire and Rescue Act 2004*.

The Statement of Assurance should be signed off by an elected member of the relevant authority who is able to take responsibility for its contents.

Statements of assurance should be published annually by fire and rescue authorities. It is for fire and rescue authorities to decide when they should publish depending on individual reporting arrangements.

## **Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Approach**

The Authority has established a Corporate Governance Group to periodically review the governance arrangements on behalf of the Authority. The group consists of Managers from the following teams:

- Audit & Review
- Democratic Services & Corporate Support
- Finance
- Risk & Insurance
- Procurement
- Information Assurance

- Service Delivery (Operations)

The Authority has agreed that the most appropriate way to manage both the National Framework and regulatory requirements is through the creation of one assurance report entitled 'Annual Statement of Assurance'.

The Annual Statement of Assurance is assessed initially by the Audit and Performance Review Committee prior to being submitted, alongside the Statement of Accounts for the year in question, for verification by the Authority's external auditors. The Annual Statement of Assurance is then re-submitted for approval by the Audit & Performance Review Committee prior to signature by the Committee's Chair and the Chief Fire Officer. The final Annual Assurance Statement is then published alongside the approved Statement of Accounts for the financial year in question on the Authority's website.

### **Review of Effectiveness**

The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness is informed by: the work of senior managers within the Service who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment; the Head of Internal Audit's annual report; and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The 2016-17 review has identified 26 key elements to the Authority's governance arrangements:

1. The Authority was constituted under the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2006. The Authority has strategic responsibility for discharging fire and rescue authority functions for the combined area with the day-to-day responsibility resting with the Chief Fire Officer and other officers within the Executive Board.
2. For the majority of the 2016-17 financial year, the Authority comprised 26 Members<sup>1</sup> appointed by the constituent authorities (Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council). In addition, there is an "independent person" appointed in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.
3. For the majority of the 2016-17 financial year, the Authority operated with the following committee structure:-
  - Resources Committee (7 Members)
  - Human Resources Management & Development Committee (7 Members);
  - Audit & Performance Review Committee (7 Members);
  - Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee (7 Members);
  - Determinations & Dispensations Committee (5 Members);
  - Capital Programme Working Party (4 Members).

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<sup>1</sup> Total membership can fluctuate annually based on operation of the apportionment formula (by reference to the relative electoral rolls of the constituent authorities) in the Combination Scheme Order. In May 2016, because of operation of this formula, the Authority saw an increase in Membership to 26 members. Membership details can be found on the Authority website – [www.dsfire.gov.uk](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk)

Terms of reference for each of these bodies were approved by the Authority. The Committee structure (including terms of reference) are subject to annual review but may also be amended in-year as circumstances dictate.

4. The Audit & Performance Review Committee operates in accordance with the CIPFA best practice guidance on audit committees. It provides an additional level of review and scrutiny of the organisation's internal and external audit arrangements (including consideration and monitoring of any reports and associated action plans), corporate governance and risk arrangements, and financial statements (Annual Statement of Accounts). The Committee has responsibility for the operation of the Authority's strategy for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and monitors the Service's performance against those measures contained in the approved Corporate Plan (which incorporates the Authority's integrated risk management plan).
5. The constitutional governance arrangements are contained in the following documents:-
  - Members Roles and Responsibilities
  - Standing orders
  - Financial Regulations
  - Treasury Management Policy
  - Contract Standing Orders
  - Scheme of Delegations
  - Members Code of Conduct (including Core Values)
  - Protocol for Member / Officer Relations
  - Policy on Gifts and Hospitality
  - Scheme of Members Allowances
  - Corporate Governance Code
  - "Whistleblowing" Code (Confidential Reporting Policy)
  - Strategy on the prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption
  - Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

These documents, with the exception of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority publicity (which is a national document issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government under Section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986), are subject to review at least annually and are updated as and when necessary to reflect legislative change, organisational change or best practice, as relevant, to ensure they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.

6. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that effective financial stewardship is in place across the Service in conducting the business of the Authority. The Authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.
7. The statutory functions of the Proper Financial and Monitoring Officers provide a source of assurance that the Authority's systems of governance and internal control are effective and being complied with.

8. The 2016-17 Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Audit & Performance Review Committee on the 11 April 2016. The plan sets out the combined scope of internal audit work to be completed by the Audit & Review Team and the Devon Audit Partnership. A total of 260 internal audit days were utilised to provide assurance to the Authority relating to the management of risks and associated operational activities. The Audit & Review Team and the Devon Audit Partnership are accountable for the delivery of the plan and the policy includes the requirement to report progress to the Audit & Performance Review Committee at least three times per year. The Authority's shared service internal audit arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in public service organisations.
9. The Health & Safety system includes a risk management module. Service risk registers are populated and reviewed periodically. This process in turn informs the Corporate Risk Register. The system also contains current and historic insurance claims data and associated costs that are linked to safety events and, where applicable, Service risk registers.
10. The operation of the Authority's Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by Service management on a quarterly basis to ensure that risks to the Authority's strategic objectives and corporate plans are appropriately identified and managed.
11. The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk.
12. The 2016-17 External Audit provision was provided by Grant Thornton. The scope of the External Audit work includes the Accounting Statements and Whole of Government Accounts and a Value for Money Statement. No significant issues have arisen to date from the External Audit work completed in 2016-17.
13. The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative scheme. We completed the return for the 2016/17 initiative and are currently working through the reply.
14. The Service has a Joint Health & Safety Committee which meets every 2 months to monitor health, safety and welfare of employees as per section 2(7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. All representative bodies (trades unions) recognised by the Authority, i.e. the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and UNISON, are invited to sit on this Committee.
15. A Health & Safety Audit Plan has been rolled out to ensure all Devon & Somerset premises are audited against Health & Safety service policies.
16. The Operational Assurance Team is now embedded in the organisational structure and culture. As part of the 'Safe Person Concept' the Operational Safety Assurance Team monitors and reports on a variety of activities linked to Operational Response.
17. The Organisational Safety Manager attends the national Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) H&S meetings & chairs the regional CFOA H&S meetings.
18. A single business change programme has been established applying recognised programme and project management approaches and standards to corporate projects, including changes as a result of the corporate planning proposals.

19. The Organisation has a dedicated Information Assurance Team which is responsible for the implementation of the Information Security Management System. Team resources have changed and increased; with a new Information Assurance Manager post holder in place and the introduction of a full time Information Technology Security Officer and Information Assurance Officer post. The new team has been in post since November 2016 and is focusing on the review of all its processes, policies and procedures to comply with the HMG Security Policy Framework. A baseline score of the Service's maturity against the Government's Communications-Electronics Security Group (CESG) Information Assurance Maturity Model has been completed. This has identified areas for improvement and a two year strategy is in development to achieve the "established" level in the model. The Service has an Information Security Forum which focuses on embedding an information-risk aware culture, by reinforcing the responsibilities of the Information Asset Owners.
20. Contract Standing Orders (approved by the Authority at its Annual Meeting in May 2015) are, along with the Authority's other constitutional framework documents, subject to annual review and in-year changes as and when required. Guidance materials on procurement and contract management are available on the Service intranet for the Service staff. Priorities for 2017/18 include embedding the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (public authorities are required to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts; and for connected purposes) and increasing collaborative procurement arrangements.
21. The Procurement Team manage contracts above £20,000 to ensure compliance with EU and UK legislation and best practice; ensure that the Authority can demonstrate value for money; and deliver savings and efficiencies. The procurement team is actively engaged in wider collaborative National Procurement initiatives. The Service's Head of Procurement: is the national Commercial Category lead for Fleet (as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council's Strategic Commercial Committee); sits on the Local Government Association National Advisory Group for Procurement (representing Fire and Rescue Service nationally) and; is part of the South West Procurement Board, which involves first tier and district councils from the region.
22. Red One Ltd has been established to allow the Authority to deliver commercial activities within the legislative framework that applies. The Authority has taken legal advice to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and to ensure effective governance arrangements.
23. Corporate commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion are set out in the Corporate Plan. The four-year equality strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, came to an end in 2016 and a new strategy will be developed in 2017. This will set out the changes needed to support the new Integrated Risk Management Plan and will address issues relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace at each stage of the employee lifecycle, including attraction, recruitment, retention, development and progression. The HRMD committee monitors progress on the equality strategy every six months.
24. The Service has a process in place to ensure that potential equality impacts are identified and mitigated when preparing or reviewing policies. The process is called Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis and it helps us to deliver better services and working practices as well as ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.



25. The Core Values and behavioural framework was developed by employees and sets out what the Service stands for and what matters most to employees and the Organisation. It allows staff and managers at all levels to know what is expected of them and what they can expect in return. The Core Values are:

- Honesty, clarity and accountability
- Respect for each other
- Working together to improve
- A 'can do' attitude

A set of leadership expectations has been developed to act as a mutual contract to define what team members should expect from their Service Managers. The expectation posters are signed and then displayed in stations and departments.

The 2016/17 review by the Corporate Governance Group has concluded that there are good systems, procedures and checks in place to manage the Authority's governance arrangements.

### **3. Financial Assurance**

#### **Statement of Accounts**

It is a statutory requirement under the *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015* for authorities to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. The 'Statement of Accounts', shows the annual costs of providing the service and is determined by a Code of Practice published by CIPFA, which aims to give a "true and fair" view of the financial position and transactions of the authority.

The Treasurer is responsible for the approval of the Statement of Accounts prior to publication. To meet the requirements of the Regulations, the draft Statement of Accounts is published by the end of June with the final audited Statement of Accounts published by the end of September.

#### **External Audit Arrangements**

On an annual basis, the Statement of Accounts is subject to external audit scrutiny. Following a national procurement exercise (conducted by the Audit Commission), Grant Thornton was appointed as the external auditors for the South West region.

Grant Thornton is therefore responsible for the completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the 2016-17 financial statements
- Proposed opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Proposed Value for Money conclusion

## **Internal Audit Arrangements**

To support the External Audit process, the Authority has in place a robust system for Internal Auditing. The Audit & Review Manager worked with Senior Managers and Authority Members to develop an annual Internal Audit Plan that is delivered across the Service. The plan includes a contract with the Devon Audit Partnership to deliver specialised key financial and ICT audits. The approach was altered in 2016-17 to identify potential risk areas for the Devon Audit Partnership to review in detail.

Performance against the Plan is reported to senior managers and Members on a quarterly basis, with a year-end report produced in April/May time. The Internal Audit Plan was successfully delivered in 2016-17.

The 2016-17 year end Internal Audit report concluded that the systems in operation within the Service demonstrated a good level of internal control. The Service received a High Standard audit report for Budgetary Control and a High Standard for its Payroll activities in 2016-17.

Audit & Review Team has designed a new organisational assurance self-assessment framework and tool that was rolled out across all Service areas in 2016-17.

The results from the self-assessment have been collated into an action plan that has fed into the corporate planning process. Agreed management actions are monitored through the Service's Assurance tracking process alongside the outcomes of External Audits, Internal Audits, EFQM assessments and Peer Reviews. The results from the self-assessment are used to inform the strategic and annual Internal Audit planning process.

## **Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”)**

The Regulations set out the EU legal framework for contracting public authorities to follow in securing a contract for works, supplies and services where the contract value exceeds set thresholds (unless the contract qualifies for a specific exclusion as defined in the Regulations applies). The Regulations are not static but subject to change, driven by evolving European and domestic case law and UK Regulations. The EU rules reflect and reinforce the value for money focus of the Government's procurement policy. The EU procurement regime is based on the Treaty principles of transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment and proportionality. Even where the procurement process is not subject to the Regulations the EU Treaty based principles apply.

The Head of Procurement is responsible for ensuring that the Service processes conform to the Regulations and Treaty principles.

## **Data Transparency**

The Service complies with the Government's 'Local Government Transparency Code 2015' for releasing public data. The following arrangements are in place:

- A Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- Publication of the annual statement of accounts
- Publication of all expenditure over £500

- Publication of all Government Procurement Card transactions
- Publication of Procurement Information
- Publication of land ownership
- Publication of Trade Union facility time
- Publication of a Pay Policy Statement including all senior employee salaries and the pay multiple
- Publication of fraud investigations
- Publication of Members' allowances and expenses
- Publication of External Audit reports
- Publication of all committee reports (other than those where a statutory exemption for publication applies).

### **Efficiency Plan**

In order to secure a fixed level of central government grant funding for the 2016-20 financial years, The Service was required to submit an Efficiency Plan. The Efficiency Plan sets out how the Authority plans to improve the service it provides whilst managing with reduced real-terms funding levels. The Efficiency Plan outlines the key projects which will improve our efficiency alongside the underpinning medium term financial plan and our Corporate Plan and is available here: [Efficiency Plan](#)

The Efficiency Plan was submitted to the Home Office in October 2016 and approved by the Fire Minister in December 2016. As a result The Service has secured a four year settlement offer which will offer greater certainty over future funding levels

## **4. Operational Assurance**

### **Statutory Responsibility**

Fire and rescue authorities function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework, the key aspects of which are:

- the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- the Localism Act 2011
- the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Authority has the following internal assurance processes and activities to ensure its statutory responsibilities are met:

### **Corporate Planning**

The Authority has a Corporate Plan that spans a five year period. This document communicates the strategic direction of the Service and is published on the Service Internet. The plan is reviewed annually.

The Plan also incorporates the requirements for Integrated Risk Management Planning, where the Service seeks to balance and match its resources to the level of community risk.

In addition to and complementing the Corporate Plan, the Service develops a bespoke Local Community Plan for each community area around its fire stations. Each plan is unique to that area and contains the actions the Service will take to reduce risk and improve community safety. The plans are informed by a community risk profile which brings together historic incident data, demographic, commercial and infrastructure risk factors.

The involvement of stakeholders and partners in developing future plans is important as it is recognised that their involvement will not only help raise awareness of the Service's plans but may help to identify new approaches. Stakeholders are invited to comment on proposed strategic changes to ensure that, before any decision is taken, all perspectives are taken into account.

Operating Strategies expand the strategic direction as set out in the Corporate Plan. These lower level strategies explain in more detail the vision for key areas of the Service together with the improvements required to achieve the vision. The Operating Strategies are cross-cutting rather than Department-specific.

Department Plans govern the activities undertaken in each Department. The activities are prioritised with non-pay costs identified to inform the annual revenue budget setting cycle.

## **Training and Development**

The Service, through its [Training] Academy, has enabled the delivery of quality assured training to its staff to improve safety and overall effectiveness, which is underwritten by the ISO quality management framework. Activities are focused through a blended learning approach which is developed through working with key stakeholders.

In addition, the Academy provides training for other fire and rescue services and industry on behalf of the Authority's trading company, Red One Limited. The commercial work is resourced using a mixture of spare Service capacity and utilising people employed on separate contracts. The money generated is re-invested into the Service and contributes towards, amongst other things, improving facilities and equipment. However, the Academy's key priority is, and always will be, the safety of the Service's firefighters.

The dedicated project has been set up to review and amend the way in which training for operational competence is delivered and managed within the Service. The project will identify how training can be developed more efficiently and effectively whilst embedding increased quality of delivery throughout

It will determine how staff gain and maintain skills and knowledge ensuring:-

- The right skills
- At the right time
- Delivered in the right place
- Delivered by the right people

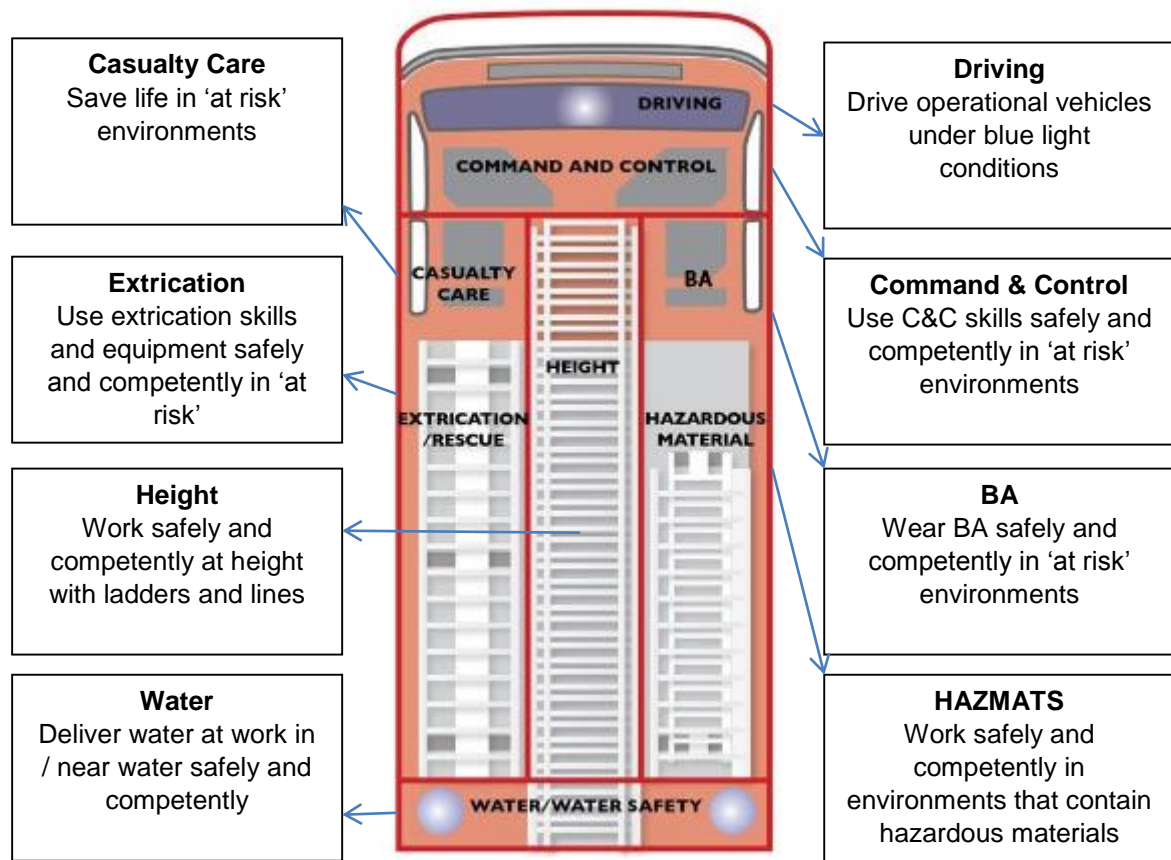
- To the right people

As part of the Academy's present training governance it delivers an annual training planning process designed to capture the organisational requirements for all staff. This supports the Authority's three stated priorities of: public safety; staff safety and; efficiency and effectiveness. All training is designed and delivered to reflect the risks faced within the communities we serve.

## Operational Licence

The Fire Professional Framework has been developed by the Chief Fire Officers Association in partnership with services from across the UK and Skills for Fire and Rescue (the body that ensures a common set of underpinning skills for all the Fire Sector).

The Operational Competencies in the Fire Professional Framework are shown in the diagram below.



The eight elements identified above make up the Operational Licence. Each of the elements is relevant to an individual's role allowing them to ride, drive or be in charge of an appliance or respond as a Tactical or Strategic Command Officer. Staff holding a current Operational Licence are therefore able to carry out their operational duties anywhere within the Organisation at any time.

Local variation in skill levels which are required to be at a higher level than the Operational Licence are managed on a risk basis and only remain relevant to the individual whilst their work base remains at that location.

The Academy is responsible for the design, delivery and assessment for each element of the Operational Licence. Individuals are responsible for ensuring each element is achieved and kept in date.

The Academy has rolled out a new training records system, 'Profile', across the Service. 'Profile' keeps a tailored record of an assessed demonstration of the skills and knowledge each person is required to maintain.

## **Firefighter Fitness**

In December 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government approved an Addendum to the National Framework for England in relation to firefighter fitness.

The Service has a Physical Fitness Policy and two dedicated Fitness Advisors in post to support Firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing for all operational staff previously took place every three years along with a medical.

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) has recently worked with the University of Bath to develop and publish fitness standards for all UK Fire and Rescue Services and a new vocational fitness test. The Service has trialled the vocational fitness test whilst CFOA was developing the test and the Service now undertaking an extended 12 month trial across all operational staff from Firefighter through to Watch Manager level. The trial is incorporated into a Firefighter Fitness Project which will improve the fitness culture within the Service.

The project will deliver the following benefits:

- A fitness standard that relates to all operational roles.
- Fitness equipment that enables the Service to accurately measure fitness standards.
- An element of strength and endurance testing within the drill ground test.
- Development of suitable facilities for a range of fitness tests.
- The provision of trained Group Fitness Advocates to conduct drill ground tests, gym inductions and provide local fitness guidance.
- Performance management data on the completion of fitness testing and ratings of staff across the Service.
- A long term agreed strategy on the physical exercise equipment that will be provided at stations to support staff with their fitness requirements, i.e. ergo cycles, treadmills, rowing machines and strength/circuit kit training items.
- Support and guidance to staff on healthy lifestyles and the maintenance of fitness throughout their career which will also have a positive influence in reducing sickness absence and potential injuries.
- A general improvement in the overall fitness and wellbeing culture within the Service.

- Evidence that we are meeting the requirements of the Addendum to the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England.

### **Operational Debriefs**

An operational debrief strategy and policy is in place. Debriefs provide the opportunity for operational personnel to identify good practice and any lessons learned for further improving the delivery of service.

### **Process for Operational Assurance**

The Authority's Corporate Plan (which incorporates Integrated Risk Management Planning requirements) contains a commitment to improve firefighter safety and consists of a number of key components:

- Listening to staff and trade unions as to how fire-fighter safety can be further improved.
- Ensuring training is not just good enough but 'excellent' as staff deserve no less.
- Ensuring that systems for sharing information between staff performing fire safety roles and staff undertaking front line firefighting / rescue are seamless.
- Supporting decision making by Incident Commanders at operational incidents.

To ensure the right focus in the right areas, an Organisational Safety Assurance Team has been embedded into the organisational structure.

This team monitors and reports on a variety of activities linked to operational response. Key activities such as incident and exercise monitoring, station assessments and station visits form part of this framework. Working closely with the Organisation's policy and performance groups, the team works to ensure that the Organisation has a clear line of sight on trends and performance to address any identified areas of concern.

As part of the roll out of the new Fire Control System in 2016-17, the process for mobilising Officers, including as Operational Assurance Officers was introduced. These procedures are based on resource requirements for the relevant National Incident Type and by the size of the incident (the number of pumps in attendance).

### **National Learning**

In accordance with the Authority's commitment to Public and Staff Safety, the Operational Assurance Team ensures that the learning outcomes from tragic national events are fed back into the Service. The learning comes from other Fire & Rescue Services directly affected, The Coroners Regulations 28/29 reports (formerly known as 'Rule 43' reports) and recommendations to all Fire & Rescue Services by the Health and Safety Executive.

The Operational Assurance Team works with the Service to digest the information, review the Service's ways of working, feed in improvements from the lessons learned, raise awareness across Service personnel and provide any additional training events.

## **Commitment to Health & Safety**

The Authority recognises and accepts its responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and others who may be affected by its activities. To achieve this, the Service looks to meet all relevant requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (together with all other statutory provisions associated with it) and support staff in meeting their obligations under the Act.

Detailed health, safety and welfare specific arrangements are set out in harmonised Service policies developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance, including the Health and Safety Executive's HS(G)65 methodology. The policies provide employees with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face and the preventative and protective measures required to control them.

A robust system for actively monitoring the effectiveness of the Organisations Health and Safety Management procedures is in place. The process includes the completion of this year's submission to the RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Health & Safety Audits as well as a rolling three year programme of audits of all premises and departments.

A comprehensive accident investigation system ensures all safety events are reported and investigated with corrective action completed as required. The system provides for detailed analysis of safety events to identify trends which further enhances a proactive health and safety management system. This approach has enabled the Service to secure a 66% reduction in personal injuries between 2009 and 2016.

Following a comprehensive external RoSPA audit of its Health and Safety procedures in 2012, the Service was awarded with the highest Quality Safety Audit award possible at Level 5 (Diamond). Additionally, RoSPA informed the Service that it had achieved a second significant milestone by showing that it now complied with all requirements for certification in Occupational Health and Safety standard 18001. A subsequent RoSPA internal assessment completed in 2014 indicated that the Service had maintained its high level of performance.

## **Collaborative and Partnership Working**

In December 2012 Sir Ken Knight was commissioned by the Government to undertake a review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England.

Sir Ken Knight's "Facing the Future" report recognises that collaborative and partnership working are key elements of driving future efficiencies. The Authority has embraced this approach by combining [Devon and Somerset] in 2007 and by pursuing a number of other initiatives. In June 2016 Sir Ken Knight was invited to revisit the Service to externally review its progress against his recommendations. Sir Ken was highly complementary at the time of the visit and confirmed this through a press release.

The Service is committed to forming or joining partnerships that assist it achieving its organisational goals and contribute to its Mission of "Acting to Protect and Save".



In 2016 the Chief Fire Officer, Lee Howell, arranged the first meeting of the 'South West Emergency Services Collaboration' (SWESC) programme. SWESC involves eleven different emergency services in the South West with a focus on developing new and improved ways of working with a focus on better outcomes for communities, where public safety will be improved and efficiencies may be realised. The programme structure is based on '*Managing successful programmes*' methodology published by the cabinet office and consists of a Sponsoring group, Programme board and Working groups.

The vision of the SWESC is '*Working together to meet local needs*'. There are currently eight current programme categories, including; demand management, community risk, community resilience, strategic planning, enabling services, culture & leadership, early intervention and community engagement. There are currently four Regional Collaboration Agreements being piloted with a number of others being developed.

As well as the SWESC there are a number of local arrangements in place. The Service continues to strengthen its partnership working with other fire and rescue services, bluelight services, local authorities, community groups and other organisations by working to common objectives at the local, regional and national level. The improvement of community safety is a major priority and the Service also contributes to wider community objectives identified in Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

The Authority is a key participant in multi-agency liaison arrangements, joint exercises and the sharing of resources which contribute to an enhanced, effective and efficient incident response.

The Authority has recently worked in partnership with other fire and rescue authorities to secure "transformational" funding to enable:

- establishment of a Chief Fire Officers Association national procurement hub, with the National Collaborative Procurement Coordinator being hosted by the Service
- establishment of a web cloud for on call firefighter recruitment
- establishment of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited (FRIC), which commenced trading on 1 November 2015 and provides an alternative to conventional insurance arrangements for nine fire & rescue authorities. FRIC operates as a mutual arrangement and in addition to providing necessary insurance protection for fire and rescue activities has reported a trading surplus of £471,000 split across the nine fire and rescue authorities involved.

### **Network Fire Control Services Partnership**

The Network Fire Control Services Partnership is a significant collaboration between three fire services (Hampshire, Devon & Somerset and Dorset & Wiltshire) that delivered a new, networked fire control solution in April 2016. An Information Assurance Partnership Group meets regularly to review current and emerging risks to the information the system holds. A risk remediation plan is in place to ensure security risks are managed effectively. This supports the Authority's compliance with the Airwave Code of Connection.

## **Co-Responding**

The Authority has a formal partnership agreement in place with the South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust to provide a co-responder medical response (an initial medical provision to stabilise casualties in life-threatening emergencies prior to the arrival of the ambulance service).

## **National Resilience**

The Civil Contingencies Team is responsible for ensuring that the Service meets the Authority's obligations as laid out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Fire Services Act.

Effective arrangements are in place to collaborate with partners through Local Resilience Forums, the National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers network, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme, the Critical National Infrastructure and Safety Advisory Groups which support multi-agency planning activity.

The Service recently hosted the largest national resilience exercise in the country. Exercise "Rolling Thunder" was attended by 20 fire and rescue services national resilience teams from all over the UK, along with the Devon & Cornwall Police Disaster Victim Identification, Hazardous Area Response Teams, the Royal Air Force and local crews from the Service.

In addition the Service has created a specialist team of 40 volunteers to respond to Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFA).

The MTFA capability has been established within The Authority to support our partner agencies, of Police and Ambulance, in response to an MTFA incident within The Authority area or, under National Mutual Aid, to any other location within the UK as requested. The overall aim is to save life, and the two main strands of FRS support during this type of incident are for casualty care, and fire hazards.

The capability is made up of two key groups;

1. National Interagency Liaison Officers (known as NILOs)
2. Warm Zone Operatives

Both of the above groups undergo the same training, but fulfil specific functions within a response.

## **Specialist Operations**

The Specialist Operations programme was set up after the events of 11 September 2001, which prompted the Government to review and improve the UK's capacity to respond to the increased threats arising from a 'new dimension' of emergency. Such threats include major incidents involving chemical, biological or radioactive materials, which would require a mass decontamination of large numbers of people, or rescue from collapsed structures.

The programme is also a response to increased risks from non-terrorist emergencies, such as major flooding resulting from changing climate patterns. In the UK we have faced the challenge of large scale flooding, the fuel crisis and a major epidemic of Foot and Mouth Disease. We need to be able to cope with and recover from a range of unexpected disruptive events, for example building collapse, or natural disasters.

The programme is split into six sections, all directly linked to each other:

- Mass Decontamination
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Water Capability
- Long Term Management
- Command & Control
- Logistics

The Service has mobilising procedures and policies in place to be able to respond to incidents anywhere in the Country, and work closely with other emergency services and organisations to provide an integrated service.

Different levels of response apply depending on the severity and location of the incident. These levels have been set nationally by DCLG.

### **Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements**

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow mutual assistance arrangements to be agreed with neighbouring Services to improve resilience and capacity in border areas. The Authority has in place contractual agreements with both Cornwall and Avon fire and rescue authorities for response to life risk incidents. In addition, the Service shares Principal Officer cover with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service.

In addition to sections 13 and 16 there is a partnership agreement between the Authority and Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire fire and rescue authorities to provide a common, networked mobilising system with the principle of ensuring that the response mobilised to an incident is always the nearest and most appropriate resource/s based upon travel time and attributes (i.e. having the necessary skills or equipment) to deal with the incident.

### **Business Continuity and Resilience**

The Service business continuity process integrates business continuity management into day-to-day activities throughout the Service.

This, combined with the existence and maintenance of the business continuity plans, ensures that the Service can continue to function (including meeting the Authority's statutory duties as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004) should it ever experience a business interruption from internal or external influences.

A Contingency Response Team provides the mechanism for the delivery of continuity of service in all business continuity management events. Business continuity management plans have been tested in both “test” and live environments and the Service has secured considerable success in delivering an effective and efficient operational capability.

An Independent review completed by a recognised industry expert (Paragon Risk Management Services) has identified that the Service has a comprehensive approach to Business Continuity Planning with a full suite of documentation adjudged as best practice within the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited.

### **Establishing a Charity**



The charity SAFE South West continues to operate successfully as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, working closely with Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, local communities and other emergency services. SAFE South West develops new and innovative community safety initiatives across communities in Devon and Somerset, raises funding and provides grants, support and guidance to organisations and projects. Further information on SAFE South West can be found on the Charity's website – [www.safesouthwest.co.uk](http://www.safesouthwest.co.uk)

### **Red One Limited**



Red One Limited provides industrial subcontracting, standby rescue, fire equipment commissioning/testing, fire and safety training and consultancy services for businesses both within the UK and overseas. Red One Limited is a trading company of the Authority and all income generated by Red One is used for the specific purpose of maintaining and improving the ongoing safety of our local community and firefighters.

Further information on Red One Limited can be found on its website - [www.red1ltd.com](http://www.red1ltd.com)

### **Performance Management**

A new set of balanced measures have been developed to provide a comprehensive view of the performance of the Service. The new measures are designed to support the outcomes described in the Corporate Plan and focus on Service improvement. Reporting of the new measures will commence during 2017 and run alongside the existing performance reports to ensure continuity before the old measures are removed.

To support the delivery of an excellent service, a set of eight measures has been developed to assess performance against previous years and to facilitate comparison with other fire and rescue services throughout the UK. These measures also provide the public with the opportunity to see how the organisation is performing.

Quarterly performance reports are produced and scrutinised at the Audit & Performance Review Committee. These reports are also published on the organisation's Internet pages: [Our Performance](#)

### **Audit & Review**

The delivery of the annual Internal Audit Plan provides independent assurance to senior managers and Authority Members on the effectiveness of the risk management, internal control and governance arrangements in delivering organisational objectives.

The scope of audit work includes the review of operational activities including Response, Resilience, Protection, Prevention, Fire Control and all supporting departments.

### **External Assurance**

To support the internal assurances processes, the Chief Fire Officers Association in conjunction with the Local Government Association has developed the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit.

The organisation invited a Peer Challenge Team to complete a formal assessment in September 2014, the results of which have fed into the organisation's improvement programme.

The Service is using the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model (the Excellence Model), which is a comprehensive management framework, to help benchmark performance across other organisations. The Excellence Model helps the Service to recognise strengths and identify areas for improvement that are then fed into the Change & Improvement Programme. The Service successfully achieved the EFQM Committed to Excellence Award in November 2016. The assessment was carried out by two experienced assessors from the British Quality Foundation who awarded the highest award for this level of assessment.

## **5. Future Challenges**

The following future changes or challenges have been identified that may impact the Authority in the next 12 months:

- Responsibility for the fire and rescue service has moved from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office and the Home Secretary announced the intention for Fire Reform. The Service will need to ensure that it supports and meets the requirements coming from the reform. As part of this, a new inspection regime has been proposed and the Service is preparing to meet the new requirements.

- All public services are having to operate with less money and the Authority is no exception. Significant financial pressures require each and every aspect of Service activity and business to be reviewed to ensure that it meets the primary objective of making the public safer.
- The Policing and Crime Act 2017 features a new statutory duty on the emergency services to collaborate. It also provides for Police and Crime Commissioners to assume responsibility for fire and rescue services (subject to approval of an appropriate business case). Alternatively, Police and Crime Commissioners may request a seat on fire and rescue authorities (with voting rights) where governance has not transferred. Consultation is anticipated on secondary legislation to revise the Scheme Orders for combined authorities such as the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority that will also be required to facilitate this aspect.
- The collaborative landscape is complex. As previously mentioned, the Service plays a key part in, and was instrumental in the establishment of, the South West Emergency Services Collaboration (SWESC). This is overseen by the Emergency Services Forum which brings together the leading politicians and chief officers for all the emergency services in the South West.
- The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public bodies, when commissioning services, to consider how wider social, economic and environmental benefits might be secured. The Act is scheduled for review with the potential for extending its provisions. The Authority is currently preparing to publish a Social Value in Procurement Policy which will be consulted upon.
- In view of changing operational threats, the Service will be developing enhanced capability to assist reduce consequences of violent and unpredictable individual events, working with partners.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government has issued consultation proposals in May 2016 to update the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. It is currently analysing the feedback and any subsequent changes will need to be adopted by the Authority.
- Following on from the referendum result for the UK to leave the EU, announced on the 24th of June 2016, there is a risk of a period of economic uncertainty, which brings the potential for further periods of austerity, possibly combined with poor economic performance for the UK as a whole. Given that central government has offered a four year settlement covering 2016-17 through 2019-20 the risk to grant income is currently considered low, although if inflation increases greater efficiencies will be required. The most significant impact is likely to be on investment values and yields following the decision by the Bank of England to reduce interest rates to a record low of 0.25%, resulting in a reduction to investment income in 2016-17 and potentially beyond.
- From May 2018, The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will affect every UK organisation that processes personal data of EU residents. The regulation is more extensive in scope than the current Data Protection Act (DPA), and extends the rights of individuals and requires organisations to have clear policies and procedures to protect personal data by adopting technical and organisational measures.

## 6. Significant Governance, Operational or Financial Control Issues

Continuing appraisal of the governance and internal control mechanisms during the accounting period has identified the following internal control issues which the organisation will address in the next year via Action Plans:

- a. Integrated Service Asset Register – A Strategic Assets review is underway. Collaborative opportunities are being considered as part of the review.
- b. Performance Management – A new set of performance measures have been designed and agreed in preparation for the introduction of a new performance management system. A project reviewing the performance reporting and planning cycle of the Service has been initiated which will support the requirements of the new system which is likely to be procured in 2017/18.
- c. Policy Management – Work is currently being scoped to improve our Policy Management arrangements.
- d. On Call Additional Hours / Payments – The Service is currently running a number of pilot schemes to analyse the best mechanisms of rewarding on call availability whilst encouraging a better work/life balance for staff. These pilots are due to report in Q2 of 2017/18 and the outcomes will be used to support the Integrated Risk Management Plan of the Service in determining how on call resources are matched to the identified risks faced by the communities of Devon and Somerset.
- e. Advocates – A new community safety strategy has been developed to ensure that organisational priorities are being met and that the community safety strategy is appropriately focussed, resilient and sustainable. The widespread use of casual contracts for delivery staff, whilst providing some benefits has also brought challenges, inconsistency and risks to delivery. The delivery of an ambitious and effective community safety strategy will require investment; we will look to offer a range of contract types that are less reliant on casual staff and with improved training. Where advocate contracts are still the most appropriate form of contract, we will be developing better management process for using advocates and new training packages to ensure our advocates have the required skills.
- f. Collaboration – It is recognised that collaborative working is complex. Working with a range of partners to support a variety of activities will require the appropriate level of governance.
- g. Closure of Accounts – The Accounting and Audit Regulations 2015 introduced the requirement for the Authority to publish its financial statements by the end of July each year from the financial year 2017-18 (from September). The reduced timescales mean that there is an increased risk of material misstatement to the accounts. The finance team is preparing for this change via new ways of working and will be working closely alongside the External Auditors to provide assurance.

- h General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – Introduced to keep pace with the modern digital landscape, these Regulations in replace – with effect from 25 May 2018 - the current Data Protection Act (DPA) regime. The Regulations, which are more extensive in scope and application than the current DPA, extend the data rights of individuals and require organisations to develop clear policies and procedures (and adopt appropriate technical and organisational measures) to protect personal data. The government has confirmed that the UKs decision to leave the EU will not affect commencement of GDPR.

The Corporate Governance Group is satisfied that the issues identified are appropriate and that steps are already in place to address the improvement areas identified in this review. The Corporate Governance Group will regularly monitor the implementation and operation of these improvement activities as part of its quarterly meetings.

## **7. Framework Requirements**

The Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority is satisfied that the systems and processes that are in place across the organisation fulfil the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

**Lee Howell**



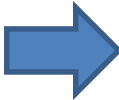

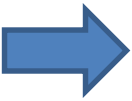
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**George Wheeler**

**CHAIRMAN, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**



**APPENDIX A TO REPORT APRC/17/12 – ACTION PLAN**

<b>Identified Issue</b>	<b>Action Needed</b>	<b>Direction of Travel since 2015-16</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Integrated Service Asset Register	An integrated service asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure all assets are effectively recorded and managed.		Head of Fleet	March 2018
Performance Management	The performance management framework that is currently under development needs to be finalised and rolled out.		Area Manager Strategy and Business Change	September 2017
Policy Management	A policy management process needs to be developed and embedded.		Head of Organisational Assurance	September 2017
On Call Additional Hours / Payments	The on call additional hours / payments process and supporting controls need to be reviewed. This is currently being progressed through the Gartan System Change Advisory Board.		Head of Human Resources	September 2017
Advocates	The Advocate initiative needs to be included in the scope of the 'root and branch' community safety review.		Area Manager Community Safety	December 2017
Collaboration	An appropriate level of governance needs to be applied to Collaborative working initiatives.	New	Executive Board	December 2017
Production and publication of financial statements (Annual Statement of Accounts)	The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require publication of final financial statements (Annual Statement of Accounts) by the end of July, commencing with the 2017-18 financial year.	New	Head of Finance	July 2018

<b>Identified Issue</b>	<b>Action Needed</b>	<b>Direction of Travel since 2015-16</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
General Data Protection Regulations	To ensure that the Service is fully compliant with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations	New	Head of Organisational Assurance	May 2018