



**DEVON &  
SOMERSET**  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

# Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority

2018-19 Annual Statement of  
Assurance

Audit & Review Manager

Devon and Somerset  
Fire & Rescue Authority

29/03/2019

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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.

### **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 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (May, 2018) sets out the requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish an annual Statement of Assurance.

This states:

*“Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. Every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework”* (Section 1.4)

*“The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan (e.g. the Fire and Rescue Plan – see 4.10 below) prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters. For PCC FRAs, this statement is subject to scrutiny by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel. The name of this statement differs across governance models (e.g. in the case of PCC FRAs it is called the ‘Fire and Rescue Statement’ and in Greater Manchester the ‘Fire and Rescue Declaration’).”* (Section 4.6.ii)

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 Services 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 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 submitted as a draft version 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 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.

## **2. Delivery of Functions**

### **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

### **Corporate Planning**

The Service has three key documents that combined sets out our strategic direction for the next 4 years; the integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), The Fire and Rescue Plan (F&RP), and the Safer Together Programme.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan is the means by which the Service assesses and analyses the risks faced by the communities we serve. The Plan gives a clear mandate to address those risks through the Prevention, Protection and Response activities of the Service.

The Fire and Rescue Plan contains the Service's Vision, Purpose, Values and Priorities. It describes the challenges we face as an organisation, for example, the financial challenge and how we propose to address those challenges setting out our strategic intent for the key areas of the organisation.

Safer Together, our change and improvement programme, is derived from the IRMP and the F&RP. The programme contains the prioritised work streams for the next 3-4 years that as a Service we must deliver if we are to achieve real improvements in the Service we provide to our communities whilst making the financial savings required.

Having the three distinct documents will facilitate greater transparency and clarity, to better achieve Service priorities and the implementation of change and improvement.

They are underpinned by Annual Directorate Statements which clearly reflect the priorities set by the Fire Authority (the F&RP and IRMP) and a series of Group and Service plans which set out our work for the financial year. The achievement of the objectives in the Fire and Rescue Plan, IRMP and the Safer Together Programme will be monitored by the Executive Board. The Directorate, Group and Service plans will be monitored at least quarterly by the respective management teams.

In order to embed the Service's approach to managing strategic and operational risks, risk management has been integrated within the planning process so that it is part of direction setting, activity and resource planning and activity monitoring. The process includes the identification, assessment and recording of risks and mitigating activities which will be incorporated into Directorate and Service plans.

Programme and Project risks will be subject to the governance arrangements established for our Safer Together Programme, including a Business Design Authority.

The Service's planning framework requires all the plans to be reviewed, updated and refocused where required annually.

### **Fleet, Equipment and Water Supplies**

In 2018-19 the Service agreed a Fleet, Equipment and Water supply strategy setting out the organisational responsibilities to ensure a safe, fit for purpose fleet, for what is the largest fleet capability of a fire and rescue service outside London. The strategy sets out our intention for supporting a new service delivery model, modernising our fleet management operations and collaboration and innovation to reflect an increasingly diverse workforce and the environmental aims of our communities. The Service has a 15 year replacement programme with the budget approved by the Authority for fleet which details vehicles and year of replacement. The Service follows the NFCC (CFOA) Best Practice Manual for the maintenance of Fire Service Vehicles. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act the Service has a duty to secure Water. Adopting the National Guidance Document for provision of Water for fire-fighting purposes (2017) the Service operates a risk based approach for the

57,000 hydrants management and maintenance requirements. Priorities in 2019/20 are to progress the fleet capital replacement programme, review of requirements for all fleet types and to implement new asset management systems and processes.

### **Operational Debriefs**

An operational debrief strategy and policy is in place, and currently subject to review to ensure consistency with new national guidance. 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**

Our Fire & Rescue Plan 2018-2022 contains a commitment to improve staff safety and consists of a number of key components:

- Considering new technologies and equipment in our service design to support staff safety, provide better firefighting tactics, and increase inclusive and efficient ways of working.
- Ensuring our staff are appropriately supported and well trained, providing risk-based training and development that is centred around safety-critical elements.
- Making sure our firefighters remain fit and take a more holistic approach to health, safety and wellbeing across the whole organisation.

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, and our Training Academy, 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.

Following every incident a "hot debrief" should take place to review what happened and why, and to discuss areas that went particularly well and areas that didn't. A new process has been introduced to allow Operational crews to submit learning points from these debriefs.

### **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, via the National Operational Learning (NOL) portal, 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. A process has been implemented to enable efficient management of learning and outcomes.

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.

### **Collaborative and Partnership Working and National Roles**

DSFRS is committed to forming or joining partnerships that assist it achieving its organisational goals and contribute to our purpose "we are here to Protect and Save".

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 prevention and protection work is a major priority and the Service also contributes to wider community objectives identified in Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

Throughout the last year, collaborative work has continued to grow through the South West Emergency Services Collaboration (SWESC). This is a formal collaborative partnership with a governance structure that is chaired by the chair of our Fire Authority and involves SWAST, Devon and Cornwall Police, Avon and Somerset Police, Dorset Police, Wiltshire Police, Gloucestershire Police, Cornwall FRS, Avon FRS, Dorset and Wiltshire FRS, Gloucestershire FRS, HM Coastguard and the RNLI. A number of collaborative arrangements have been put in place, this includes estates sharing, joint operational officers, support for the ambulance service in gaining entry to properties where people have collapsed behind locked doors and search operations for high risk missing persons.

Following the introduction of the Policing and Crime act (2017), CFO Lee Howell took on a new challenge, leading the Office for Data Analytics (formerly known as Multi Agency Integrated Services Hub). This is a small team who have the resources, technology and expertise, to use business intelligence and predictive analytics, to improve collaboration between the emergency services in the south-west, to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

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

- Establishment of an NFCC national procurement hub (now the Project Management Office for the Fire Commercial Transformation Programme), with the National Project Lead being hosted by the Service.
- Establishment of a web cloud for on call firefighter recruitment.

Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC), the mutual protection provider set up and run by eleven Fire and Rescue Authorities, has completed its third year of operations culminating in surplus being achieved every year since it was formed, with a current total of £833k. This is a significant result for FRIC and shows what can be achieved when fire authorities collaborate in an innovative and mutually beneficial manner. Surplus generated would otherwise have gone out of the public sector, instead it can be retained to support

further improvements and drive better risk management and ultimately, deliver lower costs for FRIC's members.

The continued success is due primarily to lower than expected claims experience, which is set at the lower range of scenarios predicted. Another contributing factor has been a drive to improve motor claims reporting times, enabling third party capture for "at fault claims". Evidence shows that third party costs can be as much as two thirds lower if contact is made with third party claimants quickly and claims handled by the Mutual rather than third party insurers.

### **Networked Fire Services Partnership**

The Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) is a significant collaboration between three fire services (Hampshire, Devon & Somerset and Dorset & Wiltshire) initially set up to deliver a networked fire control solution which was achieved in April 2016. An Information Governance Partnership Group meets regularly to review the required governance procedures that are required under legislation and monitor current and emerging risks to the information the system holds. A risk remediation plan is in place to ensure security risks are managed effectively and there is an annual IT health check for assurance. This supports the Authority's compliance with the Airwave Code of Connection, and the upcoming Emergency Services Network (ESN) which is due to replace the Airwave service.

Subsequently the NFSP has committed to scoping further collaboration opportunities that will support all 3 Services in achieving increased effectiveness and efficiency as well as sharing and developing good practice with regards to staff issues.

### **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).

## **3. National Resilience**

The Emergency Planning 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.

Previously the Service had created a specialist team of volunteers to respond to Marauding Terrorist Attacks (MTA). The Service, following changes in the National Planning Assumptions, has supplemented this capability with a further 16 specialist responders based at Plympton funded via a Home Office Grant.



The MTA capability has been established within The Authority to support our partner agencies, of Police and Ambulance, in response to an MTA 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 management.

The capability is made up of two key groups;

1. National Interagency Liaison Officers (known as NILOs)
2. Specialist Response Team (SRT) Operatives

Both of the above groups undergo specialist training for responding to the MTA threat, but fulfil different 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 The Home Office.

### **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 our neighbouring fire and rescue authorities for response to incidents requiring their support.

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**

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) has a Strategic Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and a number of Tactical plans in place to ensure that it is prepared for a range of new threats and challenges. Business Continuity Management (BCM) processes are also undertaken so that the organisation can continue the delivery of services following a disruptive incident.

A business continuity exercise for senior management took place in July 2018, and a corporate business continuity exercise was held in March 2019. An outcome of this was to appoint a full time Business Continuity Manager in December 2018 who is responsible for providing specialist advice and guidance on BCM issues, including the co-ordination, development, implementation and review of BC plans, processes and procedures. The Business Continuity Manager also has the responsibility of meeting with identified Directorate representatives regarding the review of Business Impact Analysis and plans as required.

DSFRS undertakes training and exercising in compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

At least one corporate Business Continuity exercise will be held annually following which a formal report will be distributed highlighting 'what went well' and potential areas for improvement.

The service embraces the principles of 'Plan, Do, Check, and Act' and aligns with some aspects of the ISO: 22301 (Societal Security – Business Continuity management systems and requirements).

A Contingency Response Team is responsible for the delivery of continuity in all Business Continuity incidents, in addition to an Operational Support Team which can be activated as required.

## **4. 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.

This statement refers to the governance arrangements that have been in place for the Authority up to the year ended 31 March 2019 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.

### **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, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The 2018-19 review has identified 25 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 2018-19 financial year, the Authority comprised 26 Members 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. During the 2018-19 financial year, the Authority operated with the following permanent committees:-
  - Resources Committee (7 Members)
  - Human Resources Management & Development Committee (7 Members);
  - Audit & Performance Review Committee (7 Members);
  - Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee (7 Members);
  - Chief Fire Officers’ Appraisal Panel (4 Members);
  - Standards Committee (7 Members plus consultation as required with an Independent person).

Terms of reference for each of these committees 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.
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
  - 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 2018-19 Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Audit & Performance Review Committee on the 26 April 2018. The plan sets out the combined scope of internal audit work to be completed by the Audit & Review manager, the Information Assurance team, and Devon Audit Partnership. A total of 345 internal audit days were utilised to provide assurance to the Authority relating to the management of risks and associated operational activities. The Audit & Review manager, the Information Assurance 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. This happened 27<sup>th</sup> July 2018, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018, and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019. 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. Service risk registers are populated and reviewed periodically. This process in turn informs the Corporate Risk Register. In order to embed the Service's approach to managing strategic and operational risks, risk management is being integrated within the planning process so that it is part of direction setting, activity and resource planning and activity monitoring. The process includes the identification, assessment and recording of risks and mitigating activities which will be incorporated into Directorate and Service plans.
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. The Corporate Risk Register is presented to the Audit & Performance Review committee every six months.
11. The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk.
12. The 2018-19 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 2018-19.
13. The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative scheme. A new data matching exercise has been completed in 2018-19, and the results will be reviewed throughout 2019-20.
14. The Service has a Strategic Health & Safety Committee which meets quarterly 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 Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA), the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and UNISON, are invited to sit on this Committee.
15. In 2018-19 the Health & Safety team trialled a new, specific Fire & Rescue service Safety Management System audit process, designed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, with a review completed by Devon Audit Partnership. The results of this will be examined and will help determine the approach to be used in future years.

16. The Operational Assurance Team is now embedded in the organisational structure and culture. As part of the 'Safe Person Concept' the team monitors and reports on a variety of activities linked to Operational Response.
17. The Organisational Safety Manager attends the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) H&S meetings & chairs the regional NFCC H&S meetings.
18. A governance framework has been prepared for programme and project management, which defines roles and responsibilities, and outlines the methodology which will be applied, as the organisation embarks on the transformational change programme, "Safer Together".
19. Delivery of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Compliance Plan has resulted in the establishment of a Personal Information Management System for the Service. This is supported by a legally required Record of Processing Activity (ROPA) which provides Service-wide visibility of the personal data that is processed and why. Activities have been risk assessed to prioritise future assurance work. A compliance gap analysis has been completed and whilst this has identified that the majority of milestones are well established, there is future work planned to further embed this within the organisation. A compliance monitoring framework has been established which is informing the Information Assurance (IA) Plan and an internal audit by the Devon audit Partnership of GDPR compliance has been commissioned which will also inform the plan.
20. Contract Standing Orders (approved by the Authority at its Annual Meeting) 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 Authority website and Service intranet for the Service staff. Priorities for 2018-19 have been to support the NFCC (fire) Commercial Transformation Programme (FCTP) and collaboration opportunities as well as deliver service priorities and savings.
21. The Procurement Team manage contracts above £20,000 to ensure compliance with EU and UK legislation and best practice; to 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 Fleet and Procurement is the NFCC Commercial Category lead for Fleet as part of the NFCC FCTP, who 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. The Corporate Procurement Manager is also the NFCC National Procurement Lead as part of the NFCC FCTP.  
  
Within 2018-19 the Procurement team have been responsible for contract management of the NFCC's Emergency Response Vehicles framework, and the NFCC's Respiratory Protective Equipment framework on behalf of the fire sector and led on collaborative arrangements for Road traffic collision equipment (RTC), Employee Payroll, Firefighter pensions, and Pensioners payroll contracts have also been implemented, on a collaborative basis with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.
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, which have been enhanced following appointment of independent board members
23. Corporate commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion are set out in the Fire & Rescue Plan, and in our People Strategy. These set out the changes needed to support the new

Integrated Risk Management Plan and HMICFRS inspection. The Fire & Rescue Plan and People Strategy 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. These also state how the service will meet the needs of different communities and vulnerable people in order to reduce risk. The HRMD committee monitors progress on the linked Diversity & Inclusion plan every three 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. The process was updated in 2018-19 to reflect the latest legal developments. Implementation of a People Impact Assessment has broadened the scope to include wider impacts on people including data protection, health & safety and safeguarding. Mandatory equalities training was rolled out across the service in 2018-19 including a new “understanding unconscious bias” e-learning package.

25. Our Values were revised during a series of workshops with employees in 2017. These set out what the Service stands for and what matters most to employees and the Organisation. These are:

- We are proud to help
- We are honest
- We are respectful
- We are working together

A cultural audit took place in 2018-19 which aimed to establish how well understood and accepted our values are across DSFRS, as well as providing an objective review of our decision making process, levels of staff empowerment, and to help inform our new Fairness/Dignity at Work policy. The results of this audit will also be used to help inform review and development of other policy and processes in 2019-20 and assist in monitoring staff satisfaction levels.

The 2018-19 review by the Authority has concluded that there are good systems, procedures and checks in place to manage the Authority’s governance arrangements.

## 5. 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 May with the final audited Statement of Accounts published by the end of July.

### 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 2018-19 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 audits, and detailed review of potential risk areas identified.

A full competitive procurement process was undertaken in 2018-19 to ensure that the appointed internal audit providers delivered appropriate value and quality; this process awarded Devon Audit Partnership with a 3 year contract to continue providing internal audit for the authority.

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 2018-19.

The 2018-19 year end Internal Audit report concluded that the systems in operation within the Service demonstrated a good level of internal control.



Agreed management actions are monitored through the Service's Assurance tracking process alongside the outcomes of External Audits, Internal Audits, External reviews, security events, and safety events.

### **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 Fleet and Procurement and Corporate Procurement Manager 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).

### **Financial Planning**

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, reserves capital and commercial strategies 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.

## 6. Workforce

### Training and Development - Academy

DSFRS, through its Academy, has enabled the delivery of quality assured training to its staff to improve safety and overall effectiveness, which is underwritten by the ISO 9001 (2015) Quality Management Framework.

Over the past 12 months significant changes have been implemented to how training is structured and delivered. We have moved away from a 'school' structure, and the instructors are now able to deliver training more locally. In addition to this, 35 Associate instructors have been recruited from existing station based personnel. These employees will receive further development to enable them to assist with delivery of local training.

This will enable our firefighting workforce to get the most out of their drill nights and training events, by participating in location based training and assessments, on the subjects that are most required by them.

The new functional leads within the training department will take responsibility for:

- **Quality assurance** – Reviewing governance arrangements and standards in training, process mapping, permit to teach standards and Quality assurance of our training activities.
- **Training Assets** – Management of estates, equipment and vehicles which are used for training, management of the learning library (which includes e-learning and course development), maintaining the asset register and liaison with other key departments such as the Health & Safety team, the Estates department and the Fleet & Equipment department.
- **Planning & Resourcing** – Planning, scheduling and updating the training and event programme, and includes allocation of required resources, from venues and equipment to trainers and assessors.
- **Customer Service & Administration** – Supporting the management of information assets and general administration functions to support the training teams. This will also involve liaising with external agencies, suppliers and partners. Financial and reporting functions will also be the responsibility of this functional area.
- **Training delivery** – Responsible for the delivery of training events and assessments as required.

DSFRS have invested in new vehicles to assist in the delivery of training, such as the Mobile Safety and Height and Confined Spaces (SHACS) training vehicle.

The Academy have also released a new e-learning system that links with other DSFRS Workbench applications. This utilises a "single-sign in" approach to ensure that it is fully accessible to all users, and uses an intuitive system which will target training towards the users.

DSFRS have also been working with an external provider to develop a training needs assessment algorithm, to ensure that our staff get the right training, at the right time, in the right place.

The service have developed new applications/systems which provides better accessibility and transparency when employees are checking their core competencies (the key training that they require in order to ensure they are completing their job in the most appropriate manner).

## **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 and the principles that should be applied to help ensure that firefighters maintain the standards of personal fitness required to safely perform their duties and that they are supported in remaining fit and in continued employment.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have a Firefit Steering Committee who provide guidance and recommendations to the UK Fire & Rescue Service on Fitness Standards, Protocols and Policy.

The Service has a Physical Fitness Policy and three dedicated Fitness Advisors in post to support Firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards that are required. The Service has also introduced Fitness Advocates who are existing operational staff that provide an additional fitness role to the Service and are qualified to a minimum of a Level 2 Gym Instructor.

There is an opportunity for DSFRS to improve and test information quality regarding this subject, to enable comparison to other Fire & Rescue services.

## **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 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 a rolling three year programme of audits of all premises and departments, provision of accident and near miss incident data to the Strategic Safety Committee every two months for review, annual completion of premises Health, Safety and Welfare Assessment Report Forms, and a

means to fully audit the organisations Health and Safety management systems on a 2 yearly basis.

In addition to this, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) selected DSFRS as one of six Fire and Rescue Services to be inspected in 2018-19. The combined findings celebrated a number of areas of good practice across the Fire and Rescue Services inspected, as well as identifying some areas where all the services could improve, such as reducing reliance on paperwork. This process enabled identification and sharing of good practice across all participating services.

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.

### **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)

## **7. Inspection, Intervention and Accountability**

### **How we measure and monitor our performance**

Significant work has been completed in 2018-19 to ensure that we are able to effectively review our performance in a way that is meaningful and practical. This work includes developing a suite of performance measures, setting performance targets and planning the reporting approaches for these. The below explains each of these in more detail.

#### **Performance Measures**

Effective performance management is key to delivering services successfully, it ensures a focus on what matters most and enables improvement. The Service's performance measures help us to know what current performance actually is and what needs to change to get us where we want to be.

DSFRS Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) represent the Service as a whole and are aligned to strategic priorities and focus on driving improvements. They form the basis of

regular performance monitoring reports to the Fire Authority, Executive Board (EB) and the Extended Leadership Team (ELT).

It is essential that the DSFRS KPIs are accounted for within the service planning process, clearly identifying the services responsible for the achievement of the targets set against the relevant DSFRS KPIs. In some cases we have additional Directorate, programme or service level indicators that are developed as part of the service planning process to monitor operational progress.

All performance indicators are reviewed annually to ensure they are still relevant.

### **Performance Targets**

Targets will be set at all levels of the organisation, from the strategic DSFRS KPIs to the targets set for individuals within appraisals. Progress has been made on the development of a new appraisal system. Targets for the DSFRS KPIs will be discussed within the Service to review the resource implications and then be agreed by the EB and the Audit Performance and Review Committee (APRC) before being widely communicated.

In addition by the beginning of the financial year managers will also set forward targets for all other local PI's within their service. When setting targets managers will set them for improvement and where possible base them on trend or benchmarking information.

All targets will be reviewed at least annually and restated to reflect progress or deterioration.

### **Reporting Performance**

Regular reporting against our plans and performance measures help to ensure a sustained focus on those things that matter most, resulting in delivery of our priorities and improvement agenda.

#### **6 monthly / Quarterly**

Reports of the key measures will be produced in a simple format using line / trend charts and graphs and will include interpretation, analysis and any actions to be taken. The audience for these reports are the Fire Authority, APRC, Executive Board/Extended Leadership Team and Group Commands.

Reports focus on exceptions, i.e. those measures that are exceeding target and those not on target. This encourages celebration of success and sharing of good practice along with discussion on actions needed to rectify poor performance.

#### **Live**

Reporting using dashboards of a small number of measures primarily for Service Delivery Management, Group Commands and Stations.

### **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.

## **HMICFRS**

In summer 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) took on inspections of England's fire & rescue services, assessing and reporting on their efficiency, effectiveness and leadership, and changed their name to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) reflect this change.

A national inspection programme was designed and in order to prepare for this, the 45 Fire & Rescue services in England were asked to provide the inspectorate with information and evidence to support their upcoming assessments.

At DSFRS an Inspection Readiness team was established, to work closely with HMICFRS, and to ensure that they have everything they need to conduct a fair assessment. Throughout 2018-19 this team have liaised regularly with HMICFRS, and have supported other departments in the gathering of evidence. DSFRS's self-assessment has been submitted to HMICFRS. The inspection is due to be completed in June 2019, and the outcome will be made publicly available towards the end of 2019.

## **8. Future Challenges**

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

- Aligning resources to risk and prioritising prevention and protection activity.
- The existing shift patterns and some work routines are not always meeting our needs and the changing risks within our communities.
- By 2024, it is likely that we will need to have reduced our costs by £8.4 million and we need to plan a balanced budget that accommodates this.
- Making sure our workforce are clear on the organisation's future direction.
- Further developing contracts and career paths to support inclusivity ensuring that the service has a workforce that reflects communities served.
- Sharing information in a secure and meaningful way, considering cyber security and data protection risks.

## 9. 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. Performance measures: Reporting against the full suite of our agreed performance measures. Our Strategic Analyst team and our ICT department are working closely on developing solutions to this.
- b. ICT systems continuity: Failure of ICT systems is a risk which would impact on Business continuity, and our ability to access key records. Our Business Continuity Manager is reviewing system restoration plans with our ICT department and developing a regular Business Continuity exercise programme.
- c. Targeted negative media: This presents reputational risk and impacts ability to provide public reassurance. An out-of-hours communication rota has been established, and Head of Communication attends strategic meetings to support emerging issues.

## 10. Conclusion

The Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority is satisfied that the issues identified in Section 6 above are appropriate and that steps are already in place to address the improvement areas identified in this review. The Audit & Performance Review Committee will regularly monitor the implementation and operation of these improvement activities as part of its quarterly meetings.

Additionally, 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.

**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**CHAIR, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**APPENDIX A TO REPORT APRC/19/11 – ACTION PLAN**

<b>Identified Issue</b>	<b>Action Needed</b>	<b>Direction of Travel since 2017-18</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Integrated Service Asset Register (Fleet and Operational Equipment)	An integrated fleet and operational service asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure all assets are effectively recorded and managed to provide consistent data to inform replacement plans and ensure operational assets are fit for purpose.	↑	Head of Fleet & Procurement	Part of the safer Together Change and Improvement Programme. Key milestones and project plan in development.
Performance Management	The performance management framework that is currently under development needs to be finalised and rolled out.	↑	Head of Organisational Assurance	December 2019
Policy Management	A policy management process needs to be developed and embedded.	↑	Director of Corporate Services	April 2020
Collaboration	An appropriate level of governance needs to be applied to Collaborative working initiatives.	↑	Executive Board	September 2019
Clinical Governance	Governance arrangements need to be more clearly defined around the care issued by the DSFRS, to casualties.	↑	Head of Service Delivery : functions	Currently being reviewed
Breathing Apparatus maintenance	The existing disjointed approach to breathing apparatus maintenance is to be investigated.	↑	Head of Procurement and fleet	August 2019
Terrorist/cyber & Data protection	The international increase in cyber attacks presents a growing risk to DSFRS, however, an IT Security Officer is in role, and work is underway to continue aligning our Information Security Practices to the international standard ISO 27001.	↑	Head of Organisational Assurance	December 2019



Identified Issue	Action Needed	Direction of Travel since 2017-18	Lead Officer	Target Date
Delayed or non-attendance of Ambulances	There have been instances of delayed ambulance attendance at scenes, which have been raised with SWAST.	↑	Head of Collaboration	Complete
GDPR	The General Data Protection Regulation came into full force from 25th May 2018. There will be an ongoing challenge to DSFRS to ensure that we maintain compliance, and the Information Assurance team have been working to inform the wider service of their responsibilities under this regulation.	↑	Head of Organisational Assurance	Complete