



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

2014-15 Annual Statement of
Assurance

Corporate Governance Group

Devon & Somerset
Fire & Rescue Service

28/09/2015

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1. Background

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Requirements

The revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish Statements 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.

Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 Requirements

The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (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 for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. 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 2011* 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.

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Approach

The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (the Service) has established a Corporate Governance group to periodically review the governance arrangements. The group consists of Managers from the following teams:

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

It was 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'.

2. Financial Assurance

Statement of Accounts

It is a statutory requirement under the *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011* 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 the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (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 ensure that External Audit requirements are met, the draft Statement of Accounts is produced 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 regional procurement exercise, Grant Thornton has been 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 2014-15 financial statements
- Proposed opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Proposed Value for Money conclusion

Internal Audit Arrangements

To support the External Audit process, the Service has in place a robust system for Internal Auditing. The Audit & Review Team has worked with Senior Managers and Members to develop a strategic and annual Internal Audit plan delivered across the organisation. The plan includes a contract with the Devon Audit Partnership to deliver specialised key financial and ICT audits.

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 2014-15.

The 2014-15 year end Internal Audit report concluded that the Service had an effective control framework for managing the key financial systems. The Service received High Standard audit reports for both its Key Financial Systems and Treasury Management activities in 2014-15.

Data Transparency

The Service conforms with the CLG 'Local Government Transparency Code 2015' for releasing public data. The following activities are in place:

- A Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- The publication of our annual statement of accounts
- The publication of all expenditure over £500
- The publication of all Government Procurement Card transactions
- The publication of Procurement Information
- The publication of local authority land
- The publication of Trade Union facility time
- The publication of all senior employee salaries and the pay multiple
- The publication of fraud investigations
- The publication of Members allowances and expenses
- The publication of External Audit reports
- The publication of all committee reports (other than those where a statutory exemption for publication applies).

3. Governance

Code of Corporate Governance

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE (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 www.dsfire.gov.uk or can be obtained from the Clerk to the Authority. This Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 (as amended) in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

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 2015 and up to the date of consideration of the statement of accounts.

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 the executive managers within the Authority 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 2014/15 review identified the following key elements to the Authority's governance arrangements:

- a. The Authority (a combination of the former Devon Fire & Rescue Authority and Somerset County Council as a fire 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 the Executive Board.

- b. The Authority is made up of 25 Members¹ appointed by the constituent authorities. In addition, there is an “independent person” appointed in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.
- c. The Authority operates with the following committee structure:-
- Resources Committee
 - Human Resources Management & Development Committee;
 - Audit & Performance Review Committee;
 - Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee;
 - Determinations & Dispensations Committee;
 - Commercial Services Committee;
 - Capital Programme Working Party.

Terms of reference for each of these bodies have been approved and are subject to annual review.

- d. 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 organisations 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 organisation’s strategy for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and monitors the organisations performance against those measures contained in the approved Corporate Plan (which incorporates the organisation’s integrated risk management plan).
- e. The constitutional governance arrangements are contained in the following documents:-
- Members Roles and Responsibilities
 - Standing orders
 - Financial Regulations
 - Treasury Management Policy
 - Procurement and Contract Regulations
 - 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

¹ Total membership can fluctuate, annually, between 24 and 25 Members owing to operation of the apportionment formula (by reference to the relative electoral rolls of the constituent authorities) in the Combination Scheme Order.

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 or best practice, as relevant, to ensure they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.

- f. 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.
- g. The statutory functions of the Proper Financial and Monitoring Officers provide a source of assurance that the organisation's systems of governance and internal control are effective and being complied with.
- h. The 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Audit and Performance Review Committee on the 7 May 2014. 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 346 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.
- i. 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.
- j. The Health & Safety system includes a risk management module. Service risk registers are populated and reviewed periodically. 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.
- k. The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk.
- l. The 2014/15 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 2014/15.
- m. The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative scheme. No significant issues have arisen to date from the data matches in 2014/15.
- n. The Service has a Health & Safety Joint 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 Service (the Fire Brigades Union [FBU], the Retained Firefighters Union [RFU], the Fire Officers Association [FOA] and UNISON are invited to sit on this Committee.

- o. A Health & Safety Audit Plan has been rolled out to ensure all Devon & Somerset premises are audited against Health & Safety service policies.
- p. An Operational Assurance Team has been established. As part of the 'Safe Person Concept' the Operational Safety Assurance Team monitors and reports on a variety of activities linked to Operational Response.
- q. The Organisational Safety Assurance Manager attends the National Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) H&S Meetings & chairs the Regional CFOA H&S meetings.
- r. A single business change programme has been established that applies programme and project management approaches and standards to corporate projects, including changes as a result of the corporate planning proposals. The programme is supported by the newly assembled Service Development Team who are leading on transformational operational projects.
- s. The Information Assurance Manager is responsible for managing our information governance processes. This year has seen us maintain our Public Services Network (PSN) certification, roll out a new accreditation process for new systems, upgrades and changes and establish an internal Information Security Forum. Information assurance policies are in place and a supporting culture is being developed to ensure compliance with the Security Policy Framework and the Data Protection Act.
- t. The Procurement Team has applied a category management approach for managing organisational spends. This has included prioritising high spend areas and identifying any significant spend areas that are currently not managed through a central contract.
- u. A Contract Management Framework and supporting guidance material has been published on the organisational intranet. Contract management training has been provided to all key stakeholders across the different service areas. The Contracts Database Register is up to date and maintained by the Procurement Department and provides the DSFRS information requirements for Data Transparency.
- v. Red One Ltd has been established to allow the Service to deliver commercial activities within the legislative framework that applies. The Authority has taken legal advice to ensure compliance with governance arrangements.
- w. The Service Equality Plan for 2012-2016 - 'Safer Lives, Brighter Futures' - sets out the Service's commitment and approach to equalities, both in the workplace and the community. It sets out what the Service needs to do to meet its legal responsibilities and to achieve the 'excellent' level of the national Fire & Rescue Service Equality Framework. The plan is monitored by the corporate Equality Steering Group which has representatives from across the Service, including the staff networks and representative bodies.
- x. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Governance Officer Group, comprising of Service Managers from Audit & Review, Finance, Democratic Services, Risk & Insurance, Procurement, Information Assurance and Operations meets on a quarterly basis to review the Authority's governance arrangements.

The review has concluded that there are good systems, procedures and checks in place to manage the Authority's governance arrangements.

4. Operational Assurance

Statutory Responsibility

Fire and rescue authorities function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents setting this out 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 Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service has the following internal assurance processes and activities to ensure its statutory responsibilities are met:

Corporate Planning

The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service 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 of 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.

The strategic direction described in the Corporate Plan is expanded on in the Operating Strategies. 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 describe the activities undertaken in each Department. The activities are prioritised and the non-pay costs identified to inform the annual revenue budget setting cycle.

Training and Development

In recent years, the Training Department has carried out a thorough review of what it does and how it is structured. The development of our Training Academy has enabled the delivery of quality assured training to the organisations staff and to others to support the organisation's commercial ambition. Activities are focused on learning and developing rather than just 'training'.

The Academy provides training for other fire services and industry on behalf of the Services trading company, Red One Limited. The commercial work is scheduled using spare capacity or utilising people employed on separate contracts to provide training in this area. The money generated is re-invested into the Service and contributes towards improving facilities and equipment. The Academy's key priority is, and always will be, the safety of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service firefighters.

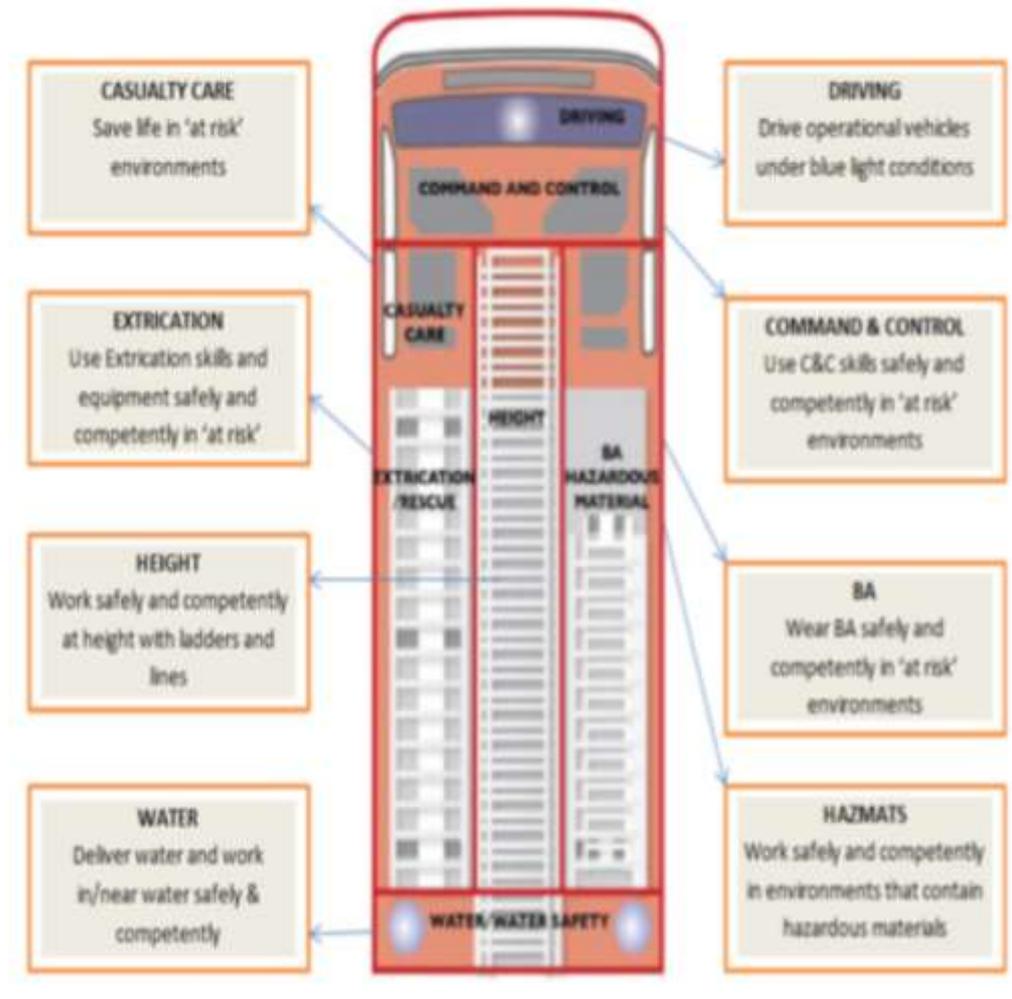
Working towards a three year plan, the Academy adds value by delivering training to ensure the Service has a safe and competent workforce, able to meet the expectations of those that live, work and visit Devon and Somerset.

As part of the management of training, the Service operates an annual Training Needs Analysis process designed to capture the organisational training and the role development needs of all staff.

Operational Licence

A new 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.



1. Driving
2. Breathing Apparatus
3. Command and Control
4. Casualty Care
5. Hazardous Materials
6. Water and Water Safety
7. Extrication
8. Height

The Operational Licence will be made up of the eight elements relevant to an individual's role which will allow them to ride, drive or be in charge of an appliance or respond as a Tactical or Strategic Command Officer. It will allow anyone with an Operational Licence 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 will be managed on a risk basis and will only remain relevant to an individual whilst their work base remains at that location.

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

Process for Operational Assurance

The Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) incorporates a commitment to improve firefighter safety, which is summed up by the 'zero harm' campaign consisting 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 systems for sharing information between fire safety and operational staff are seamless.
- Supporting incident commanders making difficult decisions at operational incidents.

To ensure the right focus in the right areas, an Organisational Safety Assurance Team (OSAT) has been established by combining operational staff with the former Health & Safety Team.

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.

Commitment to Health & Safety

The organisation 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 organisation looks to meet all relevant requirements of the Health & Safety at Work etc 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 Executives (HSE'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 bi-annual Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Health & Safety Audits as well as a rolling 3 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 in place enables 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 48% reduction in personal injuries between 2009 and 2014.

Following a comprehensive external RoSPA audit of its Health and Safety procedures in 2012, the organisation was awarded with the highest Quality Safety Audit (QSA) award possible at Level 5 (Diamond). Additionally, RoSPA informed the organisation 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 (OHSAS) 18001. A subsequent RoSPA internal assessment completed in 2014 indicated that the Service had maintained its level of performance.

Partnership Working

Sir Ken Knight's "Facing the Future" report recognises that collaborative and partnership working are key elements of driving future efficiencies. The Service has embraced this approach by combining in 2007 and continuing to seek opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations, community groups, etc and to collaborate with other organisations where appropriate.

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". The Service continues to strengthen its partnership working around common objectives at the local, regional and national level. Improving community safety is a major priority and the Service also contributes to wider community objectives identified in Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

The Service has recently worked in partnership with other fire and rescue services to submit collaborative bids for transformational funding. This has resulted in the following successful bids:

- A project with Kent and Essex Fire & Rescue Services to develop a national procurement hub.
- A project with Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Services to develop a web cloud ready service for on-call firefighter recruitment.
- A project with Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Services to recruit and train 50 on-call fire fighters to improve protection and prevention and emergency intervention to local communities.
- A project working with 8 other Fire & Rescue Services to establish an insurance pooling arrangement with additional secondary insurance to cover extreme events. This enterprise is available to all fire and rescue services. .

The Service has a formal partnership agreement in place with the South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) 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).

The Service is involved in effective multi-agency liaison arrangements, joint exercises and the sharing of resources which contribute to an enhanced incident response.

Effective arrangements are in place to collaborate with partners through Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), the National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILO) network, the Joint

Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and Safety Advisory Groups which support multi-agency planning activity.

The Service recently hosted the largest National Resilience exercise. 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 (HART), the Royal Air Force and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service local crews.

Establishing a Charity

The Service has helped establish a Charitable Incorporated Organisation called SAFE South West. This new charity was set up to work with communities and the Service to develop community safety initiatives across communities in Devon and Somerset in new and innovative ways. (www.safesouthwest.co.uk).



SAFE South West provides the opportunity for successful funding applications to help develop new areas of community safety activity. A recent example has seen the charity awarded a grant from Awards for All to work in partnership with the Service to develop a training package for people working in the voluntary sector. The training, which is free, is designed for workers who visit vulnerable people in their homes to increase their awareness as to what a Home Safety Visit is and how to refer those most at risk for a visit. This helps ensure that the Service carries out Home Safety Visits for those most vulnerable members of the community.

Red One Limited



Red One Limited (www.red1ltd.com) 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.

Business Continuity and Resilience

The Service Business Continuity process integrates Business Continuity Management (BCM) into day-to-day activities throughout the Service.

This, combined with the existence and maintenance of the Business Continuity Plans (BCP), ensure the Service can continue to function (including meeting its 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.

The Contingency Response Team provides the mechanism for the delivery of continuity of service in all BCM events. The recent national industrial action, centred on a dispute between central government and the Fire Brigades Union over proposed reforms to firefighter pensions, has enabled the Service to test its BCM capability in a live environment. In doing so, the organisation has secured considerable success in delivering an effective and efficient operational capability during all periods of industrial strike action to date.

An Independent review completed by a recognised industry expert (Paragon Risk Management Services) has identified that DSFRS has a comprehensive approach to Business Continuity Planning with a full suite of documentation that is seen as best practice within the fire insurance consortium group.

Performance Management

In order to make sure the organisation delivers an excellent service, a set of eight measures have been developed to track Service performance against previous years and facilitate comparison with other fire and rescue services throughout the UK. These measures also give the public the opportunity to see how the organisation is performing.

Quarterly Performance reports are produced and scrutinised at the Audit & Performance Review Committee. They are also published on the organisation's Internet pages:

[Our Performance](#)

Audit & Review

The organisation has its own internal Audit & Review Team whose remit is to provide independent assurance to Senior Managers and Members as to 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 (CFOA) 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 from the peer challenge have fed into the organisation's improvement programme.

5. 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. Service Asset Register – A project is being scoped.
- b. Partnership Framework – The organisation has recognised that further work is required to embed the Partnership Framework and Register. To meet future challenges, partnership arrangements need to be robust, consistent and clearly linked to strategy. Having explored the arrangements made in other organisations to identify good partnership practice, our existing Framework, Register and supporting documents are in the process of being updated. The revised framework will support the development and management of partnerships in the future.
- c. Performance Management – The organisation has recognised that further work is required to develop its performance management framework. It is important that performance management information is fully developed to meet the business need for clear and accessible data to support decision making. Good progress has been made to date in designing a new performance management framework, it is expected that this will be rolled out in 2015-16.
- d. Policy Management – The organisation has recognised that further work is required to ensure all organisational policies are effectively managed and administrated.
- e. Retained Additional Hours / Payments – The organisation has identified inconsistencies in Additional Retained Duty System (RDS) Payments across similar Service stations. These inconsistencies relate to legacy issues arising from combination and the expansion of RDS roles without the associated clarity for staff on what could be claimed. A Service project has been set up to manage this issue and enable spend to be more consistent across the retained stations.
- f. Advocates – The Advocate Scheme was a concept launched in April 2010 to employ individuals specifically to carry out prevention activities on behalf of the Service. Advocates deliver a wide range of prevention activities, including home safety visits, schools talks, RTC events, community engagement events, etc. Following an Internal Audit completed in 2014-15 it has been recognised that the underpinning controls require strengthening.
- g. ICT Assurance – It was agreed to defer the 2014-15 ICT Internal Audit work until 2015-16. The ICT Team is in the process of rolling out a new strategy and supporting the roll out of high profile business change projects such as Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP) and the new training records system (Profile). Given this level of commitment it was agreed that there would be more value in completing the ICT audit work in the next financial year. To recognise the

reduction in ICT assurance activity, it was agreed that this would be raised on the Annual Statement of Assurance.

The Corporate Governance Group is satisfied that steps are already in place to address the improvement areas identified in this review and will monitor the implementation and operation of these improvement activities as part of the next annual review.

6. Future Improvements

The Annual Statement of Assurance review has identified the following improvement activities that will further strengthen the organisation's governance, operational and financial processes:

- Contract Standing Orders and individual financial thresholds have been subject to extensive review to take account both of external changes (new procurement legislation) and internal changes (a new Corporate Procurement Strategy and framework for the Service coupled with changes to responsibilities, working practices and systems now in place and stemming from the new Procurement Strategy). The Contract Standing Orders were approved by the Authority at its Annual Meeting in May 2015. The Service will need to ensure the Contract Standing Orders are embedded.
- To ultimately reduce insurance costs and share risks, from 1 November 2015 the Service is to participate in a hybrid discretionary insurance pool with eight other English fire and rescue services.
- The Corporate Risk Register is to be reviewed by Senior Management on a more regular basis (quarterly), supplemented by a monthly risk escalation process.
- The continued roll out of the new Operational Licence process for managing core operational skills.
- The Network Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP) is a significant collaboration between Hampshire, Devon & Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire that will deliver a new fire control solution. The new system will provide significant improvements, along with better resilience and enhanced efficiency.
- The new training records system is to be rolled out to support the delivery out of the operational licence process.
- A Strategic Service Delivery Resource & Asset Modelling tool has been developed to assist in the decision making process and validate any proposed changes. Using data from a variety of sources (including 5 years incident data, census data on demographic risk and financial information), it can be used to run establishment models to predict changes in risk if different combinations of station location, appliance type and crewing systems are considered. It is proposed that this tool will be rolled out during 2015-16 to further assist Service Commands in ensuring effective, efficient service delivery.

7. Future Challenges

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

- All public services are having to operate with less money and this Service is no exception. Significant financial pressures require each and every aspect of Service activity and business to be reviewed to ensure that it meets our primary objective of making the public safer.
- There is clear drive from central government for greater collaboration between 'blue light' services.
- The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 have been agreed and made effective into UK Law Feb 2015 with for the first time some national obligations (UK Legislation). Although the majority of the Regulations came into effect immediately changes will continue until the full application of the regulations (October 2018).
- Social Value Act 2012 (Review in 2015) and recommendation for future extension of the Act.

8. Framework Requirements

The Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service 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

Ray Radford

**CHAIRMAN, AUDIT AND
PERFORMANCE REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

Appendix A – Action Plan

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Target Implementation Date
Service Asset Register	An operational asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure all operational equipment is effectively recorded. This will enable the Service to effectively manage, track and test all operational equipment.	Keith Boxall	To progress as a service project in 2015-16 and beyond.
Partnership Framework	The Partnership Framework and supporting Partnership Register need to be embedded. This will enable us to effectively manage our partnership arrangements and apply the relevant level of governance accordingly.	Chris Blackburn	January 2016.
Performance Management	The performance management framework that is currently under development needs to be finalised and rolled out. This will help us to make informed decisions.	Steve Widnell	April 2016.
Policy Management	A policy management process needs to be developed and embedded. This will ensure that our existing and developing policies are effectively managed and communicated.	Steve Widnell	Worked currently being scoped and likely to commence as a project in 2016/17.
Retained Additional Hours / Payments	There needs to be clear guidance and supporting system controls that underpin the retained additional hours / payments. This is currently being progressed through a service project.	Steve Pope	On-going.

	<p>Project Update:</p> <p>The service project has stalled due to a combination of reasons including capacity issues due to a reduction in HR staffing, other higher priorities and system change work schedules. The Service has created a Gartan System Change Advisory Board which will determine the future work plan for the Gartan System and at what point Additional Hours can be incorporated. The Service also has a Service Development Team who are working on the On-call availability and reward mechanisms which also may have an impact on this project.</p>		
Advocates	The action plan from the 2014-15 Advocate Audit needs to be progressed to ensure the controls underpinning Advocate activities are robust.	Chris Blackburn	To progress as a service project in 2015-16 and beyond.
ICT Assurance	A programme of agreed Internal Audit work needs to be agreed and scheduled for annual completion, commencing in 2015-16.	Harvey Durrant / Steve Widnell	April 2016.