



**DEVON &  
SOMERSET**  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

# Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority

2017-18 Annual Statement of  
Assurance

Corporate Governance Group

Devon and Somerset  
Fire & Rescue Authority

22/05/2018

## **Contents**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Pages</b>
1. Introduction	3
2. Governance	3 - 9
3. Financial Assurance	10 - 11
4. Operational Assurance	12 - 22
5. Future Challenges	22
6. Significant Governance, Operational or Financial Issues	22 - 23
7. Conclusion	23
8. Appendix A – Action Plan	24

## 1. Introduction

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

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

## 2. Governance

### The Purpose of Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance comprises:

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

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

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

This statement refers to the governance arrangements that have been in place for the Authority up to the year ended 31 March 2018 and up to the date of consideration of the statement of accounts.

### Code of Corporate Governance

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

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

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

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

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

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

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

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

The Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State’s biennial report under section 25 of the *Fire and Rescue 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 established a Corporate Governance Group to periodically review the governance arrangements on behalf of the Authority. The group consists of Managers from the following teams:

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

- Information Assurance
- Service Delivery (Operations)

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

The Annual Statement of Assurance is 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.

### **Review of Effectiveness**

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

The 2017-18 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 2017-18 financial year, the Authority comprised 24 Members<sup>1</sup> appointed by the constituent authorities (Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council). In addition, there is an "independent person" appointed in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.
3. During the 2017-18 financial year, the Authority operated with the following committee structure:-
  - Resources Committee (7 Members)
  - Human Resources Management & Development Committee (7 Members);
  - Audit & Performance Review Committee (7 Members);
  - Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee (6 Members);
  - Appointments panel (5 Members);
  - General Purposes Committee (4 Members).

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

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

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

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

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

8. The 2017-18 Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Audit & Performance Review Committee on the 24 April 2017. 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 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018. 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. The Health and Safety system also contains current and historic insurance claims data and associated costs.
10. The operation of the Authority's Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by Service management on a quarterly basis to ensure that risks to the Authority's strategic objectives and corporate plans are appropriately identified and managed.
11. The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk.
12. The 2017-18 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 2017-18.
13. The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative scheme. We completed the return for the 2016/17 initiative and continue working through the reply.
14. The Service has a Strategic Health & Safety Committee which meets every 2 months to monitor health, safety and welfare of employees as per section 2(7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. All representative bodies (trades unions) recognised by the Authority, i.e. the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and UNISON, are invited to sit on this Committee.
15. The 3 year Health & Safety Audit Plan which audits all Devon & Somerset premises against Health & Safety service policies was completed in December 2017. The result of this audit cycle will be analysed and help to build the next 3 year audit question set starting in 2018.
16. The Operational Assurance Team is now embedded in the organisational structure and culture. As part of the 'Safe Person Concept' the Operational Safety Assurance Team monitors and reports on a variety of activities linked to Operational Response.
17. The Organisational Safety Manager attends the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) H&S meetings & chairs the regional NFCC H&S meetings.

18. A single business change programme has been established applying recognised programme and project management approaches and standards to corporate projects, including changes as a result of the corporate planning proposals.
19. Information Governance and organisational preparedness for changes in data protection legislation have been the focus of the Information Assurance Team. Team members have been trained and have achieved a practitioners certificate in the General Data Protection Regulation which has enabled a comprehensive and robust plan for implementing the required changes to systems and procedures in managing personal data and ensuring the Service's compliance with the new regulation. A GDPR consultant has been appointed to support the team and provide additional support including the completion of a strategic information audit resulting in compliance based and best practice recommendations that are now in the process of being implemented, with the compliance plan formally recognised as a project within the strategic programme board. In light of the new regulation's requirements for a Data Protection Officer (DPO), responsibility for managing data protection has been transferred from within the Corporate Communications Team to the Information Assurance Team as DPO responsibilities overlap with the Information Assurance Manager role. A permanent Data Protection Support Officer Role has also been appointed within the team to support the additional work which was previously managed within Corporate Communications and from what is anticipated from the new regulation.

Information Assurance relies on other security controls including personnel, premises and technical security. Improvements to information governance have been made by embedding a holistic culture for managing security. The Protective Security Group has been established; chaired by the Area Manager for Organisational Assurance and incorporates all security leads across the organisation. The group meets monthly to drive forward strategic change, measure progress against ISO27001, the HMG Security Policy Framework, the CESG Information Assurance Maturity Model and manage areas of risk and mitigation.

20. Contract Standing Orders (approved by the Authority at its Annual Meeting in May 2015) are, along with the Authority's other constitutional framework documents, subject to annual review and in-year changes as and when required. Guidance materials on procurement and contract management are available on the Service intranet for the Service staff. Priorities for 2017/18 included consultation on a draft Social Value policy to meet the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (public authorities are required to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts, and for connected purposes) and increasing collaborative procurement arrangements.
21. The Procurement Team manage contracts above £20,000 to ensure compliance with EU and UK legislation and best practice; 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 Procurement is the national Commercial Category lead for Fleet (as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council's Strategic Commercial Committee), 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.

Within 2017/18 the Procurement team have awarded the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)'s Emergency Response Vehicles framework, and the NFCC's Respiratory Protective Equipment framework on behalf of the fire sector.

Employee Payroll, Firefighter pensions, and Pensioners payroll have also been awarded, 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.
23. Corporate commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion are set out in the Corporate Plan. The four-year equality strategy, Safer Lives, Brighter Futures, came to an end in 2016 and a new strategy is being developed. This will set out the changes needed to support the new Integrated Risk Management Plan, Fire and Rescue Plan and HMICFRS inspection. It will address issues relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace at each stage of the employee lifecycle, including attraction, recruitment, retention, development and progression. It will 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 equality strategy every six months.
24. The Service has a process in place to ensure that potential equality impacts are identified and mitigated when preparing or reviewing policies. The process is called Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis and it helps us to deliver better services and working practices as well as ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The process will be reviewed in 2018/19 to broaden the scope to include wider impacts on people. Mandatory equalities training is in place including a new understanding unconscious bias e-learning package.
25. The Core Values and behavioural framework was developed by employees in 2013/14 and sets out what the Service stands for and what matters most to employees and the Organisation. It allows staff and managers at all levels to know what is expected of them and what they can expect in return. In 2017 employees were involved in a revision and simplification of the core values framework. The new Core Values are:
  - We are proud to help
  - We are honest
  - We are respectful
  - We are working together

The 2017/18 review by the Corporate Governance Group has concluded that there are good systems, procedures and checks in place to manage the Authority's governance arrangements.

### **3. Financial Assurance**

#### **Statement of Accounts**

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

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

#### **External Audit Arrangements**

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

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

- Audit of the 2017-18 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.

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 2017-18.

The 2017-18 year end Internal Audit report concluded that the systems in operation within the Service demonstrated a good level of internal control. The Service was rated as attaining a High Standard for its Payroll activities in 2017-18.

Agreed management actions are monitored through the Service's Assurance tracking process alongside the outcomes of External Audits, Internal Audits, EFQM assessments and Peer Reviews.

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

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

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

## **Data Transparency**

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

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

## **Efficiency Plan**

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

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

## 4. Organisational Assurance

### Statutory Responsibility

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

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

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

### Corporate Planning

The 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, and the Change and Improvement Programme.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan is the means by which the Service assesses and analyses the risks faced by the communities served. 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 / Mission and Values. 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.

A change and improvement programme is derived from the IRMP and the Fire & Rescue Plan. The programme contains the prioritised work streams for the next 3-4 years that as a Service we must deliver on if we are to deliver 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 Services 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 and a series of Group and Service plans which set out our work for the financial year.

The Services planning framework requires all the plans to be reviewed, updated and re-written where required annually. The achievement of the objectives in the Fire and Rescue Plan and the Change and Improvement 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.

## Training and Development - Academy

The 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.

**The purpose** of the Academy is to develop and deliver quality assured training to ensure the Service has a safe and competent workforce capable of helping to make Devon and Somerset a safer place to live, work and visit.

**The vision** for the Academy is to deliver quality assured, flexible, location based training tailored to the needs of our staff and the risks they face to help to keep them and our communities safe. This directly supports the Authority's three stated priorities of: Public Safety; Staff Safety and; Efficiency and Effectiveness.



Activities are focused through a blended learning approach which is developed through working with key stakeholders, embracing new technology to enhance the learning experience and produce professional, user friendly training material to enable staff to concentrate on development, team work and safe systems of work.

The Academy provides training for other fire and rescue services and industry on behalf of the Authority's trading company, Red One Limited. However, the Academy's key priority is, and always will be, the safety of the Service's firefighters.

## Training for Competence

A dedicated project has been established to review organisational learning and improve the way in which training is delivered and managed within the Service. This project is formally known as "Training for Competence" with the aim to change the way in which training is delivered, from;

- A centralised, fixed, course based method of requalification based on an annual frequency.

To a more:

- Flexible, locally delivered, continuous programme of quality training that is centred on the customer and more driven by the risks faced based on role and risk location.

The aim is to deliver a workforce who are competent to face a variety of incident types by drawing on the right skills, at the right time, to the right standard.

The Academy will deliver assurance to the DSFRS by bringing the Academy to the end user on a more frequent basis. This approach ensures trainers consistently deliver training and assessment to the same standard thus providing operational staff increased access to the expertise of Academy trainers and quality training material.

## **Collaboration and sharing best practice**

All of our training materials are aligned to the national guidance produced by the 'National Operational Guidance Programme'. The Academy also collaborate on a national level as part of 'FRS learn'. This is a National Fire Chiefs Council initiative whereby training content is shared with other services to create a central repository for training material and assets.



To continue supporting a collaborative approach, the Academy supports the National joint development of E-learning training packages using the DSFRS Academy international award winning Blended Learning team.

In 2016, the Blended Learning team won the highest accolade Gold Award for 'Best Blended Learning Project' from the International Learning Technologies body. In 2017 the team were awarded Silver for the International Learning Technology 'Team of the Year'.

The Academy is regularly subjected to an external ISO 9001 quality audit to maintain certification and demonstrate excellent governance against the latest 2015 standards. In addition, many of the courses that we offer are accredited to national standards, e.g. Skills for Justice, BTEC, City & Guilds.

## **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.

The Service previously undertook the fitness testing of our operational staff using gas analysers as part of a Treadmill Test. The gas analyser is the most accurate surrogate test to measure firefighter fitness levels. The fitness assessments were conducted on a three yearly basis in conjunction with a three yearly Occupational Health medical examination.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Firefit have in recent years commissioned a 2 year research programme investigating the physical demands of firefighting and lifestyles of fire service employees. The research was led by the University of Bath to develop and publish fitness standards for all UK Fire and Rescue Services and a new vocational fitness test. The research was guided by a stakeholder panel with representatives from the NFCC, the Fire Brigade's Union, the Retained Fire Brigade's Union, as well as the FRS health and fitness community. The new vocational fitness testing tools were released in 2014 but further research has been undertaken since this date to provide recommended timings. Details of the vocational fitness tests can be found at the following link:

<http://www.cfoa.org.uk/11714>

The Service had trialled the vocational fitness test whilst the timings were under development and contributed to the testing times as part of the research by the University of Bath. In late 2016, Firefit announced the recommended times for the Vocational Fitness Test and the Service has subsequently developed a Firefighter Fitness Project to trial the vocational fitness test and improve the fitness culture within the Service.

During 2017/18 the Service has undertaken an extended 12 month trial of the vocational fitness test across all operational staff from Firefighter through to Watch Manager level. During the trial, data is being collated and analysed to monitor any impacts related to gender or age. The Service is also undertaking a Female Study Group, so that we can further establish whether there is a potential impact on workforce diversity as a result of this method of testing. During the 12 month trial period, the Service has used the Fitness Advocates to assist with the testing of staff.

The project will be completed following the end of 2017/18 and recommendations will be made to the Service on the method of future fitness testing within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service and how we will continue to meet the Addendum to the National Framework for England in relation to firefighter fitness.

### **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**

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

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

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

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

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 developed and is being 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, 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.

### **Commitment to Health & Safety**

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

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

A robust system for actively monitoring the effectiveness of the Organisations Health and Safety Management procedures is in place. The process includes the completion of 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 2 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.

A comprehensive accident investigation system ensures all safety events are reported and investigated with corrective action completed as required. The system provides for detailed analysis of safety events to identify trends which further enhances a proactive health and safety management system. This approach has enabled the Service to secure a reduction in vehicle collisions between 2014 and 2017 of 15%.

### **Collaborative and Partnership Working**

DSFRS 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 with other fire and rescue services, bluelight services, local authorities, community groups and other organisations by working to common objectives at the local, regional and national level. The improvement of community safety is a major priority and the Service also contributes to wider community objectives identified in Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

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 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, Wilts and Dorset 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 to 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 a Chief Fire Officers Association national procurement hub, with the National Collaborative Procurement Coordinator being hosted by the Service
- Establishment of a web cloud for on call firefighter recruitment

Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company, the mutual protection provider set up and run by nine Fire and Rescue Authorities, has completed its second year of operations culminating in surplus being achieved in both year one and two. This is a significant result for FRIC and shows what can be achieved when fire authorities collaborate in an innovative and mutually beneficial manner. Year one and two 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.

### **Network Fire Services Partnership**

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

### **Co-Responding**

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

### **National Resilience**

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

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

Previously the Service had created a specialist team of 40 volunteers to respond to Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFA). 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 MTFA capability has been established within The Authority to support our partner agencies, of Police and Ambulance, in response to an MTFA incident within The Authority area or, under National Mutual Aid, to any other location within the UK as requested. The overall aim is to save life, and the two main strands of FRS support during this type of incident are for casualty care, and fire hazards.

The capability is made up of two key groups;

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

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

### **Specialist Operations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cornwall and Avon 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**

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

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

A Contingency Response Team provides the mechanism for the delivery of continuity of service in all business continuity management events, alongside an Operational Support team which can be "stood up" to focus on continuation of the core statutory obligations of Operational response, under the Fire Services Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Business continuity management plans have been tested in both "test" and live environments and the Service has secured considerable success in delivering an effective and efficient operational capability.

## **Establishing a Charity**



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

## Red One Limited



in safe hands

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

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

### **Performance Management**

Corporate performance is currently reported on a quarterly basis to the Fire and Rescue Authority through the Audit and Performance Review Committee (APRC). The report contains eight measures to assess performance against previous years and to facilitate comparison with other fire and rescue services throughout the UK. These measures also provide the public with the opportunity to see how the organisation is performing.

The Service is continually reviewing its approach to performance management; ensuring that the way in which it measures success drives a positive performance culture. Key to this is understanding the strategic intent of the organisation and identifying how we will know that we have achieved our aims. To this end a revised suite corporate performance indicators is being developed that will link directly with the Service's new Planning Framework with the intention of integrating into reporting within 2018/19.

### **Audit & Review**

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

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

### **External Assurance**

To support the internal assurance processes, a bespoke peer review was facilitated by the Local Governments Association, bringing senior members of Merseyside, Nottinghamshire and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue services, to provide a review of our Community Safety, Business Safety, and Response activities. The results of this report are being used to drive improvement.

The Service used the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model (the Excellence Model), which is a comprehensive management framework, to

help benchmark performance across other organisations. The Excellence Model helps the Service to recognise strengths and identify areas for improvement that are then fed into the Change & Improvement Programme. The Service successfully achieved the EFQM Recognised for Excellence Award in 2017. The assessment was carried out by two experienced assessors from the British Quality Foundation.

## **5. Future Challenges**

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

- Improving how we use data to target and evaluate our work in order to learn and improve
- Being more efficient and effective to secure the best value for money for the tax payer
- Making sure that our structures and governance arrangements are clear and effective
- Ensuring that we have the right governance in place and a consistent approach to working in partnership
- Further developing contracts and career paths to support inclusivity ensuring that the service has a workforce that reflects communities served

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

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

- a. Clinical Governance: Governance arrangements need to be more clearly defined around the care issued by the DSFRS, to casualties, throughout 2018-19.
- b. Breathing Apparatus maintenance: the existing disjointed approach to breathing apparatus maintenance is being investigated.
- c. 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.
- d. Delayed or non-attendance of Ambulances: There have been instances of delayed ambulance attendance at scenes, which have been raised with SWAST.
- e. GDPR: The General Data Protection Regulation comes 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.

- f. Policy Updates: A significant proportion of service policy documents were found to be past due for their review date. A project is underway to ensure that all policies are reviewed and updated.

## **7. Conclusion**

The Corporate Governance Group 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 Corporate Governance Group 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.

**GLENN ASKEW  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**MARK HEALEY MBE  
CHAIRMAN, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**APPENDIX A TO REPORT APRC/18/12 – ACTION PLAN**

<b>Identified Issue</b>	<b>Action Needed</b>	<b>Direction of Travel since 2016-17</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Integrated Service Asset Register	An integrated service asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure all assets are effectively recorded and managed.	↑	Head of Fleet & Procurement	March 2019
Performance Management	The performance management framework that is currently under development needs to be finalised and rolled out.	↑	Head of Organisational Assurance	December 2018
Policy Management	A policy management process needs to be developed and embedded.	→	Head of Organisational Assurance	December 2018
Collaboration	An appropriate level of governance needs to be applied to Collaborative working initiatives.	→	Executive Board	December 2018
On Call Additional Hours / Payments	The on call additional hours / payments process and supporting controls need to be reviewed. This is currently being progressed through the Gartan System Change Advisory Board.	↑	Head of Human Resources	Complete
Advocates	The Advocate initiative needs to be included in the scope of the 'root and branch' community safety review.	↑	Area Manager Community Safety	Complete
Closure of Accounts	Publication of financial statements by end of July 2017-18	↑	Head of Finance	Complete

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Direction of Travel since 2016-17	Lead Officer	Target Date
Shortened Timescale for Production of the Annual Statement of Accounts	The timetable for production and publication of financial statements will need to be revised to accord with the requirements of the Account and Audit Regulations 2015	↑	Head of Finance	Complete
General Data Protection Regulations		↑	Head of Organisational Assurance	Complete