



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority

2015-16 Annual Statement of
Assurance

Corporate Governance Group

Devon and Somerset
Fire & Rescue Authority

12/09/2016

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1. Introduction

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

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

2. Governance

The Purpose of Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance comprises:

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

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

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

The governance arrangements have been in place for the Authority up to the year ended 31 March 2016 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

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.

Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 Requirements

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

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

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

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

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Approach

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

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

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

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

Review of Effectiveness

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

The 2015-16 review, conducted by the Corporate Governance Group in conjunction with the Audit and Performance Review Committee identified 26 key elements to the Authority's governance arrangements:

1. The Authority was constituted under the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2006. The Authority has strategic responsibility for discharging fire and rescue authority functions for the combined area with the day-to-day responsibility resting with the Chief Fire Officer and other officers within the Executive Board.
2. For the majority of the 2015-16 financial year, the Authority comprised 24 Members¹ appointed by the constituent authorities (Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council). In addition, there is an

¹ Total membership can fluctuate annually based on operation of the apportionment formula (by reference to the relative electoral rolls of the constituent authorities) in the Combination Scheme Order. In May 2015, because of operation of this formula, the Authority saw a decrease in Membership from 25 to 24. Membership details can be found on the Authority website – www.dsfire.gov.uk

“independent person” appointed in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

3. For the majority of the 2015-16 financial year, the Authority operated with the following committee structure:-
 - Resources Committee (7 Members)
 - Human Resources Management & Development Committee (7 Members);
 - Audit & Performance Review Committee (7 Members);
 - Community Safety & Corporate Planning Committee (7 Members);
 - Determinations & Dispensations Committee (5 Members);
 - Commercial Services Committee (7 Members);
 - Capital Programme Working Party (4 Members).

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.

During the 2015-16 financial year, the Authority undertook a fundamental review of its commercial governance arrangements. This has resulted in the appointment of an independent non-executive director to serve as the Chairman of the Board for Red One Ltd (the Authority’s commercial trading arm). It has also seen the appointment of three Authority-Member non-executive directors to the Board of Red One Ltd. and the consequential abolition of the Commercial Services Committee in February 2016.

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 2015-16 Internal Audit Plan was approved by the Audit and Performance Review Committee on the 12 May 2015. 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 280 internal audit days were utilised to provide assurance to the Authority relating to the management of risks and associated operational activities. The Audit & Review Team and the Devon Audit Partnership are accountable for the delivery of the plan and the policy includes the requirement to report progress to the Audit & Performance Review Committee at least three times per year. The Authority's shared service internal audit arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in public service organisations.
9. The Health & Safety system includes a risk management module. Service risk registers are populated and reviewed periodically. This process in turn informs the Corporate Risk Register. The system also contains current and historic insurance claims data and associated costs that are linked to safety events and, where applicable, Service risk registers.
10. The operation of the Authority's Corporate Risk Register is reviewed by Service management on a quarterly basis to ensure that risks to the Authority's strategic objectives and corporate plans are appropriately identified and managed.
11. The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk.
12. The 2015-16 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 2015-16.
13. The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative scheme. No significant issues have arisen from the most recent data matches published in 2014/15.

14. The Service has a Joint Health & Safety Committee which meets every 2 months to monitor health, safety and welfare of employees as per section 2(7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. All representative bodies (trades unions) recognised by the Authority, i.e. the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and UNISON, are invited to sit on this Committee.
15. A Health & Safety Audit Plan has been rolled out to ensure all Devon & Somerset premises are audited against Health & Safety service policies.
16. 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.
17. The Organisational Safety Assurance Manager attends the national Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) H&S meetings & chairs the regional CFOA H&S meetings.
18. A single business change programme has been established applying recognised programme and project management approaches and standards to corporate projects, including changes as a result of the corporate planning proposals.
19. The Information Assurance Manager is responsible for managing information governance standards and processes. This year has seen the Service roll out a new secure email system with all partners and members of the public, replacing the Public Services Network solution and reducing costs. The Service is maintaining compliance with the Public Services Network standards ready for a connection to the Emergency Service Network that is due to become operational as part of the roll out of the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme. The Service has an Information Security Forum that oversees the development of cultural changes required to effectively manage information risk. Information assurance policies and controls are in place and continue to be developed to ensure compliance with the HMG Security Policy Framework and the Data Protection Act 1998.
20. Contract Standing Orders and individual financial thresholds have been subject to extensive review to take account both of external changes (new procurement legislation, e.g. Public Contracts Regulations 2015) 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 and, as with other constitutional framework documents, are 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. The Contracts Database Register is up to date and meets Data Transparency requirements.
21. The Procurement Team has adopted a category management approach which includes reviewing spending, undertaking internal and external research and challenging the Service ways of working to deliver savings and efficiencies and ensuring compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and national obligations. All spend above £20k is now managed through the Procurement Team

to: ensure compliance with EU and UK legislation and best practice; ensure that the Authority can demonstrate value for money; and deliver savings and efficiencies.

22. 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 legislative requirements and to ensure effective governance arrangements.
23. 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.
24. A set of leadership expectations has been developed to act as a mutual contract to define what team members should expect from their Service Managers. The expectation posters are signed and then displayed in all stations and departments.
25. The Core Values framework has been developed by employees and applies to all individuals as well as underpinning how the organisation works collectively. The Core Values state that as a Service and as individuals we value:
 - Honesty, clarity and accountability
 - Respect for each other
 - Working together to improve
 - A 'can do' attitude

The 2015/16 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 2015-16 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 Team has worked with Senior Managers and Authority Members to develop an annual Internal Audit Plan that is delivered across the Service. The plan includes a contract with the Devon Audit Partnership to deliver specialised key financial and ICT audits.

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 2015-16.

The 2015-16 year end Internal Audit report concluded that the systems in operation within the Service demonstrated a good level of internal control. The Service received a Good Standard audit report for its Key Financial Systems and a High Standard for its Payroll activities in 2015-16.

The Audit & Review Team is designing a new organisational assurance self-assessment tool that is to be rolled out across all Service areas commencing in 2016-17.

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.

Data Transparency

The Service complies with the CLG '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).

4. Operational Assurance

Statutory Responsibility

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

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

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

Corporate Planning

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

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

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

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

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

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

Training and Development

The development of the Service's Academy has enabled the delivery of quality assured training to its staff together with supporting 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 the Service's firefighters.

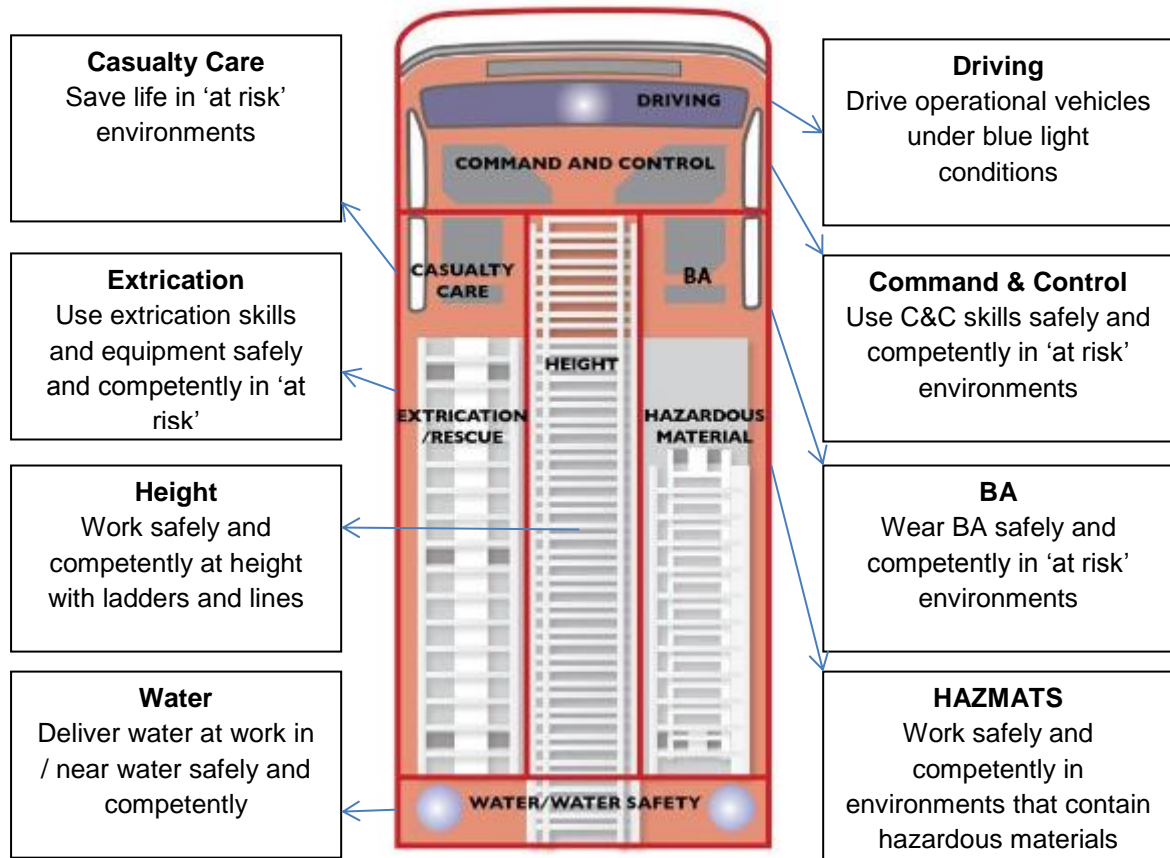
The Academy is in its third year of a three-year strategic plan that adds value by delivering training to ensure the Service has a safe and competent workforce, able to meet the expectations of those that live and work in, or visit, Devon and Somerset.

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

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

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



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

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

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

The Academy has rolled out its new training records system (Profile) across the Service. Profile keeps a tailored record of an assessed demonstration of the skills and knowledge they are required to maintain.

Firefighter Fitness

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

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

CFOA has recently worked with the University of Bath to develop and publish occupational fitness standards for all UK Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is to review its current arrangements based upon this new guidance material.

Operational Debriefs

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

Process for Operational Assurance

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

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

To ensure the right focus in the right areas, an Organisational Safety Assurance Team has been established comprising firefighters and Health & Safety support staff.

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

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

Section 28 Reform

In accordance with the Service's commitment to staff and public safety, the Operational Assurance Team ensures that the learning outputs from tragic national events are fed back into the Service. The learning comes from other fire and rescue services directly affected, information notices (**Coroner "Rule 43" Notices**) issued as a result of inquests and recommendations to all fire and rescue services by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

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 bi-annual Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Health & Safety Audits as well as a rolling three year programme of audits of all premises and departments.

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

Following a comprehensive external RoSPA audit of its Health and Safety procedures in 2012, the Service was awarded with the highest Quality Safety Audit (QSA) award possible at Level 5 (Diamond). Additionally, RoSPA informed the Service that it had achieved a second significant milestone by showing that it now complied with all

requirements for certification in Occupational Health and Safety standard (OHSAS) 18001. A subsequent RoSPA internal assessment completed in 2014 indicated that the Service had maintained its level of performance.

Collaborative and Partnership Working

In December 2012, the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, commissioned Sir Ken Knight to undertake a review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England.

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

The Service is committed to forming or joining partnerships that assist it achieving its organisational goals and contribute to its Mission of "Acting to Protect and Save". 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. 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 is a key participant in multi-agency liaison arrangements, joint exercises and the sharing of resources which contribute to an enhanced, effective and efficient incident response.

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

- establishment of a CFOA national procurement hub, with the CFOA national collaborative procurement coordinator being hosted by the Service
- establishment of a web cloud for on call firefighter recruitment
- establishment of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited (FRIC), which commenced trading on 1 November 2015 and provides an alternative to conventional insurance arrangements for nine fire & rescue authorities. FRIC operates as a mutual arrangement and in addition to providing necessary insurance protection for fire and rescue activities has generated initial savings of £300,000 split across the nine fire and rescue authorities involved.

Network Fire Control Services Partnership

The Network Fire Control Services Partnership is a significant collaboration between Hampshire, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire that has delivered a new fire control

solution in April 2016. The new system will provide significant improvements, along with better resilience and enhanced efficiency.

Co-Responding

The Authority 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).

National Resilience

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

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

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

Specialist Operations

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

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

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

- Mass Decontamination
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Water Capability
- Long Term Management

- Command & Control
- Logistics

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

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

Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements

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

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

Business Continuity and Resilience

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

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

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

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

Establishing a Charity

The 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 new and innovative community safety initiatives across communities in Devon and Somerset.



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. Further information on SAFE South West can be found on the Charity's website – www.safeshouthwest.co.uk.

Red One Limited



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

Further information on Red One Limited can be found on its website - www.red1ltd.com

Performance Management

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

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

[Our Performance](#)

Audit & Review

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

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

External Assurance

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

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

The Service is using a comprehensive management framework (EFQM Excellence Model) to help to benchmark organisational performance. The Excellence Model helps the Service to recognise strengths and identify areas for improvement that are fed into the Change & Improvement Programme.

5. Future Challenges

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

- Responsibility for the fire and rescue service has moved from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office. The Home Secretary has recently announced the intention for Fire Reform. The Service will need to ensure that it supports and meets the requirements coming from the reform.
- All public services are having to operate with less money and the Authority is no exception. Significant financial pressures require each and every aspect of Service activity and business to be reviewed to ensure that it meets the primary objective of making the public safer.
- The Policing and Crime Bill published in February 2016 includes measures to put into effect the government's intention to promote greater collaboration between the emergency services. These measures feature introduction of a new statutory duty to collaborate, enabling Police and Crime commissioners to assume responsibility for fire and rescue services (subject to approval of an appropriate business case) and by affording Police and Crime Commissioners, upon request,

a seat on fire and rescue authorities (with voting rights on fire and rescue matters) where governance has not transferred.

- The collaborative landscape is complex and the Authority has been exploring a wide variety of collaboration opportunities and has been instrumental in establishing the Emergency Services Forum to enable leading politicians and chief officers of all the emergency services in the South West to explore options for mutually beneficial collaboration.
- The Social Value Act 2012 at present requires public bodies, when commissioning services, to consider how wider social, economic and environmental benefits might be secured. The Act is scheduled for review with the potential for extending its provisions.
- In view of changing operational threats, DSFRS will be developing enhanced capability to assist reduce consequences of violent and unpredictable individual events, working with partners.
- The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently issued consultation proposals for updating the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. Any subsequent changes will need to be adopted by the Authority.
- Following on from the referendum result for the UK to leave the EU, announced on the 24th of June 2016, we are now in a period of economic uncertainty which brings the potential for further periods of austerity combined with poor economic performance for the UK as a whole. Given that central government have offered a four year settlement covering 2016-17 through 2019-20 the risk to grant income is currently considered low, although if inflation increases greater efficiencies will be required. The most significant impact is likely to be on investment values and yields following the decision by the Bank of England to reduce interest rates to a record low of 0.25%, resulting in a reduction to investment income in 2016-17 and potentially beyond.

6. Significant Governance, Operational or Financial Control Issues

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

- a. Integrated Service Asset Register – A Strategic Assets review is underway. Collaborative opportunities are being considered as part of the review.
- b. Performance Management – A new service model has been agreed that identifies 15 service outcomes. A project has been established to identify measures by which success in achieving the 15 outcomes can be assessed. These performance measures should be designed and agreed in the current (2016-17) financial year in preparation to introduction of a new performance management system (currently scheduled for 2017-18).

- c. Policy Management – Work is currently being scoped to improve our Policy Management arrangements.
- d. On Call Additional Hours / Payments –The Service has created a System Change Advisory Board which is to review the On Call Duty System availability process (Gartan). The Service is also exploring on-call availability and reward mechanisms which also may impact on the issue of additional payments.
- e. Advocates – The Advocate initiative is to be reconsidered as part of a wider “root and branch” review of community safety initiatives to be undertaken with a view to ensuring that organisational priorities are being met and that the community safety strategy is appropriately focussed, resilient and sustainable.
- f. Collaboration – It is recognised that collaborative working is complex. Working with a range of partners to support a variety of activities will require the appropriate level of governance.

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

7. Framework Requirements

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



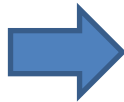

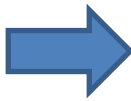
Lee Howell

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Ray Radford

**CHAIRMAN, AUDIT AND
PERFORMANCE REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

Appendix A – Action Plan

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Direction of Travel since 2014-15	Lead Officer	Target Date
Integrated Service Asset Register	An integrated service asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure all assets are effectively recorded and managed.		Head of Fleet	March 2018
Performance Management	The performance management framework that is currently under development needs to be finalised and rolled out.		Area Manager Strategy and Business Change	September 2017
Policy Management	A policy management process needs to be developed and embedded.		Area Manager Organisational Assurance	September 2017
On Call Additional Hours / Payments	The on call additional hours / payments process and supporting controls need to be reviewed. This is currently being progressed through the Gartan System Change Advisory Board.		Head of Human Resources	September 2016
Advocates	The Advocate initiative needs to be included in the scope of the 'root and branch' community safety review.		Area Manager Community Safety	December 2016
Collaboration	An appropriate level of governance needs to be applied to Collaborative working initiatives.	New	Executive Board	December 2016