



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Statement of Assurance 2017-18

Background

- 1.1 Each year we produce a corporate plan known as the [Community Safety Plan](#) to set out our five-year high-level vision and the priorities that we are pursuing. This high-level plan is supported by a wide variety of supporting documents to translate this intent into on-the-ground action. In September, we publish an [Annual report](#) that sets out how we are doing and the key achievements that we have made. This report supplements a range of quarterly progress reports provided to the Authority at their public meetings.
- 1.2 The [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#), published in May 2012, sets out the requirement for all fire and rescue Authorities in England to publish an annual assurance statement on financial, governance and operational matters. In May 2013, Government produced guidance on how this statement might be formulated.
- 1.3 This statement of assurance provides a broad summary of the arrangements in place since forming our new organisation and highlights our areas of focus for 2017-18. In the interests of greater transparency, we have linked this statement to our policy assurances many of which have additional documents to help further substantiate our position in key areas. These policies are:
- [Corporate Governance \(incorporating information management\)](#)
 - [Health and Safety](#)
 - [Community Safety \(IRMP¹\)](#)
 - [People](#)
 - [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#)
 - [Finance](#)
 - [Asset Management](#)
 - [Safeguarding](#)
- 1.4 The Annual Statement of Assurance is divided into assurances about the overall governance, financial and operational arrangements. It also sets out what our current and future challenges are and how we are taking these forward.

Governance assurance

- 1.5 Corporate Governance comprises of:
- the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is directed and controlled; and
 - those activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community.

¹ Integrated risk management planning- a system to bring together all aspects of prevention, protection and response to support community and employee safety

- 1.6 Corporate Governance enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic priorities and to help ensure the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services. The system of internal control is an integral part of the governance arrangements designed to manage risk to a managed level.
- 1.7 To help us maintain good governance we have adopted a corporate governance policy that is underpinned by the principles developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in their revised model issued in April 2016. The Framework has seven core principles, a number of supporting principles and suggestions for source documents/good practice that may be used to demonstrate compliance. We have incorporated within the governance code our information management arrangements and practices. The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance arrangements including the system of internal control. This review of the effectiveness is informed by the work of senior managers within the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service); the internal and external auditors' annual reports; and also, by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates including the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, who undertook an audit of the Service's arrangements for complying with the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). After reviewing the procedures, training and support mechanisms that are in place, and speaking with a range of officers, Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Sir Adrian Fulford concluded that: "Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service has taken a very professional approach to RIPA and associated obligations".
- 1.8 We have undertaken a comprehensive [corporate governance baseline assessment](#) against this framework and to support our additional requirement to publish an [Annual Governance Statement](#) to accompany the financial statements.

Financial assurance

- 1.9 The Finance, Governance and Audit Committee receive regular quarterly financial and audit reports. It is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2016 for all fire and rescue authorities in England to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. This '[Statement of Accounts](#)' shows the annual costs of providing the service and is determined by a Code of Practice which aims to give a "true and fair" view of the financial position and transactions of the authority. To support these regulations an overarching [financial management policy](#) has been agreed and published. This policy sets out our approach to ensuring the sound financial management and control of our assets and finances. A number of supporting procedure documents have also been published. The Treasurer is responsible for the development of the Statement of Accounts prior to Authority approval and publication. To meet the requirements of the Accounting and Audit Regulations, the Statement of Accounts is now published and approved by the end of July.

- 1.10 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. This plan sets out how the Authority plans to improve the services it provides whilst managing with reduced real-terms funding levels. The Efficiency Plan was submitted to the Home Office 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
- 1.11 **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), KPMG LLP was appointed as the external auditors. KPMG LLP 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
- 1.12 In their [annual report](#) KPMG have stated that “We have completed our risk-based work to consider whether in all significant respects the Authority has proper arrangements to ensure has taken properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. We have concluded that the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We therefore anticipate issuing an unqualified value for money opinion.”
- 1.13 **Internal Audit Arrangements.** To support the external audit process, the Authority has in place a robust system for internal auditing. An annual Internal Audit Plan is delivered across the Service and includes specialised key financial and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) audits. Performance against the audit plan is reported to senior managers and Members on a quarterly basis, with a year-end report produced in March 2018. The internal audit service reviewed a number of areas during the year:
- Communications
 - ICT Management Systems
 - IT Health Check
 - Business Case Management
 - Strategic Workforce Planning
 - Strategic Planning
 - Key Financial Controls
- 1.14 The [internal auditor annual report](#) stated “that we are satisfied that sufficient internal audit work has been undertaken to allow us to draw a reasonable conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness (or inadequacy and ineffectiveness) of the Authority’s risk management, control and governance

processes. Overall in our opinion, based upon the reviews performed during the year, the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority:

- has adequate and effective risk management;
- has adequate and effective governance; and
- has adequate and effective control processes

1.15 **Procurement.** The Service has in place a procurement procedure that addresses both revenue and capital procurement and how to procure goods, services and works including meeting the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that the Service processes conform to the Regulations and Treaty principles. The procurement process spans the whole cycle from identification of need through to the contract or end of the useful life of an asset. Recent government analysis indicates that we are procuring at or below national average against a [standard basket of goods](#).

1.16 **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)

Operational Assurance

1.17 We are required to comply with a range of laws and regulations. The key documents for us are:

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated regulations

1.18 In broad terms, our service delivery has three key components:

1.18.1 **Prevention.** Our prevention teams, station staff and volunteers work with partners to prevent fires from starting and also to reduce the numbers of fire related injuries and deaths. Whilst our statutory duty is to prevent fires, we are firmly of the opinion that we have a key role to play in broader prevention areas such as road safety and health and well-being. As such we are significantly involved in the health and well-being agendas across the new Service area running a wide range of education and engagement programmes. Key to this is the development of a new educational Safety Centre on the Wiltshire/ Swindon border, which will complement the existing facilities in Bournemouth and Weymouth.

1.18.2 **Protection.** We are the enforcing Authority for the fire safety requirements of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, along with other related legislation. To ensure legal compliance our fire safety staff all have new warrant cards and we have procedures in place to ensure that we can operate effectively. Our fire safety inspectors are engaging with work and business, in preference to enforcing fire safety standards, and will continue to enhance the economic growth of our communities. Fire investigation officers are carrying out investigations in conjunction with the police, where appropriate and information is being collated for serious case conferences and for the use of HM Coroner, as well as reducing the incidence of fire. As part of forming the new Service, we are currently embedding new working arrangements following our recent combination. This includes new processes and software to allow the acceptance of electronic building regulations submissions.

1.18.3 **Response.** Our provision of immediate emergency response consists of 74 front line fire engines operating from 50 fire stations across the Service. In addition, we have specialist resources which can be deployed at incidents that include:

- Command and control
- Hazardous materials
- Environmental protection
- Water rescue
- Animal rescue
- Rescue from confined spaces
- Rescue from height
- Marine firefighting
- National resilience

1.18.4 **Assurance.** In terms of our prevention and protection activities, we use sophisticated modelling and profiling techniques, coupled with partnership data, referrals, and local knowledge to identify those who are most at risk from fire and ensure appropriate interventions are made to educate and reduce risk. This helps us ensure that we maximise our impact and allows us to target areas outside of response standards a key part of our approach to integrated risk management planning. Safe and Well checks are quality assured and there are follow up surveys with our wider prevention activities to help us assure the value of our efforts and to

gauge our potential impacts. Protection visits are also targeted against risk and are both quality assured and audited. There is a significant assurance framework in place for assessing our operational capability. Operational competencies aligned to the fire professional framework form part of our operational licence which must be in date for all operational firefighters. Local variation in required skill levels which are required to be at a higher level than the Operational Licence is managed on a risk basis and according to local risk and Service requirements. A structured approach is in place 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.

- 1.18.5 The organisation recognises and accepts its responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and others who may be affected by its activities. To achieve this, the organisation looks to meet all relevant requirements of the Health & Safety at Work 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 procedures that are developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance. The procedures 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 maintaining the BSI 18001 health and safety standard for the southern part of the Service. The arrangements to achieve this standard is currently being rolled out across the new Service with the aim of achieving whole Service accreditation by March 2019.
- 1.18.6 We work closely with our Local Resilience Forums to help us meet our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act and are the employing body for the Dorset Civil Contingencies Unit. We align our risk management arrangements to the community risk registers to ensure that we have the appropriate response and recovery plans and resources to meet our duties. Multi-agency and Service based exercising takes place to test these arrangements. The Service is also heavily involved in effective multi-agency liaison arrangements, and the sharing of resources which contribute to an enhanced incident response such as the National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILO) network, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and Safety Advisory Groups.
- 1.18.7 Whilst Service wide performance is reported by officers and scrutinised by Members at Authority level, to ensure that local accountability across a large Service is maintained, four Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees have been established for Bournemouth and Poole; Dorset; Swindon and Wiltshire. The principle is to provide a mechanism for ensuring local accountability, focus and on-going support for matters relating to the geographical areas of the five constituent local authorities. These public meetings are held on a quarterly basis with performance information and reports available from our website which also hosts our community performance dashboard.

Current and future challenges

1.19 The following challenges are being addressed by the Authority:

- 1.19.1 **A diverse workforce to meet our needs.** We remain committed to having a competent, diverse and resilient workforce. To help us achieve this we are strengthening our strategic workforce plan to ensure that over the next few years we are better forecasting our needs and appropriately recruiting firefighters, corporate staff, apprentices and volunteers. In support of this we have a comprehensive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion that is overseen by a separate committee. We are strengthening all aspects of our Service with a particular focus on our approach to positive action, leadership, talent management and progression.
- 1.19.2 **Securing financial sustainability.** All public services are having to operate with less money and the Authority is no exception. In spite of our combination, we received the fourth worst financial settlement for Combined Fire Authorities in England and Wales (27%) with significant frontloading requirements. Around £4-4.5m of likely annual savings was to be targeted from the combination along with a review of crewing arrangements for whole time appliances of £1.5m to help set a balanced budget. We achieved through our efficiency plans, £4m worth of cashable and non-cashable savings. The main areas for savings have been through senior management reviews, the rationalisation of non-station-based staffing and flexi duty officers, establishing a single Service Control Centre and the remainder through other areas, such as property sharing initiatives, smarter working practices and changes in procurements and contracts. We are currently using reserves to balance our budget and are working on achieving the remaining changes to service delivery to ensure a balanced budget for future years.
- 1.19.3 **Sustainable on-call duty system.** Over 80% of our appliances are crewed by on-call staff who balance their time between their primary employer and our Service. To help us ensure that we have these firefighters available, we are reviewing our recruitment processes and employment practices to maximise the opportunities for a greater range of applicants to the Service. We are also seeking to systematically reduce the level of management and administration to help achieve a better work-life balance for those working this duty system. In addition, we are investing in a salaried scheme to make the duty system more attractive and sustainable.
- 1.19.4 **Delivering Operational Training.** To ensure that our firefighters maintain their high standards and competencies the Service has two training centres; one in the north of the Service and one in the south. These centres have specialised facilities, including the ability to deliver critical hot fire behaviour training. We are currently undertaking work to ensure the long term resilience of these training facilities.

1.20 To meet these challenges, we have initiatives and actions that are included in our service delivery plan. Progress is reviewed via the strategic risk register by the Finance & Governance Committee at each of its meetings and by internal audit who have given a 'substantial' level assurance over this work. Reports are available via the Service's website (www.dwfire.org.uk).

Conclusion

1.21 We believe that this statement of assurance provides a good overview of how we maintain high standards of good governance and services to the communities we serve. Whilst we recognised that there are key challenges, we are also firmly committed to the need to continuously improve. Overall, we are satisfied that the systems and processes that are in place across the organisation fulfil the requirements under the National Fire and Rescue Framework. Should you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be more than happy to help.

Cllr Spencer Flower

Ben Ansell

**Chairman
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Rescue Authority**

**Chief Fire Officer
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service**