



DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
AUTHORITY

# Statement of Assurance

2020-2021



PASSIONATE ABOUT

CHANGING & SAVING LIVES

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in May 2018, sets out the requirement for all fire and rescue authorities in England to publish an annual Statement of Assurance. This Statement of Assurance outlines our overall governance, financial and operational arrangements and provides details of our current and future challenges. The statement is structured in accordance with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and is underpinned by a comprehensive assurance framework aligned to our key policies that can be found on our website.

## GOVERNANCE

### General arrangements

2. To help us maintain good governance we adopt a [Corporate Governance Policy](#), that is underpinned by the principles developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), 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. Within our baseline assessment against this code of practice we have incorporated our information management arrangements and practices.

### How we assure our corporate governance

#### Local Government Association peer review

3. The governance model of our Authority was independently assured in July 2019, by the Local Government Association (LGA) who undertook a bespoke governance peer review covering the following key areas:
  - Overall organisational governance
  - The assurance framework and supporting procedures that underpin the annual Statement of Assurance
  - The quality of Member and Officer relations
  - The scope of opportunity for Member development arrangements
  - The development of the annual Statement of Assurance
  - Recommendations for strengthening the current governance arrangements.
4. The [LGA report](#) provided us with positive assurance, citing that, '*the overall impressions are that the Authority is a good, well organised Fire and Rescue Authority*'. All of the opportunities for further improvements arising from this peer review have been put in place.

### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

5. Within its [first inspection report](#) of our Service, HMICFRS commended our high standard of performance in all areas and in meeting the needs of our communities. The Inspectorate awarded our Service the grading of 'Good' against all three pillars of the inspection: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and People.
6. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Inspectorate have delayed their second round of full inspections. Instead, during 2020, the Inspectorate undertook a Covid-19 themed inspection of all fire and rescue services in England.
7. Whilst no graded judgements were awarded following these inspections, each service received a letter to confirm the inspection findings. Overall, the Inspectorate found a positive and robust response by the Service to the pandemic and noted no significant areas of concern.
8. [Our letter](#) confirmed that the Inspectorate had found that we had rapidly established comprehensive arrangements to cope with the challenges and uncertainties associated with the national pandemic. Furthermore, they were positive about the fact that core functions were maintained and that we were able to quickly adapt our ways of working to keep the community safe, whilst maintaining high standards of health, safety and welfare of our staff.

### **Code of corporate governance (CIPFA/SOLACE)**

9. As part of our assurance process, we undertake an annual comprehensive corporate governance baseline assessment against the Corporate Governance in Local Government framework (2016) published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). This supports our additional requirement to publish an Annual Governance Statement, which is included within our statutory [Financial Statement of Accounts](#). This Statement is audited annually by our external auditors.

### **Internal Audit**

10. To support the external audit process, we have in place a robust system for internal auditing. In January 2019 we appointed the South West Audit Partnership as our Internal Auditors and agreed a four-year Internal Audit Strategy in March 2019. The Internal Audit Strategy provides coverage of our key corporate outcomes, as well as coverage of the eight themes of a 'Healthy Organisation'. Annually, in March, an annual internal audit plan is developed and approved by the Finance & Audit Committee. Performance against the internal audit plan is reported to senior managers and Members on a quarterly basis, through the Finance & Audit Committee. On the balance of the 2020-2021 audit work for the Service, South West Audit Partnership provided an adequate assurance opinion in respect of the areas reviewed within the year's [internal audit plan](#). The following areas were included within this year's plan, with assurance levels provided:

- Malpractice management controls (*adequate assurance*)
- Critical supplier management (*substantial assurance*)
- Asset management strategy (*adequate assurance*)
- Financial resilience (*substantial assurance*)
- Information security (*adequate assurance*)
- Health and wellbeing programme (*adequate assurance*)
- Treasury management (*substantial assurance*)
- ICT asset management (*adequate assurance*)
- Project management framework (*substantial assurance*)
- People development (*substantial assurance*).

11. Our quarterly internal audit reports which may include any agreed improvement actions are published on our website. These improvement activities are reviewed at the quarterly [Finance & Audit Committee meetings](#), until they are signed off as complete. Good progress has been made in 2020/21 in discharging these actions.

### **Planning and Performance Management**

12. In support of the development of the Community Safety Plan (CSP) we undertake a [Strategic Assessment of Risk](#) to ensure we are fully aware of our current and future risks and threats. We consult and engage with key partners and stakeholders in the delivery of this document to help ensure that it is comprehensive and appropriately aligned to meet the needs of our communities. Our CSP is aligned to national standards arising from the Fire Standards Board.
13. The strategic issues, expectations and requirements that are translated from the [Community Safety Plan](#) through our strategies are translated into on-ground action through our Service Delivery Plan. This structured process is aligned to the HMICFRS's inspection methodology.
14. Our performance is monitored internally on a monthly basis through our performance management systems and with department management oversight. Performance data is then further scrutinised internally on a quarterly basis by our strategic managers and elected Authority Members. This reporting process is designed to feed directly into the Service wide performance reporting framework that has been aligned to HMICFRS's inspection methodology. In addition to these quarterly reports, we publish an annual report each September which is available on our website.
15. Whilst our service wide performance is reported by officers and scrutinised by Members at Authority level, to make sure local accountability across our large Service area is maintained, four Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees are in place for the four constituent authorities: Bournemouth, Christchurch & 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 constituent Local Authorities. These are public meetings, held locally on a quarterly basis, with performance information and [reports available through our website](#).

## Information Governance & Data Transparency

16. We have incorporated our policy position on information governance within the wider [Corporate Governance policy](#) and comply with the Government's 'Local Government Transparency Code 2015' for publishing public data. Our website provides details of the information required to be published.
17. We maintain a Freedom of Information Publication Scheme and in the last year we have complied with 95% of requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 within the 20 - working day legal timescale. Only six out of the 131 requests exceeded this timescale. All Subject Access Requests were responded to within the legal timescales required under the General Data Protection Regulations. We have strengthened our data protection by design approach, ensuring that data protection impact assessments are conducted for all new processes and ways of working that involve the collection of personal data.
18. An Information Assurance and ICT Steering Board is in place to manage information risks. Information Asset Owners are clear about their responsibilities for managing their information. A corporate complaints process ensures complaints are recorded, investigated and resolved within 14 working days.
19. All arrangements are comprehensively monitored and reported to senior officers and elected Members.

## FINANCIAL

### General arrangements

20. It is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 for all fire and rescue authorities in England to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. Our [Statement of Accounts](#) show the annual costs of providing our Service and the format is determined by the CIPFA Code of Practice, which aims to give a "true and fair" view of our financial position and transactions.
21. To support this, we have an overarching [Financial Management Policy](#), which sets out our approach to ensuring that we demonstrate sound financial management and control of our assets and finances. The policy is further supported by a number of procedural documents.

### How we assure financial planning and financial management

22. The Head of Financial Services and Treasurer is responsible for producing the Statement of Accounts ready for approval and publication. To meet the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, the Statement of Accounts must be approved and published annually, usually by the end of July. This timescale has been extended to 30 September for the Statement of Accounts covering 2020-21 and 2021-22.
23. The Authority approves a [Medium-Term Finance Plan \(MTFP\)](#) each year, along with the revenue and capital budgets. The MTFP sets out an outline financial strategy to meet the requirements of Members' agreed vision and strategic priorities as set out in our Community Safety Plan. The MTFP includes our plans for achieving efficiency and value for money and sets out our reserves strategy.

24. The Service was awarded the rating of 'Good' within the 'Efficiency' pillar from our first HMICFRS inspection, with the Inspectorate confirming that *'We found it to be good at providing an efficient service. And it is good at using resources and providing an affordable service'*.

### **External Audit Arrangements**

25. On an annual basis, our Statement of Accounts are subject to external audit scrutiny. Since 2018, Deloitte LLP have been our appointed external auditors. Deloitte LLP are responsible for the completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the 2020-21 financial statements
- Providing an opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Providing a Value for Money conclusion

26. Deloitte LLP have completed their audit of the 2020-21 financial statements and provided an unmodified (or unqualified) opinion in respect of our accounts and value for money arrangements.

### **Procurement**

27. Our Procurement Plan encompasses both revenue and capital purchases of goods, services and works and meets the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The procurement process spans the whole cycle, from the identification of need through to the end of contract or useful life of an asset. These arrangements are embedded within the organisation and were further strengthened over 2020-21 with the introduction of category management and delivery of contract management training across the organisation. The Head of Financial Services and Treasurer oversees procurement processes to ensure compliance with standing orders and regulations. Regular reports are taken to elected Members as part of our performance management arrangements. Following the exit from the European Union, policies and procedures were reviewed and amended to reflect legislative changes. Impact assessments are undertaken as part of the procurement process to ensure that diversity and inclusion issues are considered and that we meet our corporate and social responsibilities in respect of the procurement of goods and services. Recent Government analysis indicates that we procure at, or below, national average against a standard basket of goods.

## **OPERATIONAL**

### **General arrangements**

28. We are required to comply with a range of legislation and regulations for each facet of the organisation. The key general legislative requirements for us are contained within:

- 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 etc Act 1974, and associated regulations
- Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Localism Act 2011

29. In broad terms, our Service delivery has three key components, Prevention, Protection and Response & Resilience.

### **Prevention**

30. Our prevention teams, along with station-based staff and volunteers, work with partners to prevent fires from starting and to reduce the numbers of fire related injuries and deaths. Whilst our statutory duty is to prevent fires, we have an important role to play in the wider health and crime reduction agendas. Our role is defined within our [Prevention policy](#). We are significantly involved in the health and well-being agendas across our Service area, which includes running a wide range of education and engagement programmes on key focus areas. These include the general wellbeing of vulnerable people, road safety, general risk education and improving the lives and opportunities for young people.

### **Protection**

31. 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. A [Protection Policy](#) document provides oversight on the range of work undertaken by the department. Our fire safety inspectors actively engage with businesses to provide support and fire safety guidance and where necessary enforce fire safety standards, which will continue to enhance the economic growth of our communities. Fire Investigation Officers carry out investigations in partnership with the Police where appropriate and information is collated for serious case conferences and for the use of HM Coroner to assist in reducing the incidence of fire.
32. The Service has developed a Risk Based Inspection Programme that utilises a risk-based methodology to identify those premises that fall under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005). This work also incorporates premises identified by the NFCC Fire Protection Board's Building Risk Review which seeks to reduce fire risks in high rise residential buildings.
33. For 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 work helps us guarantee that we maximise our impact and allows us to target areas outside of our response standards and is a key part of our approach to integrated risk management planning.



## Response and Resilience

34. Our response and resilience activities are directed by our [Response and Resilience policy](#). Our provision of immediate emergency response consists of front-line fire engines and specialist appliances operating from 50 fire stations across our Service, with over 80% of our fire appliances being staffed by On-Call Firefighters. Resources are mobilised to the scene of an emergency based on risk assessed response plans.
35. We have the following specialist resources which can be deployed at incidents where required:
- Command and control
  - Hazardous materials
  - Environmental protection
  - Water rescue
  - Animal rescue
  - Rescue from confined spaces
  - Rescue from height
  - Marine firefighting
  - National resilience.
36. The availability of our appliances and our response times, predominantly in some of the rural parts of our Service, continues to be a key area of focus for improvement for us. This local challenge is reflective of the wider national position.
37. We are 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 network, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), the Critical National Infrastructure and Safety Advisory Groups.
38. We ensure that our initial multi-agency response to all incidents is organised, structured, and practiced using the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme principles](#). The interoperability framework provides us with a standard approach to multi-agency working, which is supported by training and awareness arrangements for our staff. The embedding of JESIP ensures that we are up to date with working practices and able to learn from events together with the other emergency services.
39. Operational crews maintain preparedness through training and the completion of community risk reduction activities to reduce risks presented to residents and business across the Service area. These activities range from Safe and Well visits for vulnerable residents to inspections of commercial or complex buildings to understand the inherent risks. Operational risk information is collated through these visits and shared with all crews and accessed via mobile data terminals at the scene of an incident. Risk information is also shared with bordering services through the secure national Resilience Direct sharing platform. Operational crews exercise against foreseeable risks to ensure they are ready to deliver a fast, safe and effective response during an emergency.
40. We work closely with both the Wiltshire & Swindon and Dorset Local Resilience Forums to help us meet our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. We are also the employing body for the Dorset Civil Contingencies Unit. Our risk management arrangements are aligned to the local community and national risk registers to make sure we have the appropriate response and recovery plans and resources to meet these threats, risks and our duties. Additionally, we work with multi-agency partners to ensure that appropriate exercising takes place to test these arrangements.

41. The concept of both mutual support and emergency provision has been enshrined in fire service legislation since 1947 and currently within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Section 13 obliges Fire and Rescue Authorities to group together, so far as practicable, to provide mutual assistance for fires, road traffic collisions and other serious emergencies. Section 16 extends powers to Fire and Rescue Authorities to enter into contractual arrangements with others (including other Fire and Rescue Authorities) to provide services in the execution of their functions. In respect of firefighting, this can only be delegated to another Fire and Rescue Authority or others that employ firefighters.
42. We currently have such arrangements in place with Royal Berkshire, Hampshire & the Isle of Wight and Devon & Somerset fire and rescue services and work is progressing to deliver similar collaborations with Avon, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire fire and rescue services.
43. Additional resources can be mobilised from across the Service area and requested from further afield through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF). The availability of our resources is monitored through Service wide IT software which provides real time and accurate availability information to ensure the nearest available resource is mobilised when required.

## How we assure operational delivery

### Operational assurance and learning

44. We have a number of processes to assure our incident command and response arrangements. These processes are increasingly being made more efficient and responsive as we invest in technology and the opportunities afforded by Microsoft Office 365. Large and more complex incidents are audited for fire ground safety and effectiveness. Feedback from this learning is used to inform future improvement.
45. We have a structured approach to operational debriefing both within our organisation and in a multi-agency environment. Learning is captured within our own arrangements and using national databases that are shared with bluelight agencies. Our Operational Effectiveness Database (OED) provides a mechanism for staff members to identify notable practice, highlight areas for improvement or make suggestions that may improve the effectiveness of our response or increase the health safety and wellbeing of its operational crews. Members of staff are encouraged to highlight any points they feel need raising via this system and extensive engagement has been undertaken to support and instil confidence in utilising this system. Where information coming into the OED is deemed of strategic importance this will be raised directly with strategic management.
46. In addition, we have an established network of auditors working to BSI standards that audit specific operational aspects of our frontline operational delivery and the supporting arrangements. These reports and their improvement opportunities are considered by senior officers as part of the Incident Command Board and once agreed are tracked through our planning and performance arrangements.
47. The OED is used to assess, process and disseminate key communications received from National Operational Learning (NOL), Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) and through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). The OED helps to ensure a culture of continuous improvement is embedded across the Service. It is used to gather information and learning from operational incidents, incident ground operational assurance processes, post incident debriefing and reviews following exercising.

## **Learning and assurance through exercising**

48. We have a structured approach to local and multi-agency testing and exercising. Due to the national pandemic these have largely been limited to desk top exercising, although as part of our improvements arising from the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry we have revised and tested our arrangements for high rise buildings. All learning points are systematically considered by senior officers and the improvements actions are captured in the OED for inclusion within our planning and performance management arrangements.

## **Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services**

49. HMICFRS, following our first inspection, reported that they were pleased with the performance of our Service in terms of keeping our communities safe and secure and provided an overall score within their 'Effectiveness' pillar of 'Good'.
50. The Inspectorate made special mention of our positive arrangements to prevent fires and other emergencies and in particular, the delivery of safety messages to children, the targeting of our Safe and Well visits towards those who are more vulnerable and how we work with our partners and other organisations to prevent fires. It confirmed that we are good at protecting our public through fire regulation and have a robust approach to compliance within fire safety legislation. We were also rated as 'Good' at responding to fires and other emergencies and to national risks.
51. In addition, the Inspectorate awarded the Service a rating of 'Good' within their 'People' pillar, confirming that our Service is good at: looking after our staff and their health and wellbeing, understanding the skills and capabilities of our workforce, appropriately monitoring and recording training delivered and ensuring sufficient resilience when crewing shortfalls arise.

## **Prevention and Protection**

52. We have training and procedures in place to ensure that we have sufficient provision of competent staff, supported by a quality assurance process to help ensure that we deliver quality and well-regarded services to the public.
53. Prevention activities are monitored and evaluated through statistical analysis, customer satisfaction, behaviour change and our value for money framework. Safe and Well visits are quality assured by the auditing of visits and follow up customer satisfaction and behaviour change surveys. Road safety, fire education and youth intervention are measured and evaluated through attendee behavioural change surveys and feedback questionnaires. All areas of Prevention review Service incident data to identify any emerging trends. Evaluation results are recorded in our end of year reports together with actions for areas of improvement. The value for money of each element of delivery is also monitored to assess the return on investment for both Society and the Service. This helps us to assure the value of our efforts and gauge our potential impacts. As part of our extensive community engagement activities, we are undertaking a significant amount of work to better understand the diversity of the communities we interact with and ensure that we understand and adapt our services and overall perception to meet the needs of everyone we serve.
54. Protection visits are targeted against risk and are quality assured. The internal assurance framework is in place to assess our operational capability and is currently under review. The framework includes quality assurance to improve the targeting of enforcement and prohibition activity, as well as sampling the work of inspectors to inform future practice. Customers are invited to provide feedback on audits via a survey portal, which is reviewed and scrutinised to improve future performance. Our community engagement work is being further strengthened at station and managerial levels to allow us to better understand the diverse needs of the communities we serve. This will enable us to appropriately tailor our approach to support all aspects of service delivery as well as supporting our recruitment drives.

## **Operational Competence**

55. Our operational competencies that must be maintained by our officers, firefighters and control staff are aligned to the Fire Professional Framework and form part of our Operational Licence. Local variations in essential skill levels are aligned to local risk and operational requirements. A structured approach is in place for the design, delivery and assessment of each element of our Operational Licence. Operational competence is recorded against a specialist database and regularly monitored by management at all levels.
56. Our incident command training programme ensures that our incident commanders understand, interpret and apply the incident command system appropriately to every incident. Validated training and assessment programme ensures that incident commanders at every level are equipped with the operational knowledge, understanding and flexibility needed to resolve the full range of foreseeable incidents.

## **Health, Safety & Welfare**

57. We fully recognise and accept our responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of our members of staff and others who may be affected by our activities. Our accidents and near misses are low and have an improving long-term trend. A detailed quarterly health and safety report is considered by a structured Health and Safety Committee and by elected Members via the Finance and Audit Committee.
58. We hold detailed procedures in health, safety and welfare, that are developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance. These procedures, which are openly consulted upon, provide staff with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face and the preventative and protective measures required to control them.
59. We also maintain our accreditation to the International Standards Organisation's (ISO) 45001 Health and Safety Standard, helping to further verify that we have robust systems in place for actively monitoring the effectiveness of our health and safety management procedures. We are one of only a small number of fire and rescue services in England to have achieved this standard. This standard requires external validation from auditors trained to British Standard Institution's competencies every six months. The key finds are reported to senior managers and elected Members.
60. As part of our continued assurance arrangements for this standard, we are required to undertake a suite of audits and inspections to monitor compliance and to identify areas for improvement. This extensive programme of audits recently covered our incident command and control arrangements, as well as compliance with our Coronavirus infection, protection and control guidance and contact tracing processes.

## **CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES**

61. The following strategic risks are currently being addressed by the Authority.

### **Secure financial sustainability that ensures and maintains effective Service provision**

62. Financial sustainability continues to be a key risk and focus area for us. Our Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) published in February 2021 predicts a forecast deficit of £1.5m for 2022-23, rising to £3.1m for 2024-25, based on our assumptions about future funding. This funding position will not become clear until we see the outcomes of the next spending review, which we hope will provide a

multi-year funding settlement from Government until the longer-term financial impact of Covid-19 is known. It is not clear yet, for instance, how Covid-19 will impact on council tax and business rates funding in future years as the economy recovers from the effects of the pandemic. We have also seen costs increasing in certain sectors, such as property repairs and maintenance contracts. We are continuing to engage with local MPs, the Home Office, and the National Fire Chiefs Council to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services.

### **A robust and financially sustainable on-call duty system to meet the needs of our Service**

63. Over 80 percent of our fire engines are crewed by on-call firefighters, who balance their time between their primary employment and ourselves. As with the fire and rescue service nationally, the on-call duty system model remains challenging. To improve on-call fire engine availability, our selection and recruitment processes have been reviewed and strengthened. This includes having recruitment plans focussed on bridging contractual gaps and prioritising stations where most value can be achieved. An on-call steering group, including representative bodies, managers and on-call staff are also reviewing recruitment practices and undertaking a study into reasons for leaving. To improve future financial and operational sustainability, a new pay model was implemented in 2020, with an evaluation plan in place to monitor progress and improvement. In addition, we are seeking to further improve operational availability in rural areas by trialling attribute-based response, where stations are paired up to provide safe crewing levels. Furthermore, there is continued engagement with primary employers, promoting the role of an on-call firefighter in the community.

### **Protection against cyber risks**

64. The threat of cyber incidents, both nationally and locally, has remained on the increase. We have good information security risk management processes in place to monitor and manage the risk. As required under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, we have robust and resilient business continuity arrangements in place to enable us to respond in the event of an incident and these plans have been exercised and tested. An internal audit of our information security processes in 2020 found that our arrangements are 'adequately' managed. We continue to strengthen our technical security arrangements, which are central to the resilience and safeguarding of our critical functions. A revised e-learning course has been introduced to ensure that all staff are aware of their data protection responsibilities and the latest cyber threats. Additional risks within the managing of our information are presented with the increase in our staff home working. We have ensured appropriate technical measures are in place to protect our data and that our staff understand the threats and the action they need to take to avoid security incidents in a remote environment. We are currently working hard to achieve the national Cyber Essentials security standard to further assure our cyber security arrangements.

### **Failure to sufficiently resource potential changes to the fire safety and building safety regimes**

65. We continue to anticipate and monitor the impacts of the future Building Safety Bill and the effects of the Fire Safety Act on future legislative change. The Building Risk Review work stream is progressing with a requirement to triage and audit high-rise residential buildings of 18 metres and above, prior to the end of 2021. We have assessed the resources to meet these increased demands and will continue to anticipate future workforce and competency requirements. HM Government grant funding is being utilised to support the development of capacity and capability within fire safety and plans are in place to ensure the funding is used and reported efficiently and effectively. The Hackitt Report and the subsequent Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry have provided several areas that we await implementation detail through legislative change.

66. Our strategic risks are reviewed monthly by senior officers and scrutinised quarterly by elected Members through our Finance & Audit Committee. The process adopted is well embedded and has been assured by internal audit who provided a ‘*substantial*’ level of assurance. Our strategic risk register and quarterly report is published on our website.

## CONCLUSION

Our Statement of Assurance provides you with a comprehensive overview of how we maintain high standards of good governance and services to the communities we serve. Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI), Wendy Williams CBE, in her press release, following the publication of our first HMICFRS inspection stated:

*‘Our first inspection of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service has found that it is performing to a high standard in all areas.’*

*‘The residents of Dorset and Wiltshire can be confident that they are receiving a quality service’.*

In addition, following the Covid-19 themed inspection, HMI Williams, in her letter of the 20 January 2021, stated:

*‘I am grateful for the positive and constructive way your service engaged with our inspection. I am also very grateful for the positive contribution you and your service have made to your community during the pandemic.’*

*‘We were pleased with how the service continued to maintain its core functions during the pandemic, in particular how innovatively it provided its prevention activities.’*

*‘The service’s strategic leadership team regularly communicated with its staff and had positive wellbeing support in place.’*

Whilst we recognise that there continues to be future challenges, we are firmly committed to embracing a culture of continuous improvement. However, we are satisfied that the systems and processes that are in place across the organisation fulfil the requirements under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018. 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 Rebecca Knox**

**Ben Ansell QFSM**

**Chair  
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and  
Rescue Authority**

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