

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Annual Statement of Operational Assurance

September 2013

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1. Foreword and Introduction by Councillor Phil Howson Chairman East Sussex Fire Authority and Des Prichard Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive.

- 1.1 The Coalition Government is committed to reducing red tape and eliminating bureaucracy. This freedom and flexibility comes with the requirement that we need to ensure that we deliver our services in a responsible manner that provides accountability and transparency.
- 1.2 The Government requires us to provide information to our community on how your service is being provided. We must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show you how we are meeting our priorities through our plans as well as the expectations set for us in our legislative framework. To do this we have written our Operational Statement of Assurance
- 1.3 In line with the requirement to streamline, a lot of additional information about the themes covered in this document can be found in various publications on our website. So as not to duplicate information, we have provided links to the appropriate pages for reference.

2. Financial Arrangements

- 2.1 We are responsible for ensuring that our business and the service provided to you is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 2.2 By law, we must publish our financial results by 30 September every year and this is called our 'Statement of Accounts'. It shows the annual costs of providing the service to you and is produced under strict financial guidelines. This is essentially, a technical publication, which provides a true and fair view of our financial position, our income and expenditure for the year and our assets and liabilities.
- 2.3 The Fire Authority's accounts are subject to external audit by Ernst and Young LLP. They independently review our accounts to ensure that they give a true and fair view, have been prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance and that we use the Authority's resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 2.4 For more information please see the financial pages of our website at <http://www.esfrs.org/fa/financialInformation.shtml>

3. Governance Arrangements

- 3.1 We are also required by Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011, to produce an Annual Governance Statement which supports the Statement of Accounts. Good governance is about how the Authority ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. This statement assesses how effective our governance arrangements, risk management procedures and internal controls have been in helping us to deliver our services to the community and where they need to be improved.

3.2 Copies of our Annual Governance Statements for 2012/13, together with statements from previous years can be found on our website at <http://www.esfrs.org/fa/governance.shtml>

4. Data Transparency

4.1 All local authorities are requested to comply with the Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency. This means that certain public data must be made available to the public. The public data that should be made available includes:

Expenditure over £500

Details of salaries of staff paid over £58,200 per annum

An organisational staff chart

Councillor allowances and expenses

Policies, audits and performance

The location of public land and building assets

Data on the democratic running of the local authority including the constitution, committee minutes, decision making processes and records of decisions.

4.2 Much of this information is already provided on our website under 'local transparency' and we will be adding to this page regularly to make even more of our data freely available and accessible. For more information please see http://www.esfrs.org/about_us/localTransparency.shtml

5. Operational Assurance – Legislative Framework

5.1 Statutory Duties

5.1.1 The core functions of the Fire Authority are set down in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("the Act") as follows:

- Fire Safety – a fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area (Section 6 of the Act);
- Fire Fighting – a fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area (Section 7 of the Act);
- Road Traffic Collisions – a fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of rescuing people in the event of road traffic collisions in its area and protecting people from serious harm, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, in the event of road traffic collisions in its area (Section 8 of the Act); and
- Other Emergencies – the Secretary of State may, by Statutory Order, confer on fire and rescue authorities' functions relating to emergencies other than fires and road traffic collisions. These may include chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear incidents, major transport incidents, search and rescue incidents and rescues from flooding.

5.1.2 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 fire and rescue authorities, through local and regional resilience forums where appropriate, must work in co-operation with other emergency services and agencies to ensure an effective response to a full range of emergencies from localised incidents to catastrophic emergencies. The Act imposes a range of duties on resilience forums that include:

- to have in place appropriate information sharing mechanisms between responders;
- to develop and implement business continuity plans;
- to produce and publish emergency plans as appropriate; and
- to agree arrangements for public awareness and information provision.

5.1.3 As a category 1 responder under the Civil Contingences Act 2004 we are required to formulate business continuity plans that ensure the continuation of our critical functions in the event of an emergency (an event or situation that threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK). Ideally, we would be able to continue all our functions at ordinary service levels. In practice, this may not prove possible, and therefore our focus is on ensuring that our critical functions can be delivered so far as is reasonably practicable. These are:

- Responding to 999 emergencies;
- Delivering community & statutory fire safety;
- Supporting national resilience;
- All support functions that enable the above.

5.2 National Framework

5.2.1 Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act requires a fire and rescue authority to have regard to the National Fire and Rescue Framework, produced by the Secretary of State, when carrying out its functions. The Framework:

must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions;
may contain guidance for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions; and
may contain any other matters relating to fire and rescue authorities and their functions as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

5.2.2 The Fire and Rescue Services Act also makes it a statutory requirement for us to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Our Integrated Risk Management Plan process forms a key component of our strategic programme and significantly contributes toward achievement of our vision and strategic aims. The process enables us to identify the risk from fire and other emergencies to our communities and direct our resources to the areas of greatest need, based upon local risk analysis.

- 5.2.3 Proposals for any major changes through the IRMP process are consulted upon at the appropriate time. Views are sought on any IRMP reviews that are deemed appropriate for public consultation. Consultation methods have always been as wide ranging as possible and we include public meetings, focus groups and telephone surveys wherever appropriate.
- 5.2.4 Last year, under our IRMP proposals, we consulted on our service provision in Hastings with telephone surveys and focus groups. The consultation was comprehensive and we are confident that appropriate information was provided to enable active and informed participation of our communities. The option to relocate the Wholetime appliance from The Ridge Community Fire Station to Bohemia Road Community Fire Station was decided against following consultation with staff and the public.
- 5.2.5 The Fire Authority is satisfied that it has met all the requirements in the National Framework document in terms of producing its Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- 5.2.6 More information on IRMP can be found in the supporting documentation for our Medium Term Plan which includes detailed results of the consultation process. http://www.esfrs.org/document/pdf/planning/mediumTermPlan/appendix_17_integrated_risk_management_supporting_appendix.pdf

5.3 Mutual Aid

- 5.3.1 Section 13 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act requires fire and rescue authorities to enter into reinforcement schemes with other fire and rescue authorities, so far as practicable, for securing mutual assistance. Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act enables fire and rescue authorities to enter into arrangements for the discharge of their functions by others.

Under a section 16 Agreement with West Sussex county Council, East Sussex Fire Authority provides a mobilising function in order for West Sussex County Council to discharge their functions under the Fire & Rescue Services Act. This is carried out by East Sussex Fire & Rescue staff using West Sussex property and equipment at present located in Chichester. This arrangement will change in future.

- 5.3.2 The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 outlines the additional statutory duties enabled by section 9 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The new duty requires authorities, where provision of resources has been made by central government, to respond to incidents, both within and outside the authority area, involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear hazards and Urban Search and Rescue
- 5.3.3 The Order complements the National Mutual Assistance Protocol, to which we are a signatory. This requires fire authorities to make a reasonable response to requests for assistance in relation to any large-scale emergency outside of their area.

- 5.3.4 To meet our responsibilities from the above legislation, we prepare emergency plans, train our staff in preparing those plans, and we undertake exercises to make sure they work.
- 5.3.5 We sponsor, organise and facilitate events which bring together key organisations from across the public, private and voluntary sectors to increase awareness about emergency planning issues, to make sure all of those agencies understand their responsibilities in the event of a major emergency.
- 5.3.6 We provide a supporting response to specialist risks over the border such as Gatwick Airport and Shoreham Harbour in West Sussex and Dungeness Power Station in Kent. We also assist other emergency services at any other incident where additional resources are required.
- 5.3.7 We also consider the risk to heritage sites, the environment and the continuing risk from terrorism. The National Risk Assessment is given careful consideration by the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) and the Service to monitor any new risks identified through these processes. The LRF is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services, including the blue-light emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and other partners. These risks can affect the economy, cause disruption and impact on the day to day lives of our community and therefore understanding these risks within the County and the City provides a clearly defined baseline for us to develop our provision of service to the community we serve.
- 5.3.8 We also consider the wider risk assessments included within the SRF's Community Risk Register (CRR) to ensure that proposed changes to our service delivery complement, as far as possible, the strategies of other local responders and central government agencies. We make significant contributions to the preparation, pre planning and response to a wide range of events that are considered as part of the CRR. This analysis has enabled us to enhance our flooding capability by introducing a boat and swift water rescue team for responding to water rescues based at Crowborough Fire Station. This team is a declared asset and is available for response to local, regional or national flooding incidents.
- 5.3.9 We also plan for, and occasionally respond to, incidents of such scale and/or complexity that local resources may be insufficient even when taking into account mutual aid agreements. As part of the National Resilience New Dimensions Capability Programme, the Government has provided Incident Response Units (IRUs) and High Volume Pumps, (HVPs) into the UK Fire & Rescue Service. The national capability consists of 72 operational IRU's, with 9 being located in the South East region, one of which has been allocated to us and is based at Eastbourne Fire Station Eastbourne and 46 HVPs, with 7 being located in the South East region, 1 has been allocated to us and is based at Hove Fire Station.

5.3.10 Section 7(2) d of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires fire authorities to make arrangements for inspection of certain premises to obtain information. These inspections are known as 7(2) (d) visits. These visits assist in the maintenance of knowledge of the site, equipment and any particular hazards associated with the building. We use the 7(2) (d) visits together with any relevant data collection methods to assist in dealing with an incident, informing command decision making and ensuring public and firefighter safety.

5.3.11 For more information please see our Community safety section of the website. <http://www.esfrs.org/communitySafety/>.

5.4 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

5.4.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order requires that responsible persons in all premises, other than single private dwellings, carry out fire risk assessments. The auditing and enforcement of this activity is the responsibility of fire and rescue authorities to ensure people are protected from fire in places such as hotels, hospitals, entertainment venues and similar premises.

5.4.2 Our Business Safety Department enforces the provisions of the Fire Safety Order. The Department has a targeted programme for auditing all non-domestic premises in our area, based on the level of fire risk that each property presents. Fires in non-domestic premises not only have the potential to do harm to their occupants but also have a devastating effect on business. For more information please see <http://www.esfrs.org/businessSafety/>

5.5 Rule 43

5.5.1 Under the provisions of Rule 43 of the Coroners Rules, a Coroner who believes that actions should be taken to prevent the recurrence of fatalities similar to that in respect of which the Inquest is being held, may announce at the Inquest that he is reporting the matter in writing to the person or authority who may have power to take such action and he may report the matter accordingly.

5.5.2 Following an inquest into the tragic deaths of two firefighters on the 6 April 2010, when fighting a fire in a high-rise block of flats in Southampton, the Coroner K St J Wiseman wrote a Rule 43 Letter to Sir Ken Knight, Chief Fire and Rescue Advisers Unit, Department for Communities and Local Government.

5.5.3 Each Fire and Rescue Service must respond to the recommendations in the letter and examine existing procedures in the light of the recommendations and where necessary, take steps, to implement improvements. An action plan has been agreed by Corporate Management Team (CMT) and will be progressed during the next year to ensure we internally address the Coroner's recommendations.

5.6 Crime and Disorder Act 1998

- 5.6.1 As a “responsible authority” under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the fire and rescue authority has a statutory duty to work in partnership with key agencies in Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. These are required to carry out annual strategic assessments to identify current and possible future crime, disorder and substance misuse issues from sound evidence and analysis.
- 5.6.2 We believe that partnership working between local agencies is key to providing ‘joined up’ public services for local people and to ensuring successful outcomes at the lowest cost for taxpayers. Our structure is based on a borough command geographical arrangement with specific officers responsible for community safety partnerships in their area. In addition, our Inclusion and Partnership Manager is responsible for delivery of our partnership strategy and undertaking an annual review of partnerships to ensure we are achieving the desired outcomes for our communities.
- 5.6.3 The annual review of Partnerships is presented to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel in September each year and can be accessed through this link:
http://www.esfrs.org/document/pdf/fa/ScrutinyPanel/2012/september/1209_SA_agd_PART_1_non_confidential.pdf.

5.7 The Localism Act 2011

- 5.7.1 The Localism Act takes as its starting point the existing statutory powers of fire and rescue authorities and then gives the Fire Authority the power to do:
Anything they consider appropriate for the purposes of carrying out their functions
Anything they consider appropriate for purposes incidental to carrying out their functions
Anything they consider appropriate for purposes indirectly incidental to carrying out their functions
- 5.7.2 It also added three new sections to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which allows Fire and Rescue Authorities to place a charging policy in support of its strategy to deal with unwanted fire signals received from automatic fire detection systems.
- 5.7.3 The charging power allows us a level of discretion in that we may decide not to charge at all, as is the case now, or we may charge different amounts to different groups of recipients when we respond to specific categories of calls. We have reduced false alarms by 32% over recent years, but last year we still attended 2,832 false alarms calls from automatic fire alarms. We will be reviewing our policy over the coming months in order to determine our approach to charging. For more information please see our reducing false alarms section on the internet.
<http://www.esfrs.org/communitySafety/reducingFalseAlarms.shtml>

- 5.7.4 Under section 38(1) of the Act we are required to prepare a Pay Policy Statement. The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that that the pay policy statement sets out the issues relating to the pay of the workforce and in particular the senior officers and the lowest paid employees. This ensures that there is the appropriate accountability and transparency of the salaries of our senior staff. The purpose of the statement is to provide greater transparency on how taxpayers' money is used in relation to the pay and rewards for public sector staff.
- 5.7.5 Please see the local transparency section of our website:
http://www.esfrs.org/document/pdf/fa/statementsOfAccounts/2012_13_Pay_Policy_Statement.pdf

6. Internal Audits and Assessments

- 6.1.1 East Sussex County Council's Internal Audit provides our internal audit reviews to meet the requirements of our Corporate Governance Framework to support the role of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. An annual internal audit plan is agreed by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel following consultation between Principal Officers and Internal Audit about the risk priorities. Individual reports on our systems are evaluated by internal audit and include recommendations to enhance controls, and then action plans are developed to address and implement audit recommendations.
- 6.1.2 During 2012/13 a programme of audits, based on an assessment of risk, was carried out across ESFA. The areas audited that relate to our Operational effectiveness included:
- Whole Time Shift Leave Investigation
 - Station Regularity Visits
 - East and West Sussex Joint Control Project
 - Firewatch Implementation
- 6.1.3 The programme also included audits on our financial, governance and other internal arrangements included:
- Precepting Arrangements
 - Travel and Subsistence
 - Audit of Fundamental Accounting Systems including the general ledger, pensions, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and Human Resources Payroll function
 - National Fraud Initiative
- 6.1.4 Internal Audit gave the following opinion:
No assurance can ever be absolute; however based on the internal audit work completed, East Sussex County Council's Head of Assurance (as East Sussex Fire Authority's Head of Internal Audit) can provide reasonable assurance that East Sussex Fire Authority has in place an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and internal control for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. Audit testing has confirmed that the majority of key controls examined are working in practice, with some specific exceptions. Where improvements to control or compliance are required, we are satisfied that appropriate action has been agreed by the relevant managers within reasonable timescales.

6.1.5 For the full report please see the Scrutiny & Audit Agenda pages on our website.
<http://www.esfrs.org/fa/scrutinyPanel.shtml>

6.2 Operational Assessment

6.2.1 The Fire and Rescue sector has a strong and long standing commitment to sector led improvement. As part of this, the Chief Fire Officers Association developed the concept of Operational Assessment (OpA) in 2009, in partnership with the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire & Rescue Adviser. This process, which has a strong operational focus, comprises a self -assessment and external peer challenge and is designed to allow a “whole system” look at how a Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) leads, prioritises and delivers the interrelated functions of prevention, protection and response.

6.2.2 Our next peer review is due to take place in January 2014.

6.3 Station Inspections

6.3.1 The Station Inspection programme is designed to support the continual performance improvement of our front line delivery services in terms of effectiveness, compliance with service operational and administrative procedures but above all, to ensure that the operational preparedness and safety of crews remains a priority

The Inspection programme includes three elements:

A review of station documents and records on Health & Safety, risk critical and business critical issues.

A practical drill session to observe basic core skills application.

A question and answers session to confirm underpinning knowledge and understanding on core safety related issues.

6.3.2 Immediate feedback is provided to duty managers and if any significant notices of improvement are issued, copies are provided to the Station Manager and Borough Commander who take direct responsibility for the implementation of improvement actions.

7. Performance Management

7.1 To help us improve in the right areas and demonstrate progress, we use performance management. This helps us to:

Focus on our priorities.

Set targets aimed at improving services and measures progress.

Identify and tackle poor performance.

Be accountable to our communities.

Help ensure we provide value for money.

7.2 The Corporate Management Team (CMT), of four Principal Officers, the Treasurer and three Directors meet at least once a month to discuss strategic and policy issues and to monitor and determine service and financial plans into the future to ensure that we meet our statutory duties.

7.3 The Service to the public is then delivered by four directorates, Service Delivery Directorate, Service Support Directorate, Corporate Services Directorate and People & Organisational Development Directorate and their main responsibilities are:

Service Delivery - operational response and resilience, new dimensions, community and legislative fire safety, and emergency planning;
Support Services - Health, Safety and Welfare, Engineering Services, Estates Management, and Information Management;
Corporate Services - business planning, financial planning and governance, strategic procurement development, support and review of performance and quality;
People and Organisational Development - development of staff, focusing particularly on personal leadership, developing managerial capability and embedding core values.

7.4 The Authority's priorities are articulated in our aims and objectives and contained in our planning documents. We produce a number of separate plans, all of which outline how we intend to deliver our services:

Our Medium-Term Plan sets our longer-term direction and sets out how we intend to deliver our services based on community needs and the resources available to us.

Our Annual Plan and summarises what we've done over the last year, as well as what we intend to do over the following year

Each Directorate, Borough and Station has a more detailed local Action Plan that sets out their activities against our aims and objectives.

All of our staff have their own Personal Development Plans - which aid individual career development whilst, at the same time, providing a focus as to how their particular role helps deliver the overall aims of the Service.

7.5 The start to effective performance management is business planning. The purpose of which is to translate high-level objectives into management action and linked performance measures. Staff are able to see where their work area fits into the overall strategic direction of the Authority, what the targets are to be achieved in the year ahead and how their contribution fits into vision, aims and objectives.

7.6 On a monthly basis performance results are produced by Borough and Station. On a quarterly basis, the performance results are presented at Corporate Management Team in the form of a traffic light system. Any major variances are investigated to ascertain the cause and commentary is provided by the responsible officer. The reports are then presented to the Fire Authority for monitoring and further scrutiny purposes.

7.7 We also have clearly defined priority areas in which we concentrate our efforts. Each year we revisit them to ensure the targets remain appropriate. Our priority areas for 2013/14 are:

- Percentage of Home Safety Visits provided to vulnerable people should not be less than 70%.
- Number of accidental fires in dwellings should reduce by 5% over the period from 2011/12 to 2015/16.
- Ensuring accidental dwelling fires are confined to the room they started in on 94% of occasions.
- A 20% reduction in automatic fire alarms.
- Expenditure per head of the population should not exceed original budget.
- The number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence for all staff should not exceed 7.5 days.

7.8 The Government set all Fire Authorities 10 year targets from 2001/02. We have been measuring our progress ever since against this benchmark year. The following table shows our reductions in performance over the twelve years from 2001/02 to 2012/13 and our performance from last year, 2011/12.

Summary Table

	Reduction since 2001/02	Reduction from last year
	+ /- %	+ /- %
Primary Fires (<i>fires in properties of value or involve more than 5 fire engines</i>)	-55%	-5%
Deliberate Primary Fires (<i>fires in properties of value or involve more than 5 fire engines where the cause of fire is suspected not to be an accident</i>)	-76%	-9%
Deliberate Road vehicle primary fires (<i>fires in vehicles that are not derelict where the cause of fire is suspected as not to be an accident</i>)	-83%	+7%
Secondary Fires (fires in derelict buildings, grass, heath, railway, straw, fence, bins etc.)	-72%	-44%
Deliberate secondary fires (<i>fires in derelict buildings, grass, heath, railway, straw, fence, bins etc. where the cause is suspected not to be accidental</i>)	-80%	-52%
Fires in houses where the cause was accidental	-29%	+4%
Non-fatal casualties by in fires	-59%	-15%
Malicious False Alarms	-70%	57%
False Alarms	-23%	-22%
False Alarms due to apparatus	-	-5%

- 7.9 These impressive statistics have been achieved through the hard work and dedication of all our staff. From our targeted community safety work achieved by our firefighters on stations and our Community Safety Department, to our Business Safety Teams delivering important advice and enforcing fire safety regulations, to all our staff in the back offices who all play a part in making our communities safer.
- 7.10 Further information on our people and resources and our services to the community and performance can be found in our plans and on the About Us page of our website at the following links, <http://www.esfrs.org/planning/mediumTermPlan.shtml>
<http://www.esfrs.org/wedomore/>

8. Assurance Statement by the Fire Authority

Good governance is about running things properly. It is the means by which the Fire Authority shows it is taking decisions for the good of the people of the area, in a fair, equitable and open way. It also requires standards of behaviour that support good decision making - collective and individual integrity, openness and honesty. It is the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meet all local people's needs. It is fundamental to showing public money is well spent. Without good governance Fire Authorities will struggle to improve services.

From the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken and supported by the ongoing work undertaken by both Internal and External Audit, we have reached the opinion that, overall, key systems are operating soundly and that there are no fundamental control weaknesses.

We can confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, that this statement provides an accurate and fair view.

Signed

Signed

Date

Date

Councillor Sven Rufus

Des Prichard

Chair of the Scrutiny and Audit Panel

Chief Fire Officer & Executive