



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE**

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

## **Statement of Assurance**

**April – Sept 2016**



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## **1. BACKGROUND**

The [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#), published in July 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. The statement should also have regard for the national framework itself. In May 2013, Government produced guidance on how this statement might be formulated.

With the inauguration of Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, this is our first statement of assurance. It provides a broad summary of the arrangements in place since the combination and highlights our areas of focus for 2016/17.

In the interests of transparency we have linked this Statement to a number of key documents. 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 you.

## **2. ASSURANCE**

In line with national guidance on producing this statement of assurance, the following sections outline the arrangement and assurances we have in place associated with the financial, governance and operational aspects of our work.

### **Financial assurance**

#### *Financial arrangements*

It is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations for all fire and rescue authorities in England to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. The [Dorset](#) and [Wiltshire](#) '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. As part of our combination we have agreed a new set of Financial Regulations. To support these new regulations an overarching [Financial Management Policy](#) has been published. This policy document 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 with further procedure documents due for publication during 2016/17.



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The new Finance and Audit Committee receive regular quarterly financial performance reports overview financial issues as they arise. Both legacy Services have had a good record with regards to their financial managements, with clean audits on their statutory accounts each year. A number of financial internal audit reviews are carried out each year. The most recent audit opinion for [Dorset Fire and Rescue Service's Key Financial Controls Audit](#) was "Reasonable", stating that most of the areas reviewed were found to be adequately controlled, and risks were well managed, but some systems required the introduction or minor improvement of internal controls to ensure the achievement of objectives. With the [Main Accounting Audit for Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service](#) concluding that significant system controls were in place and operating effectively and only minor recommendations were made.

### *Procurement Policy*

The Service has in place a procurement procedure in place that addresses both revenue and capital procurement and how to procure goods, services and works. The process spans the whole cycle from identification of need through to the contract or end of the useful life of an asset. Procurement advice is held on the staff section of the new website for internal staff and separately for external suppliers. Significant work was undertaken prior to combination to establish a Service wide contracts register for the new Service. All details have been embedded into departmental planning for 2016/17. Additional in house budget monitoring and procurement training is being provided to Service budget mangers to further embed these requirements. As part of this process, contracts will also be reviewed with budget managers.

### **Governance framework**

We are required to ensure that our business is conducted in accordance with our legal requirements and proper standards. We constantly strive to ensure that public money is always safeguarded, property accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. To help us achieve this we appoint a Monitoring Officer who helps ensure that our decision-making remains lawful; a Treasurer to ensure that we have sound financial management and arrangements in place and a Chief Fire Officer to lead the fire and rescue service. Our decision-making process is supported by a democratic services team and legal support from Dorset County Council.

To help us maintain good governance we have adopted a [set of standing orders](#), which are based upon the six principles developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and SOLACE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. These standing orders set out the means by which we both meet and demonstrate our commitment to good corporate governance.



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In addition to these governance arrangements, the Accounts and Audit Regulations require us to publish an Annual Governance Statement ([Dorset Annual Governance Statement](#) and [Wiltshire Annual Governance Statement](#)) to accompany the financial statements. This provides details as to the measures taken to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and good governance. This is audited each year and we are pleased to highlight that there are no significant areas of concern raised by our external auditors.

### *Audit and review*

We are required to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control at least once a year and this is complete by the Finance and Audit Committee. We achieve this through our own appointed internal auditors and through externally appointed auditors who work closely together. An audit programme has been designed and agreed for the 2016/17. The [first quarter audit programme](#) has been already completed, providing assurance to the Authority in its risk and business continuity management, information management, Workforce Planning, ICT Migration and Procurement. The Authority's external auditors review the Annual Governance Statement required under the Finance and audit regulations as well as auditing our financial arrangements and controls. No significant issues were raised by them when they audited our previous separate Services.

### *Plans, policies and procedures*

We have set our longer-term plans and priorities in our [Community Safety Plan](#). This plan is further supported by our integrated risk management programme, and an efficiency plan. We are also in the process of formulating our organisational development and cultural change programme. To ensure that these plans get delivered we have a structured process of planning and performance management which is being embedded within the new Service.

We have a [clear set of policies](#) published on our website. These policies are supported by a large number of procedures that are made widely available. In preparation for establishing the new Authority, we prioritised over 80 key procedures and officers are closely managing the development of the remaining procedures. As part of developing our procedures we have a corporate process in place to ensure that all procedure reviews incorporate an impact assessment which included, data security, equality, health and safety and business continuity.

### *Health and Safety*

We are fully committed to the continuous improvement of the health, safety, and welfare of our staff and those we come into contact with. The management of health, safety and welfare is an integral part of our business processes. We have a clear policy and set of procedures and we are currently working hard to bring together our respective reporting,



monitoring and management arrangements. To help us achieve this, our Health, Safety and Welfare Committee, made up of key managers and representative bodies, will ensure an additional level of scrutiny of the adequacy and effectiveness of our arrangements. We have published the annual health and safety reports for the former [Dorset](#) and [Wiltshire](#) fire and rescue services. We are currently working to extend the [BSI 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management standard from Dorset](#) across the new Service.

### *Equality & Diversity*

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a number of specific duties, one of which is for us to publish equality information on an annual basis. Prior to combination Dorset annually produced a report entitled "[Meeting our Equality Duty](#)" and Wiltshire compiled an "[Equality Information Report](#)". Both reports contained similar data about the respective workforce, as well as service delivery statistics and details of relevant projects. On combination it was proposed to produce one single report and work towards providing relevant statistics for publication in January 2017. We are working to this and are corporately committed to achieving an Excellent rating under the fire and rescue service equality framework. We have adopted a [common set of value and behaviours](#) that we are embedding within the new Service.

### *Risk and Business Continuity*

Appropriate risk management arrangements have been put in place, aligned to best practise. We are working to the British Standard, ISO 31000:2009 and the Association of Local Authority Risk Managers National Performance Model for Risk Management in Public Services. This helps us to manage and mitigate threats which may hinder the delivery of our vision and priorities. Our Strategic Leadership Team review our strategic level risks on a monthly basis with the Finance & Audit committee reviewing these risks on a quarterly basis ([Strategic Risk Register](#)). Corporate risks are identified, reported and managed via our performance management system which is set to manage risks within our identified risk appetite.

We are also committed to making sure appropriate Business Continuity arrangements are in place to ensure a continued and uninterrupted emergency response for our communities and stakeholders, as well as safeguarding our other critical business processes. In working to the principles set out in the British Standard, BS ISO 22301:2012 25999 "Business Continuity Management System" and the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) "Good Practice Guidelines 2013" we can ensure good governance and best practice throughout our Business Continuity arrangements.

An [audit of the Service's current risk management and business continuity arrangements](#), along with the future work programme for 2016/17, has been complete, providing assurance of our measures currently in place. We are working hard to further develop and embed these arrangements in line with an agreed work programme.



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## *Transparency and access to information*

We are committed to being open and transparent organisation. We ensure that relevant information is made available as soon as possible via our publication scheme which is published on our website. These arrangements align with the [Local Government's Transparency Code 2015](#) which we audit our standing against this code each year. We have a procedure for ensuring compliance with both the [Freedom of Information Act](#) and the [Data Protection Act](#). The number of requests received and compliance with the response deadline are being monitored monthly and quarterly by the Finance and Audit Committee. We also publish an [annual pay policy statement](#) which includes information about the salaries paid to our most senior staff.

## *Information security*

Whilst each of the former Services had good arrangements in place, we are currently consolidating and embedding these arrangements following our recent combination. Our [Security Breach procedure](#) for reporting and managing actual and potential breaches is in place. In line with good practice we have recently undertaken an IT penetration test and we have an Information Governance Forum for the new Service to allow us to better manage information risk across the new organisation. An early audit of current arrangements has been complete with Auditors confirming substantial assurance in this area. To ensure best practice we working to achieve compliance against the national standard (ISO 27001)

## *Complaints*

A [compliments and complaints procedure](#) is in place and communicated to all staff. We are confident that these are being accurately captured and managed. This allows us to see the number of complaints being received, what they are about, how long they are taking to resolve, whether that are upheld or not, any actions required to prevent further occurrence as well as equality monitoring data of complainants. It also allows us to centrally record compliments in the same way. In addition to this being closely managed, the Finance and Audit Committee monitor this area on a quarterly basis.

## *Whistle Blowing*

Awareness of the whistle blowing, anti-fraud, corruption and bribery procedures have been promoted internally to encourage staff to raise issues of concern without fear of reprisal. The [whistle blowing](#) procedure is also available on our website.

## *Data Quality*



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For the first year of the combined service, we are embedding new information governance arrangements and drawing upon the foundations that were in place in the two former Services. An Information Governance Forum is being established along with training for departments to ensure that they manage and quality control data and information. A process of migrating to single information systems has begun with data quality and integrity central to the process. These arrangements are being audited by Internal Audit who are also conducting a wider review of the newly formed governance arrangements. A full assurance framework that includes a key focus on data quality is being put in place to support future our Statement of assurance.

## **Operational Assurance**

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 2012

In broad terms our service delivery has three key components:

### *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 in the Swindon area, which will complement the existing facilities in Bournemouth and Weymouth.

### *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. Whilst the former Services had effective fire safety arrangements in place, this is being further developed by 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. Data systems are being integrated with an aim that one system will be in place across the new Service by early 2017.

### *Response*

Our provision of immediate emergency response consists of 73 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

### *Assurance*

There is a significant assurance framework within our prevention and protection activities. We use sophisticated modelling and profiling techniques, coupled with 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 efforts and impact. Home safety 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 quality assured and audited. We are currently consolidating our approach to customer surveys; our re-inspection programme and aligning our station audit programme.

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





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Unit. We align our risk management arrangements to the community risk registers to ensure that we have the appropriate response and recover plans and resources to meet our duties. Multi-agency and Service based exercising takes place to test these arrangements.

All stations and departments have key activities along with key performance indicators for prevention, protection and response. Whilst Service wide performance is reported by officers and scrutinised by Members at full Authority level, to ensure that local accountability for Operations across a large Service, 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.

### **3. FUTURE PLANS**

We remain on target to meet our savings of between £4-6 million per year, which will help us to protect and where possible strengthen frontline services. Our future plans and priorities are set out in our [Community Safety Plan](#). This plan is supported by our Integrated Risk Management programme and our Efficiency programme. Our focus and commitments for 2016/17 will be to continue to build upon the work complete as part of our combination, further embed our new arrangements and ensure a one culture, single team approach to deliver an economic, effective and efficient Service.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

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. 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.

Handwritten signature of Rebecca Knox in black ink.

**Councillor Rebecca Knox**  
Chairman, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire  
and Rescue Authority

Handwritten signature of Darran Gunter in black ink.

**Darran Gunter**  
Chief Fire Officer, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire  
and Rescue Service