



Wiltshire
Fire & Rescue
Service

Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority Statement of Assurance



Foreword

The revised Fire and Rescue National Document, published in July 2012, sets out the requirement for all English Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide an annual assurance statement on financial, governance and operational matters and to demonstrate how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

This paper provides an overview of Wiltshire and Swindon Combined Fire Authority's arrangements, along with links and direction to other key documentation, which support this Statement of Assurance.

Statutory responsibility

Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) operate within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents for this 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
- Localism Act 2011
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

To ensure that these are met, the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) has the following internal assurance measures.

Financial assurance

Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, the Authority is responsible for ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Each year, the Authority reviews the money required against the money it secures from the precepts, business rates and Government grants.

It is a statutory requirement, under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, for FRAs to publish the financial results of their activities on an annual basis. The Authority publishes a [Statement of Accounts](#), which sets out the annual costs of providing the Fire & Rescue Service and its performance. This is prepared in accordance with practices determined by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

In addition, the Authority prepares a [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) (MTFS), which aims to provide a financial assessment of the pressures and constraints that it will have to manage over a four year period, in order to deliver its services to the people of Wiltshire and Swindon. The Authority's current MTFS covers the period from 2014 to 2019.

The fundamental objective of the CFA is to deliver affordable, value for money services and, as such, the MTFS is established to:

- Ensure that the Authority has sufficient resources to deliver against its priorities;
- Enable spending plans (revenue and capital) to be aligned to the core priorities within the plans;
- Deliver value for money, efficiency and improvement;
- Provide a longer term financial plan to provide stability for future budget proposals;
- Maintain an adequate level of reserves and balances in line with our risk strategy; and
- Improve financial management.

On an annual basis, the Statement of Accounts is subject to external audit scrutiny by KPMG LLP, who has awarded the Service with an unqualified opinion – this has been the case for many years.

The accounts are certified by the Authority's Chief Financial Officer, who is a qualified accountant.

Governance

The Fire Authority approves and adopts a [Code of Corporate Governance](#), which is based upon the six principles developed by CIPFA, the professional public sector accountancy body, and SOLACE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers. Our Code of Corporate Governance sets out the means by which the Fire Authority will meet and demonstrate its commitment to good corporate governance in relation to these principles:

- Focusing on the Authority's purpose and outcomes for the community, and assisting with the creation and implementation of a vision for the local area;
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- Promoting values for the Fire Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and risk management;
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

In addition, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 require Fire Authorities to publish an [Annual Governance Statement](#) to accompany the financial statements. In preparing the Annual Governance Statement, the Code of Corporate Governance is used as the benchmark or standard by which to measure against.

The [Annual Governance Statement](#) provides details as to the measures taken to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and good governance. It sets out the actions undertaken to review the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. At least annually, the Fire Authority will review the effectiveness of its governance framework.

Transparency

The Service is committed to being open and transparent. [The publication scheme](#) is regularly reviewed to ensure that relevant information is made available as soon as possible.

We regularly publish information on our website in line with the Local Government's Transparency Code 2015 and publish responses to Freedom of Information requests in a [decisions log](#).

Audit and review

Internal audit

The requirement for the CFA to have an effective internal audit function is laid down in its Financial Regulations (No 13) and, under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011, the Authority is required to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control at least once a year - this is completed by the Finance Review and Audit Committee. Based on the audits carried out in 2014/15, it has been noted that the Authority's internal control arrangements regarding the main financial systems are satisfactory, representing a moderate risk.

External assurance

The Fire Authority's external auditors, KPMG LLP, carry out a review of internal audit each year. The purpose of this is to determine whether the work of the internal audit team - Swindon Borough Council (SBC) - is of sufficient quality to allow the external auditor to place reliance on that work. Confirmation has been received that the internal audit by SBC continues to be effective and consistently meets CIPFA standards.

Delivering improvements

The implementation of any recommendations made from audits and improvement plans will be delivered via the plans highlighted within the planning framework. Delivery of this will be monitored by the Fire & Rescue Service's Management Board.

Risk management

Risk management is well embedded throughout the Authority and our policies conform to the BSI British Standard Risk Management – Code of Practice (BS 3100:2008). Our processes ensure that the Authority understands, evaluates and

takes action when necessary on risks, with the aim of increasing the probability of success and reducing the likelihood of failure.

Our risk management arrangements are scrutinised on an annual basis via internal audit, to ensure that suitable standards are maintained.

Equality & Diversity

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority value and respect diversity and are committed to promoting good community relations and equality of opportunity for its entire workforce.

The Service has an equality & diversity steering group, chaired by the Director of People & Development, which drives the equality & diversity agenda in the organisation. Members of the group include the Chief Fire Officer, the Fire Authority's lead member for equality & diversity; key managers from across the Service; representatives from UNISON, the Fire Brigades' Union and the Retained Firefighters' Union; and the Service's Equality & Diversity Advisor.

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service together with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority has adopted a number of equality objectives which they are working to achieve by 2016. Full information in relation to our equality & diversity objectives, policies and processes are available via the [Equality & Diversity page](#) on the website

Health and Safety

Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority recognises the importance of health & safety in terms of compliance with the law and safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of all Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service employees and those who come into contact with our Service. As such, a [health & safety policy statement](#) is renewed each year and makes a definitive statement as to the intentions with regards to policy, and acknowledges that responsibility for effective health & safety management rests at the very highest level.

The Service looks to meet all relevant requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (together with all other statutory provisions associated with it) and supports our people in meeting their obligations under the Act.

Detailed health, safety and welfare specific arrangements based on the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE's) HS (G) 65 methodology, are set out in harmonised Service policies and have been developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance.

The Service has developed a robust system for actively monitoring the effectiveness of our health & safety management systems. This process includes a health & safety audit programme that systematically monitors workplace and work activities in line with health & safety policy and procedures. This enables a check to be made on the attainment of suitable and sufficient standards of health & safety within Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Additionally, the Service has a Health & Safety Committee, made up of key managers and representative bodies, which ensures the adequacy and effectiveness of our arrangements. It also ensures that safety practices are achieving the desired results in line with our duty of care under current legislation and the HSE's approved code of practices (ACoPs).

Performance

The Authority uses a 'systems thinking' approach in relation to monitoring successful performance. This principle is that performance comes from studying and redesigning the very way that work gets done, rather than from placing arbitrary targets. As such, the Authority has moved away from the traditional performance indicator approach, of red green and amber, to charts that show data plotted in a time or sequenced order. This enables the Authority to monitor where it makes a difference to the communities through spotting trends, shifts and unusual patterns.

The suite of performance measures includes the following groups:

- Harm statistics (deaths and injuries)
- Incident overview (number of incident types)
- Response performance (confining fires to rooms of origin and the severity of fires we attend)
- Prevention performance (home fire safety visits done in Wiltshire a Swindon)
- Protection performance (protection activity output and outcomes)
- Response standards (meeting attendance standards).

Others are only reported internally (see below):

- Availability of appliances (appliance availability and ridership)
- Recorded operational competency of firefighters
- Staff sickness.

Performance information can be found on our website or by clicking this [link](#).

Integrated Risk Management Planning

It is a legal requirement for all Fire and Rescue Services to produce and implement an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), to provide the foundation for its activity and focus.

The national standards of fire cover were replaced in 2003 with local integrated risk management planning. In its simplest terms, this is achieved by combining prevention, protection and emergency response activities in a risk-based approach to improve public and firefighter safety and to manage risks in the community.

In September 2013, the Authority published its IRMP for 2013/14 to 2016/17, which we have called our '[Public Safety Plan](#)'. By using risk modelling and analysis, the Authority has set priorities to manage key risks facing the communities of Wiltshire and Swindon.

To underpin our commitment to our communities, the Authority has implemented a [Community Engagement Strategy](#). Community participation is essential to secure sustainable improvement in the services we deliver.

Prevention

This year the Service has collaborated with Swindon Borough Council with the 'One Swindon' project. One Swindon is designed to be a multi agency community 'safety net' to enable community based staff to better support vulnerable adults, with multiple needs, in their home. The scheme is set up to follow each case to ensure that individuals within the community have indeed received the help and support they require.

Operational Competence and Training

The Authority maintains significant focus on ensuring that all operational staff achieve and maintain competence in risk critical areas such as breathing apparatus, fire behaviour training and trauma care.

Training and assessment in these risk critical areas is carried out at our Training and Development Centre in Devizes. With the compartment fire behaviour training and assessment being carried out at our purpose built training site, at Kemble Airfield.

All operational staff have training and development records kept electronically. These provide individual skill records; training attended and retains evidence of the training outcomes. Managers use this system to plan training and record assessment results. Reports are produced to assure the service that skills are being maintained and provide a training forecast for the year ahead.

Local scrutiny of operational competence is verified service wide with Station Managers auditing the operational performance and theoretical knowledge of our station based staff.

Operational managerial assurance, in line with the requirements of the Incident Command System, is provided via a robust system of either operational or simulation based assessment, with commanders required to achieve a satisfactory pass to maintain their 'operational licence'.

Operational Commitments

In addition to the normal demands on the Authority, it also has to be ready for major commitments that arise from time to time. In support of this, this year we have worked with our partners in the Local Resilience Forum to develop Incident Commanders through the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme](#), as well as continue to support the on going review work by Swindon Borough Council on the Averies fire.

We have focused on consolidating our existing procedures and training to match future risks, embarked on wide scale integration of Prevention and Protection activities into the workloads of operational crews, strengthened community links and provided appropriate leadership when required

Business continuity

The Authority has well-embedded business continuity arrangements that conform to the BSI British Standard 25999 Business Continuity Management and the Business Continuity Institute (BCI) Good Practice Guidelines 2010. Our arrangements are written to enable the Authority to identify the potential impact of a business failure, and to formulate and implement strategies to mitigate its effect.

Both the peer assessment and results from internal audit have appraised the Authority's business continuity arrangements as an area of strength.

During the past 12 months, the Authority has continued to be affected by periods of industrial action due to the on-going dispute between the Government and the Fire Brigades' Union. Throughout this time, and in any future periods, the Authority endeavours to provide the best possible service for the communities of Wiltshire and Swindon. To achieve this, the Authority has well- established business continuity plans in place.

Future plans

In November 2014 Dorset Fire Authority and Wiltshire and Swindon Combined Fire Authority voted unanimously to merge the two Services, with a Combination Order being submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government just before Christmas 2014.

Earlier this year Dorset and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authorities successfully gained the support of the Secretary of State to combine; and have now started on the journey for full combination, which comes into effect on the 1st April 2016. The Services have appointed a jointed Programme Team to manage this transition.

The combination will make substantial savings of between £4-6 million per year, which will help us to protect frontline services as much as possible and continue to develop the services we provide to the community in the most efficient way. The combination will allow the two authorities to come together to build a safe, strong and resilient combined Fire & Rescue Service fit for the future.

Full details of the combination journey can be found on our [combination with Dorset website page](#).

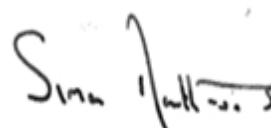
Conclusion

The Authority believes that this Statement of Assurance provides an overview of how it maintains high standards and ensures the safeguard of public money. Should further information be required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Wiltshire and Swindon Combined Fire Authority are satisfied that the systems and processes that are in place across the organisation fulfil the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.



Councillor Christopher Devine
Chairman, Wiltshire and Swindon
Fire Authority



Simon Routh-Jones GFireE MInstLM
Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive

[Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)

[Code of Corporate Governance](#)

[Annual Governance Statement](#)

[The publication scheme](#)

[Freedom of Information Decisions Log](#)

[Equality & Diversity website page](#)

[Health and Safety Policy Statement](#)

[Public Safety Plan](#)

[Community Engagement Strategy](#)

[Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme](#)

[Performance Report](#)

[Combination with Dorset website page.](#)