



KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Meeting of the Authority

Thursday, 17 October 2024

10.30 am

AGENDA

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Thursday, 17 October 2024, 10.30 am
Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
The Godlands, Maidstone, ME15 6XB

Ask for: Marie Curry
Telephone: (01622) 692121 ext 8291

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

A Routine Business

- A1. Chair's Announcements *(if any)*
- A2. Membership Changes and Apologies for Absence
- A3. Declarations of Interest in Items on this Agenda
- A4. Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 5 July 2024 *(for approval)*

B For Decision

- B1. Community Risk Management Plan - Response Time Standards
- B2. Finance Update 2024/25
- B3. Development of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-2029 *(Presentation)*
- B4. Governance and Policy Updates
- B5. Calendar of Meetings and other Events 2025/26

C For Information

- C1. Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report
- C2. Activity Update *(Presentation)*
- C3. Information Update *(available to view on website)*

D Urgent Business *(Other items which the Chair decides are urgent)*

E Exempt Items

E1. Motion to Exclude Press and Public

Under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 and 9 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

- E2. Channel Tunnel Update

Marie Curry
Clerk to the Authority
7 October 2024

Please note that any background papers referred to in the accompanying reports may be inspected by arrangement with the Lead/Contact Officer named on each report.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held on Friday 5 July 2024 at Kent Fire and Rescue Service HQ, The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil Maidstone ME15 6XB.

PRESENT:- Mr A Booth, Mr N Chard, Mr P Harman, Ms S Hohler, Ms J Meade, Ms C Parfitt-Reid, Mr M Prenter, Mr C Simkins, Mr M Sole.

APOLOGIES: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mr D Beaney, Mr P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Mr M Hood, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp, Mr S Manion, Mr J McInroy, Mr A Ridgers, Mr V Maple, Mr B Sweetland, Ms Z Van-Dyke and Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington; the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Mrs A Hartley; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Rist; Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement, Mr J Quinn; Director, HR and Culture, Ms L Jell, Assistant Director, Response, Mr M Deadman; Assistant Director, Resilience, Mr C Else; Head of Finance and Pensions, Mr B Fullbrook; Head of Policy, Dr O Thompson and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Ms C Valmond, Monitoring Officer, Ms H Ward, Deputy Monitoring Officer

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chair for 2024/25

(Item A1)

- (1) Ms S Hohler moved, Ms C Parfitt-Reid seconded, that Mr Chard be elected Chair of the Authority.
- (2) There being no other nominations Mr N Chard was declared the elected Chair of the Authority for 2024/25.

2. Election of Vice-Chair for 2023/24

(Item A2)

- (1) Mr N Chard moved, Mr A Booth seconded, that Mr B Kemp be elected Vice-Chair of the Authority.
- (2) There being no other nominations Mr B Kemp was declared the elected Vice-Chair of the Authority for 2024/25.

3. Chair's Announcements

(Item A3)

- (1) The Chair welcomed Dan McManus, Kent's Service Liaison Lead for HMICFRS, to the meeting.
- (2) The Chair welcomed Claudette Valmond, the Authority's Monitoring Officer, to the meeting.

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- (3) The Chair welcomed Helen Ward, the Authority's Deputy Monitoring Officer to the meeting.
- (4) The Chair gave thanks and best wishes on behalf of the Authority to Mark Rist, Director Response and Resilience on his retirement.
- (5) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Matthew Deadman on his appointment as Mark Rist's successor as Director Response and Resilience.
- (6) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Lyndsey Jell on being appointed as Director Human Resources and Culture.
- (7) The Chair, on behalf of Members, congratulated Barrie Fullbrook on the position of Interim Director Finance as the current Director Finance and Corporate Services heads towards retirement next year.
- (8) The Chair informed the Authority that Members of the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee agreed these transitional positions to assist the service with its succession planning due to impending retirements.

4. Membership

(Item A4)

- (1) The list of Members appointed by the constituent Councils to serve on the Authority for 2024/25 was noted.

5. Audit and Governance Committee – 29 January 2024

(Item A6)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 29 January 2024, be noted.

6. Minutes of the Authority – 20 February 2024

(Item A7)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 20 February be approved and signed as a true record.

7. Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee – 9 April 2024

(Item A8)

- (1) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the minutes of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee held on 9 April 2024, be noted.

8. Appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies for 2024/25

(Item B1 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) The Authority reviewed its scheme of proportionality as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and then considered various matters relating to the appointment of Members to Committees and outside bodies for 2024/25.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) for the purposes of the statutory annual review of proportionality, and without any Member voting against, the allocation of places to the political groups on the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee as detailed in paragraphs 5 and 6 and shown in Table 1 of the report, be approved for 2024/25.
 - (b) If and when a Hearings Panel is needed in 2024/25, it should comprise of six Members (the majority drawn from the administration and one representative from each of the other political parties), be approved.
 - (c) the Authority continues in the membership of the outside bodies to which it currently belongs, and the allocation of places and voting rights on the LGA General Assembly between the political groups, as shown in Table 2 to the report, be approved for 2024/25.

9. Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

(Item B2 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members were presented with the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) document together with its strategic priorities and enabling plans for the next four-year strategy period. This document follows the risk analysis and assessment document 'Creating a Safer Future – Together' that was approved at the Authority meeting in February.
- (2) The covering report for the CRMP document also contained details of an extensive evaluation carried out against the strategies for the last strategy period 2021-2024 as well as a proposed change to the cycle of public consultation timetable.
- (3) The Chair said it was pleasing to see an increase in the responses to the public consultation.
- (4) Mr Booth asked how technology is playing its part in supporting firefighting techniques in buildings. The Assistant Director Response explained that the Service has several drones and have been using this type of technology for the past 10 years which does help greatly in command situations. The Assistant Director Response also explained that the Service is in the process of purchasing a remote-control robot which will be equipped with hose and firefighting equipment. This provides advantages to support firefighting at incidents where colleagues would need to be rotated on hose lines. He added that the Authority is in contact with the New York Fire Department, learning from them and the robotics they use at incidents.
- (5) Mr Booth asked if and when the Authority gets involved in the consultation phase of any building design and used the expansion of schools as an example. Director, Protection,

Prevention and Customer Engagement said that our Fire Engineering team regularly review consultations that come into the Service and have specific engineers that look at building design. The team liaise with architects, developers and building control. However, he added that the Authority is not a statutory consultee for new school builds or expansions, which does present problems. He said that the Education team do go in to schools to do fire safety talks and we are changing our approach to this based on the school curriculum. The team also support teachers with providing fire safety information.

- (6) Ms Meade complimented officers on an excellent CRMP. She said that she would advocate the Authority being a consultee on school buildings and would like to have a further discussion with officers on how to take this forward.
- (7) Members congratulated officers and colleagues for their exceptional work which can clearly be seen in the evaluation document of the last four-year plan.
- (8) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the CRMP delivery plan and strategic priorities and enabling plans set out for the next four-year strategy period, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the contents of the extensive evaluation conducted against the strategies for the last strategy period 2021-2024, detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.
 - (c) the change to the cycle of public consultation for the CRMP as detailed within the report, be approved.

10. Governance and Policy Update

(Item B3 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report on a number of governance issues such as
 - A. Revised approach to governance over policy approval
 - B. Policies that require Members' approval and then policies for Members' information
 - C. Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2023/24
 - D. Legislative Update
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the revised approach to governance over policy approval as detailed in the report, be approved.
 - (b) the listed policies for Members' approval as detailed in the report and Appendices 1- 3, be approved.
 - (c) the Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2023/24, as detailed in the report and attached at Appendix 4, be approved.
 - (d) the remaining contents of the report, be noted.

11. Treasury Management Year End Report for 2023/24

(Item B4 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report on its treasury management activities as well as the estimated and actual prudential and treasury indicators for the year. A provisional outturn report was provided to Members of the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting in April 2024 and this report concludes the final outturn now that the 2023-24 financial statements have been finalised.
- (2) Members congratulated the Director Finance and Corporate Services and her team for the excellent management of the Authority's budget.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the year-end report on treasury management activities for 2023/24, be approved.

12. Provisional Final Outturn for 2023/24

(Item B5 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which detailed the provisional outturn on revenue and capital spends for the 2023/24 financial year as well as details of the proposed resultant transfers from earmarked reserved to fund the final overspend on the revenue budget.
- (2) The report covered in detail the provisional revenue budget outturn of an underspend of £2.922m against a budget of £85.292m. The underspend has increased by £170k since the last forecast presented to Members in February where a forecast underspend of £2.752m was reported.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the transfer of £1.5m of the final revenue budget underspend to the Insurance and Resource Reserve, be approved.
 - (b) the transfer of £0.4m of the final revenue budget underspend to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve, be approved.
 - (c) the remaining underspend (provisionally £1.022m) be transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve, be approved.
 - (d) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

13. Financial Summary Update 2024/25

(Item B6 - Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered the first report for the 2024/25 financial year which provided an overview of the spend against the revenue and capital budgets forecasted so far this year.
- (2) The report also provided details of the nationally agreed pay award for operational colleagues for 2024/25 as well as a number of other financial related issues.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the proposed drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve to fund the additional cost of the nationally agreed pay awards for operational colleagues for 2024/25, should there be a requirement to balance the budget from reserves at the end of the financial year, be approved.
- (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

14. Appointment of an Independent Person for Standards

(Item B7 – Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) Under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, the Authority must include provision for the appointment of at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought, and considered, before a decision is made on any allegation of misconduct against a Member of the Authority.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the reappointment of Jennifer Waterman, as the Authority's Independent Person for Standards, for a four-year term until the Authority's AGM in 2028 be approved.

15. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

(Item B8 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) It is a statutory requirement for the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority to appoint a Monitoring Officer to carry out the responsibilities set out in legislation.
- (2) The Authority received a report detailing the work involved in securing a Monitoring Officer provision from Mid Kent Legal Services.
- (3) Members also received a letter from Claudette Valmond, Head of Legal Services, seeking permission to appoint a Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the appointment of Claudette Valmond, Head of Mid Kent Legal Services, as the Authority's Monitoring Officer under the conditions defined within the Service Level Agreement, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the provision with Mid Kent Legal Services will be reviewed annually to ensure that performance is met by both parties and subject to agreeing further collaboration, a recommendation will come back to the Authority for consideration on any possible extension of this contract, be approved.
 - (c) The appointment of Helen Ward as the Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority, be approved.

16. Pensions Overview and Discretions

(Item B9 – Presentation by Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation which gave an overview of the different types of Fire and Rescue Pension Schemes as well as the work required by this Authority to administer the changes required as a result of national legal cases.
- (2) Within each pension scheme there are a number of discretions which are left to the Authority to agree the policy to be applied. In order that the effective administration of these changes can be carried out by the Scheme Manager, Members were requested to agree further amendments to the Authority's current discretions.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The application of any discretion will require the collective approval of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and the Director of HR, be approved.
 - (b) If the net cost of applying a discretion exceeds £50k per year, on an individual case basis, this will require prior Member agreement, be approved.
 - (c) All other financial commitments will be approved in line with existing schemes of delegation, be approved.

17. Activity Update

(Item C1 – Presentation from Director Response and Resilience and Director Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation on a noteworthy operational incident which covered the firefighting and rescue techniques that were employed, the equipment and resources used and what was learnt as a result of the incident.
- (2) As part of the presentation there was also an overview on the building safety activities in relation to a high-risk premises in Canterbury. Within this presentation there was a demonstration on new technology encompassing 3D imaginary which gave Members an insight to the complexities in terms of the layout of the building being discussed. The Authority is trialling this technology to support future building safety activities.
- (3) Members thanked both the Director Response and Resilience and Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement for the informative presentation.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The contents of the presentation be noted.

18. Information Update

(Item C1 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on: -
 - A. Inspection Update
 - B. Performance Update
 - C. Response and Resilience Update

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- D. Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement Update
- E. Freedom of Information Update
- F. Pensions and Pension Board Update

(2) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) The contents of the report be noted.

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024

Subject: COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN – RESPONSE TIME STANDARDS

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report outlines proposed changes to the way we target our response time standards. This forms part of our CRMP programme of work and is the first phase of a wider review of performance standards.

The changes will:

- Improve our ability to demonstrate the time it takes us to get to incidents in rural and urban areas, providing greater transparency to our customers.
- Provide a better differentiation between emergency and non-emergency incident types, allowing us to better tailor our services to need.

These proposals will require public consultation. The consultation will also seek views from the public in relation to setting the Council Tax for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve that we consult with the public on changes to our response time definitions, paragraphs 7-9 refer.
2. Approve that we consult with the public on changes to our response time targets, paragraph 10 refers.
3. Approve the public consultation questions, as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Director Response and Resilience - Matt Deadman

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 ext. 8383

EMAIL: matthew.deadman@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Current position

1. It is important that we measure the time it takes for us to get to an incident. Speed of response is something that previous consultations have identified our customers value the most. Several factors determine the severity and outcome of an incident. The time taken for firefighters to arrive on scene is one of these. This is in part due to the natural urgency that comes with the incidents our customers experience but also it is the easiest factor to understand in our response. In time we hope to develop a limited set of indicators which we can ask customers to score so we can create better feedback and learning. But by adopting the right response time measures and standards now we can ensure that we are able to use the resultant data to best inform the delivery of our services.
2. Our current response time standards (based on the point of mobilisation to firefighters arriving on scene) are:
 - Life threatening calls – within 10 minutes on 71% of occasions.
 - Life threatening calls – within 12 minutes on 71% of occasions.
 - Non life-threatening calls – within 15 minutes on 92% of occasions.

Problems with this approach

3. Our county is split into urban and rural areas. A response time standard that does not differentiate between these two areas (which carry different levels of risk) is not representative of our performance in these areas. We regularly achieve this target in urban areas but meet it less regularly in rural areas. This is largely due to the greater distances that need to be travelled, and the fact that our urban areas are served by wholtime firefighters who are on station and ready for immediate response, whereas our rural areas are served by on call fire fighters who have to respond from home to the fire station before proceeding to the incident.
4. If we better understand the difference between response times in urban areas versus rural areas, we will be better able to target some of our prevention activities in those areas where there will be a longer response time. For example, in remote villages we may choose to deliver additional home fire safety visits to help reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring and its severity if it does.
5. We also want to be transparent with our customers. Setting a target of 10 minutes could be misleading to customers in rural areas who are less likely to get a response within that time.
6. Furthermore, whilst we differentiate between life threatening and non life-threatening types of calls, we do not adapt the way we mobilise resources based upon this.

Currently, for the majority of incidents, we immediately mobilise resources to an incident regardless of whether it is life threatening or not. This does not easily allow for our control room colleagues to be able to prioritise according to risk. Although an incident is non-life threatening it may still be an emergency and important that we get there quickly. We would like to move to a situation where it is clear what incidents require an immediate response as opposed to those where our immediate attendance is not necessary. This allows us to then direct the resources we have available to us at the time in the most appropriate way based on risk.

Proposal

Categorisation

7. Rather than a “life threatening” / “non-life threatening” definition, we are proposing to move to an “emergency” / “non-emergency” categorisation for our incidents.
8. “Emergency” calls would be those classed as requiring a blue light, immediate, response. For example, building fires.
9. “Non-emergency” calls would be those classed as not requiring a blue light, immediate, response. For example, persons locked out.

Times

10. We are proposing to move to the following response time standards, which differentiate between urban and rural areas.
 - Emergency – urban – within 9 minutes on at least 75% of occasions.
 - Emergency – rural – within 15 minutes on at least 75% of occasions.
 - Non-emergency – within 30 minutes (regardless of location).
11. Urban and rural areas will be based on the Kent and Medway rural urban classification at output area level, published by the Office for National Statistics:

KFRS Classification	Office for National Statistics Classification
Urban	Urban major conurbation
	Urban city and town
Rural	Rural village
	Rural town and fringe
	Rural hamlets and isolated dwellings

Benefits

12. The following would be immediate benefits:
 - Increased transparency on service expectations for those living in rural areas.
 - Improved alignment of prevention activities to those areas where response times are longer.
 - Better use of emergency resources according to nature of the incident.
13. In time, this approach would allow us to review and potentially extend the types of incidents classed as “non-emergency” (subject to Authority approval). This would allow us to reduce the road risk to our customers and our colleagues by reducing the number of times we need to drive on blue lights at faster road speeds.

Setting the Council Tax

14. The average Band D household pays just over £1.72 per week in council tax (£89.91 per year in 2024/25) to help run Kent Fire and Rescue Service.
15. We welcome the views on the following council tax options for 2025/26 and ask: which option would you be prepared to pay? Please tick one option:
 - Option 1: Freeze council tax for a year.
 - Option 2: Increase council tax by an amount just under a previously proposed referendum limit of 3%, which is an increase of just over 5p a week for an average band D household.
 - Option 3: If there is flexibility to do so, would you agree to an increase of up to £5 (5.5% increase) a year on an average band D household, which is a weekly increase of just over 9p?
 - Option 4: As an alternative option, having read about the significant challenges we face over the medium-term, what increase in council tax would you be prepared to pay in 2025/26? To give you some context, each 1% increase in a Council Tax Band D household is just under 2p per week.
16. Central Government set the maximum amount by which we can increase Council Tax each year and we can then set council tax at any percentage up to that level, without a public referendum. The maximum level of council tax increase has not yet been set by the Government. We would like your views on the level of increase that you would be prepared to pay for your Fire and Rescue Service.

17. Feedback from the public consultation will be presented to Members at the February 2025 meeting.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

18. The proposals on response times are limited to how we measure our performance. They do not introduce changes to our capability or resources and so do not change the time it takes us to get to emergency incidents. As a result, there is no anticipated impact from these proposals, including financial impacts or impacts on any protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010).

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. Members are requested to:
 - 19.1 Approve that we consult with the public on changes to our response time definitions, paragraphs 7-9 refer.
 - 19.2 Approve that we consult with the public on changes to our response time targets, paragraph 10 refers.
 - 19.3 Approve the public consultation questions, as outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Seeking your views

We want to get your views and consent to change the way we measure our response times, and to set council tax for the coming year.

By giving your views, you are helping us design the services we provide to you.

Details of how we use data collected can be found in our privacy statement and notices at www.kent.fire-uk.org/privacy. By completing this survey, you are consenting for your information to be used for the stated purpose.

Please use the 'Next' button to navigate through the survey. If you need to revisit a question during the survey, please use the 'Back' button at the bottom of each page.

When you reach the end of the survey, please make sure to click the submit button so that we definitely see your answers. Thank you.

* 1. What's your email address? (You don't have to give us this, however we can let you know the outcome of the survey if you do)

* 2. Please tick the relevant box below:

- Customer
- KFRS employee
- KFRS volunteer
- Business
- Other _____

* 3. What's the first part of your postcode? (Example ME12)

* 4. While we differentiate between life threatening and non-life-threatening types of calls, we do not adapt the way we mobilise resources based upon this. Currently, for the majority of incidents, we immediately mobilise resources to an incident regardless of whether it is life threatening or not. This does not easily allow for our control room colleagues to be able to prioritise according to risk. Although an incident is non-life threatening it may still be an emergency and important that we get there quickly. We would like to move to a situation where it is clear what incidents require an immediate response as opposed to those where our immediate attendance is not necessary. This allows us to then direct the resources we have available to us at the time in the most appropriate way based on risk.

We are proposing to move to classifying incidents as 'emergency' and 'non-emergency':

Rather than a “life threatening” / “non-life threatening” definition, we are proposing to move to an “emergency” / “non-emergency” categorisation for our incidents.

“Emergency” calls would be those classed as requiring a blue light, immediate, response. For example, building fires.

“Non-emergency” calls would be those classed as not requiring a blue light, immediate, response. For example, persons locked out.

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes

No

Further comments:

- *5 Our county has urban and rural areas. Our response time standard is the same in these two areas (which carry different levels of risk) and is not representative of our performance.

We regularly achieve this target in urban areas but meet it less regularly in rural areas. This is largely due to the greater distances that need to be travelled, and the fact that our urban areas are served by wholetime firefighters who are on station and ready for immediate response, whereas our rural areas are served by on call fire fighters who need to travel from home to the fire station before responding to the incident.

We are proposing that areas will be based on the Kent and Medway rural urban classification at output area level, published by the Office for National Statistics:

KFRS Classification	Office for National Statistics Classification
Urban	Urban major conurbation
	Urban city and town
Rural	Rural village
	Rural town and fringe
	Rural hamlets and isolated dwellings

Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes
 No

Further comments:

- *6 We are transparent with our customers. Setting a target of 10 minutes is misleading to customers in rural areas who are less likely to get a response within that time.

We are proposing to move to the following response time standards:

Emergency – urban – within 9 minutes on at least 75% of occasions.

Emergency – rural – within 15 minutes on at least 75% of occasions.

Non-emergency – within 30 minutes (urban and rural).

Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes
 No

Further comments:

Setting the council tax

Central Government set the maximum amount by which we can increase Council Tax each year and we can then set council tax at any percentage up to that level, without a public referendum. The maximum level of council tax increases has not yet been set by the government. We would like your views on the level of increase that you would be prepared to pay for your Fire and Rescue Service.

The average Band D household pays just over £1.72 per week in council tax (£89.91 per year in 2024/25) to help run Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

*7 We welcome your views on the following council tax options for 2025/26 and ask: which option would you be prepared to pay? Please tick one option:

- Option 1: Freeze council tax for a year.
- Option 2: Increase council tax by an amount just under a previously proposed referendum limit of 3%, which is an increase of just over 5p a week for an average band D household.
- Option 3: If there is flexibility to do so, would you agree to an increase of up to £5 (5.5% increase) a year on an average band D household, which is a weekly increase of just over 9p?
- Option 4: As an alternative option, having read about the significant challenges we face over the medium-term, what increase in council tax would you be prepared to pay in 2025/26? To give you some context, each 1% increase in a Council Tax Band D household is just under 2p per week.

Further comments:

Equality, diversity and inclusion questions

You do not have to answer these questions, but the information is useful to Kent Fire and Rescue Service so that we can ensure we have a representative sample and for us to understand our community better. Thank you.

8. What's your age?

9. What's your ethnicity?

British/ English/ Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish

Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background, please describe:

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe:

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, please describe:

African

Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe:

Arab

Any other ethnic group, please describe:

10. What is your gender identity?

- Man (including trans man)
- Woman (including trans woman)
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

11. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation

12. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No

By: Director, Finance and Corporate Services
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024
Subject: FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR 2024/25
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report provides a mid-year financial update for the current financial year and includes an update on the latest forecast outturn position on the Authority's revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25. The Authority's revenue budget is currently forecast to underspend by £1.602m but highlighted within the report are a number of key risks and assumptions that may impact on the final outturn for 2024/25.

Other financial updates are also included in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Agree to transfer £1.3m of the current forecast underspend to the Insurance and Resource Reserve (paragraph 10 refers).
2. Agree to allocate an additional £3m from the Infrastructure reserve, to meet the increased cost pressures of delivering the Life Fire Training facility at Ashford (paragraph 12);
3. Consider and note the contents of the report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions – Barrie Fullbrook
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 ext. 8264
EMAIL: barrie.fullbrook@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Revenue and Capital Budgets

1. **Revenue Budget Adjustments** - Since the budget was approved by Members in February it has been necessary to action some adjustments to the budget in the form of virements, a number of which were reported to Members at the Authority meeting in July earlier this year and are now reflected in this report. These virements invariably relate to adjustments between revenue budgets and earmarked reserves, for example reflecting identified slippage, but they do not change the overall net revenue budget. Details of all budget changes are shown in **Appendices 1 and 2** (subjective analysis, by type of expenditure) and **Appendices 3 and 4** (functional analysis, by service area).
2. **Revenue Budget Summary** - The revenue budget for the current financial year is £94.713m. Current forecasts are indicating that the anticipated outturn is likely to be an underspend in the region of £1.602m. This includes a forecast net underspend of £1.179m on pay-related budget headings, a forecast net overspend of £352k on non-pay expenditure budget headings and a forecast increase in income of £775k.
3. **Pay-related Underspends** - Whilst **Appendices 5 - 8** provide more information relating to this forecast underspend, the primary reason relates to difficulties in recruiting to vacancies as and when they arise. Whilst this is primarily in relation to on-call firefighters, which has been discussed previously with Members, there have also been challenges in recruiting to posts in Control and some support service roles.
4. **Non-pay and Income Variances** – There are several under and overspends forecast in non-pay related areas of activity, for which more detail is provided in **Appendices 5 – 8**. However, within the net increase in forecast income, £883k relates to higher returns on deposits than previously expected. This is due to several factors; proactive management by Finance colleagues in seeking the best available returns on deposits, deposit rates have remained slightly higher than expected and a significant pension related grant provided by the Home Office, was paid earlier than expected. This has resulted in average cash balances increasing from around £51m to a cash balance currently of approximately £73m.
5. However, there are a number of areas of uncertainty within the current forecast position, so the issues and key assumptions, set out below, could impact the final outturn position for this financial year. More detailed explanations for the forecast variances are set out in **Appendices 5 - 8**.

Budget Volatility and Risks

6. In areas where some costs are uncertain a number of assumptions have been used in generating the current forecast position so the most significant, along with other areas of uncertainty, are detailed below for Members consideration:
- a) **Operational pay** - The budget for operational pay represents around 61% of the Authority's overall net revenue budget for 2024/25. As a proportion of this budget is allocated to fund variable pay, such as overtime (for whole-time colleagues), and activity pay (for on-call colleagues) a number of assumptions have been made using historic data and trends to project future costs. In addition, recent changes to pension scheme regulations mean that forecasting the retirement profile of operational colleagues is much less predictable than in the past, so where historic data has become less informative the current forecast has been generated using several updated assumptions. The actual costs may, however, vary from the estimates used in generating this forecast outturn.
 - b) **Operational pay (Channel Tunnel colleagues)** - Eurotunnel has recently announced Falck as the new provider for the first line of response (FLOR) contract when KFRS exits from the contract in February 2025. Discussions are now underway with regards to the transition arrangements, with particular consideration around KFRS colleagues who are currently located at the Channel Tunnel.
 - c) **Support Services pay** - The current forecast position includes an assumption that the 2024/25 nationally agreed pay settlement will be in line with the offer made by the Employers' side of the pay negotiations on 16 May 2024, although at the time of finalising this report the offer had not been accepted.
 - d) **Recruitment into vacancies** - An assumption has been made regarding start dates against vacant posts, however the actual position may differ to the assumptions made and will therefore have an impact on the final outturn. Similarly, if a post becomes vacant and recruitment is delayed or an efficiency is taken by deleting the post from the establishment, then additional underspends may arise during the year. However, recruitment is challenging in some areas of the business and therefore occasionally agency or interim appointments may be the only option at the current point in time, and this could cost more than savings generated from the vacancy. However, as the service adapts to its changing need, periodically people with specialist skillsets may be required, for a period of months to join the organisation. As such the service will have an element of a contingent temporary workforce to deliver one off pieces of work. This too will have an impact on spend levels.

- e) **Energy costs** - The budgets for gas and electricity were increased by £363k for 2024/25. Whilst no variance is currently forecast against these budgets, energy prices remain volatile and are subject to changes in the energy price cap. Changes to prices or changes in usage as a result of unusual weather conditions over the winter may result in a variance to the current forecast.
 - f) **Insurance claims and legal costs** - Costs in this area can be volatile as they are dependent on the level of insurance claims and the number of prosecutions for non-compliance with fire safety standards in the year. If costs incurred during the year are higher than the allocated base budgets, there may be a requirement to draw funds down from the Insurance and Resource Reserve (which is one of the reasons why such a reserve has been created) to fund the additional costs.
 - g) **Investment Returns** - Following the September meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, the base rate was maintained at 5%, following a reduction from 5.25% to 5% in August. The current forecast is based on various assumptions on timing of future base rate changes and levels of cash balances available for investment purposes. If the actual experience differs to these assumptions, there may be a change in the amount of investment returns achieved in comparison to the current forecast.
 - h) **Slippage of planned spend** - Although a proportion of infrastructure spend has already been slipped to 2025/26, it is possible that further supply chain issues may arise during the year and there may also be delays in other areas of planned work meaning that additional expenditure is slipped to 2025/26 later in the year.
7. **Infrastructure Plan and Capital Budgets** - The Infrastructure Plan contains all planned capital expenditure and some large one-off revenue expenditure, such as investment in IT projects. Since the last report to Members in July the capital budget has been reduced by £3.753m from £12.380m, to a revised £8.627m. This reduction mainly relates to slippage on the Ashford Live Fire and Training Facility project (£3.885m) partly offset by an increase due to the lease provision for the Control Room at Coldharbour (£161k). The revenue infrastructure budget has been reduced from £5.519m to £5.234m. This is due to a forecast underspend of £830k on the Dynamics project (software solution to provide a view of risk information to multiple teams) where internal resources have been utilised to complete the project as opposed to outsourcing development. This reduction in spend has been offset by additional infrastructure projects, mainly around workplace needs assessments to support employee needs within the workplace (£150k) and procurement of lightweight PPE (£400k). More detailed explanations regarding the adjustments to the infrastructure budgets are provided at **Appendices 9 and 10**.

8. **Capital Receipts and Other Usable Reserves** - The opening balance of the capital receipts reserve, on 1 April 2024, was £8.554m. There is currently no planned use of capital receipts to fund the capital infrastructure plan in 2024/25, but the disposal of surplus vehicles, equipment and surplus land and buildings is forecast to generate capital receipts totalling £313k, giving a forecast year-end balance of £8.867m.
9. **Reserves** - The Authority maintains a general reserve balance, representing approximately 5% (£4.680m for 2024/25) of the base revenue budget. In addition, there are a small number of Earmarked reserves, although by far the largest is the Infrastructure Reserve (opening balance at 1 April 2024 of £26.751m), which funds a significant proportion of the capital and revenue spend on Infrastructure assets. Details and forecast closing balances on these reserves are attached at **Appendix 11**.
10. **Allocation of Underspend** - The Insurance and Resource Reserve is one of five Earmarked Reserves held by this Authority and its main purpose is to meet exceptional one-off costs or to be used as a resource to temporarily address unexpected funding shortfalls. Given the economic pressures expressed by the Chancellor, future funding in all aspects of local government remains uncertain at this stage, as such reserves of this nature are important. Since there still remains six months of the year to incur spend, and given the potential volatilities set out above, Members are asked to agree that £1.3m of the currently forecast underspend is transferred to the Insurance and Resource Reserve.
11. As we approach the end of the financial year the volatility on spend will have reduced, and therefore any proposals to utilise any remaining underspend will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

Other Financial Issues

12. **Ashford Live Fire project** – Members may recall that within the last 12 months a new contractor was appointed to this major project, and since that point they have been undertaking considerable value re-engineering costings. This is now highlighting that some sub-contractor costs and supply costs have increased due to inflation, and this alongside the additional remediation ground works required to rectify contamination issues, are resulting in the need for additional funding to be allocated to deliver this project. Members are therefore asked to agree that a maximum amount of a further £3m, be allocated to this project, to ensure the much-needed Live Fire Training Facility can be delivered (increasing the overall project to £16m). The tragic fire at Grenfell Tower has highlighted the importance of live fire training across the sector. Members can be assured that there will be very close monitoring of all the costs throughout this project.
13. **Disposal of vacant day-crewed house at St Michaels Close, Sittingbourne** – Members have previously approved the disposal of day crewed houses at

specific locations when they become available. A review of the appropriateness of each location was carried out and reconfirmed as current at the Authority meeting in February 2021. Consequently, a house in Sittingbourne which is now deemed surplus to operational requirements will shortly be disposed of in line with the Disposal Policy.

14. **External Audit** - The audit of the 2023/24 Financial Statements had been expected to start in July 2024, as set out in the External Auditors Draft Audit Plan presented to and agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee in April 2024. Unfortunately, changes to the Code of Audit Practice and the introduction of a backstop of 30 September 2024 for the publication of audited accounts for 2022/23 and prior years was delayed due to the General Election. Therefore, audit firms have been following National Audit Office (NAO) guidance to continue to prioritise completion of these outstanding audits. The audit of the Authority's 2023/24 Financial Statements therefore started in September 2024 and is currently ongoing. On the 9 September the Government published its response to the Consultation on the proposed backstop dates for the publication of audited accounts and consequently confirmed its intention to set a date of 28 February 2025 for the financial year 2023/24.

Firefighters' Pension Fund 2024/25

15. **The Firefighters' Pension Fund for 2024/25** - Attached at **Appendix 12** is the forecast outturn for the Firefighters' Pension Fund for 2024/25. Firefighter pension costs that are related to injury whilst on duty are met by the Authority, whereas the majority of other firefighter pension costs are funded by Government. Whilst the Authority is responsible for paying all pensions and collecting all contributions, the resultant net deficit is funded by top-up grant which is paid by the Government in July each year. The forecast for the top-up grant requirement for 2024/25 has reduced by £916k since the previous forecast submitted to the Home Office in August 2023.

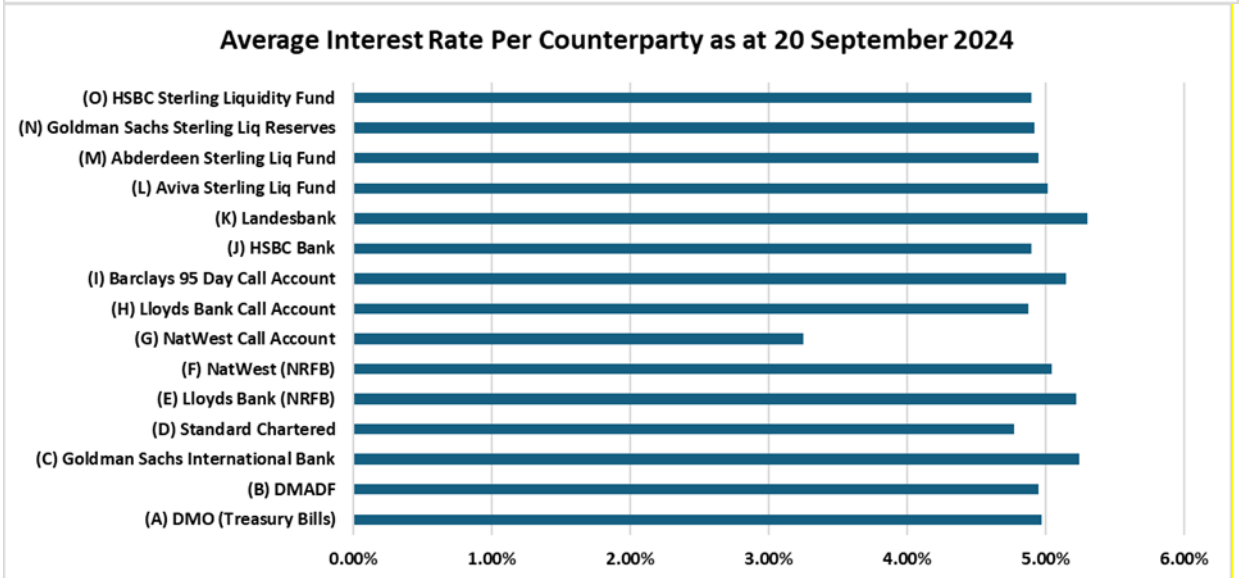
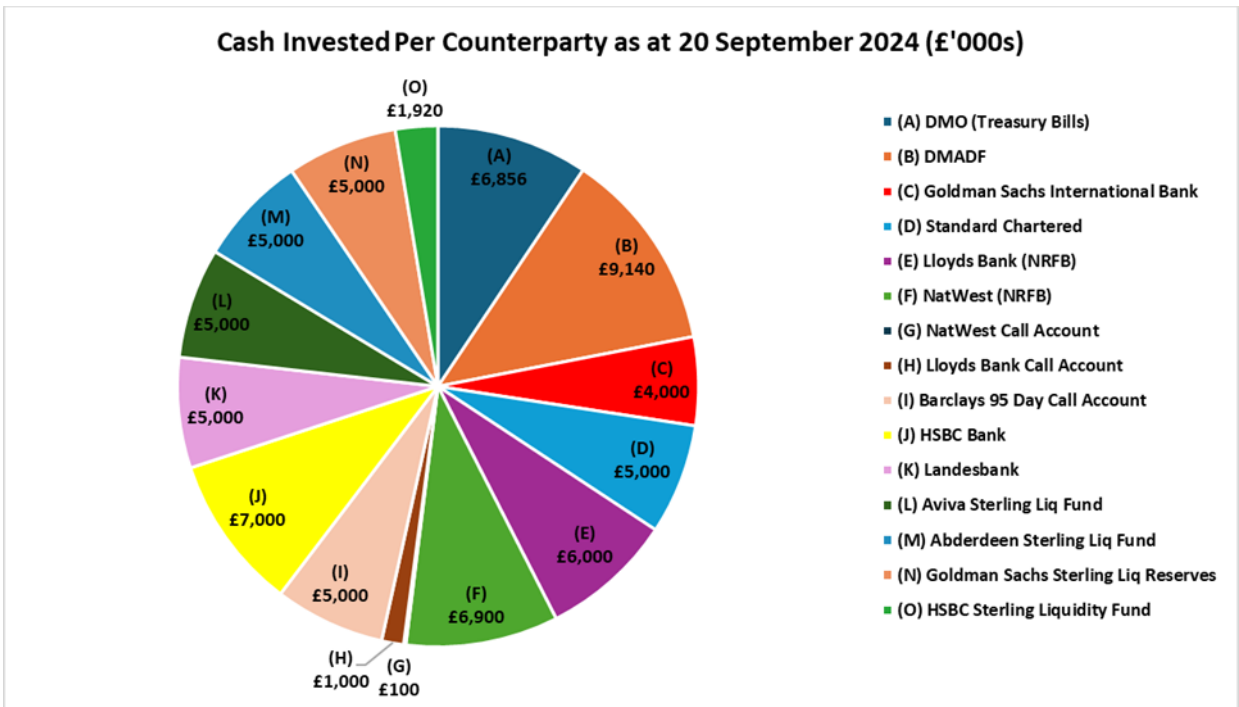
Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-29

16. On 29 July 2024 the Chancellor published an audit of the spending pressures across the public sector and confirmed that there would be a Budget on 30 October 2024, which will announce the Government's taxation and spending plans. Although departmental allocations for 2025/26 are expected to be announced on the same day, specific funding allocations for Authorities are not expected until late December when it is anticipated that the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 will be published. It is highly likely that there will be a one-year settlement, i.e. for 2025/26, but the expectation is that there could be a multi-year spending review (covering possibly 2/3 years from 2026/27) announced in Spring 2025. A presentation will be given to Members later, on this agenda, in relation to our early

thoughts on financial assumptions and proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025 – 2029.

Cash Invested and Average Interest Rates per Counterparty 2024/25

13. **Cash Invested** - Previously the Authority had invested an average cash balance of approximately £51m. However, since receiving the large government grant in relation to the additional pension payments due, average cash balances have increased to approx. £73m. The pie chart below shows the balance invested as at 20 September 2024 (£72.916m) which has a forecast investment income for the year of £2.577m. The bar chart details current interest rate levels paid on these deposits.



14. There are no implications arising from this report that cannot be managed within the overall budget.

RECOMMENDATION

15. Members are requested to:
 - 15.1 Agree to transfer £1.3m of the current forecast underspend to the Insurance and Resource Reserve (paragraph 10 refers);
 - 15.2 Agree to allocate an additional £3m from the Infrastructure reserve, to meet the increased cost pressures of delivering the Life Fire Training facility at Ashford (paragraph 12);
 - 15.3 Consider and note the contents of the report.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget Adjustments – Subjective Analysis

Figures shown are in £'000	Original Budget	July Budget Changes	October Budget Changes	Revised Budget
Salaries, allowances and on-costs	77,902	0	100	78,002
Training expenses	553	80	10	643
Other employee costs (inc. Insurance)	744	0	3	747
Direct pension costs	2,222	0	0	2,222
Total Employee Costs	81,421	80	113	81,614
Repairs, maintenance and other costs	2,955	185	1	3,141
Utility costs	3,074	0	0	3,074
Total Premises Costs	6,029	185	1	6,215
Vehicle running costs	2,440	0	0	2,440
Travel allowances and expenses	83	3	9	95
Total Transport Costs	2,523	3	9	2,535
Equipment and supplies	5,650	-1,683	857	4,824
Fees and services	1,588	120	-42	1,666
Communications and computing	5,888	381	-734	5,535
Other supplies and services	1,435	228	156	1,819
Total Supplies and Services	14,561	-954	237	13,844
Capital financing costs	1,320	0	0	1,320
Revenue contributions to Capital	2,368	-371	846	2,843
Total Capital Financing	3,688	-371	846	4,163
Grants and contributions	-7,243	-9	-222	-7,474
Investment income	-1,694	0	0	-1,694
Other income	-199	0	0	-199
Transfers from reserves	-4,373	1,066	-984	-4,291
Total Income	-13,509	1,057	-1,206	-13,658
Net Revenue Budget	94,713	0	0	94,713

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget Adjustments - Subjective Analysis Explanations (October Budget Changes)

Individual virements (budget transfers) that exceed £50k are required to be reported to Members. Any individual virements that are not technical budget adjustments that exceed £500k require Member approval. There are no virements that require Member approval in this report.

- (a) **Salaries, allowances and on-costs (£100k Increase)** – A number of interims have been appointed to undertake specialist pieces of work (for which the experience does not exist in-house) to help drive forward certain initiatives. This budget increase is offset by a transfer from the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve for which funding had previously been set aside for such a purpose.
- (b) **Equipment and supplies (£857k Increase)** - See Appendix 10 (d) and (f) in relation to Infrastructure budgets (£550k). Additionally, £200k has been allocated for the Reducing Operational Contaminants project, £41k for Grenfell Infrastructure work and £35k to fund new diagnostic kit for the Fleet and Equipment team. Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £31k.
- (c) **Communications and computing (£734k Decrease)** - See Appendix 10 (e) in relation to the infrastructure budget for the Dynamics project which is now forecast to underspend by £830k. This is partly offset by various other minor budget adjustments totalling a net increase of £96k.
- (d) **Other supplies and services (£156k Increase)** - This budget has been increased by £140k to cover the cost of a secondment into the Service to provide specialist Building Safety advice. Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £16k.
- (e) **Revenue contributions to Capital (an adjustment of £846k)** - This budget has been adjusted to reverse the July adjustment in relation to the slippage to 2025/26 in the Ashford Fire Station and Live Fire Training Facility project (-£1.066m) and the requirement to account for the full lease costs for the vehicle maintenance workshop in 2024/25 (£213k) as both are currently funded by internal borrowing. This is offset by a corresponding adjustment to Transfers from Reserves (e). Other minor budget adjustments total £7k.
- (f) **Grants and contributions (£222k Increased income)** - The forecast for income has increased as a result of new external funding expected to be received in respect of the National Specialist PPE project (£100k) and additional grant income from the Building Safety Regulator to cover the cost of works undertaken for the Regulator (£82k). Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £40k.

(g) **Transfers from reserves (an adjustment of £984k)** - The majority of this budget adjustment is offset by (e). The difference primarily relates to additional interim posts agreed for various teams and funded by a transfer from the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget Adjustments – Functional Analysis

Figures shown are in £'000	Original Budget	July Budget Changes	October Budget Changes	Revised Budget
Firefighting and Rescue Services	38,487	60	-345	38,202
Control	2,944	-4	0	2,940
Operational Policy and Resilience	14,839	-1,787	493	13,545
Fleet and Transport	3,915	0	53	3,968
Total Ops Response and Resilience	60,185	-1,731	201	58,655
Customer Safety	3,477	0	52	3,529
Building Safety	3,278	0	37	3,315
Customer Engagement	1063	0	74	1,137
Total Customer Safety, Building Safety, Engagement and Collaboration	7,818	0	163	7,981
Corporate Management Board and Customer Support	2,489	-15	119	2,593
Member Allowances and Expenses	82	0	0	82
People and Learning	4,103	0	253	4,356
Business Change and Information Technology	9,662	260	-859	9,063
Property, Environment and Facilities	6,426	136	4	6,566
Finance, Insurance and Procurement	3,276	5	54	3,335
Business Intelligence, Policy and Performance	918	0	0	918
Total Customer Services	26,956	386	-429	26,913
Pension Costs	2,222	0	0	2,222
Net Financing Costs	-374	0	0	-374
Infrastructure Funding and Other Reserves	-2208	1,350	65	-793
Admin for Council Tax Support	114	-5	0	109
Total Pensions, Financing and Other Costs	-246	1,345	65	1,164
Net Revenue Budget	94,713	0	0	94,713

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget Adjustments – Functional Analysis Explanations (October Budget Changes)

Individual virements (budget transfers) that exceed £50k are required to be reported to Members. Any individual virements that are not technical budget adjustments that exceed £500k require Member approval. There are no virements that require Member approval in this report.

- (h) **Firefighting and Rescue Services (£345k Decrease)** - The reduction in this budget heading relates to the realignment of budgets to fund the Operational Contaminants project (£200k) and the On-call Review project (£150k) both of which sit under the Operational Policy and Resilience heading. Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £5k.
- (i) **Operational Policy and Resilience (£493k Increase)** - See (h) regarding the realignment of project budgets to this heading (£350k increase). See Appendix 10 (f) regarding the infrastructure project for Lightweight PPE (£400k increase). These budget increases are partly offset by a reduction where pay budgets relating to the Associate Trainers totalling £197k have been transferred to the People and Learning heading. Other minor budget adjustments total a net decrease of £60k.
- (j) **Corporate Management Board and Customer Support (£119k Increase)** - See Appendix 10 (d) regarding the infrastructure project for Supporting Workplace Needs (£150k increase). Other minor budget adjustments total a net decrease of £31k.
- (k) **People and Learning (£253k Increase)** - See (i) regarding the realignment of pay budgets for the Associate Trainers (£197k increase). Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £56k.
- (l) **Business Change and Information Technology (£859k Decrease)** - See Appendix 10 (e) regarding the infrastructure project for the Dynamics system which is forecast to underspend (£830k decrease). Other minor budget adjustments total a net decrease of £29k.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget – Subjective Analysis

Figures shown are in £'000

	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Total Variance
Salaries, allowances and on-costs	78,002	76,823	-1,179
Training expenses	643	673	30
Other employee costs (inc. Insurance)	747	823	76
Direct pension costs	2,222	2,304	82
Total Employee Costs	81,614	80,623	-991
Repairs, maintenance and other costs	3,141	3,133	-8
Utility costs	3,074	3,076	2
Total Premises Costs	6,215	6,209	-6
Vehicle running costs	2,440	2,535	95
Travel allowances and expenses	95	95	0
Total Transport Costs	2,535	2,630	95
Equipment and supplies	4,824	4,886	62
Fees and services	1,666	1,697	31
Communications and computing	5,535	5,601	66
Other supplies and services	1,819	1,735	-84
Total Supplies and Services	13,844	13,919	75
Capital financing costs	1,320	1,320	0
Revenue contributions to Capital	2,843	2,843	0
Total Capital Financing	4,163	4,163	0
Grants and contributions	-7,474	-7,394	80
Investment income	-1,694	-2,577	-883
Other income	-199	-239	-40
Transfers from reserves	-4,291	-4,223	68
Total Income	-13,658	-14,433	-775
Net Revenue Budget	94,713	93,111	-1,602

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Significant Variances and Movements in the 2024/25 Revenue Budget

Subjective Variance Analysis

The forecast net underspend of £1.602m includes a variety of underspends and overspends, and the reasons for the most significant variances are commented on below: -

Budget Variances

- a) **Salaries, allowances and on-costs (£1.179m Underspend)** - Explanations for the most significant variances in regard to this forecast underspend are provided under the relevant functional headings at **Appendix 8**.
- b) **Other Employee Costs (£76k Overspend)** - This forecast overspend mainly relates to compensation payments (e.g. refunds of pension contributions) in relation to the McCloud age-discrimination pension case (£60k). This is offset by an increase in the forecast for grant income as these additional costs will be funded by government grant. Other minor variances total a net forecast overspend of £16k.
- c) **Direct pension costs (£82k Overspend)** - Several colleagues based at the Channel Tunnel have drawn their pension benefits but continue to be employed by the Authority. As a result, the Authority is required to contribute an amount into the Firefighter' Pension Fund for not abating their ongoing pension payments (£82k). This arrangement has been agreed to ensure that the Authority continues to fulfil its contractual obligations until February 2025, when the contract will end. This forecast overspend is offset by a forecast underspend on pay budgets whereby those members who have drawn their pension benefits are no longer contributing into the pension scheme meaning the Authority is saving on employer pension contributions.
- d) **Vehicle running costs (£95k Overspend)** - Some vehicle maintenance activities have been outsourced due to in-year staff shortages within the Fleet Workshop team. This forecast overspend is therefore offset by a forecast underspend against pay budgets.
- e) **Other Supplies and Services (£84k Underspend)** - This forecast underspend primarily relates to a reduction in the contribution required from the Authority towards joint funded posts in the Kent Resilience Forum due to an increase in partner contributions.

- f) **Investment income (£883k Increased Income)** - An increase in the forecast for additional investment income primarily relates to the grants that have been paid to the Authority for the Matthews and McCloud pension cases (totalling £21m). The Authority has been able to invest the majority of these funds as the associated expenditure will not be incurred until much later in the financial year.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Revenue Budget – Functional Analysis

Figures shown are in £'000

	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Total Variance
Firefighting and Rescue Services	38,202	37,576	-626
Control	2,940	2,782	-158
Operational Policy and Resilience	13,545	13,438	-107
Fleet and Transport	3,968	3,802	-166
Total Operational Response and Resilience	58,655	57,598	-1,057
Customer Safety	3,529	3,390	-139
Building Safety	3,315	3,319	4
Customer Engagement	1,137	1,174	37
Total Customer Safety, Building Safety, Engagement and Collaboration	7,981	7,883	-98
Corporate Management Board and Customer Support	2,593	2,670	77
Member Allowances and Expenses	82	82	0
People and Learning	4,356	4,382	26
Business Change and Information Technology	9,063	9,187	124
Property, Environment and Facilities	6,566	6,633	67
Finance, Insurance and Procurement	3,335	3,444	109
Business Intelligence, Policy and Performance	918	869	-49
Total Customer Services	26,913	27,267	354
Pension Costs	2,222	2,304	82
Net Financing Costs	-374	-1,257	-883
Infrastructure Funding and Other Reserves	-793	-793	0
Admin for Council Tax Support	109	109	0
Total Pensions, Financing and Other Costs	1,164	363	-801
Net Revenue Budget	94,713	93,111	-1,602

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Significant Variances and Movements in the 2024/25 Revenue Budget

Functional Variance Analysis

The forecast net underspend of £1.602m includes a variety of underspends and overspends, and the reasons for the most significant variances are commented on below: -

Budget Variances

- g) **Firefighting and Rescue Services (£626k Underspend)** - The majority of this underspend relates to vacancies at on-call fire stations. Availability of on-call firefighters is a significant issue being experienced by fire services across the country. Despite the difficulties in recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters, overall appliance availability levels remained within the target operating model. A project to review the on-call system is now underway. Whilst this project works to deliver improvements, the use of overtime has increased to maintain the required levels of day-to-day appliance availability.
- h) **Control (£158k Underspend)** - There has been up to nine vacancies within this team during the year resulting in a forecast underspend of £192k. Five vacant positions have now been filled with the new joiners expected to start their positions shortly. Other minor variances total a net forecast overspend of £34k.
- i) **Fleet and Transport (£166k Underspend)** - See (d) which is offset by forecast pay underspends totalling £105k due to savings from in-year vacancies within the Fleet team. In addition, forecast income has increased by £40k due to the disposal of some older vehicles and equipment, and costs in relation to the in-housing of the vehicle maintenance function are expected to be £116k less than budgeted.
- j) **Customer Safety (£139k Underspend)** - This forecast underspend primarily relates to pay budgets and is due to a requirement for less overtime to be paid for the cadet scheme (£28k) and savings from in-year vacancies within the team (£86k). Additionally, there is an increase in the forecast income (£25k) whereby the Authority will receive a contribution towards the cost of carbon monoxide alarms which can be installed during Home Fire Safety visits.
- k) **Corporate Management Board and Customer Support (£77k Overspend)** - This forecast overspend relates to pay headings and is due to an overlap in roles for succession planning purposes due to an upcoming retirement.

- l) **Finance, Insurance and Procurement (£109k Overspend)** - This forecast overspend primarily relates to pay headings and is mainly due to a requirement to backfill two roles for maternity cover.
- m) **Pension Costs (£82k Overspend)** - See (c) regarding non-abatement of pensions for colleagues based at the Channel Tunnel.
- n) **Net Financing Costs (£883k Underspend)** - See (f) regarding increased investment income.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Infrastructure Budget Adjustments

Figures shown are in £'000

	Original Budget	July Budget Changes	October Budget Changes	Revised Budget
Infrastructure Capital Budget				
Ashford Fire Station Redevelopment	10,384	-1,066	-3,885	5,433
Control - lease for Coldharbour	0	0	161	161
Vehicle Maintenance - Unit Lease	0	213	-11	202
Estate changes and development	800	184	0	984
Total Estate Development	11,184	-669	-3,735	6,780
Roofing Works	150	205	0	355
Boilers and Heating Systems	60	43	0	103
Total Premises	210	248	0	458
Mobile Data Terminals	0	95	0	95
Total Information and Comms Systems	0	95	0	95
Appliances	0	59	0	59
Specialist Units and Vehicles	1,162	-17	66	1,211
Cars and Vans	196	-88	-84	24
Total Vehicles and Equipment	1,358	-46	-18	1,294
Total Infrastructure Capital Budget	12,752	-372	-3,753	8,627
Infrastructure Revenue Budget				
Premises	393	80	191	664
Information and Comms. Systems	3,642	411	-875	3,178
Operational Equipment	2,918	-1,925	399	1,392
Total Infrastructure Revenue Budget	6,953	-1,434	-285	5,234
Total Infrastructure Revenue and Capital	19,705	-1,806	-4,038	13,861
Funded from: -				
Base Revenue Contributions	-3,844	0	0	-3,844
Internal Borrowing	-10,384	853	3,896	-5,635
Infrastructure Reserve	-5,452	956	317	-4,179
One-off funding and grants	-25	-3	-175	-203
Total Infrastructure Funding	-19,705	1,806	4,038	-13,861

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Infrastructure Budget Adjustments (October Budget Changes)

Capital Infrastructure Budget

- a) **Ashford Fire Station Redevelopment (£3.885m Decrease)** - This project has encountered delays due to unexpected site remediation work and a recent change in the main contractor appointed to undertake the redevelopment of the site.
- b) **Control - lease for Coldharbour (£161k Increase)** - New accounting regulations require the market value of this lease to be recognised in full in 2024/25.
- c) **Specialist Units and Vehicles (£66k Increase)** - The purchase of a new Firefighting Robot (£87k) has been brought forward to 2024/25. Other minor budget adjustments total a net reduction of £21k.
- d) **Cars and Vans (£84k Decrease)** - The purchase of a new Water Safety Training van has been slipped to 2025/26 due to delays in the supply chain.

Revenue Infrastructure Budget

- e) **Premises (£191k Increase)** - A budget of £150k has been provided to fund new equipment where it has been identified that the workplace needs of some colleagues require adaptation from the standard (such as sit/stand desks or ergonomic mice etc). This was approved by Members at the July Authority meeting. Other minor budget adjustments total a net increase of £41k.
- f) **Information and Comms. Systems (£875k Decrease)** - This budget has been reduced by £830k due to an underspend on the Customer and Premises Risk Management project (Dynamics). This is primarily as a result of using internal resources to deliver the later stages of the project. Other minor budget adjustments total a net reduction of £45k.
- g) **Operational Equipment (£399k Increase)** - A budget of £400k has been provided for the purchase of new Lightweight PPE which will improve working conditions for Firefighters at certain incidents, such as wildfires. This was approved by Members at the July Authority meeting. Other minor budget adjustments total a net decrease of £1k.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 General and Earmarked Reserves

Figures shown are in £'000		Opening Balance 01-Apr-24	Forecast Transfer 2024/25	Forecast Closing Balance 31-Mar-25
General Reserve	(A)	4,260	420	4,680
<i>Earmarked Reserves:</i>				
Government Grants	(B)	904	21	925
Infrastructure	(C)	26,751	-4,179	22,572
Insurance and Resource	(C)	4,580	-10	4,570
Rolling Budgets	(C)	761	-599	162
Service Transformation Reserve	(C)	400	124	524
Total Earmarked Reserves		33,396	-4,643	28,753
Total Revenue Reserves		37,656	-4,223	33,433
Capital Receipts Reserve	(D)	8,554	313	8,867
Total Usable Reserves		46,210	-3,910	42,300

Notes:

- A. Reserve held to provide a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected costs
- B. Resource provided by Government with any unspent amounts rolled forward
- C. Reserve held to smooth the impact of expenditure on the revenue budget
- D. Reserve available to fund capital expenditure

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2024/25 Firefighters' Pension Fund

Figures shown are in £'000	2024/25 Home Office Return (Aug 2023)	2024/25 Home Office Return (Sep 2024)	Total Variance
Pension Outgoings:			
Pension payments	31,048	33,027	1,979
Total Expenditure	31,048	33,027	1,979
Pension Income:			
Employee contributions	-4,341	-4,349	-8
Employer contributions*	-9,360	-12,019	-2,659
In-year ill-health charge income	-253	-300	-47
Non-abated pension income	-110	-223	-113
Transfer values received	0	-68	-68
Government top-up grant	-16,984	-16,068	916
Total Income	-31,048	-33,027	-1,979
Net Fund Expenditure	0	0	0

*Notification of the increase in the employer contribution rate from 1 April 2024 (28.8% to 37.6%) was provided after the August 2023 submission was submitted to the Home Office.

The employer contributions are funded from the Authority's revenue budget and the increase in costs due to the uplift in the contribution rate is primarily funded by an additional government grant. However, the actual cost incurred may differ from the amount of grant is received as the grant has been calculated on historic data. A rough estimate of the difference between the grant and the Authority cost is £162k.

By: Director, Finance and Corporate Services
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024
Subject: DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN
2025-2029
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

A presentation will be given to Members on the development of the medium-term financial plan for 2025-2029 at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the recommendations contained within the presentation.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions – Barrie Fullbrook
EMAIL: barrie.fullbrook@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

By: Chief Executive
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024
Subject: GOVERNANCE AND POLICY UPDATES
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report covers the following governance issues:

- A. Statement of Assurance 2023/24 (Fire and Rescue National Framework)
- B. Annual Review of Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017
- C. Policy Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the Statement of Assurance 2023/24, paragraphs 1 to 4 and **Appendix 1** refer.
2. Approve the Annual Review of Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, paragraphs 5 to 7 and **Appendix 2** refer.
3. Approve the AI (Artificial Intelligence) Policy, paragraph 8, accompanying table and **Appendix 3** refers.
4. Note the remaining contents of the report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Policy - Owain Thompson

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 ext. 8453

EMAIL: owain.thompson@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

A. Statement of Assurance 2023/24 (Fire and Rescue National Framework)

Lead/contact officer: Owain Thompson, Head of Policy

01622 692121 ext: 6374 owain.thompson@kent.fire-uk.org

1. The Statement of Assurance sets out the Authority's compliance with the requirements of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#). The publication of an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework is a requirement set out within section 1.4 of the National Framework itself. In previous years the Statement of Assurance was combined with the Annual Governance Statement and taken to the Authority as a single document. However, because these two documents are written to meet the needs of two entirely different sets of legislative requirements (the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 for the Annual Governance Statement, and the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 for the Statement of Assurance), in 2022 they were separated into two separate, stand-alone documents. The Annual Governance Statement will be brought to Members for approval at the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 06 November 2024. The Statement of Assurance is attached at **Appendix 1** for Members' approval.
2. The reason the Statement of Assurance year is one behind the year it goes the Fire Authority is because it provides an assessment based on evidence from the preceding financial year.
3. There is no standard measure of assessment for fire and rescue authorities' degree of compliance with the National Framework. Consequently, to be as robust as possible, for the Statement of Assurance the Authority employs a level of assessment assessed against a five-tier rating. The criteria that inform this rating are drawn from the definitions in the assurance levels used by Internal Audit. This ensures consistency with the reporting methodology used during these other assessments of the Authority's effectiveness.
4. On the basis of our self-assessment of operational performance against the requirements of the National Framework for the 2023/24 financial year has been assessed as HIGH. This indicates that arrangements against each of the seven sections are extremely well designed and applied effectively. Processes are robust and well-established, there is a sound system of control operating effectively and consistently applied to achieve service/system objectives and there are examples of best practice. No significant weaknesses have been identified.

B. Annual review of compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017

Lead/contact officer: Owain Thompson, Head of Policy

01622 692121 ext: 6374 owain.thompson@kent.fire-uk.org

5. This Local Government Transparency Code 2015 applies to all local authorities and sets out a series of requirements to publish open data. The Code comprises 15 separate categories for which there is a mandatory requirement to publish certain types of information. Of these 15 mandatory categories, 11 contain additional information that is recommended for publication. As part of ensuring good governance the Authority undertakes an annual review of its compliance with the Code. The Authority is fully compliant with all but one of the 11 relevant mandatory categories (4 of the 15 categories are not applicable to this Authority). Within the 'Senior salaries' category, the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish some of the information as it of the view that to do so would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this.
6. Among the categories for which information is recommended for publication, seven are relevant to the Authority and the Authority is fully compliant with five of these. Of the two recommended categories that remain outstanding (4. Local Authority Land and 7. Organisation Chart), work is underway to ensure compliance with the 'Local Authority Land' category. Within the 'Organisation Chart' category, the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish some of the recommended information as it of the view that to do so would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this.
7. The annual transparency review also considers the requirements of the Trade Union (Facility Time) Regulations 2017, of which the Authority is fully compliant. The last three pages of the document provide a summary of compliance with each category. This year's transparency review is attached at **Appendix 2** for Members' approval.

C. Policy Update

Lead/contact officer: Owain Thompson, Head of Policy

01622 692121 ext: 6374 owain.thompson@kent.fire-uk.org

Policies that require Members' approval

8. Since the last meeting of the Authority in July, one new policy has been developed. This has passed through the appropriate governance process and it has been determined that it meets the threshold for requiring Members' approval. The table below summarises the policy, the reason for its development and the reason for it being brought to Members for approval. A copy of the policy is attached at **Appendix 3** for Members' approval.

Policy	Summary of why developed or key changes	Reason for KMFRA approval	Department
Artificial intelligence (AI) Policy	New policy. Ensure clarity and structure over Authority's position on this area. Published as V1.	Oversight Relates to an area that will have significant societal and technological impact.	Policy and Governance

Policies for Members' information

9. In order to ensure that they remain up-to-date and effective, the Authority's policies are revised as required based on a variety of factors, which may include changes to legislation, changes to procedures and practices, and the scheduled policy review dates. This may also include the development of new policies. The table below summarises new policies, or policies that have been revised or undergone review since the last meeting of the Authority. Copies of these policies can be made available to Members upon request.

Policy	Summary of why developed or key changes	Department
Data Breach Policy	New policy. Ensure clarity and structure over Authority's position on this area. Published as V1.	Policy and Governance
Public Warn and Inform Service Policy	New policy. Ensure clarity and structure over Authority's position on this area. Published as V1.	Engagement
Secondary Employment Policy	Existing policy. Restructured in accordance with new policy templates and guidance. Clearer guidance on restricted duties to include not trading on the reputation of working for KFRS, not relying on training provided by KFRS and not using KFRS equipment and uniform. Changed the title of the policy from Secondary or Other Employment to Secondary Employment Policy Updated to V3.	HR

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. There are no direct impacts from the contents of this paper which cannot be contained within existing budgetary provision. A people impact assessment has been completed for each policy referenced in this report. There are a range of data associated with each policy which, if falling within the scope of the Equality Act 2010 will be appropriately protected by the Authority. It is important that the Authority has

strong processes in place to protect customers, and colleagues have confidence in using these policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Members are requested to:

11.1 Approve the Statement of Assurance 2023/24, paragraphs 1 to 4 and **Appendix 1** refer.

11.2 Approve the Annual Review of Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, paragraphs 5 to 7 and **Appendix 2** refer.

11.3 Approve the AI Policy, paragraph 8, accompanying table and **Appendix 3** refer.

11.4 Note the remaining contents of the report.

Statement of Assurance 2023/24 for the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

(Prepared August 2024)

Government guidance requires the Authority to undertake a separate self-assessment of operational performance (known as the Statement of Assurance). [Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) requires the Secretary of State to prepare a [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#) which sets priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England. FRAs have a statutory duty to have regard to the National Framework. The Statement of Assurance is the assessment of the position of this Authority against the National Framework. The revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England came into effect on 1 June 2018 and is organised around the following seven sections:

Section 1. Introduction

This highlights five priorities for all FRAs in England. These are to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents.
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face.
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Section 2. Delivery of functions

This section deals with risk assessment and countywide resilience, and how the FRA plans to mitigate these risks through either operational response, or prevention activities, something that FRAs are required to set out within their 'integrated risk management plan', or as it is referred to now within the sector, a 'community risk management plan' (CRMP). The Framework also sets a number of expectations of what a CRMP should contain.

Section 3. National Resilience

This section requires FRAs to make arrangements to support national resilience, including working across borders and responding to terrorist incidents.

Section 4. Governance

Fire and rescue authorities operate with a range of different locally determined governance arrangements including an individual – either a police, fire and crime commissioner (PFCC) or a mayor – having sole responsibility for being the fire and rescue authority for an area. Each fire and rescue authority has a statutory duty to ensure provision of their core functions as required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Section 5. Achieving value for money

This section contains a number of recommendations regarding reserves. It also makes engagement in national procurement schemes mandatory, but only where appropriate. For example, if a national procurement of goods or services has been recently undertaken, FRAs will be expected to use any framework contract that results. If they choose not to, there is an expectation they will need to account for that decision.

Section 6. Workforce

All FRAs are expected to have a workforce strategy which aligns with the national workforce strategy. Following a consultation early in 2017, the Government has included wording in the draft Framework which limits the practice of re-engaging retired employees at senior levels of the workforce, except in absolutely exceptional circumstances. Enhancing professionalism within the fire sector, applying principles of fitness that account for the physically demanding nature of the role. Ensuring FRAs comply with the fitness principles within Annex C of the Fire and Rescue Service National framework. This section also states the FRAs are to implement the new professional standards that are now being developed and published by the Fire Standards Board.

Section 7. Inspection, intervention and accountability

This section sets out the responsibilities on FRAs to cooperate with the inspection process that is delivered by HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) and requests from the inspectorate for information and data. It also requires FRAs to give due regard to the reports published by HMICFRS. This section restates the powers of intervention into a failing (or at risk of failing) FRA which are available to the Secretary of State under Section 22 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This edition of the framework makes meeting the transparency code relevant to each FRA mandatory (for this Authority this is the Local Government Transparency Code 2015).

The level of assurance for 2023/24

There is no standard measure of assessment for FRAs' degree of compliance with the National Framework. Consequently, to be as robust as possible, the Authority employs a level of assessment assessed against a five-tier rating and provides an assessment based on evidence from the preceding financial year. The criteria that inform this rating are drawn from the definitions in the assurance levels used by Internal Audit – this ensures consistency with the reporting methodology used during these other assessments of the Authority's effectiveness. These are displayed on page 34 of this statement.

On the basis of our self-assessment of operational performance against the requirements of the National Framework for the 2023/24 financial year has been assessed as **HIGH**. This indicates that arrangements against each of the seven sections are extremely well designed and applied effectively. Processes are robust and well-established, there is a sound system of control operating effectively and consistently applied to achieve service/system objectives and there are examples of best practice. No significant weaknesses have been identified.

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Powers

Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”), the Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. The Framework:

- a) must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions.
- b) may contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions; and
- c) may contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions that the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

1.2 Priorities

The priorities in this Framework are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents.
- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face.
- collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide.
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

How do we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires every fire and rescue authority to assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national, and prepare an ‘integrated risk management plan’, or as it is now referred to within the sector, a ‘Community Risk Management Plan’ (CRMP). In 2023, the Authority started a new CRMP process which built upon the 10-year analysis of the key societal, economic, technological, and environmental changes that were set out in the 2022 Safety Plan.

The first stage of our CRMP was a comprehensive risk analysis and assessment. Undertaken in line with the National Fire Chiefs’ Council’s “Community Risk Management Planning Strategic Framework”, this risk assessment utilised a robust, evidence-based methodology. The results were published in our [CRMP risk analysis and assessment document](#). We called this document “Creating a Safer Future – Together”. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 19 October 2023](#).

Between 01 November 2023 and 01 February 2024, we undertook public consultation on the “Creating a Safer Future – Together” document. This also included consultation on the council tax options for 2024/25. The consultation generated a total of 1,859 responses. This is the highest number of responses of any recent CRMP consultation undertaken by the Authority and reflects our carefully planned approach and the effort of our Engagement Team to raise awareness of the CRMP with our stakeholders and customers. There was overwhelming support for both the risks identified and the areas of focus set out in the CRMP document. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 20 February 2024](#).

Recognising the clear support expressed through the consultation responses for the identified risks and areas of focus, we moved forward to the next stage and formed actions under each strategic area. In the forthcoming period 2025 to 2029, we will be ensuring effective integration of actions from our Building Safety, Prevention, and Response and Resilience teams. Our CRMP consultation identified seven areas of focus: Climate change and environment; Health and society; Rescues; Major industry; Buildings and places; and Transport, Utilities fuel and Power.

Our [CRMP delivery plan for 2025 to 2029](#) sets out the strategic priorities and actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges. To enable delivery of our customer facing strategic priorities we have also defined the enabling internal plans for every area. There are clear long-term priorities and measures which will help us evaluate progress. Each team has an annual plan which details their roles in delivering against the main priorities. This allows for clear alignment of activities and our medium-term financial plan. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 05 July 2024](#).

In addition to all of the above, we have conducted an [extensive evaluation of the last strategic period, 2021 to 2024](#) which considered the effectiveness of the outgoing [Customer Safety Plan 2021-2031](#) (the term we previously used to describe the CRMP).

When it comes to collaborating with partners, we are key organisation within the [Kent Resilience Forum \(KRF\)](#) and host it at our headquarters. The KRF is a local resilience forum which has been set up to ensure that agencies and organisations plan and work together, to ensure a co-ordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities in Kent. For example, it was fundamental to coordinating the response to both the coronavirus pandemic and the UK's departure from the EU.

Partnership working is a key feature of how the Authority operates and we continue to develop strong and lasting working relationships with Kent Police, SECamb, other fire and rescue services, local authorities, NHS clinical commissioning groups, and many other agencies.

Section 2. Delivery of functions

2.1 Identify and Assess

Every fire and rescue authority must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national in nature from fires to terrorist attacks. Regard must be had to Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate.

Fire and rescue authorities must put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability. Fire and rescue authorities should work through the Strategic Resilience Board where appropriate when determining what arrangements to put in place.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Between 01 November 2023 and 01 February 2024, we undertook public consultation on the “Creating a Safer Future – Together” document. This also included consultation on the council tax options for 2024/25. The consultation generated a total of 1,859 responses. This is the highest number of responses of any recent CRMP consultation undertaken by the Authority and reflects our carefully planned approach and the effort of our Engagement Team to raise awareness of the CRMP with our stakeholders and customers. There was overwhelming support for both the risks identified and the areas of focus set out in the CRMP document. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 20 February 2024](#).

Proposals for changes to the Authority are drawn up and consulted upon with employees, members of the public, businesses and community groups. We also provide a summary of what the public receive for the money they pay in council tax to help run the fire and rescue service across Kent and Medway. Responses to the proposals in the plan are analysed and then presented to the Fire Authority, most recently at the [meeting of the Authority held on 20 February 2024](#).

Once agreed by Members, the outcomes of the CRMP consultation are used to inform the development of actions against each identified strategic area. We monitor the delivery of the strategic priorities and actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges and report updates to the meetings of the [Fire Authority](#). Over and above that, we have a suite of performance indicators which form the basis of a ‘balanced scorecard’, drawing from all the strategies and other measures we use. This is used to give assurance to all that we are delivering what we promise in this plan.

In order to further improve our ability to use the data we collect and, from that, improve performance reporting, we worked with a specialised data consultancy to assist us in undertaking comprehensive data mapping.

The Authority maintains a [corporate risk register](#). Twice yearly updates about the corporate risk register are taken to the Authority’s Audit and Governance Committee. The corporate risk register is kept under regular review, updated as required and key stakeholders kept informed.

In relation to operational (as opposed to corporate) risk, the Authority undertakes and has published a comprehensive [CRMP risk analysis](#), which is an analysis of risk Kent and Medway and how this relates to demand for the Authority’s services. We have a mature risk assessment process which draws in data from a variety of internal databases and external sources, including the [Kent Community Risk Register](#).

In January 2024, we undertook a significant refresh of our approach to risk management, enhancing our approach to strategic and corporate risks. This included researching approaches in other organisations, consulting with the Institute of Risk Management and liaising with our external auditors on our updated approach. The key components of our revised approach to integrated risk management are as follows:

- A detailed document outlining our approach to both internal risks and the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) risks
- A refreshed Risk Management Policy
- A Risk Appetite Statement and a Risk Tolerance Matrix. The Authority’s Corporate Management Board determine and continuously assess the nature and extent of the principal risks that the Authority is exposed to, and is willing to take, to achieve its objectives (risk appetite) and ensure that planning and decision-making reflects this assessment. The Audit and Governance Committee provide a scrutiny role in relation to highlighted risks and as such monitor the delivery of the action plans.

- Following advice from the Institute of Risk Management, the separation of risks into the top strategic risks and other significant corporate risks. The two full risk registers are available on request for public scrutiny.
- Setting the plan of work for internal audit reviews so that it is based on the necessary controls set out in the strategic and corporate risk registers. This will allow our internal audit to provide an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of risk management and our internal control arrangements.
- This approach also ensures the Authority is in line with best practice as set out in the Institute of Internal Auditors' 'Three Lines Model'.
- The establishment of a dedicated Corporate Risk manager, which gives the Authority the capacity to fully assess, evaluate, and manage the enhanced risk management approach.

This revised and enhanced approach was approved by Members at the [meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 April 2024](#).

2.2 Prevent and Protect

Fire and rescue authorities must make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme in place for enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Our [CRMP delivery plan for 2025 to 2029](#) sets out the strategic priorities and actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges. To enable delivery of our customer facing strategic priorities we have also defined the enabling internal plans for every area. There are clear long-term priorities and measures which will help us evaluate progress. The areas of focus are grouped under the following seven themes:

1. Climate change and environment
2. Health and society
3. Rescues
4. Major industry
5. Buildings and places
6. Transport
7. Utilities, fuel, and power

These act as a focus for change and innovation across the organisation. Our actions are integrated across our Building Safety, prevention, operational response, resilience, and internal customer teams. This ensures that the investments we make and activities we undertake are complementary, and directly contribute to risk reduction for customers and the communities they live in.

Over the past ten years we have seen a steady reduction in the number of fires across Kent and Medway – albeit with spikes in the summers of 2020 and 2022 due to the exceptionally hot, dry weather. We are also working to reduce the number of deaths on the roads. We will remain proactive in this as we work towards a future where no one is killed or seriously injured by a fire or other emergency. For the first time, we have brought together our protection, prevention, customer experience, collaboration, equality of access to services and engagement work into one strategy. This is because we recognise that by having these areas work more closely, we can be more effective and efficient.

The Authority has a specialist team of [Safe and Well Officers](#) working across Kent and Medway. We deliver approximately 20,000 Safe and Well visits and Home Fire Safety visits annually, using referrals from other agencies and direct mail to help recruit and target those at most risk.

Our Collaboration and Behaviour Change teams have been brought together to form a new Community Insight and Partnerships Team. This allows us to be more effective at gathering information from underrepresented groups and supporting communities through partnership working. Through our work on behaviour change we developed a framework and methodology for embedding behaviour change practices into our Customer Safety and Business Safety strategies. Also included in this is the ability to evaluate the programme of Safe and Well visits.

We operate a team called the Risk Information Team who are responsible for collating and assessing information from special risk sites and ensuring site specific risk information is consistent, accurate and available to crews. In conjunction with this, we are introducing one single system to collect, store and share risk information: Microsoft Dynamics. This has been successfully rolled out for building safety, covering risk information for regulated premises. Once complete, Dynamics will replace the three separate Microsoft CRM systems that were previously in use; one each for Building Safety, Customer Safety and Operational Response. Information was not easily or routinely shared amongst these systems or teams and in some instances the same premises or site would be in all three systems.

Dynamics allows us to address these issues, to provide an even more effective means of accessing and disseminating critical information. Dynamics has changed the way the Authority approaches risk information. With this new system a premises only needs to be added once, all activities are then processed from this one place. For example, if Building Safety issue a prohibition notice for a premises this is then made available to all employees including operational colleagues. Dynamics also stores plans, images and evacuation information, which the Risk Information team collect as part of their inspection, to support crews in planning for and responding to an incident.

2.3 Respond

Fire and rescue authorities must make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements. Fire and rescue authorities must have effective business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

As set out in section 2.2, our [CRMP delivery plan for 2025 to 2029](#) sets out the strategic priorities and actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges. It outlines how we will prepare for emergencies and how we will respond to them.

Business continuity plans (including recovery plans) are in place for all reasonably foreseeable risks to the Authority. Our plans are designed to enable us to respond effectively to emergencies which may affect the delivery of our core functions.

All business continuity plans are validated through exercises (both live and table-top) to ensure they are comprehensive, fit for purpose and realistic. These exercises allow us to test our procedures and responses to a variety of events, ensuring a cohesive response whilst being able to maintain our front line emergency response and Service critical support functions.

As part of this, in the first half of 2024 the old 'Emergency Planning and Contingencies Policy' and series of framework documents were replaced by four new emergency planning and resilience policies. Collectively they ensure the key resilience-related areas are adequately covered at a policy level and that KFRS meets its statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Authority also participates in a national annual exercise on Business Continuity Awareness Week.

As part of our commitment to continually seek to improve our response capability, earlier this year we introduced new water rescue vehicles to our fleet of emergency vehicles in order to provide quicker and more effective rescue response when someone is struggling in water or mud, Two of the specialist vans are already in use across Kent and Medway, with an additional three soon to be available. The 4x4 vehicles are strategically based at fire stations where crews are trained in flood, water and mud rescues and include a variety of improved features to help firefighters respond to those types of emergencies. One of the key changes is the units can transport inflatable motorised boats on-board, rather than towing them, which means they can leave the station quickly and travel at blue light speed. The inflatable boats, which can be used with or without a motor, can also be easily transported and inflated anywhere, enabling the crew to enter the water as close as possible to the person in need of help.

As outlined in section 2.2, we operate a team called the Risk Information Team who are responsible for collating and assessing information from special risk sites and ensuring site specific risk information is consistent, accurate and available to crews. The risk data is also shared with partners across borders enhancing risk data awareness for neighbouring services. In conjunction with this, the Authority has moved to one single system called Microsoft Dynamics to collect, store and share risk information across departments and services.

To further improve the relevance and quality of our risk information, in May 2022 we introduced 'Response Assessment Intelligence Visits' (RAV-Int). This is a method for operational colleagues to record Building Safety, firefighter or Customer Safety concerns and send them to the relevant department for action. We have now completed well in excess of two thousand RAV-Int visits. This programme has been recognised nationally and by HMICFRS for its innovation and effectiveness.

We continue to be committed to learning from the experiences of our customers, partners, and colleagues. We will continue to embed a culture of learning that allows us to deal with new situations and problems. This drives innovation and allows us to become more skilled and experienced. We proactively seek out feedback and use our operational learning activities to understand and measure the effectiveness of changes we make. To this end, we play an active role in the [National Operational Learning](#) process and had adopted [National Operational Guidance Good Practice Guide](#), and comply with the [Fire Standard for Operational Learning](#).

The Authority has provided a round-the-clock on-site emergency response capability to Eurotunnel since the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994. The service is provided under a contract with Eurotunnel to provide the first line of response (FLOR) to any rescue emergency inside the Channel Tunnel. This contractual arrangement is separate to the Authority's day-to-day public services. In February 2024, the Authority made the decision to withdraw from the contract at the Channel Tunnel in February 2025, as it was no longer viable. However, we will continue to work closely with Eurotunnel and Falck, who have been appointed to take over the FLOR arrangements from February 2025. The Authority will continue to deliver the second line of response (SLOR) role in the future as we still have the statutory responsibility to attend incidents at the tunnel, and firefighters at stations nearest to the crossing, such as Dover, Folkestone and Ashford, will continue to respond to emergencies at the site when called out via 999, in the usual way.

2.4 Collaboration

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 created a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities, police forces, and ambulance trusts to:

- keep collaboration opportunities under review.
- notify other emergency services of proposed collaborations that could be in the interests of their mutual efficiency or effectiveness; and
- give effect to a proposed collaboration where the proposed parties agree that it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness and that it does not have an adverse effect on public safety.

Fire and rescue authorities must collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities to deliver interoperability (between fire and rescue authorities) and interoperability (with other responders such as other emergency services, wider Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums) in line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP). Fire and rescue authorities must collaborate with the National Resilience Lead Authority to ensure interoperability is maintained for National Resilience assets.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Collaboration and partnership working is a key feature of how the Authority operates and we continue to develop strong and lasting working relationships with Kent Police, SECamb, other fire and rescue services, local authorities, NHS clinical commissioning groups, and many other agencies. A [collaboration update](#) is taken to the meetings of the [Fire Authority](#).

In 2023, the Collaboration Team and Behaviour Team were merged to form a new Community Insight and Partnerships Team to increase efficiency and effectiveness of partnership working. This allows us to be more effective at gathering information from underrepresented groups and supporting communities through partnership working. The name change will also make it clearer to partners and colleagues that, as well as working with partner agencies, the team is responsible for gather information from underrepresented groups and supporting communities through partnership working. Wherever possible we consider collaboration with our partner organisations, such as Kent Police and SECamb and progress any other possible collaboration opportunities that may present themselves to enable greater efficiencies and improvements to the service.

We are key organisation within the [Kent Resilience Forum \(KRF\)](#). The KRF is a local resilience forum which has been set up to ensure that agencies and organisations plan and work together, to ensure a co-ordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities in Kent. It was fundamental to coordinating the response to both the coronavirus pandemic and the UK's departure from the EU.

The Authority also hosts and manages the Kent Resilience Team (KRT). The KRT is part of the KRF and is a multi-agency initiative to transform the delivery of emergency planning services in order to achieve better outcomes for the people of Kent. It does so by improving the effectiveness of the planning, response and recovery from emergencies.

To ensure we develop better inter-agency working and to help save public money, we have proactively opened up our premises for use by other agencies, particularly SECAMB and Kent Police. SECAMB mobilise resources from a number of KFRS owned premises and we support them by responding to life-threatening medical emergencies when our crews or officers are available to do so.

We are part of the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme \(JESIP\)](#) with Kent Police and SECAMB. The JESIP programme sets out a standard approach at incidents to multi-agency working between emergency services and other response organisations.

We operate a shared 999 control room with Kent Police. Working in partnership with Kent Police, we implemented the UK's first inter-agency command and control solution. In January 2024 we moved into a brand-new purpose-built fire and police control room at Coldharbour.

In addition, to facilitate collaborative work and incident support agreements for reinforcement schemes and discharge of operational functions by other FRAs (referred to as Section 13 and 16 Agreements after their respective sections in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) have been signed with all neighbouring fire and rescue authorities. To ensure our effectiveness, we also undertake familiarization and training with our neighbouring FRAs.

Following approval from our fire Authority in October 2022, we formally applied and were accepted as a member of the Networked Fire Service Partnership (NFSP). The NFSP is a partnership between Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service, which gives them the capability to handle each other's 999 calls during periods of high operational activity. Having this capability was one of the outcomes from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, which identified the importance of fire and rescue services being able to work closely from a fire command and control perspective.

In practical terms, this will mean that once a new mobilising system is procured, calls that are not answered within six seconds will be passed to another specialist fire control room, if the call is then not answered in ten seconds it is transferred to two further specialist fire control rooms. This means that during a major incident we will have access to a minimum of 16 specialist fire control operators who can give lifesaving fire survival guidance advice to our customers.

We actively consider opportunities for collaboration with other services and ensure arrangements are in place to effectively evaluate opportunities and to review and monitor collaboration activities to ensure continued benefits and cost-effectiveness. The Authority has been at the forefront of collaboration and leads the fire service national collaboration project for procurement.

Section 3. National Resilience

3.1 Gap Analysis

Fire and rescue authorities' risk assessments must include an analysis of any gaps between their existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience. Fire and rescue authorities are required to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning. To do this effectively, fire and rescue authorities are expected to assess their existing capability and identify any gaps as part of the integrated risk management planning process.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority undertakes and has published a comprehensive [CRMP risk analysis](#), which is an analysis of risk Kent and Medway and how this relates to demand for the Authority's services. We have a mature risk assessment process which draws in data from a variety of internal databases and external sources, including the [Kent Community Risk Register](#).

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, partner agencies in the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) are required to assess the risks in their area. KRF partners achieve this by working together to develop the 'Kent Community Risk Register'. The risk register is informed by national guidance and developed locally with partners and subject matter experts to list hazards and threats identified by government departments and local agencies. Prior to approval the risk register is then endorsed by the strategic representatives of all KRF partners.

We are a key organisation within the [Kent Resilience Forum](#). The KRF is a local resilience forum, one of a number across England, which has been set up to ensure that agencies and organisations plan and work together, to ensure a co-ordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities in Kent.

The Authority also works with partners in South East England and nationally on a number of projects to support national resilience. Issues regarding this are reported to Members of the Fire Authority, but it should be recognised that due to the sensitive nature of this area, limited information is detailed in the public domain.

The Authority plans and undertakes regular operational exercises against the current risks and threats in Kent and Medway. These test the efficacy of our emergency planning and the use of joint emergency services interoperability principles (JESIP). The scenarios and location of the service level exercises are determined by giving close consideration to risks in the National Risk Register, our multi-agency Kent Community Risk Register and the information the Authority holds relating to specific premises within its risk management system.

We undertake numerous exercises, which are made up of practical and tabletop exercises as well as professional discussions following Response Assessment Intelligence Visits. In 2022 we established an Exercise Planning Group to ensure that we are conforming to the legislative requirements

for exercising and training. As part of this Response Assessment Intelligence Visits and exercise processes are incorporated into one streamlined process to ensure that all high and very high-risk sites in Kent and Medway are visited and exercised against. In addition there were several National Resilience led exercises, plus some held outside of Kent and Medway.

3.2 National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF)

The NCAF has been designed to provide robust and flexible response arrangements to major emergencies that can be adapted to the nature, scale and requirements of the incident. Fire and rescue authorities must proactively engage with, and support, the NCAF arrangements including the NFCC's (National Fire Chiefs Council) lead operational role.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Kent Fire and Rescue Service maintains a critical incident framework that ensures we are able to respond to critical and major incidents and continue to maintain essential services. The framework ensures that KFRS has suitable management and coordination arrangements in place to respond to such incidents. These include arrangements for categorising and escalating incidents. Within this the links to local, regional, and national coordination processes are set out.

This includes identifying the need to report trigger incidents into the [National Coordination and Advisory Framework \(NCAF\) Electronic Support System](#).

The KFRS procedure for reporting trigger incidents is managed through the KFRS control room. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is held on the control system. This SOP lists the trigger incident types that require reporting to NCAF. A prompt to consider activation of this SOP is also listed against the incident type within the mobilising system, ensuring that NCAF reporting is carried out at the point at which the incident type is defined and confirmed.

The critical incident framework arrangements are tested annually as part of the KFRS Strategic Exercise. This includes consideration of NCAF reporting. These exercises are subject to a full and robust debrief and operational learning process.

We are able to offer resources via the National Resilience Fire Control. This includes our range of national resilience assets.

3.3 Response to Terrorist Attacks or MTFAs

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to the threat of terrorism and be ready to respond to incidents within their areas and across England. Fire and rescue services should also be interoperable to provide operational support across the UK to terrorist events as required.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority plans and undertakes regular operational exercises throughout the year. These test the efficacy of our emergency planning, the use of joint emergency services interoperability principles (JESIP).

The issues raised in the recommendations of the Kerslake Report and the government inquiry into the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena on May 2017, are supported by the Authority's plans and activities. For example, we have amended talkgroups on airwaves radios in line with the recommendations of the Kerslake Report.

We hold live and tabletop exercises based on scenarios related to marauding terrorist attacks. These have included on board Eurotunnel passenger trains and in the Bluewater shopping centre. Doing so allows us to test the multi-agency binational emergency plan, as well as individual organisational plans for a major terrorist incidents in significant locations.

Further commentary on this section is withheld due to the sensitivity of the area.

3.4 National Resilience Assurance

Fire and rescue authorities must continue to work collectively and with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board and the national resilience lead authority to provide assurance to government that:

- existing national resilience capabilities are fit for purpose and robust; and
- risks and plans are assessed and any gaps in capability that are needed to ensure national resilience are identified.

Fire and rescue authorities with MTFA teams must work with police forces and ambulance trusts to provide tri-service assurance of this capability.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

As part of the Fire and Rescue Marine Response Group the Authority has entered into an agreement with counterparts in France, the Netherlands and Belgium for an agreed response and procedures to incidents in the English Channel.

We have a variety of National Resilience Assets that are exercised both locally and nationally. Assets include: Urban Search and Rescue; National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers; Enhanced Logistics Support; High Volume Pump; Detection; Identification and Monitoring; and Tactical Advisors specialising in a variety of areas.

Because of the responsibilities related to the Channel Tunnel, exercises are undertaken with the Authority's counterparts in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. As set out in section 2.3, when Falck take over the FLOR arrangements from February 2025, we will continue to work closely with them and Eurotunnel.

We are key organisation within the [Kent Resilience Forum \(KRF\)](#). The KRF is a local resilience forum which has been set up to ensure that agencies and organisations plan and work together, to ensure a co-ordinated response to emergencies that could have a significant impact on communities in Kent. It was fundamental to coordinating the response to both the coronavirus pandemic and the UK's departure from the EU.

The Authority also hosts and manages the Kent Resilience Team (KRT). Part of the KRF, the KRT is a multi-agency initiative to transform the delivery of emergency planning services in order to achieve better outcomes for the people of Kent. It does so by improving the effectiveness of the

planning, response and recovery from emergencies. This is in line with both the [National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums](#) and the [National Coordination and Advisory Framework for England](#).

Section 4. Governance

4.1 Managing the Fire and Rescue Service/Chief Fire Officer

Each fire and rescue authority will appoint an individual – commonly known as a Chief Fire Officer – who has responsibility for managing the fire and rescue service. Each fire and rescue authority must hold this person to account for the exercise of their functions and the functions of persons under their direction and control.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is overseen and run by a dedicated local authority called the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority. The [Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority](#) ('the Authority') is responsible for ensuring that it delivers its services in accordance with the prevailing legislation, regulations and government guidance and that proper standards of stewardship, conduct, and professional competence are followed to by those working for and with the Authority.

The Authority meets three times a year (normally February, June, October) and comprises 25 elected councillors appointed by Kent County Council (21 councillors) and Medway Council (4 councillors) as well as the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and an Independent Person for Standards.

The Authority also has an Audit and Governance Committee. Comprising 10 elected councillors from the Authority who serve as members, The purpose of this committee is to provide independent assurance to the Authority of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It is also chaired by an opposition Member, which demonstrates good governance around scrutiny.

Meeting three times per year (normally January, April, September), it provides an independent review of the Authority's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. Additionally, it oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place. It also has responsibility for signing off the final accounts and the annual governance statement.

Meetings of the Fire Authority and Audit and Governance Committee are open to the public and agenda packs, reports and minutes are made publicly available on our website.

The Chief Executive has management responsibility for ensuring that effective controls and processes are implemented across the Authority in compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance. Our controls are regularly reviewed and updated with reports submitted to the Fire Authority. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services is responsible for ensuring that effective financial controls are in place, the provision of an effective

internal audit function, and for reviewing the overall effectiveness of the governance framework. In addition, the corporate leadership team has collective responsibility for setting the strategic direction and management of the finances.

Our [constitutional and governance documents](#) set out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made, and the rules and procedures governing Authority meetings and decision-taking. These comprise the following:

- The Kent Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997. This is the Order made by Parliament which first established the Authority. It contains the Constitution of the Authority and prescribes the arrangements for the Authority to take over responsibility for Kent Fire Brigade from Kent County Council on 1 April 1998.
- Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority Standing Orders. These are rules for the operation of Authority and Committee meetings.
- Committee Terms of Reference for the Audit and Governance Committee; Hearings Panel; and Senior Officer Appointments, Conditions and Conduct Committee.
- Scheme of delegation of powers to the Chief Executive. This sets out those decisions which can only be taken by the Authority or one of its committees (i.e. by Members of the Authority), and those which can be taken by the Chief Executive or other officers.
- Convention on Member and Officer relationships. This deals with the working relationships between Members (both as individuals and collectively within their political groups) and the officers (i.e. the paid employees) of the Authority.
- Code of Corporate Governance. This is the means through which the Authority applies the CIPFA principles of good governance and sets out how the Authority meets each of these principles in its day-to-day activities.
- The Statement of Assurance against the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018.

We publish an [annual governance statement](#). This is the report of the review of the Authority's governance and systems of internal control, along with an assessment of their effectiveness. The legal requirement to undertake this annual review is set out in [Section 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#).

In early 2024, we mapped out all of the scheduled meetings that take place across the Authority and ensured that all of these had up-to-date terms of reference.

All local authorities are required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to appoint a Monitoring Officer whose statutory duty is to report to the Authority on any proposed actions which may contravene the law or constitute maladministration. Following the decision by the previous Monitoring Officer to stand down from the role, in July 2024 [the Authority approved the proposal for the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer](#) from Mid Kent Legal Services (a partnership which was formed in 2008 by Maidstone Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale Borough Council.) for an initial two year term.

As part of the "value for money" section of the annual audit report undertaken by Grant Thornton, the Authority's external auditors, they undertake an assessment and provide opinion on the Authority's governance arrangements. For the most recent [annual audit report \(2022/23\)](#), with this area the

auditors stated the Authority has robust governance arrangements. Processes and ways of working are embedded across the Authority and no improvement recommendations were raised.

4.2 Documents to be prepared

Each FRA is expected to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), Annual statement of assurance, financial plans (a medium-term financial strategy, an efficiency plan and a reserves strategy).

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires every fire and rescue authority to assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national, and prepare an 'integrated risk management plan', or as it is now referred to within the sector, a 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP, formerly an IRMP). In 2023, the Authority started a new CRMP process which built upon the 10-year analysis of the key societal, economic, technological, and environmental changes that were set out in the 2022 Safety Plan.

The first stage of our CRMP was a comprehensive risk analysis and assessment. Undertaken in line with the National Fire Chiefs' Council's "Community Risk Management Planning Strategic Framework", this risk assessment utilised a robust, evidence-based methodology. The results were published in our [CRMP risk analysis and assessment document](#). We called this document "Creating a Safer Future – Together". This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 19 October 2023](#).

Between 01 November 2023 and 01 February 2024, we undertook public consultation on the "Creating a Safer Future – Together" document. This also included consultation on the council tax options for 2024/25. The consultation generated a total of 1,859 responses. This is the highest number of responses of any recent CRMP consultation undertaken by the Authority and reflects our carefully planned approach and the effort of our Engagement Team to raise awareness of the CRMP with our stakeholders and customers. There was overwhelming support for both the risks identified and the areas of focus set out in the CRMP document. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 20 February 2024](#).

Recognising the clear support expressed through the consultation responses for the identified risks and areas of focus, we moved forward to the next stage and formed actions under each strategic area. In the forthcoming period 2025 to 2029, we will be ensuring effective integration of actions from our Building Safety, Prevention, and Response and Resilience teams. Our CRMP consultation identified seven areas of focus: Climate change and environment; Health and society; Rescues; Major industry; Buildings and places; and Transport, Utilities fuel and Power.

Our [CRMP delivery plan for 2025 to 2029](#) sets out the strategic priorities and actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges. To enable delivery of our customer facing strategic priorities we have also defined the enabling internal plans for every area. There are clear long-term priorities and measures which will help us evaluate progress. Each team has an annual plan which details their roles in delivering against the main priorities. This allows for clear alignment of activities and our medium-term financial plan. This was approved by the [Fire Authority at the meeting on 05 July 2024](#).

In relation to financial plans, we publish the following documents:

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#). Our approach to budgeting is sustainable and business-led and is detailed in a document called the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The latest document covers the four-year period from 2024/25 to 2027/28 and provides an update on the work of the service and our future plans. Our Budget Book and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Treasury Management and Investment Strategy](#). The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code require the Authority to determine and set the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for the financial year ahead as part of the annual budget papers in February of each year. Our Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Reserves Strategy](#). Every year the Authority's Reserves Strategy is reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. There are five earmarked reserves, with by far the largest being the Infrastructure Reserve, which is used to help fund the Authority's capital programme and large one-off IT investments. In challenging financial times, it is prudent to maintain an appropriate level of reserves which will help bridge the gap of any shortfall. Our Reserves Strategy 2024/25 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Capital Strategy](#). The most recent [CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities](#) was issued in December 2021. Its key objectives remain ensuring that decisions made around local authority capital programmes are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Authority continues to use the Code as required under [Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003](#), as a framework to demonstrate effective planning and proper appraisal of its capital finances. A requirement of the Code is that authorities should produce a Capital Strategy which sets out an outline of the reporting requirements that it should be meeting. Our Capital Strategy was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

Information about the Authority's reserves is also provided in the [external auditor's annual report for 2022/23](#). This was presented at the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 April 2024.

Each year, the Authority also publishes an Efficiency and Productivity Plan. Our most recent one was taken to the [February 2024 meeting of the Fire Authority](#). This presents a general overview of the national and local economic environment in which KFRS is operating and the effect of this upon our planning and delivery of services over the medium term. The aim is to offer a degree of context about the way we undertake our financial planning but to also set out that our focus is to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of our services to all our customers. Ensuring our services are delivered as efficiently as possible whilst also considering our outputs and outcomes is an important driver to improving productivity.

4.3 National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC)

The NFCC is the first line of operational advice to central and local government during major incidents. This is outlined within the National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF), which fire and rescue services must proactively engage with. The NFCC has a role to drive continuous improvement and development throughout the sector. Fire and rescue services should consult the NFCC for advice and support when

developing improvement plans, particularly in response to inspections. The expectation is that fire and rescue services in England engage with the NFCC and, in turn, that the NFCC works to support and represent every service.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Through widespread involvement in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), we play an active role in sector improvement at the national level.

- The Chief Executive is an active member of the NFCC council, mentors new chief fire officers and is regularly involved in working groups. Currently involved in the task and finish group on defining institutional racism in fire services.
- The Director of Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement is the national lead for Home Safety and a member of the NFCC Prevention committee.
- The Director of Operations is Co-lead Officer on the NFCC Environmental, Sustainability and Climate Change work stream, which is part of the NFCC Sector Resources and Improvement Committee.
- The Director of Finance and Corporate Services plays a significant role in the Fire Finance network.
- The Assistant Director Response is the NFCC Alternative Fuels and Energy systems lead; a member of the USAR National User Group; and a member of the MTA National User Group.
- Assistant Director Resilience is a member of the National Fire Control Board, the NFCC Operational Communications Strategy Board, the Emergency Services Network Fire Customer group; the Eastern Region Chair for the Emergency Services Network; sits on national NFCC groups for operational communications and fire control; and is the MAIT local strategic lead.
- The Assistant Director Customer and Building Safety Chairs the NFCC South East Prevention Group, is an active member of the NFCC Regional Prevention Leads Group and Chairs the NFCC Road Safety Practitioners Group. She is also the NFCC 'Post Incident' lead for Road Safety and the Vice Chair for the NFCC Road Safety Group.
- The Area Manager Learning and Professionalism is Chair of ICTAS (Incident Command Training and Assessment Subgroup) under SEORRG (South East Operational Response and Resilience Group) and sits on NCCUG (National Command and Control User Group).
- The Group Manager Building Safety is a member of the Emerging Hazards Group under NFCC Protection.
- The Resilience Manager is the Chair of the NFCC and Home Office Resilience Group; Chair of the NFCC Business Continuity and Resilience Group; represents the NFCC Business Continuity and Resilience Group at the NFCC Resources Forum and at the NFCC Digital, Technology and Cyber (DTC) Board.
- The Education Manager plays an active role in the Children and Young People Group and the Water Safety Group.
- The Road Safety Manager is the NFCC Road Safety 'Driving for Better Business' thematic lead and Chairs the South East Regional Road Safety Group.
- The Water Services Manager plays a significant role within the NFCC Water Officer Group.
- The KFRS Inclusion Officer is technical lead for NFCC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Section 5. Achieving value for money

5.1 Reserves

Sections 31A, 32, 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing and precepting authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. Each fire and rescue authority should publish their reserves strategy on their website, either as part of their medium-term financial plan or in a separate reserves strategy document. The information on each reserve should make clear how much of the funding falls into the following three categories:

- a. Funding for planned expenditure on projects and programmes over the period of the current medium term financial plan.
- b. Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current planning period.
- c. As a general contingency or resource to meet other expenditure needs held in accordance with sound principles of good financial management (e.g. insurance).

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

We have a robust and complaint financial framework, as part of this the following documents are published:

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#). Our approach to budgeting is sustainable and business-led and is detailed in a document called the Medium-Term Financial Plan. The latest document covers the four-year period from 2024/25 to 2027/28 and provides an update on the work of the service and our future plans. Our Budget Book and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Treasury Management and Investment Strategy](#). The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code require the Authority to determine and set the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for the financial year ahead as part of the annual budget papers in February of each year. Our Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Reserves Strategy](#). Every year the Authority's Reserves Strategy is reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. There are five earmarked reserves, with by far the largest being the Infrastructure Reserve, which is used to help fund the Authority's capital programme and large one-off IT investments. In challenging financial times, it is prudent to maintain an appropriate level of reserves which will help bridge the gap of any shortfall. Our Reserves Strategy 2024/25 was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

[Capital Strategy](#). The most recent [CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities](#) was issued in December 2021. Its key objectives remain ensuring that decisions made around local authority capital programmes are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Authority continues to use the Code as required under [Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003](#), as a framework to demonstrate effective planning and proper appraisal of its capital finances. A requirement of the Code is that authorities should produce a Capital Strategy which sets out an outline of the reporting requirements that it should be meeting. Our Capital Strategy was approved at the [meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2024](#).

Information about the Authority's reserves is also provided in the [external auditor's annual report for 2022/23](#). This was presented at the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 April 2024.

Each year, the Authority also publishes an Efficiency and Productivity Plan. Our most recent one was taken to the [February 2024 meeting of the Fire Authority](#). This presents a general overview of the national and local economic environment in which KFRS is operating and the effect of this upon our planning and delivery of services over the medium term. The aim is to offer a degree of context about the way we undertake our financial planning but to also set out that our focus is to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of our services to all our customers. Ensuring our services are delivered as efficiently as possible whilst also considering our outputs and outcomes is an important driver to improving productivity.

5.2 Commercial Transformation

Each fire and rescue authority must demonstrate that it is achieving value for money for the goods and services it receives. Every fire and rescue authority should look at ways to improve its commercial practices including whether they can aggregate their procurement with other fire and rescue authorities and other local services (e.g. police) to achieve efficiencies.

Fire and rescue authorities must demonstrate and support national and local commercial transformation programmes where appropriate. Each fire and rescue authority should be able to demonstrate full awareness of the objectives to standardise requirements, aggregate demand and manage suppliers of products and services within their commercial arrangements.

Fire and rescue authorities must ensure that their commercial activities, be that the placement of new contracts or the use of existing contracts, is in line with their legal obligations, including but not limited to the Public Contracts Regulations, the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and transparency commitments.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

We have a [Commercial and Procurement Strategy](#), which sets out our approach to buy goods and services in such a way that we deliver value for money on every pound spent with our suppliers, whilst complying with the rules that regulate public sector procurement.

We apply an approach called category management. The principle, as defined by the [Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply](#), is that category management is an approach which organises our resources to focus on specific areas of spend. The results can be greater than traditional transactional based purchasing methods. A structured category management approach helps us generate savings, but also improve supplier performance, reduce supply risks, and drive innovation and continuous improvement. We profile, benchmark, research and assess the market, and look for any risks and trends and new opportunities constantly. We have developed an expert level of knowledge in each category and we will maintain this approach.

As an organisation that procures a large amount of goods and services and spends time working closely across all communities throughout Kent and Medway, we are highly aware of the issue of modern slavery. Our [Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement 2023/24](#) articulates our commitment to helping to eradicate this crime.

In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, we have a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and its presence within our organisation and supply chains. We welcome the increasing momentum towards mandatory human-rights due diligence and are therefore fully committed to supporting the government in tackling modern slavery. Our Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement is a reflection of our commitment to this.

In practice we demonstrate this through our procurement and purchasing processes and an active commitment to upholding and protecting the human rights of our customers, supply chain workers, local communities, and employees. We have set out the standards, values and behaviours we expect from our suppliers in our [Supplier Code of Conduct](#). This is also underpinned by our [Modern Slavery Policy](#) which is the mechanism through we ensure that modern slavery is not taking place anywhere in our own business or our supply chains. We also ensure that, when delivering our customer services, our employees are appropriately trained to be able identify potential modern slavery and raise those concerns accordingly.

[Equality in Procurement at Kent Fire and Rescue Service](#). In response to the Equality Act 2010 and our own values in promoting equality in everything we do, we want people who work with us to also demonstrate the same commitment to fairness and equality. The procurement opportunities we publish are inclusive and accessible, and our evaluation of proposals is undertaken using objective and non-discriminatory criteria. We have a formalised approach to equality in procurement at Kent Fire and Rescue Service. We consider it necessary for organisations who intend to supply goods, works or services to us or on our behalf to demonstrate that reasonably practicable steps have been taken to allow equal access and treatment in employment and services for all and can give evidence of their approach to meeting the requirements of the law.

5.3 Research and Development

Fire and rescue authorities should engage with national research and development programmes, including those overseen by the NFCC, unless there is a good reason not to.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

We have a dedicated research and development resource in the Customer Engagement and Safety Team who support the development and improvement of services within Community Safety and Building Safety.

The Collaboration and Behaviour Change teams have been brought together to form a new Community Insight and Partnerships Team. This makes clear to partners and KFRS colleagues that the team is responsible for gathering information from underrepresented groups and supporting communities through partnership working.

A key function is to ensure all of our prevention and protection interventions are underpinned by evidence through undertaking research and evaluation. Our approach to research and development is supported by an Evaluation Framework to help ensure our approach to intervention evaluation follows best practice and is of suitable quality. This framework has been shared with the NFCC and South East prevention network members.

Research is currently supporting a number of corporate projects and initiatives with the Customer Engagement and Safety Team, which feed into wider strategic and corporate objectives. The Authority also sponsored [world-leading doctoral research on human behaviour in dwelling fires](#), the outcomes of which supported several areas of Service activity.

We undertake research and use behavioural theories to evaluate initiatives, ensuring we are as effective as possible in our approach. We are also undertaking research to better understand who our customers are, what their perceptions of the fire and rescue service are, and how we can best communicate with them to deliver safety initiatives more efficiently. We research behaviour in fires in the home to tailor our customer safety activities and improve the advice we give to people about staying safe. This also supports operational training and emergency call management.

Recent examples of this include the research undertaken for one of our latest safety and behaviour change campaigns called 'Smoke is No Joke'. This promotes closing internal doors to delay the spread of smoke and fire, improving the chance of safe escape, and protecting the home from fire and smoke damage. The campaign has gone through research, co-creation and focus groups with members of the target audience to shape the name, look and feel in line with behaviour change methodology. Work has been undertaken to map customer journeys for home fire safety visit booking and school-based education. The outcomes of this research, which includes hearing from the external customers accessing these services, is being used to improve the experience and ease of accessing these services. We will also be undertaking research will look at interactions with members of the public calling 999 and see how we can further improve the two-way flow of information to keep our customers as safe as possible.

5.4 Trading

Fire and rescue authorities have the power to trade and make a profit but they must ensure that their commercial activities are performed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), the Local Government Order 2009 and the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970. Fire and rescue authorities must also ensure that such commercial activities are exercised through a company within the meaning of Part 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority does not have a trading arm and has no plans to engage in such activity.

Section 6. Workforce

6.1 People Strategy

Each fire and rescue authority should have in place a people strategy that has been designed in collaboration with the workforce.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

Our [People Strategy](#) sets out how we aim to improve organisational performance by ensuring that everyone has the right skills, capabilities and involvement to make life safer for the people of Kent. Delivery of this plan will ensure that the highest standards of leadership and management are in place to sustain a motivated and engaged workforce. We believe this will foster an organisational culture which truly embraces the diversity and individuality of people and the need for inclusiveness.

Our People Strategy will continue to be updated and we move into our new CRMP.

6.2 Professional Standards

To enhance professionalism of fire and rescue services, a coherent and comprehensive set of professional standards across all areas of fire and rescue services' work will be developed, drawing on existing standards where appropriate. The development of new standards will be on an ongoing basis.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

At the time of writing, the [Fire Standards Board](#) have approved and published the following 17 fire standards:

- Code of Ethics
- Communication and Engagement
- Community Risk Management Planning
- Data Management
- Emergency Preparedness and Resilience
- Emergency Response Driving
- Fire Control
- Fire Investigation
- Internal Governance and Assurance
- Leading the Service
- Leading and Developing People
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Operational Preparedness
- Prevention
- Protection
- Safeguarding

The Authority has undertaken a gap analysis of its position against each of the published fire standards. This has identified that the Authority is compliant with the majority of the key areas of each of these standards.

During the consultation period, the Authority has been an active participant and engaged with and responded to each of the consultations on the proposed fire standards. As and when consultation opens on additional standards, we will continue to engage actively with the process.

Within KFRS there already exists a well-established culture of professional standards, which is underpinned by and codified in a small number of key documents. The conduct of employees, volunteers and Members is taken very seriously, and we have a Code of Ethical Conduct, a Code of Ethics for Senior Managers and a separate Code of Conduct for Members of the Fire Authority. Each of these clearly set out the standards of ethical and professional behaviour we expect. To further enhance the Authority's commitment to continually improve standards, accountability and behaviour, in early 2024 we introduced a disciplinary policy that is specifically aligned with the higher level of responsibility and associated expectations that would be required of either the Chief Executive, a member of the Corporate Management Board or one of the Authority's Statutory Officers, this is the Disciplinary Policy for Dealing with an Allegation of Misconduct by a Senior Officer.

We place the utmost importance on holding ourselves to high standards of behaviour and integrity as embodied in the seven (Nolan) principles of public life: 1. Selflessness; 2. Integrity; 3. Objectivity; 4. Accountability; 5. Openness; 6. Honesty; 7. Leadership.

In relation to ethical standards, in 2021 the Authority introduced a code of ethical conduct and made it a requirement for all employees to sign it. This presents the Authority's values and commitment to fairness and equality.

We also have a [Code of Corporate Governance](#). This sets out the seven key principles of good governance which the Authority has adopted and the means by which these principles are adhered to and evidenced. The principles set out here represent the core philosophy of the Authority. It was reviewed and updated in 2020 to incorporate the requirements of [new guidance issued by CIPFA](#) regarding financial management in public authorities. The next review of this is scheduled to take place in the autumn of 2024.

[Code of Conduct for Members of the Fire Authority](#). This establishes the requirement for all Members of the Authority to conduct themselves, when undertaking the business of the Authority, in accordance with our values and ethics. It also contains the mechanism by which inappropriate or unethical behaviour can be reported and investigated. This is aligned to the Kent Code, which in addition to being the Kent County Council Code, has been adopted by the majority of district councils in Kent.

Each October we publish an [annual report on Members' standards, allowances and travel expenses](#) and bring this to the meeting of the Fire Authority. No complaints alleging that a Member of the fire authority has breached the Code of Conduct have been made to the Authority during the past year.

All local authorities are required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to appoint a Monitoring Officer whose statutory duty is to report to the Authority on any proposed actions which may contravene the law or constitute maladministration. Following the decision by the previous Monitoring Officer to stand down from the role, in July 2024 [the Authority approved the proposal for the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer](#) from Mid Kent Legal Services (a partnership which was formed in 2008 by Maidstone Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale Borough Council.) for an initial two year term.

Under [Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011](#), the Authority must include provision for the appointment of at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought, and considered, before a decision is made on any allegation of misconduct against a Member of the Authority. In addition, the [Combined Authorities \(Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees\) Order 2017](#) sets out the requirement on audit committees of a combined authority to have at least one independent person on its membership. At the [meeting of the Fire Authority on 05 July](#), the Authority's current Independent Person was reappointed for another four-year term.

6.3 Fitness Principles

Fire and rescue authorities have an important role in helping to ensure their firefighters remain fit and are supported in remaining in employment. Each fire and rescue authority must comply with the fitness principles set out at Annex C.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority has established clear fitness standards required for all operational personnel, alongside a robust process for monitoring and testing these standards. This is done through our Health and Wellbeing Policy, which is available upon request.

All new trainee firefighters, both wholtime and on-call, attend a 12 week detailed physical training programme designed to enhance their fitness, teamwork and operational readiness. All operational colleagues are subject to annual fitness testing and support is given to anyone falling below the required fitness level. We will also be introducing a strength and conditioning programme to help reduce musculoskeletal injuries among firefighters.

We have a team of Physical Training Coaches who are coordinated by two Physical Fitness Consultants, who oversee fitness activities and support for all operational colleagues. Our Physical Fitness Consultants deliver physical training-based workshops and continuing professional development sessions. They also play a key role in assisting with return-to-work programmes by addressing any potential reductions in physical fitness, thereby assisting a smooth and safe reintegration for colleagues who have been away from work.

The working day is structured to allow one hour per day fitness training for all operational personnel (subject to operational demands). Gyms or fitness equipment is provided on all stations.

The Supporting Performance Policy provides for a process of adjustment and redeployment where an individual cannot maintain or regain the required fitness level. A number of colleagues have already been redeployed under this policy. The Medical Advisory Group within the Authority is a collaboration between our occupational health provider, inclusion, health, safety and wellbeing to ensure tailored support is given to those requiring reasonable adjustments in their role.

In addition to physical health, the Authority has a strong focus on actively supporting colleagues' mental well-being. KFRS takes the issue of mental health very seriously, particularly as in the course of their work, firefighters can be exposed to potentially distressing scenes. We are committed to fostering a culture that challenges the stigma around mental health and removes barriers to seeking help.

We are signatories to the [Government's Workplace Wellbeing Charter](#) and we have in place all the appropriate support arrangements, and referral systems into our occupational health provider (available to operational and customer service colleagues).

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offers year round access to trained counsellors providing professional, friendly, and non-judgmental support.

This is supplemented by a network of Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First Aiders. These are volunteers among our colleagues who provide a confidential support and guidance, helping colleagues access the resources they need for both physical and mental well-being.

6.4 Re-engagement of Senior Officers

Fire and rescue authorities must not re-appoint principal fire officers after retirement to their previous, or a similar, post save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interests of public safety. Any such appointment must be transparent, justifiable and time limited.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority responded to the Government's consultation on the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework and stated its commitment to not re-appointing principal fire officers after retirement to their previous or a similar post.

KMFRA oversight of senior appointments through the [Senior Officer Appointments, Conditions and Conduct Committee](#).

The Localism Act 2011 requires the Authority to publish a [Pay Policy Statement](#) for each financial year. The Pay Policy Statement describes the arrangements in place for setting and amending the pay of its employees and contains a section covering the rules around the re-engagement of former employees. The [2024-25 Pay Policy Statement](#) was approved at the meeting of the Fire Authority on 20 February 2024.

When an employee retires from the Authority, they may choose to set themselves up as a consultant. On occasions there has been a need to reengage that individual for their specific expertise and skills.

If this option is taken up, then a taxation test called IR35 needs to be applied. If the consultant meets the thresholds for IR35 to apply, meaning that the consultant is effectively an employee, it is officers' recommendation that abatement rules should also then be applied. At the meeting of the Fire Authority in April 2019, the Authority approved the proposal that abatement will be applied where ex-employees return to the Authority as consultants.

Section 7. Inspection, intervention and accountability

7.1 Inspection

All fire and rescue authorities must cooperate with the inspectorate and its inspectors to enable them to deliver their statutory function. This includes providing relevant data and information to inform inspections. The Home Office and HMICFRS will work together to align data and information collections where possible to avoid duplication. Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

At the time of writing, we are preparing for our Round 3 inspection by HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services), with the inspection fieldwork scheduled to begin in March 2025.

HMICFRS published their report 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services' in March 2023, which contained 35 recommendations, 20 of which were directed at England's fire and rescue services (the rest were directed towards the government). The Authority is proud to have completed all 20 of these recommendations.

The Round 2 inspection by HMICFRS was undertaken over a period of six weeks running from July to August 2022 and provided an exhaustive and robust external validation and accreditation of the effectiveness and efficiency of KFRS.

When the [results of the inspection were published in January 2023](#), we were delighted to be judged by HMICFRS as 'Outstanding' in the pillar around 'Efficiency' – which is about how everyone in the service spends public money and uses resources – and 'Good' in the two pillars of 'Effective emergency response' and 'People.' 22. Furthermore, within the Efficiency pillar itself, as well as an overall 'Outstanding' judgement, KFRS was also graded as 'Outstanding' against both of the pillar's underlying categories ('Making best use of resources' and 'Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future').

Among the findings presented by HMICFRS is that KFRS is judged to be: *“Outstanding in the way that it uses its resources and manages its budgets to provide an efficient fire and rescue service for the public.”*

In 2020, HMICFRS undertook an inspection of fire and rescue authorities' responses to the coronavirus pandemic. This was a stand alone thematic inspection that sat outside of its routine round based inspections. In January 2021, [HMICFRS published the results of this inspection](#). The inspectorate praised the Authority's ability to meet the significant demands placed on it by the pandemic whilst maintaining its statutory duties and acting as the national lead for PPE distribution. Consequently, the arrangements and systems of control employed by the Authority have been shown to be robust and effective, which have allowed it to adapt to the significant challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

In 2019 the Authority received its first inspection by HMICFRS (Round 1 inspection). [The inspectorate rated KFRS as 'Good' across the three inspection pillars of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People](#), reflecting the high standard of service provided by the Authority. Of the 45 FRAs which

were inspected in 2018/19, the Authority was one of only 16 to have been awarded 'good' in all three pillars. The Inspectorate did not identify any 'causes of concern' (the most serious level) and identified just eight areas for improvement (the least serious level). The breakdown of these eight areas of improvement across the three pillars is as follows: six in the Effectiveness pillar; and one each in the Efficiency and People pillars. Although there is no requirement placed on the Authority to do so, following the inspection by HMICFRS, we prepared an action plan that addressed each of the eight areas for improvement.

The Inspectorate identified several areas where the Authority was showing notably good practice, particular highlights included the Authority's ability to respond to incidents effectively and to spend public money appropriately and responsibly. The report also found that the Authority offers 'excellent wellbeing support' for employees, noting a culture of 'trust and empowerment'.

In the [HMICFRS press release following their inspection of KFRS](#), HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services stated:

"I am pleased that we have rated Kent Fire and Rescue Service as 'good' across all three areas of our inspection, in terms of its efficiency, effectiveness and the way it looks after its staff. This is a modern and innovative fire service that is prepared to find new ways of doing things. Many other fire and rescue services could learn from the example it sets. The service performs well in one of its primary duties: responding to fires and other emergencies. We found good collaboration with other local emergency services, including the ambulance service and the police, which improves the service given to the people of Kent."

7.2 Intervention

Section 22 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 gives powers to the Secretary of State to intervene should a fire and rescue authority fail, or be likely to fail, to act in accordance with this Framework.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

The Authority is not in this position, therefore this section is not relevant in this context.

7.3 Accountability

Fire and rescue authorities are expected to have governance and accountability arrangements in place covering issues such as financial management and transparency, complaints and discipline arrangements, and compliance with the seven principles of public life.

In demonstrating their accountability to communities for the service they provide, fire and rescue authorities need to:

- be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions.
- provide the opportunity for communities to help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement; and
- have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

[Meetings of the Fire Authority are open to the public](#) and agenda packs, reports and minutes are made publicly available. In addition, the following documents relating to the governance of the Fire Authority are publicly available:

- [Standing orders](#). These are rules for the operation of Authority and Committee meetings.
- [Scheme of Delegation of Powers to the Chief Executive](#). This sets out those decisions which can only be taken by the Authority or one of its committees (i.e. by Members of the Authority), and those which can be taken by the Chief Executive or other officers.
- [Convention on Member and Officer relationships](#). This deals with the working relationships between Members (both as individuals and collectively within their political groups) and the officers of the Authority (i.e. the Authority's paid employees).

Consultation with the public and partners is an essential aspect of how the Authority operates. Proposals for changes to the Authority are drawn up and consulted upon with employees, members of the public, businesses and community groups. We also provide a summary of what the public receive for the money they pay in council tax to help run the fire and rescue service across Kent and Medway. Responses to the proposals in the plan are analysed and then presented to the Fire Authority, most recently at the [meeting of the Authority held on 20 February 2024](#).

Between 01 November 2023 and 01 February 2024, we undertook public consultation on the “Creating a Safer Future – Together” document. This also included consultation on the council tax options for 2024/25. The consultation generated a total of 1,859 responses. This is the highest number of responses of any recent CRMP consultation undertaken by the Authority and reflects our carefully planned approach and the effort of our Engagement Team to raise awareness of the CRMP with our stakeholders and customers.

In relation to standards, in 2021 the Authority wrote a Code of Ethical Conduct and made it a requirement for all employees to sign it. This sets out the Authority's values and commitment to fairness and equality. We also have a Code of Ethics for Senior Managers and a separate Code of Conduct for Members of the Fire Authority. Each of these clearly set out the standards of ethical and professional behaviour we expect.

[Code of Conduct for Members of the Fire Authority](#). This establishes the requirement for all Members of the Authority to conduct themselves, when undertaking the business of the Authority, in accordance with our values and ethics. It also contains the mechanism by which inappropriate or unethical behaviour can be reported and investigated. This is aligned to the Kent Code, which in addition to being the Kent County Council Code, has been adopted by the majority of district councils in Kent.

We publish an [annual report on Members' standards, allowances and travel expenses](#). No complaints alleging that a Member of the fire authority has breached the Code of Conduct have been made to the Authority during the past year.

All local authorities are required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to appoint a Monitoring Officer whose statutory duty is to report to the Authority on any proposed actions which may contravene the law or constitute maladministration. Following the decision by the previous Monitoring Officer to stand down from the role, in July 2024 [the Authority approved the proposal for the appointment of a new Monitoring Officer](#) from Mid Kent Legal Services (a partnership which was formed in 2008 by Maidstone Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Swale Borough Council.) for an initial two year term.

Under [Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011](#), the Authority must include provision for the appointment of at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought, and considered, before a decision is made on any allegation of misconduct against a Member of the Authority. In addition, the [Combined Authorities \(Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees\) Order 2017](#) sets out the requirement on audit committees of a combined authority to have at least one independent person on its membership. At the [meeting of the Fire Authority on 05 July](#), the Authority's current Independent Person was reappointed for another four-year term.

Our [Code of Corporate Governance](#) sets out the seven key principles of good governance which the Authority has adopted and the means by which these principles are adhered to and evidenced. The principles set out here represent the core philosophy of the Authority. It was reviewed and updated in 2020 to incorporate the requirements of [new guidance issued by CIPFA](#) regarding financial management in public authorities. The next review of this is scheduled to take place in the autumn of 2024.

The Authority has an effective and up-to-date suite of policies covering anti-fraud bribery, anti-fraud and corruption and anti-money laundering. The Speak Up Policy ensures arrangements are in place to give colleagues the confidence to challenge and report allegations of inappropriate behaviour and the gives the Authority the means to investigate such reports. The Bullying and Harassment Policy makes clear the expectations on all of all employees and ensures we understand our responsibilities. Its purpose is to promote and support a working environment and culture free from intimidation. There is also a formalised process for managing allegations against employees of KFRS.

To further enhance the Authority's commitment to continually improve standards, accountability and behaviour, in early 2024 we introduced a disciplinary policy that is specifically aligned with the higher level of responsibility and associated expectations that would be required of either the Chief Executive, a member of the Corporate Management Board or one of the Authority's Statutory Officers, this is the Disciplinary Policy for Dealing with an Allegation of Misconduct by a Senior Officer.

The Customer Feedback Policy ensures that feedback received by the Authority is dealt with fairly and properly. The Authority is committed to transparency and an analysis of feedback received is reported to the Authority annually in a publicly available report. We also offer several communications channels, including social media, through which the public are able to [get in contact, provide feedback and offer their views](#).

7.4 Transparency

Each fire and rescue authority must comply with their statutory transparency requirements. The nature of the requirements is dependent on the legal basis of the authority; for example, combined fire and rescue authorities would be subject to the Local Authority Transparency Code 2015 while PCC FRAs must comply with requirements under section 11 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) Order 2011. All fire and rescue authorities should therefore publish certain information, including senior salaries; register of interests; staffing; income and expenditure; property; rights and liabilities; and decisions of significant public interest. Fire and rescue authorities must make their communities aware of how they can access data and information on their performance.

How to we meet these requirements and get assurance?

[Making information publicly available on our website](#). In line with the requirements of Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, we publish a comprehensive and detailed range of information on our website. This covers information including monthly spend reports, register of suppliers, and senior officers' pay.

As per the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Authority maintains a [Publication and Retention Scheme](#). This sets out the classes of information held and the duration (retention period) for which information will be kept.

We publish a full range of [financial information about the Authority](#). This includes, but is not limited to, the statement of accounts, medium term financial plan, monthly spend reports and the capital strategy.

We set out on [our website how people can request information](#) from the Authority through a Freedom of Information Act request, subject access request or general request for information. We also offer a clear explanation about the differences between these three types of request.

External audit. The Authority is statutorily obliged to have a yearly audit conducted by an external audit firm. Grant Thornton is currently the Authority's auditor having been appointed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments. The [annual audit reports are publicly available on our website](#). For the most recent [annual audit report 2022/23](#), on 28 March 2024 the auditors concluded an unqualified opinion on the [audited annual statement of accounts and annual governance statement 2022/23](#).

Value for money. As part of the annual audit of the financial statements Grant Thornton are also required to give a separate opinion on Value for Money. This focusses on three areas: financial sustainability (how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services); governance (how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks); and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services). Against each of these, opinion is provided on the arrangements the Authority has undertaken to secure value for money and any significant weaknesses the auditors have identified are highlighted, along with the auditor's recommendations for any areas where they consider may need improvement.

The auditors reported that there was no significant weakness identified in any of the three reporting criteria. For financial sustainability the auditor's concluded the Authority delivered a reasonable budget outturn 2022/23 and has strong financial governance in place that allows for effective financial planning. Although, an area for continued development is savings generation and an improvement recommendation was raised to this effect. For governance the auditors stated the Authority has robust governance arrangements. Processes and ways of working are embedded across the Authority. No improvement recommendations were raised in relation to governance arrangements. For improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the auditors stated the Authority has well developed arrangements to deliver economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Again, no improvement recommendations were raised in relation to governance arrangements.

Internal audit. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Authority to maintain an adequate and effective Internal Audit process and, as such, this is provided by Kent County Council under a service level agreement. Each year the Head of Internal Audit brings an [annual report to the September meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee](#) and a [mid-year progress report to the November meeting](#) (the November 2023 meeting

was rescheduled to January 2024). Based on the outcomes of internal audits, action plans will be developed where appropriate and follow up audits undertaken to review progress against any issues identified. This is reflective of our commitment to a culture of continuous improvement and transparency in our activities.

Joint Statement by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive

We acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring the proper governance of the Authority's affairs and the need to give due regard to the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework. We confirm that this Statement of Assurance represents an honest and full assessment of the levels of assurance we have obtained following the assessment process as described above.

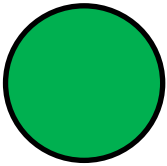
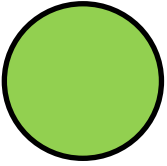
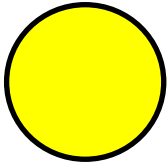
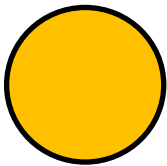
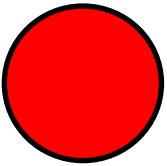
Nick Chard

Chair, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

Date:

Ann Millington

Chief Executive, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

Assurance level	Definition of assurance levels
High 	<p>Internal control, governance and the management of risk are at a high standard. The arrangements to secure governance, risk management and internal controls are extremely well designed and applied effectively. Processes are robust and well-established. There is a sound system of control operating effectively and consistently applied to achieve service/system objectives. There are examples of best practice. No significant weaknesses have been identified.</p>
Substantial 	<p>Internal control, governance and management of risk are sound overall. The arrangements to secure governance, risk management and internal controls are largely suitably designed and applied effectively. Whilst there is a largely sound system of controls there are few matters requiring attention. These do not have a significant impact on residual risk exposure but need to be addressed within a reasonable timescale.</p>
Adequate 	<p>Internal control, governance and management of risk is adequate overall however, there were areas of concern identified where elements of residual risk or weakness with some of the controls may put some of the system objectives at risk. There are some significant matters that require management attention with moderate impact on residual risk exposure until resolved.</p>
Limited 	<p>Internal control, governance and the management of risk are inadequate and result in an unacceptable level of residual risk. Effective controls are not in place to meet all the system/service objectives and/or controls are not being consistently applied. Certain weaknesses require immediate management attention as there is a high risk that objectives will not be achieved.</p>
No Assurance 	<p>Internal control, governance and management of risk is poor. For many risk areas there are significant gaps in the procedures and controls. Due to the absence of effective controls and procedures no reliance can be placed on their operation. Immediate action is required to address the whole control framework before serious issues are realised in this area with high impact on residual risk exposure until resolved.</p>

**August 2024, Annual review of compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union
(Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017**

Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
1. Expenditure exceeding £500	<p>Quarterly publication Publish details of each individual item of expenditure that exceeds £500, including items of expenditure, consistent with Local Government Association guidance, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual invoices • grant payments • expense payments • payments for goods and services • grants • grant in aid • rent • credit notes over £500 • transactions with other public bodies. <p>For each individual item of expenditure the following information must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date the expenditure was incurred • local authority department which incurred the expenditure • beneficiary • summary of the purpose of the expenditure • amount • Value Added Tax that cannot be recovered • merchant category (e.g. computers, software etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish information on a monthly instead of quarterly basis, or ideally, as soon as it becomes available and therefore known to the authority (commonly known as 'real-time' publication). • Publish details of all transactions that exceed £250 instead of £500. For each transaction the details that should be published remain as set out in paragraph 29. • publish the total amount spent on remuneration over the period being reported on. • classify purpose of expenditure using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Service Reporting Code of Practice to enable comparability between local authorities. 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. Monthly spend reports are published. These are available here:</p> <p>https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the recommended requirements. Monthly spend reports are published. Furthermore, the authority exceeds the spending reporting requirement, as transactions <u>under</u> £250 are listed. See above for the link to the monthly spend reports.</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
2. Government Procurement Card transactions	<p>Quarterly publication Publish details of every transaction on a Government Procurement Card. For each transaction, the following details must be published:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish all transactions on all corporate credit cards, charge cards and procurements, including those that are not a Government Procurement Card. For each transaction the details that should be 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date of the transaction • local authority department which incurred the expenditure • beneficiary • amount • Value Added Tax that cannot be recovered • summary of the purpose of the expenditure • merchant category (e.g. computers, software etc). 	published remain as set out in paragraph 30.	<p>The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. The Authority publish monthly spend reports for all purchasing card transactions. These are available here:</p> <p>https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the recommended requirements. The Authority publish monthly spend reports for all purchasing card transactions. See above for the link to the monthly spend reports.</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
3. Procurement information	<p>Quarterly publication Publish details of every invitation to tender for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £5,000. For each invitation, the following details must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference number • title • description of the goods and/or services sought • start, end and review dates • local authority department responsible. <p>Quarterly publication Publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000. For each contract, the following details must be published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference number • title of agreement • local authority department responsible 	<p>Place on Contracts Finder, as well as any other local portal, every invitation to tender or invitation <u>to quote</u> for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £10,000.</p> <p>In addition, for general publication (i.e. on Authority's own website) publish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on a monthly instead of quarterly basis, or ideally, as soon as it is generated and therefore becomes available (commonly known as 'real-time' publication) • every invitation <u>to tender</u> for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £500 instead of £5,000 • details of invitations <u>to quote</u> where there has not been a formal invitation <u>to tender</u> • all contracts in their entirety where the value of the contract exceeds £5,000 • company registration number at Companies House 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>“Publish details of every invitation to tender for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £5,000.”</p> <p>In part</p> <p>1. In relation to publishing ITTs (invitation to tender) over £5k, KFRS has a £10k ITT threshold. Consequently, KFRS is unable to publish ITTs for anything under £10k as no such data are held.</p> <p>KFRS website states that:</p> <p><i>The authority advertises new procurement opportunities with a contract value greater than £10k on the Kent Business Portal and the Government's Contracts Finder website. New procurement opportunities that require publication of a notice in the Find A Tender</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • description of the goods and/or services being provided • supplier name and details • sum to be paid over the length of the contract or the estimated annual spending or budget for the contract • Value Added Tax that cannot be recovered • start, end and review dates • whether or not the contract was the result of an invitation to quote or a published invitation to tender • whether or not the supplier is a small or medium sized enterprise and/or a voluntary or community sector organisation and where it is, provide the relevant registration number. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of invitations to tender or invitations to quote that are likely to be issued in the next twelve months • details of the geographical (e.g. by ward) coverage of contracts entered into by the local authority • details of performance against contractual key performance indicators • information disaggregated by voluntary and community sector category (e.g. whether it is registered with Companies House, charity or charitable incorporated organisation, community interest company, industrial and provident society, housing association, etc.). 	<p><i>Service (FTS) are also published in Tenders Electronic Daily (TED).</i></p> <p>In response to why this is this is not £5k, KFRS's position is that its internal procurement process does not require an ITT to be issued for requirements valued at less than £10k. For ITTs under £10k, a less formal approach is taken which is proportionate to the value of the requirements vs the cost and time of formal procurement.</p> <p>Moreover, KFRS tested this approach with KCC Internal Audit, who confirmed that this is reasonable and proportionate, and broadly in line with the approach taken by KCC.</p> <p>As a result, KFRS does not propose to take any further action in relation to this.</p> <p>“Quarterly publication Publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000.”</p> <p>2. Information currently published on the KFRS Contracts Register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier name and details. Supplier name is published but no details are published. However, the ability to conduct an internet search of supplier name against business area mitigates the need to publish further details. Consequently, KFRS does not propose to take any further action in relation to this. • Value Added Tax (VAT) that cannot be recovered. This is published on the monthly spend reports where relevant. It is not on the Contracts Register as it cannot
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			<p>be calculated at the time contracts are issued, therefore it is felt that it would not make sense to have it presented on the Contracts Register. Consequently, KFRS does not propose to take any further action in relation to this.</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>In part</p> <p>Where appropriate, contracts are added to this the GOV.UK Contracts Finder.</p> <p>“Every invitation to tender for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £500 instead of £5,000”</p> <p>See above about KFRS’s position and processes in relation to ITTs below £10k.</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
4. Local authority land	<p>Annual publication Publish details of all land and building assets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all service and office properties occupied or controlled by user bodies, both freehold and leasehold • any properties occupied or run under Private Finance Initiative contracts • all other properties they own or use, for example, hostels, laboratories, investment properties and depots • garages unless rented as part of a housing tenancy agreement • surplus, sublet or vacant properties • undeveloped land • serviced or temporary offices where contractual or actual occupation exceeds three months 	<p>Publish information on a monthly instead of annual basis, or ideally, as soon as it becomes available and therefore known to the authority (commonly known as ‘real-time’ publication). It is also recommended that local authorities should publish all the information possible on Electronic Property Information Mapping Service.</p> <p>Publish the following additional information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the size of the asset measured in Gross Internal Area (m2) for buildings or hectares for land, in accordance with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Code of Measuring Practice. The Gross Internal Area is the area of a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level. Local authorities using Net Internal Area (m2) should convert measurements to Gross Internal Area 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>“Publish details of all land and building assets”</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The required information is published on the ‘Property assets’ section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/our-buildings-fleet-and-equipment</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>In part</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all future commitments, for example under an agreement for lease, from when the contractual commitment is made. <p>However, information about the following land and building assets are to be excluded from publication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rent free properties provided by traders (such as information booths in public places or ports) operational railways and canals operational public highways (but any adjoining land not subject to public rights should be included) assets of national security information deemed inappropriate for public access as a result of data protection and/or disclosure controls (eg. such as refuge houses). <p>Information on social housing is also excluded from this specific dataset.</p> <p>For each land or building asset, the following information must be published together in one place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique Property Reference Number Unique asset identity - the local reference identifier used by the local body, sometimes known as local name or building block. There should be one entry per asset or user/owner (e.g. on one site there could be several buildings or in one building there could be several users, floors/rooms etc – where this is the case, each of these will have a separate asset identity). This must include the original reference number from the data source plus authority code name of the building/land or both street number or numbers - any sets of 2 or more numbers should be separated with the '-' symbol (eg. 10-15 London Road) 	<p>using appropriate conversion factors and state the conversion factor used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the services offered from the asset, using the services listed in the Effective Services Delivery government service function list http://doc.esd.org.uk/FunctionList/1.00.html (listing up to five main services) the reason for holding asset such as, it is occupied by the local authority or it is providing a service in its behalf, it is an investment property, it supports economic development (e.g. provision of small businesses or incubator space), it is surplus to the authority's requirements, it is awaiting development, it is under construction, it provides infrastructure or it is a community asset whether or not the asset is either one which is an asset in the authority's ownership that is listed under Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011 (assets of community value) and/or an asset where the authority is actively seeking transfer to the community total building operation (revenue) costs as defined in the corporate value for money indicators for public services required maintenance - the cost to bring the property from its present state up to the state reasonably required by the authority to deliver the service and/or to meet statutory or contract obligations and maintain it at that standard. This should exclude improvement projects but include works necessary to comply with new legislation (e.g. asbestos and legionella) functional suitability rating using the scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good – performing well and operating efficiently (supports the needs of staff and the delivery of services) satisfactory – performing well but with minor problems (generally 	<p>Work is currently underway to ensure compliance with all of the recommended requirements, however, given the large amount of information required, this is being addressed as an when resources allow.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • street name – this is the postal road address • post town • United Kingdom postcode • map reference – local authorities may use either Ordnance Survey or ISO6709 systems to identify the location of an asset, but must make clear which is being used. Where an Ordnance Survey mapping system is used (the grid system) then assets will be identified using Eastings before Northings. Where geocoding in accordance with ISO 6709 is being used to identify the centre point of the asset location then that reference must indicate its ISO coordinates • whether the local authority owns the freehold or a lease for the asset and for whichever category applies, the local authority must list all the characteristics that apply from the options given below: <p><i>for freehold assets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ occupied by the local authority ▪ ground leasehold ▪ leasehold ▪ licence ▪ vacant (for vacant properties, local authorities should not publish the full address details and should only publish the first part of the postcode) <p><i>for leasehold assets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ occupied by the local authority ▪ ground leasehold ▪ sub leasehold ▪ licence <p><i>for other assets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free text description e.g. rights of way, access etc. 	<p>supports the needs of staff and the delivery of services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ poor – showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (impedes the performance of staff and/or the delivery of services) ▪ unsuitable – does not support or actually impedes the delivery of services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • energy performance rating as stated on the Display Energy Certificate under the Energy Performance of Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 (as amended). 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether or not the asset is land only (without permanent buildings) or it is land with a permanent building. 		
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
5. Social housing asset value	<p>Annual publication Publish details on the value of social housing assets within local authorities' Housing Revenue Account. Information to be published using the specified value bands and postal sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total number of homes the aggregate value and mean value of the dwellings for both existing use value (social housing) and market value, and percentage of homes that are vacant and that are tenanted. <p>Information to be published at a general level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an explanation of the difference between the tenanted sale value of homes within the Housing Revenue Account and their market sale value, and an assurance that the publication of this information is not intended to suggest that tenancies should end to realise the market value of properties. <p>Other residential tenanted properties that the authority may hold within their General Fund are excluded from this specific dataset, as is information on other building assets or land that local authorities hold within their Housing Revenue Account.</p>		This is not applicable to the Authority.
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
6. Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations	<p>Annual publication Publish details of all grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. This can be achieved by either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tagging and hence specifically identifying transactions which relate to voluntary, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish information on a monthly instead of annual basis where payments are made more frequently than a single annual payment, or ideally, as soon as the data becomes available and therefore known to 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.</p>

	<p>community and social enterprise organisations within published data on expenditure over £500 or published procurement information, or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by publishing a separate list or register. <p>For each identified grant, the following information must be published as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> date the grant was awarded time period for which the grant has been given local authority department which awarded the grant beneficiary beneficiary's registration number summary of the purpose of the grant amount 	<p>the authority (commonly known as 'real-time' publication).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information disaggregated by voluntary and community sector category (e.g. whether it is registered with Companies House, charity or charitable incorporated organisation, community interest company, industrial and provident society, housing association etc). 	<p>The monthly spend reports that are published show 'Grants and Contributions' as an expenses type where relevant. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the recommended requirements. Where grants are made, additional columns are added to the right-hand side of the transparency spend reports identifying additional details in line with the code.</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
7. Organisation chart	<p>Annual publication</p> <p>Publish an organisation chart covering staff in the top three levels of the organisation. The following information must be included for each member of staff included in the chart:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> grade job title local authority department and team whether permanent or temporary staff contact details salary in £5,000 brackets, consistent with the details published for Senior Salaries salary ceiling (the maximum salary for the grade). 	<p>Local authorities should publish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> charts including all employees in the local authority whose salary exceeds £50,000 the salary band for each employee included in the chart(s) information about current vacant posts, or signpost vacancies that are going to be advertised in the future. 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. The Authority publishes information about senior employees. This is available via the following link https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/who-we-are and within the statements of accounts.</p> <p>Full pay details of all members of the Corporate Management Board (CMB) are published on the 'Senior officers' pay' section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>In part</p>

			<p>The published data meet most of the recommended requirements. Full pay details of all members of the Corporate Management Board (CMB) are published on the 'Senior officers' pay' section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>The number of employees receiving more than £50k per year is set out in in £5k bands and is published within the statements of accounts. This also includes salary information for CMB.</p> <p>However, apart from CMB, the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish details of the individual pay of any Grey or Customer Service (Green Book) employees earning more than £50k.</p> <p>This is because we are of the reasonably held view that it would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
8. Trade union facility time	<p>Annual publication Publish the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total number (absolute number and full time equivalent) of staff who are union representatives (including general, learning and health and safety representatives) total number (absolute number and full time equivalent) of union representatives who devote at least 50 per cent of their time to union duties names of all trade unions represented in the local authority 		<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. The Authority publish information in line with both the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017. This is available under the 'Pay policies' section:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a basic estimate of spending on unions (calculated as the number of full time equivalent days spent on union duties multiplied by the average salary), and a basic estimate of spending on unions as a percentage of the total pay bill (calculated as the number of full time equivalent days spent on union duties multiplied by the average salary divided by the total pay bill). 		https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
9. Parking account	<p>Annual publication Publish on their website, or place a link on their website to this data published elsewhere:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a breakdown of income and expenditure on the authority's parking account. The breakdown of income must include details of revenue collected from on-street parking, off-street parking and Penalty Charge Notices a breakdown of how the authority has spent a surplus on its parking account. 		This is not relevant to the Authority.
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
10. Parking spaces	<p>Annual publication Publish the number of marked out controlled on and off-street parking spaces within their area, or an estimate of the number of spaces where controlled parking space is not marked out in individual parking bays or spaces.</p>	<p>Local authorities should publish the number of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> free parking spaces available in the local authority's area and which are provided directly by the local authority, and parking spaces where charges apply that are available in the local authority's area and which are provided directly by the local authority. <p>Where parking space is not marked out in individual parking bays or spaces, local authorities should estimate the number of spaces available for the two categories.</p>	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>This is not relevant to the Authority.</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>This is not relevant to the Authority.</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
11. Senior salaries	<p>Annual publication</p>		<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>In part</p>

	<p>Local authorities must place a link on their website to the following data or must place the data itself on their website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of employees whose remuneration in that year was at least £50,000 in brackets of £5,000 • details of remuneration and job title of certain senior employees whose salary is at least £50,000 • employees whose salaries are £150,000 or more must also be identified by name. • a list of responsibilities (for example, the services and functions they are responsible for, budget held and number of staff) and details of bonuses and 'benefits in kind', for all employees whose salary exceeds £50,000. 		<p>The published data meet most of the mandatory requirements.</p> <p>Full pay details of all members of CMB are published on the 'Senior officers' pay' section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>The number of employees receiving more than £50k per year is set out in in £5k bands and is published within the statements of accounts. This also includes salary information for the CMB.</p> <p>For these employees, their role-related responsibilities are published on the 'Pay policies' section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>However, apart from CMB, the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish details of the individual pay of any Grey or Customer Service (Green Book) employee earning more than £50k.</p> <p>This is because we are of the reasonably held view that it would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>N/A</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?

12. Constitution	Annual publication Local authorities must publish their Constitution on their website.		INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED Yes The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. The Kent Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 is the Parliamentary Order that established the Authority. A copy of this, along with all of our other constitutional documents, is available on the 'Governance' section of our website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/fire-authority INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION N/A
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
13. Pay multiple	Annual publication Publish the pay multiple on their website defined as the ratio between the highest taxable earnings for the given year (including base salary, variable pay, bonuses, allowances and the cash value of any benefits-in-kind) and the median earnings figure of the whole of the authority's workforce. The measure must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cover all elements of remuneration that can be valued (e.g. all taxable earnings for the given year, including base salary, variable pay, bonuses, allowances and the cash value of any benefits-in-kind) • use the median earnings figure as the denominator, which should be that of all employees of the local authority on a fixed date each year, coinciding with reporting at the end of the financial year • exclude changes in pension benefits, which due to their variety and complexity cannot 		INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED Yes This information is published in our annual Pay Policy Statement, which can be found of the 'Pay policies' section of the website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION N/A

	be accurately included in a pay multiple disclosure.		
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
14. Fraud	<p>Annual publication Publish the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of occasions they use powers under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud (Power to Require Information) (England) Regulations 2014, or similar powers • total number (absolute and full time equivalent) of employees undertaking investigations and prosecutions of fraud • total number (absolute and full time equivalent) of professionally accredited counter fraud specialists • total amount spent by the authority on the investigation and prosecution of fraud • total number of fraud cases investigated. 	<p>Local authorities should publish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total number of cases of irregularity investigated • total number of occasions on which a) fraud and b) irregularity was identified • total monetary value of a) the fraud and b) the irregularity that was detected, and • total monetary value of a) the fraud and b) the irregularity that was recovered. 	<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet the requirements. This is set out in the 'Fraud Transparency' section of our website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The published data meet the requirements. This is set out in the 'Fraud Transparency' section of our website. https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/financial-information</p>
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Is KFRS compliant with this?
15. Waste contracts	<p>One-off publication Local authorities must publish details of their existing waste collection contracts, in line with the details contained in paragraphs 32 of the Code, at the point they first publish quarterly contract information under Part 2 of this Code.</p>		<p>INFORMATION THAT MUST BE PUBLISHED</p> <p>This requirement is not relevant to the Authority.</p> <p>INFORMATION RECOMMENDED FOR PUBLICATION</p> <p>N/A</p>

Compliance Summary document – Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017

Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
1. Expenditure exceeding £500	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	Yes. The published data meet all of the recommended requirements.	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
2. Government Procurement Card transactions	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	Yes. The published data meet all of the recommended requirements.	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
3. Procurement information	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements. KFRS has a clear position statement for the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITTs under £10k • Supplier details beyond the name • Non-recoverable VAT 	Where appropriate, KFRS adds information to the GOV.UK contracts finder and Kent Business Portal Contracts Finder. KFRS has a clear position statement on why it does not issue ITTs under £10k	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
4. Local authority land	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	Work is currently underway to ensure compliance with all of the recommended requirements, however, given the large amount of information required, this is being addressed as an when resources allow.	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
5. Social housing asset value	This is not applicable to the Authority	This is not applicable to the Authority	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information

6. Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations	<p>Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.</p> <p>The only outstanding area relates to the time period for which grants are awarded, although this will be dependent upon whether grants are actually time limited.</p>	The published data meet the recommended requirements.	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
7. Organisation chart	<p>Yes. This is published in a format that suits the needs of the website.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the data published meet all of the mandatory requirements.</p>	<p>The published data meet the majority of the recommended requirements.</p> <p>The only area where this area is not fully compliant is because the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish details of the individual pay of any Grey or Customer Service (Green Book) employee earning more than £50k.</p> <p>This is because we are of the reasonably held view that it would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this.</p>	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
8. Trade union facility time	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	No recommended information	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
9. Parking account	This is not applicable to the Authority	This is not applicable to the Authority	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
10. Parking spaces	This is not applicable to the Authority	This is not applicable to the Authority	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information

11. Senior salaries	In part. The published data meet the majority of the mandatory requirements. The only area where this area is not fully compliant is because the Authority deliberately chooses not to publish details of the individual pay of any Grey or Customer Service (Green Book) employee earning more than £50k. This is because we are of the reasonably held view that it would breach principle 1(a) of Article 5 of the UK GDPR. To that end, the Authority has a clear position statement on this.	No recommended information	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
12. Constitution	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	No recommended information	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
13. Pay multiple	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	No recommended information	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
14. Fraud	Yes. The published data meet all of the mandatory requirements.	The published data meet the recommended requirements.	
Information title	Information which must be published	Information recommended for publication	Additional information
15. Waste contracts	This is not applicable to the Authority.	This is not applicable to the Authority.	

AI (Artificial Intelligence) Policy



Policy owned by:	Policy and Governance
Version 1	Tier 2 (Policy)
Policy applies to:	Employees, Members, volunteers, cadets

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that focuses on creating machines or software that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. These tasks include things like understanding language, recognising patterns, solving problems, and making decisions. Essentially, AI is about teaching computers to think and learn in ways that mimic human thought processes.

KFRS will actively consider the introduction of AI where there is a clear business case based upon improving efficiency, improving inclusivity, and supporting our vision, aim and objectives, and strategic priorities as set out in our CRMP delivery plan.

Examples of where AI is used include the following:

- **Content Creation Tools:** Tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Mistral, which can help generate text for emails, articles, or social media posts.
- **AI programmes that generate images from textual descriptions.**
- **Smart Email Assistants:** Features in email platforms that suggest replies or help draft emails based on the content of the received messages.
- **Customer Service Chatbots:** Many companies use AI-powered chatbots on their websites to handle customer queries, provide support, and offer product recommendations.
- **Microsoft Copilot is a type of AI.** It uses advanced machine learning models to help users with various tasks in software like Microsoft Office. For example, it can help write text, generate code, create presentations, and analyse data by understanding and processing natural language inputs.

Currently there is no legislation in place that directly refers to the use AI. However, where an AI system is using or collecting personal data, it will fall within the scope of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. This would include where personal data is being used as training data for AI.

Service Policy

At the current time KFRS has not formerly adopted any stand-alone AI applications. The opportunities and risks of AI are still developing and being understood. Because this is a rapidly developing area, KFRS has established the following set of principles to govern our approach to the formal procurement, adoption and use of AI in the Service and the deliberate choice to invest in AI or an AI enhanced tool or application.

Benefits the Service and our customers

- Only introduce and use, or permit the use of, AI where there is a clear business case based upon improving efficiency and supporting our vision, aim and objectives, and strategic priorities as set out in our CRMP delivery plan.
- Ensure any AI applications serve the wider public interest and contribute (even if indirectly) to the safety of customers and communities.

Accountability and governance

- Ensure clear governance and accountability mechanisms for the adoption, deployment, management and use of AI systems within KFRS.
- Define roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in AI programmes and projects.
- Ensure transparency around the adoption, deployment, management and use of AI systems within KFRS.
- Decisions to adopt AI systems must always follow the established project and procurement processes, including approval from CMB and SLT.

Ethical and fair use

- Embed ethical principles (fairness, transparency, and accountability) into the adoption, deployment, management and use of AI systems within KFRS.
- Understand AI providers' position on any biases in their AI products to ensure decision-making processes and equitable outcomes for all residents.

Privacy and data protection

- Uphold privacy rights and comply with data protection regulations (UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018). This includes the use of data protection impact assessments.
- Do not use any personal data, organisationally sensitive data (including of partners), or commercially sensitive data in any non-KFRS procured AI applications (for example, ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Mistral, Perplexity).
- Make colleagues, customers and partners aware when personal data we collect, and process will be used in KFRS procured AI applications.

Education and training

- Provide training and resources to colleagues involved in AI projects to enhance their understanding of AI technologies, ethical considerations, and best practice.
- Inform colleagues about the role and impact of AI used within KFRS and encourage colleagues to engage with AI systems effectively.

Organisational aim

An effective AI policy based on principles of Service and benefits, accountability, ethical use, privacy and data protection, and education and training supports the aim of "Customer - Saving lives and reducing harm" by using AI technologies to improve public safety by enhancing the effectiveness of our services. By prioritising AI applications that focus on public benefit and ethical considerations, the policy ensures that the formal use of AI systems will contribute to help save lives and reduce harm. Transparent decision-making processes build trust and confidence in AI-enabled services, while strong data protection measures safeguard colleagues' and customers' privacy rights.

Relevant legislation and documentation

- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Cabinet Office and Central Digital and Data Office Guidance – Generative AI Framework for HMG](#)
- [National Cyber Security Centre – Guidelines for secure AI system development](#)
- [ICO guidance – What are the accountability and governance implications of AI?](#)

Linked Guidance (Tier 3)

None yet

Related Tier 2 Policies

Data Protection Policy

Data Inputs and Controls

Project documentation

Records of processing activity

Document audit information

Senior responsible manager	Head of Policy
Authorised by	KMFRA
Direct enquiries to	Head of Policy
Date first implemented	17 October 2024
Date of most recent approval	17 October 2024
Review by	17 October 2027
People Impact Assessment	Yes
Security classification	Not protectively marked
Version number	1

Version change summary	V1 (17/10/2024) new policy developed and published to cover this area. PIA undertaken and published.
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By: Clerk to the Authority
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024
Subject: PROPOSED CALENDAR OF MEMBER MEETINGS AND OTHER
EVENTS FOR 2025/26
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report sets out for Members' consideration and approval, the proposed Calendar of Member Meetings and Other Events for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the proposed Calendar of Member Meetings for 2025/26 as set out in **Appendix 1** (paragraphs 2 and 3 refers).

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Clerk to the Authority – Marie Curry
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 Ext 8291
EMAIL: marie.curry@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Introduction

1. It is the Authority's normal practice to approve the programme of Member meetings for the forthcoming municipal year (June to June).

Member Meetings for the Remainder of 2024/25 Calendar Year

2. In October 2023 (Minute 27), the Authority set and agreed the dates for its meetings for the remainder of the current Authority year (through to the Annual Meeting in June 2025). Members are required to note the existing calendar of dates which are identified in Part 1 of **Appendix 1**.

Proposed Meeting Dates for 2025/26

3. Suggested dates for the proposed Authority and Audit and Governance Committee meetings from June 2025 until June 2026 are shown in Part 2 of **Appendix 1** for Members' consideration and approval.
4. All currently known dates which have an influence on the meetings programme (such as local elections, LGA Conferences, and annual meetings of the constituent authorities) are also shown where known.
5. The suggested dates for 2025/26 follow a similar pattern to that adopted for 2024/25, avoiding school holiday periods as far as reasonably possible.
6. As usual, in drawing up the proposed calendar of meetings, discussions have taken place with relevant officers at both Kent County Council and Medway Council to try to avoid any significant date clashes. As it is often necessary for the constituent Councils to call meetings at short notice, it is inevitable that clashes will occur from time to time, despite the best efforts of all parties.
7. Once Member agreement has been sought to the proposed dates, the Clerk will send out formal calendar invitations.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8. All costs associated with the meetings are contained within existing budgetary provisions.

RECOMMENDATION

9. Members are requested to:
 - 9.1 Approve the proposed Calendar of Member Meetings for 2025/26 as set out in **Appendix 1** (paragraphs 2 and 3 refers).

**PROPOSED CALENDAR OF MEMBER MEETINGS AND
OTHER EVENTS 2025/26**

**Part 1: Dates for remainder 2024/25- Previously Approved by the Authority at its meeting
on 19 October 2023**

2024

Audit and Governance Committee Wednesday 6 November at 10.30am

2025

Audit and Governance Committee Wednesday 29 January at 10.30am

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget Meeting Tuesday 18 February at 10.30am

*LGA Annual Fire
Conference Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 March*

Audit and Governance Committee Thursday 24 April at 10.30am

Kent County Council Elections Thursday 1 May

Medway Council Annual Meeting Thursday 14 May

Kent County Council Annual Meeting Thursday 22 May

LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition Tuesday 1st – Thursday 3rd July

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Annual Meeting Thursday 26 June at 10.30am

Part 2 – Proposed dates for remainder of 2025/26 – for Member approval

2025

Audit and Governance Committee Thursday 25 September at 10.30am

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority Thursday 16 October at 10.30am

2026

Audit and Governance Committee Thursday 29 January at 10.30am

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget Meeting Wednesday 18 February at 10.30am

Audit and Governance Committee Thursday 23 April at 10.30am

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Annual Meeting Thursday 25 June at 10.30am

By: Chief Executive
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 17 October 2024
Subject: GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY: PHASE 2 REPORT
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR INFORMATION

SUMMARY

This report reflects on the recent publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report, and outlines the arrangements KFRS will put in place to learn from the findings of the Inquiry.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Note the contents of this report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Director Response and Resilience - Matt Deadman
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121 ext. 8383
EMAIL: matthew.deadman@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

1. 72 people lost their lives in the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower on the night of the 14 June 2017. Immediately after the event we carried out a number of actions including a review of the tall buildings in Kent in contact with all the district councils, Medway Council and Kent County Council.
2. The resultant public inquiry published its findings in two phases. Phase 1, which focused primarily on the events of that night was published in October 2019. Phase 2, which shifted to broader issues relating to fire safety, building regulations and emergency response procedures was published on 4th September 2024.
3. In the phase 1 report, 27 recommendations were made by the Chair, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, to UK Fire and Rescue Services outside of London. In addition, detailed analysis of the phase 1 report by KFRS officers identified a further 34 internal actions that Corporate Management Board (CMB) chose to accept from the inquiry. A formal action plan was developed and overseen by the KFRS Professional Standards team, reporting into the Response and Resilience Steering Group and finally Corporate Management Board. The final actions were completed on 23rd February 2023. Completion of actions against these recommendations were reported back to central government, via the National Fire Chiefs Council. Additional assurance was provided through a KFRS commissioned internal audit report.
4. The learning we identified under phase 1, and changes that we implemented, have laid good foundations for responding to many of the phase 2 recommendations.
5. The phase 2 report made 58 recommendations in total. 13 of these are specifically addressed to London Fire Brigade and the UK fire and rescue service sector.
6. Whilst each recommendation needs to be viewed on its own merits, broadly the themes most directly related to fire and rescue services include:
 - Legal recognition and regulation of the role of fire engineers, including further embedding of the principles of fire engineering in the activities of fire and rescue service personnel.
 - The potential standardisation of key firefighting facilities in buildings.
 - Training and preparedness of fire and rescue control room personnel, improve control room operations and integration with on-scene operations through the provision of effective communication channels.
 - Risk assessment and information gathering processes in accordance with section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004).
 - The effectiveness of operational learning processes to ensure timely implementation of necessary changes.

- Incident ground communications, including procedures and equipment.
 - Firefighter knowledge and understanding of water supply issues and problem solving.
 - When and how firefighters can depart from instructions and act independently.
7. In addition to the formal recommendations, we will adopt a similar approach to that under phase 1. We will establish a working group to review the entirety of the phase 2 report, including identifying any issues not raised through the formal recommendations. A full list of these recommendations will then be taken to Corporate Management Board.
 8. The working group will then be responsible for coordinating the actions to address the recommendations on a cross departmental basis.
 9. Our action plan will be brought back the Authority in February 2025 for information, with regular updates being presented to Members until such point as the actions are discharged.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service as a Learning Organisation

10. We are not only focusing on formal recommendations but also reflecting on how we continue to evolve our culture to improve our practices by learning from all types of incidents – successful ones, mistakes and near misses.
11. We have done much to reduce blame in the organisation and have systems which pick up ideas and learning but we can do more. This will mean encouraging people to raise when things go wrong without fear of any disciplinary process or blame. It is important Members are aware of this and endorse this stance. We will not meet our full potential without this cultural move alongside the recommendations.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. Undertaking this work will deliver a positive impact for our customers in Kent and our colleagues. No adverse impacts have been identified across any customer group or area of the service.

RECOMMENDATION

13. Members are requested to:
 - 13.1 Note the contents of this report.