

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 MTFA

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 wholetime 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.

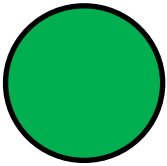
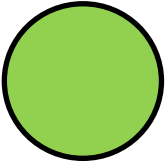
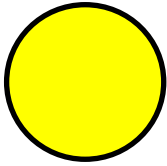
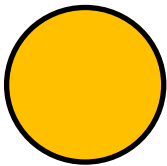
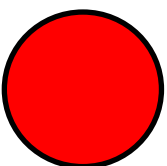
Nick Chard

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>