



Bedfordshire
Fire and Rescue Service

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016/17



Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

DRAFT

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1. Introduction

The Government sets out its high level expectations and requirements for Fire and Rescue Authorities through the [Fire and Rescue National Framework \(England\) 2012](#).

The Framework is issued under Section 21 of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) with the stated purpose to give Fire and Rescue Authorities the freedom and flexibility to deliver services to their communities, moving accountability away from Central Government and placing responsibility with local communities.

Under the National Framework, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) have a responsibility to publish an *Annual Statement of Assurance* which provides a report on the Service's performance in the previous year with regard to:

- **Financial:** How BFRA ensures that public money is properly accounted for, managed, audited and reported along with management of financial assets and the production of the *Annual Statement of Accounts* which is produced in line with accounting codes of practice.
- **Governance:** How BFRA ensures that it conducts its business lawfully and that public money is properly accounted for and managed economically, efficiently and

effectively and that an *Annual Governance Statement* (AGS) is published.

- **Operational:** How BFRA operates within a clear defined statutory framework including key documents such as National Framework (England (2012) and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 etc.

Statements of Assurance are required to be published annually and where possible form part of the existing governance reporting arrangements. This Statement of Assurance is subject to normal scrutiny arrangements which comprise of:

- Approval by the Audit and Standards Committee who oversee the production of the Annual Statement of Assurance;
- Reported to the Full Authority Meeting by the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee; and,
- Published on the Service's website.

In summary this Statement of Assurance aims to provide information to the communities, government, local authorities and partners in an easy and accessible way in which a valid assessment can be made of their local fire and rescue authority's performance during 2016/17.

2. Financial Assurance

BFRA is a precepting authority; this means that its net cost, after receiving Government Grant and a proportion of local business rates, is met by all council tax payers in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton as a proportion to the valuation band of their home.

BFRA has the responsibility for ensuring that public money collected by way of grant and council tax is properly accounted for and managed appropriately in accordance with Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This responsibility extends to securing the continuous improvement in which BFRA's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of managing the financial arrangements of the Authority, BFRA have robust control measures in place for protecting the public purse which are supported by accurate budget monitoring processes which are subject to rigorous scrutiny and reporting.

The Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) has the responsibility for ensuring that the right measures are in place to manage the Authority's financial assets that the financial reporting arrangements are

sound and that the Annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2017 is a document that summarises BFRA's transactions for the previous financial year detailing how the funding was used to provide a Fire and Rescue Service to the communities of Bedfordshire and includes:

- a) The Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts which sets out the responsibilities of the FRA and the Treasurer to the FRA;
- b) The Annual Governance Statement (AGS);
- c) The Movement in Reserves Statement which summarises the FRA's spending against the council tax it raised, taking into account the use of reserves during the year;
- d) The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which summarises the income and expenditure of the FRA;
- e) The Balance Sheet which displays the financial position of the FRA as at 31st March 2017;
- f) The Cash Flow Statement which summarises the changes in the FRAs funds; and,

g) The Pension Fund Account for the year together with the Net Assets Statement at the year end.

The Accounts are supported by a Statement of Accounting Policies and Core Financial Statements and prepared by the Finance Team under the direction of the Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Statement of Accounts is signed off by the Chairperson of the Audit and Standards Committee which oversees the audit activity, regulatory framework, accounts and standards of the Service and are prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices that include:

- [Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2015](#);
- [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom](#); and,
- International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

BFRA are subject to independent external audit and scrutiny to ensure that appropriate and effective financial arrangements are in place.

At the conclusion of the audit for 2016/17 the Annual Audit Letter was produced which reported on the audit of the Authority's financial statements and an assessment of

the arrangements to achieve value for money in the use of resources.

In summary the auditor's provided an unqualified opinion and stated that the Financial Statements of BFRA:

- **Give a true and fair view of the financial position of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority as at 31st March 2017 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and,**
- **Have been prepared properly in accordance with the [CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17](#).**

In addition, the auditors concluded that on the basis of their work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria published by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), they were satisfied that, in all significant respects, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31st March 2017.

3. Governance Framework

BFRA is made up of twelve elected members who are appointed in proportion to the number of local government electors in each constituent authority area with Members from the 3 Local Authorities of Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton comprising:

- Three members from Bedford Borough Council;
- Five members from Central Bedfordshire Council; and,
- Four members from Luton Borough Council.

The responsibility for ensuring proper governance arrangements and controls rests with BFRA that enables for the effective exercise of the Authority's functions and the management of risk. The Governance Framework includes systems, processes, culture and values to enable BFRA to monitor the achievement of strategic objectives and consider whether the objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services to the communities of Bedfordshire and stakeholders.

BFRA's governance framework derives from seven core principles identified in the [International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector \(CIPFA/IFAC\) 2014, which was reviewed by CIPFA in 2015 and published in 2016.](#)

The seven core principles are:

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes
5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.1 Annual Governance Statement

The [Annual Governance Statement \(AGS\) for 2016/17](#) explains how the Authority manages its governance arrangements and internal control measures. It is an open and transparent account of how the Authority ensures its financial management systems are adequate and effective, as well as ensuring there is a robust and sound system of internal control.

The AGS also explains how BFRA has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement. BFRA's financial arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA – Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Treasurer to the Authority reports in this role directly to the Chief Fire Officer.

3.2 Internal Audit

The role of internal audit is to review the internal control framework that governs the operations of the Authority and, in so doing, provide an independent opinion to both Management and Members of the Authority on the robustness of the Authority's internal control environment. Each year an Internal Audit Plan is produced and developed by the auditors, in conjunction with the Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority and is based on a risk

assessment of all the services/systems of the Authority. Members and Service Managers are directly involved in the development of the plan and subject to review by the Corporate Management Team (CMT), prior to being approved by the Audit and Standards Committee. In summary, the plan identifies the audits to be completed each year, including core fundamental systems and other operational systems.

The appointed Internal Auditors also work with both Essex, and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services as part of a joint contract and where possible are able to audit on areas of commonality and shared service areas across all three FRAs. The work of the audit team complies fully with the requirements of CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK.

The Annual Internal Audit report for 2016/17 by the Service's appointed internal auditors, RSM, advises that they were satisfied that sufficient internal audit work has been undertaken to allow them to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements. The report summarises that BFRA has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control.

3.3 External Audit

BFRA remains committed to continuing to improve its performance towards achieving excellence in all areas. Value for Money (VFM) is still part of an annual review carried out by the Service's external auditors with an opinion whether the Authority is delivering VFM as part of the external auditor's annual report and whether the Authority has proper arrangements for:

- Securing financial resilience; and,
- Challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

An integral part of this assurance is the role of the external auditor in the annual review report which complies with the statutory requirements governing audit and inspection work, in particular:

- The criteria published by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016.
- The 2016/17 Code of Practice.
- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

On the 27th September 2017 External Audit issued an unqualified opinion on the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts.

This means that in the auditor's opinion, the Statement of Accounts provides a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and has been prepared properly in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. In addition the External Audit also confirmed that in all significant respects that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

3.4 Committee and Groups

BFRA has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people and stakeholders.

BFRA meets a minimum of five times per year and have established an Audit and Standards Committee and three Policy and Challenge Groups which align with the structure of the Service to ensure a more interactive relationship between Elected Members and the managers and employees to facilitate the scrutiny role of Members more visibly effective. The Audit and Standards Committee and Policy and Challenge Groups have responsibilities covering all areas of the Service to ensure that the Service is

functioning efficiently and effectively. This is achieved by providing checks and challenges, monitoring performance and approving associated policy and activity. These groups make recommendations on matters within their terms of reference to the Authority according to their area of concern.

The Chairs of the Audit and Standards Committee and Policy and Challenge Groups report any recommendations arising from meetings to each meeting of the Full FRA with on-going policy and decision making facilitated by a clear framework of delegation set out in the Authority's Constitution, with clear details of delegated authorities to officers.

All reports are reviewed for legal, human resource, financial and risk considerations prior to being presented to Members of the Authority for formal decision-making. This, together with an appropriate level of delegation to both the Authority Executive and senior managers, enables prompt decision making.

3.5 Review of Authority Effectiveness

The Authority publishes an Annual Review of the Fire Authority's Effectiveness and Record of Member Attendance. Implementation and formal review of the agreed actions arising from the *Annual Review of Effectiveness* is

incorporated as a standing item in each year's Annual Governance Statement. Review of effectiveness, including the processes of Internal and External Audit has ensured that the Authority's overall financial management and corporate governance arrangements continue to be sound.

3.6 Internal Control Framework

BFRA has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

The Internal Auditors provide an annual opinion on the internal control framework and operate to standards set out in the *Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK*. The key features of the Authority's internal control framework which directly contribute to review of effectiveness are:

- The Fire and Rescue Authority;
- The Audit and Standards Committee;
- Internal Audit;
- External Audit;
- Assurance Statements; and,
- Internal Performance Management Framework.

BFRA has a robust Performance Management Framework in place for securing

continuous improvement in its services and where the quality of service to the communities can be measured by the use of local performance indicators. Other forms of measures include external performance assessment, external inspections, peer reviews, the Authority's internal reviews and audits, consultation exercises, and Service improvements identified by the Authority's Customer Care Complaints and Compliments procedure.

An integral part of the performance framework includes the setting of organisational key performance indicators. These are agreed and monitored on a bi-monthly basis by senior managers of the Service with performance being reported through the Corporate Management Team, the Authority's Policy and Challenge Groups, and to full FRA Meetings.

For the year ending 2016/17 the Annual Internal Audit report advises that the Auditors were satisfied that sufficient internal audit work had been undertaken to allow them to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements.

3.7 Data Transparency

In accordance with the Code of Recommended Practice for Local

Authorities on Data Transparency, BFRA is committed to greater openness and financial transparency through the publication, on the Authority's website, of information regarding how public money is spent. This includes payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £500, and details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members.

In doing so, BFRA utilise a number of information sources and data sets to improve delivery of service to the communities and reports its performance accordingly. The performance data and information is published in the form of reports against targets and outcomes showing the performance of BFRA.

4. Operational Assurance

The National Framework does not prescribe operational firefighting matters; this is determined locally by respective FRAs.

However it does set out the government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England with the key priorities that include:

- Identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks in the respective areas;
- Making provision for prevention and protection activities and responding to incidents appropriately;

- Working with partners within the communities both locally and nationally to deliver their services; and,
- Being accountable to communities for the service they provide through the 'Statement of Assurance'.

FRA's do however operate within a clear defined boundary of a statutory framework that has a number of key documents that outline their responsibilities, these include:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#);
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#);
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#);
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#);
- [The Localism Act 2011](#);
- [The Fire and Rescue National Framework](#);
- [Local Government Act 2010](#); and,
- [Health and Safety & Work Act 1974](#).

In addition to the statutory framework and assurance detailed above BFRA have a range of key performance indicators and measures reported throughout the year. An integral part of operational assurance includes prevention and protection services and emergency response standards; which are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Service and the FRA that include:

- Internal audits of service delivery functions;

- Quarterly performance reporting against station-based targets;
- Formal evaluation of prevention and protection activities; and,
- Full summary report of performance for the previous financial year.

4.1 Performance Summary

BFRA oversees the performance of the Service throughout the year by the setting and review of robust and challenging Performance Indicators (PIs) and associated stretch targets aimed to maximise the effort and resources of the Service. In 2016/17 the Service's performance was met and surpassed in 9 out of the 20 PIs set with the remaining 11 being narrowly missed and will be targeted to improve the Service's performance in these areas.

Looking forward for 2017/18 the Service delivery PIs have been thoroughly reviewed and approved by the FRA. Full details of the Service's performance for 2016/17 and comparison against performance for 2015/16 can be found in the published document detailed below:

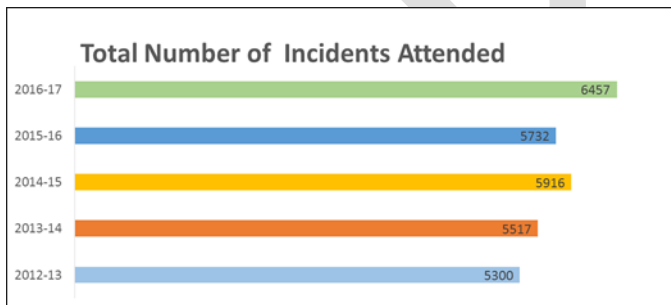
- [Annual Overarching Performance Report 2016/17: A summary report detailing performance against the Service's strategic objectives and strategies](#); and,
- [Statement of Assurance 2015/16](#).

4.2 Overview of Service Activity

The following charts provide an overview of the Service's Emergency Response, Prevention, and Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) activities over a 5 year period to provide a balanced view of performance over the short and medium¹ term. In particular, providing examples of incident types the Service attended.

4.2.1 Total Number of Incidents Attended

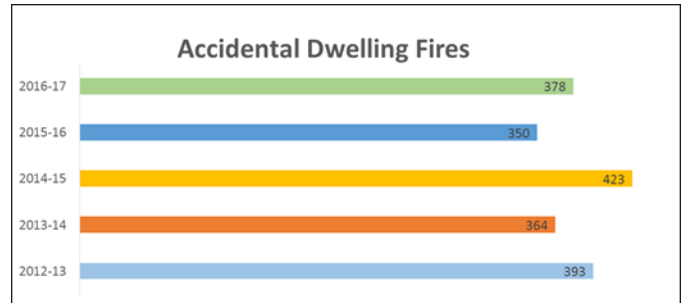
Over the 5 year period the number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated with the lowest in 2012/13. The increase is due to increased collaborative working which has expanded the services now delivered by BFRS. See Section 6.



4.2.2 Accidental Dwelling Fires

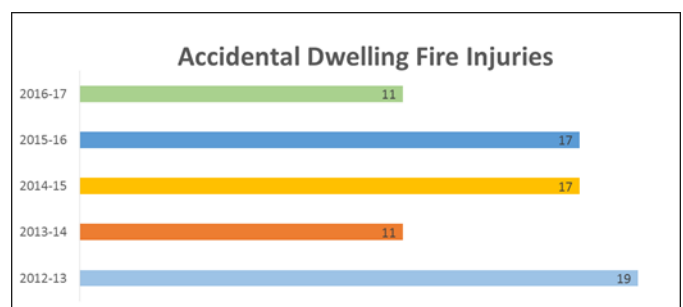
Accidental Dwelling fires are fires that occur in the home and in 2016/17 the number across Bedfordshire totaled 378, this is a slight increase from 2015/16.

A positive relationship to the prevention activities carried out by BFRS to drive down the number of dwelling fires.



4.2.3 Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries

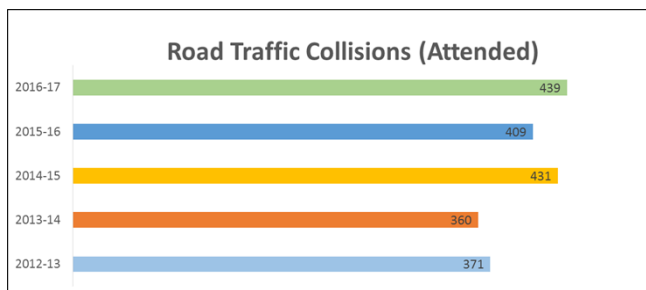
Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries have reduced in 2016/17 from 17 to 11 compared to the previous year with indications of the start of a downward trend. The performance improvement in 2016/17 is supported by the Service continuing to target advice and guidance to those most at risk in the community on fire safety awareness in the home.



¹Source: Service Performance Data is updated frequently that may affect previously reported performance figures; this should be noted when comparing previous reports.

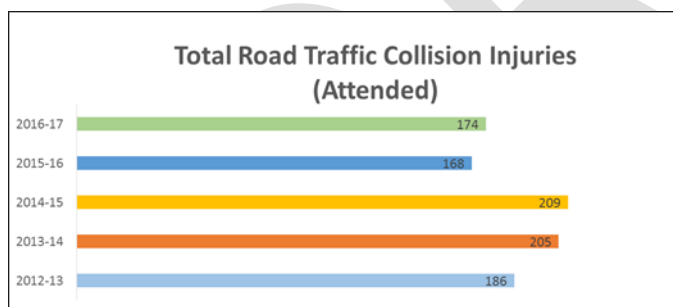
1.1.1 Road Traffic Incidents (Attended)

In 2016/17 the Service attended the highest number of Road Traffic Incidents since 2013/14, peaking at 439



1.1.2 Road Traffic Collision Injuries (Attended)

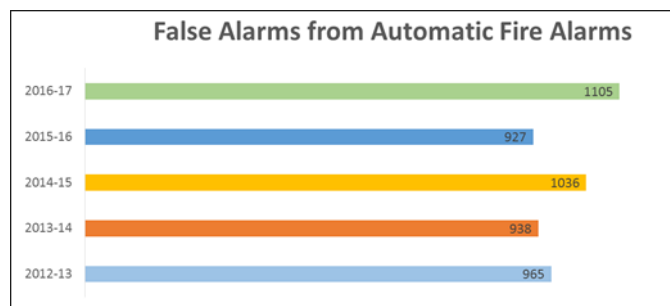
Road Traffic Injuries almost mirrors those seen in the number of Road Traffic Incidents Attended by the Service; in particular an increase in 2016/17 compared to the previous year.



1.1.3 False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms

During 2016/17 the Service attended 178 more calls to False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems when compared to the previous year. The Service continues to target the reduction in false alarms from fire alarm systems and has put in place further

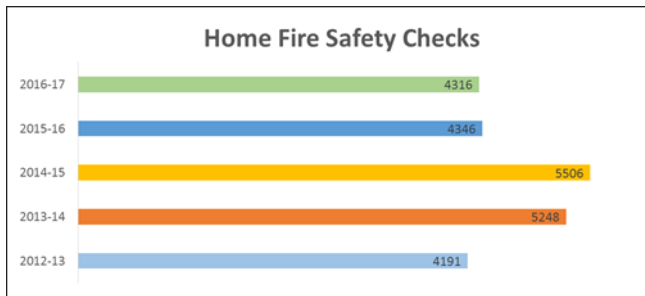
processes during 2016/17.



1.1.4 Total Home Fire Safety Checks

The Service uses a variety of preventative risk reduction activities in keeping the communities' safe, in particular the delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs). Home Fire Safety Checks are free, and are completed by members of the Service during a home visit. The HFSC includes advice on how to prevent fires occurring, what to do in the event of a fire, and how to devise an escape plan. During the visit and if appropriate a free smoke alarm and other safety equipment may also be installed.

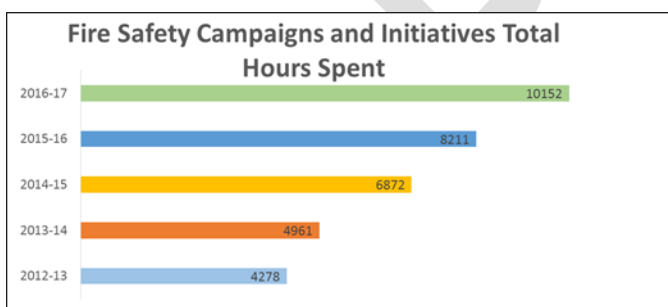
BFRS uses a number of other interventions working with partner agencies in reducing risk in the community. Therefore a reduction in the number of HFSCs is the desired outcome targeting resources more effectively, keeping risk low and releasing capacity to deliver more prevention and risk reduction activities. This approach is evidenced in the increased number of hours spent on fire safety campaigns and initiatives in providing a diverse range of safety interventions and preventative actions. See 4.2.8.



1.1.5 Total Hours spent on Fire Safety Campaigns and Initiatives

The number of hours spent on Fire Safety Campaigns and Initiatives has shown an increasing commitment over the 5 year period. In 2016/17 the increase was detailed as 24% compared to 2015/16 and increased by 137% compared to 2012/13.

The Service delivers a broad range of risk reduction interventions and themed safety campaigns. These include school visits working with young people, Fire Cadets, road safety advice for all road users, and seasonal advice including electrical safety, chimney safety and cooking safely in the home plus many others.



1.2 Community Risk Management Plan

The [Community Risk Management Plan 2015 – 2019 Summary](#) (CRMP) is the Authority's

programme for securing continuous improvement in its services and outlines the Authority's vision, objectives and priorities for the future, sets performance targets and outlines the Authority's accountability to its stakeholders and the communities.

In summary the aim of the CRMP is to inform the communities of Bedfordshire how the resources of the Service contribute in a co-ordinated and meaningful way, towards keeping the communities safe.

Within Bedfordshire the assessment of all fire and rescue related risk to life and injury formulates the basis of the production of the CRMP. When identifying priorities for the CRMP the views of stakeholders and the communities are taken into account to ensure that they are aware of the aims, objectives, priorities and performance of BFRA.

Views on the 2015-2019 CRMP were obtained through the Service's *Consultation Portal*, a consultation resource shared with other public service authorities and sent to 121 Parish Councils, 41 Community Group Leaders, 300 Citizen Panelists and other agencies and local authorities. The consultations sought the views from all stakeholders on the recommendations for

improvement in driving the Service forward which covered:

- Making Every Contact Count: Ensuring we make every possible use of the contact we have with the vulnerable by way of education and advice where appropriate, making referrals to partner agencies;
- Service Delivery Effectiveness and Improvement; Providing excellent prevention, protection and response functions to our communities; and,
- Firefighter Safety; keeping our operational firefighters as safe as possible through the application of robust risk assessment processes, training, personal protective equipment, and operational equipment.

The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) aims to inform our communities of our plans and ensures that the Service contributes, in a co-ordinated and meaningful way towards keeping our communities safe. The CRMP is a long term plan that is refreshed annually to assist the Service in being more agile and responsive to locally identified needs and trends. This approach enables the effective targeting of resources to prevent incidents occurring in the first place whilst putting resources in the right location to best protect the communities.

In 2017 we will be carrying out further research to understand our communities to inform our approach to risk. A new CRMP will be developed for 2017-2021.

In January 2016 we carried out a consultation on our budget for 2016/17 using the Beds Fire Alert Community Messaging Service, social media, our website and the media to encourage engagement. Over 1,000 people gave their views. Consultation will commence again in in December 2016 and January 2017 to seek views on our proposals for our 2017/18 budget.

Each quarter we consult those people who have received a HFSCs and those business who have taken part in a Fire Safety Audit, as well as those involved in incidents, to ensure they have been satisfied with the services they receive from us. This ensures we constantly monitor our customer service and are able to respond to any issues that might arise when delivering services to our communities. See Customer Satisfaction result.

1.3 Mutual Aid and Reinforcement Schemes

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 place a requirement on all FRAs to enter in to Mutual Aid agreements with neighboring FRSs. The purpose of these agreements is to enable the summoning of assistance to provide and utilise resources such as fire engines when required to attend a range of incidents. In addition to Mutual Aid, FRAs, as far as is practicable, should enter into Reinforcement Schemes, for securing mutual assistance between authorities and for the purpose of discharging their functions. BFRA has in place mutual agreements with neighboring FRAs. In addition the Service, through National Resilience, provides specialist appliances and crews for mass decontamination. See 4.6.

4.5 Business Continuity Arrangements

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) and the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) places a legal duty for all FRAs to write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority is able to continue its functions.

In response to these duties BFRA has robust Business Continuity Management (BCM) plans in place which are integral in managing corporate risk and to provide, in the event of a

major disruption, a fire and rescue service to the community. The BCM Plans cover a broad range of interruptions for specific events such as Pandemics to individual functions of the Service providing resilience arrangements across the entire Service.

In summary our BCM plans provide clear and defined strategies to be adopted to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Provide a response to events that threaten the delivery of services to the community of Bedfordshire;
- Protect the Service from business interruptions;
- In the event of business interruptions to provide a co-ordinated recovery; and,
- Facilitated a risk management culture embedded into the Service to enable risks to be identified and managed effectively.

1.4 National Resilience

The UK Fire and Rescue Service forms an integral part of the Governments National Resilience capability as Category 1 Responders.

Category 1 Responders include Blue-light emergency services as well Local Authorities and NHS hospitals etc. where the capacity and capability of FRSs work together with Category 1, and Category 2 Responders (Utilities/Transport infrastructure providers

etc.) to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges.

In addition to working with other FRAs, BFRA work closely with and are members of the [Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum](#) (BLRF) which is a statutory body covering a police force area, designed to bring together Category 1 and Category 2 Responders for multi-agency co-operation and information sharing. For information, under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) every area of the United Kingdom is required to establish a Local Resilience Forum.

BFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters and terrorist attacks where some types of incident that are larger in scale may require a Fire and Rescue Service response.

BFRA are actively involved in national resilience arrangements and hold a number of national assets including two Prime Movers and a Module for Mass Decontamination. The Service also has Water Rescue national assets which have been mobilised on several occasions following requests from the [National Asset Co-ordination Centre in Merseyside to assist other Fire and Rescue Services.](#)

BFRS, one of only several FRSs in the UK have a Fire Special Operations Team (FSOT) to support Police and Ambulance operations. This team is exercised on a regular basis with other Category 1 Responders ensuring that the team is ready for operational deployment. As part of the assurance process to the Service, the Fire Special Operations Team were audited in 2016 as part of the National Audit Programme and a number of areas were highlighted as notable practice.

2. Awards and Commendations

The Long Service and Good Conduct medal is awarded to uniformed members of the Fire and Rescue Service who have completed 20 years meritorious service and are awarded under Royal Warrant. [In 2016/17 six members of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.](#)

Not resting on our achievements the Service strives for continuous improvement in the services delivered to the community and the use of Customer Satisfaction surveys plays a key role in obtaining feedback from the Communities and users of the services we deliver. [From 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017, 99.6% of all those surveyed in the communities of Bedfordshire were satisfied with the service they received. This is consistent with previous years and the high standards BFRS sets.](#)

3. Improvements

The finance settlements for FRAs from Central Government since 2010 have significantly reduced, leading to the need for increased efficiencies from existing resources and developing new ways of working to meet the funding reductions. The Authority's CRMP process is the principal route for the development of a balanced approach to reducing risks within the community and to the delivery of future improvements.

During 2016/17 the Service had a number of strategic projects that are scheduled to deliver efficiencies and effective improvements over the life of the current CRMP:

- Closer Working Between the Emergency Services: Working collaboratively with other Blue Light Services to include:
- Estates: Exploring the potential of further sharing estates with Bedfordshire Police building upon our current estate sharing with the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS) and the St. John's Ambulance Service.
- BFRS has worked closely with other Voluntary Community organisations Midlands Search and Rescue and The Road Victims Trust, and has enabled sharing of spare capacity within Barkers Lane Station Bedford to improve the cost efficiency in estate management
- Assisting the EEAS in gaining entry to property in the event of a Medical Emergency to help save lives.
- Co-Responding: A pilot scheme between BFRS and EEAS to provide emergency medical cover to preserve life until the arrival of either a Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) or an ambulance has been operating successfully. The intention is to undertake an evaluation to provide learning and subject to national developments, aid the process of decision making on whether it becomes a routine operation and expanded to more stations.
- Vulnerable Missing Person Search: Working with Bedfordshire Police to assist in searching for vulnerable missing persons using our resources to support the communities we serve.
- There are now more than 70 front line Police response vehicles with Authority and access to Community Fire stations with the benefit of enabling officers to remain in local communities longer and use Fire stations as community havens to complete paperwork or take comfort breaks.
- Combined Crime Prevention / Community Protection Teams. Teams are co-located in Fire stations in Barkers Lane Bedford, Ampthill and Leighton Buzzard with benefits in addition to improved cost efficiency on estates, including a sharing of local community intelligence. Options appraisals being conducted to seek possible extension of this list.
- BFRS Control now has remote direct online access to the Police Incident

reporting system “STORM”. This provides more detailed information to inform operational response.

- BFRS as a member of the National Dementia Action Alliance is working closely with Bedfordshire Police and other agencies on “The Herbert Protocol”, a scheme which supports people affected by dementia and who go missing placing themselves at risk.
- Replacement Mobilising System: Replace the Service’s mobilising system to provide resilient, dynamic mobilisation of Fire Service assets.
- HR/Payroll System and Services: Implement a new HR/Payroll Business system and associated payroll services to support and optimise HR and Payroll activities across the Service.

Building upon the previous year’s three successful bids to the Government’s Transformation Fund the Service has made considerable progress in the following areas:

- Review of the On-call (Retained Duty System): Further improvements to the crewing and management of on call personnel have been achieved by the project.
- Improvements have been made to the recording and monitoring of contracted hours of all On-call personnel and provision of a smartphone App has

enabled Officers to plan and monitor availability of appliances and crewing levels.

- IT Collaboration Project: The joint project between Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services has made significant in-roads in the development of on-call recruitment processes that can be adopted by any organisation regardless of the technology they use. Progress to 31st March 2016 includes the formation of a shared team, the completion of a *cloud environment* and the associated technical Infrastructure which once developed and integrated further will assist in increasing success rates and throughput whilst reducing cost and administrative burden.

6.1 Future Improvements

In addition to the efficiencies and improved effectiveness already delivered the Service have a number of projects that once completed, delivered and integrated will provide improvements to service delivery, safety of the community and partners.

- Unmanned Aircraft Vehicle (UAV): Arrangements confirmed to jointly procure a UAV between both Bedfordshire Police and the Service to assist in operational and search and rescue situations.
- Corporate Communications Teams: Explore closer working between

Bedfordshire Police and BFRS's Corporate Communications teams sharing expertise and resources as well as increasing the frequency of joint "good news" publication through printed and social media.

- ESMCP: A National Project to meet the future requirements for mobile voice and data communications for the emergency services, to replace and upgrade the current Airwave System.
- **Telephony System Replacement:** Replacement of existing business Telephony system, including main switchboard, to a network (VOIP) system.
- In 2017-2018 it is planned to roll out an electronic payroll system for all On-call personnel, optimising the efficiency and effectiveness for processing and recording of On-Call pay. This in turn will reduce the administration for Watch Officers and provide clear indications of expenditure against station budgets.
- An On-call Firefighter Standby scheme will provide an opportunity for the Service to redeploy existing On-call personnel to stations with identified crewing deficiencies, resulting in an increase in available appliances throughout the County.
- Fitting of PC screens at all On-call stations will support crews responding to incidents through provision of live crewing data,

confirming the expected number responding crew members and giving an early opportunity to plan for maintenance of remaining appliances.

- Improved On-call Annual leave arrangements will lead to improved crewing levels and greater flexibility for staff.

4. Conclusion

This Statement of Assurance provides an accurate account of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's Financial, Governance and Operational Assurance arrangements secured from the 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. In addition I am satisfied that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority conducted its business practices within the appropriate legal framework and standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This Statement of Assurance was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee on 6th December 2017.

Signed

Chief Fire Officer

Signed

Chair Audit and Standards Committee on
behalf of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue
Authority

Signed

Chair of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue
Authority

GLOSSARY

AGS - Annual Governance Statement

BFRA - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

BLRF - Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum

BCM - Business Continuity Management

CFRS - Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

CRMP - Community Risk Management Plan

C&AG - Comptroller and Auditor General

CMT - Corporate Management Team

EEAS - East of England Ambulance Service

FSOT – Fire Service Operations Team

FRA - Fire and Rescue Authority

FRIC - Fire and Rescue Service Indemnity Company

HFSCs - Home Fire Safety Checks

HR - Human Resources

IRU - Incident Response Unit

IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards

NHS - National Health Service

PIs - Performance Indicators

RRV - Rapid Response Vehicle

UAV - Unmanned Aircraft Vehicle

VFM - Value for Money

VOIP - Voice over Internet Protocol