

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: 14 MAY 2014

LEAD OFFICER: DAVE SARGEANT, INTERIM STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND FIRE AND RESCUE

SUBJECT: SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2013-2014



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

The Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance (attached as Annex 1) sets out how information can be found relating to the Service and provides assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.

With the content of the document and through the links to the website, it is possible to find information relating to all aspects of the Fire and Rescue Service, the relationships with partners and how they work as part of the County Council.

The Statement of Assurance will continue to be refreshed and kept up to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Statement of Assurance 2013/14 (Annex 1) is agreed for publication.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The delivery of public services is a matter of public interest, and performance is increasingly the subject of scrutiny. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service must be accountable for its performance and therefore open to evaluation by the community it serves. To enable this, the Service is committed to making information transparent and easy to obtain, so that it can be held to account.

DETAILS:

Introduction

1. The Government is committed to unburdening local government; eliminating top-down bureaucracy and increasing local flexibility. For fire and rescue authorities, this ethos is demonstrated by the revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (the Framework), and in the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, which helps to let them run their services as they see fit.
2. This freedom and flexibility is accompanied by the need for accountability and transparency. Providing an excellent service is only the starting point – communities expect to know how their services are being provided.
3. It is against this background that the Framework sets out a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish Statements of Assurance. It says:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance’.

Context

4. Fire and rescue authorities are accountable for their performance and should be open to evaluation by the communities they serve. Information on their performance should be accessible, robust, fit-for-purpose and accurately report on effectiveness and value for money.
5. One of the principal aims of the statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority’s performance.

Content

6. The information contained in the Statement of Assurance is designed to provide reassurance that the appropriate arrangements are in place to deliver services safely and effectively and includes:
 - The Planning Framework
 - Governance
 - Risk Management, Contingency Planning and Business Continuity
 - Working in Partnership
 - Reviewing Progress
 - Priorities, Vision and Working with Partners
 - Responding to Incidents
 - Financial Performance and Governance

CONSULTATION:

7. The Statement of Assurance has been shared with the SFRS Formal Programme Board, the Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services and with SFRS staff.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

8. Without a published Statement of Assurance, the fire and rescue authority would not meet the requirement set out in the revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. There would be a risk that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service would not be seen to be transparent and that information would not be accessible.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

9. There are no financial implications associated with publishing the Statement of Assurance.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

10. The Statement of Assurance sets out the governance and operational arrangements within which Surrey Fire and Rescue Service operates. The section 151 officer confirms that the Statement of Assurance is a true reflection of these arrangements, and that there are no direct business issues, risks or financial implications associated with the publication of this statement.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

11. No legal implications have been identified with publishing the Statement of Assurance.

Equalities and Diversity

12. There are no equality implications associated with the content of this report. One of the principal aims of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, public sector authorities and our partners may make a valid assessment of our performance. The information presented in the report will be reviewed continuously to ensure that it reflects and is in line with any changes or developments in the equalities legislation.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- Publish the Statement of Assurance on the Surrey County Council website.
- Continue to review the content and update to maintain the transparency of data.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

The Statement of Assurance has been shared with the SFRS Formal Programme Board, the Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services and with SFRS staff.

Annexes:

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2013-14 (Annex 1).

Sources/background papers:

- Guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England (DCLG, May 2014)
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