

Committee:	Audit Committee
Meeting Date:	28 January 2016
Lead Councillor/s:	Councillor Matthew Hicks
Local Councillor/s:	All councillors
Director:	Mark Hardingham, Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Mark Sanderson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Author:	Mark Sanderson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer 01473 260540

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement Of Assurance (2014-15)

Brief summary of report

1. English fire and rescue authorities are required to produce and publish an annual Statement of Assurance. The subject of this report is the draft Statement for the period 2014-15 that sets out the financial, governance and operational arrangements of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.
2. The Statement has been produced in accordance with the guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and reflects closely the format approved for the 2013-14 Statement.

Actions recommended

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The Board is asked to agree the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance for 2014-15 as set out at Appendix A. |
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Reason for recommendation

4. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework document. The Framework sets out the Government's expectations and requirements for fire and rescue authorities and those authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their duties.
5. The current Framework, published in 2012, requires fire and rescue authorities to produce and publish an annual Statement of Assurance. Guidance to assist in the production of the Statement was published in May 2013. The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Framework and accompanying guidance.
6. On 9 July 2013, the Suffolk County Council Cabinet determined that the Statement of Assurance should be annually agreed and published through the council's Audit Committee.

Alternative options

7. The Cabinet considered, in July 2013, that there were no preferred alternative approaches to meeting the requirements of the National Framework.

Who will be affected by this decision?

8. Internal and external users of the services provided by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, including the general public, fire and rescue service staff, and partner organisations.

Main body of report

9. The main aim of the Statement of Assurance is to provide accessible information for communities, Government, local authorities and other partners to make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.
10. The published guidance does not constitute legal advice. There is flexibility for authorities to tailor the Statement taking into account other publications and their view on how best to present the information for their communities and other interested parties.
11. The Statement of Assurance provides information on Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's financial, governance and operational matters and demonstrates how the Government's National Framework commitments have been met. Much of the financial and governance information is already managed through the established arrangements for the publication of the County Council Statement of Accounts and Governance Statement. These are agreed through the council's Audit Committee and on that basis the Cabinet agreed that the Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance will be managed through the same committee.
12. This Statement of Assurance was produced in 2015 to reflect the 2014-15 financial year. It references readily-available financial, governance and performance information that accurately reflects the position of the fire and rescue service.
13. The Statement has been approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection, Councillor Matthew Hicks, on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Sources of Further Information

Guidance on Fire Authority Statements of Assurance

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/198812/130510_Guidance_on_Statements_of_Assurance.pdf