

Audit Committee

Report Title:	Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance (2015-16) summary of report
Meeting Date:	29 November 2016
Lead Councillor(s):	Councillor Matthew Hicks
Local Councillor(s):	All Councillors
Director:	Chief Fire Officer Mark Hardingham
Assistant Director or Head of Service:	Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Sanderson
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Brief summary of report

1. English fire and rescue authorities are required to produce and publish an annual Statement of Assurance (SOA). The subject of this report is the draft Statement for the period 2015-16 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 previous SOA's.

Action recommended

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The Committee is asked to agree the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority SOA for 2015-16 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 SOA annually. 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.
7. The main aim of the SOA 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.
8. The published guidance does not constitute legal advice. There is flexibility for authorities to tailor the Statement considering other publications and their view on how best to present the information for their communities and other interested parties.

Alternative options

9. 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?

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

Main body of report

11. The SOA 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 SOA was produced in 2016 to reflect the 2015-16 financial year. It references readily-available financial, governance and performance information that accurately reflects the position of the Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee is asked to note the SOA 2015-16 includes a summary of proposed future improvements and data on the reasons for false alarms.
13. The Statement has been approved by Councillor Matthew Hicks, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection, 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