

## Draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Steve Worrall, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260204.

#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report gives the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft internet / web-based Annual Statement of Assurance for 2012/13, prior to its going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

#### 2 Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- a) Make comment on the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13; and
- b) Forward the draft Statement, with appropriate amendments (if any), to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

#### 3 Background

During 2012 the Coalition Government published a new Fire and Rescue National Framework,<sup>1</sup> a Framework that has implications for the Authority's previous approach to the development and publication of the customary Fire Authority Annual Report.

#### 4 Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

National Frameworks for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) have been in existence since 2004 and cover a broad range of activities and responsibilities, including resilience, prevention, protection and response. The emphasis is to promote local accountability, while focusing on issues where there is a clear national interest, for example national resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england>

With FRAs ultimately accountable to their local communities, the Framework states that all FRAs need to be transparent about decisions and actions taken, and engage with communities so local people can scrutinise and influence service delivery. They should also ensure that local communities can access information to compare the performance of their FRA with that of others.

To this end, the Government has stated that robust mechanisms should be in place to provide independent assurance to communities and to the Government. The Framework details (paragraph 3.2) important measures, which will ensure that FRAs provide assurance and local scrutiny arrangements.

## **5 Web / Internet – Based Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13**

Adhering to the requirements of the National Framework and Government issued guidance<sup>2</sup> concerning Statements of Assurance, officers have prepared a draft web / internet-based Statement for approval by the Fire Authority. The proposed Statement replaces the previously published Annual Report and complements the Fire Authority's Annual Service Plan,<sup>3</sup> creating two linked documents.

The Statement of Assurance is intended to act as a 'signpost' document, directing the reader to more detailed information elsewhere on the website or other linked sites. Publishing the Statement in this format enables a flexible approach to be taken to updating the contents, as and when required, to reflect the changing / additional evidence that provides the community and stakeholders with the assurance sought by Government.

The Statement may be viewed at:

[https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/page/files/SFRS%20Annual%20Statement%20of%20Assurance%202012-13%20Draft%20Version%201\\_0.pdf](https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/page/files/SFRS%20Annual%20Statement%20of%20Assurance%202012-13%20Draft%20Version%201_0.pdf)

## **6 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **7 Legal Comment**

Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory authority for the Fire Service National Framework and requires Fire Authorities to have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. The proposed Statement of Assurance addresses the requirements of the Framework (and associated Government guidance), but should not be considered as representing a 'qualified' statement or opinion regarding the Authority's or Service's performance. There are currently no Government arrangements in place to verify Statements of Assurance formally.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/9326/2219707.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9326/2219707.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/planning-and-performance/annual-service-plan>

## **8 Initial Impact Assessment**

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed for this report.

## **9 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **10 Background Reports**

### **Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority**

13 February 2013, Paper 14, Preparation of Annual Service Plan and Statement of Assurance

## **11 Background Papers**

### **Department for Communities and Local Government**

- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework<sup>4</sup> (2012)
- Guidance on the statements of assurance for fire authorities in England<sup>5</sup> (2012)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/2039159.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/guidance-on-statements-of-assurance-for-fire-and-rescue-authorities-in-england>