



**Suffolk Fire and  
Rescue Authority**

# Statement of Assurance

## 2016 – 2017

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## 1. Statement of Assurance

This Statement of Assurance details the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority financial, governance and operational arrangements that were in place for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The Statement is produced in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework [guidance](#) on 'Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England.'

I am satisfied that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority ensured that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. I am further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

I am proud of the fire and rescue service we provide and of the people who work so hard to keep our communities safe.

On behalf of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority, I will continue to progress the matters identified under 'Future Plans'. I am committed to developing the Service so that it can continue to provide an effective, efficient and resilient fire and rescue service for the people of Suffolk, those who visit our county, and for the wider community in case of national emergency.



Councillor Matthew Hicks  
Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection  
Suffolk County Council



## 2. Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2016/2017.

The Statement is a requirement of the 2012 [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) and reinforces my commitment to provide our communities with clear information about how we manage public funds and assure the effectiveness of our financial, governance and operational fire service arrangements.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service provides a 24/7 emergency response service to deal with fires, road traffic collisions and a wide range of emergencies. Our staff also deliver activities to reduce fires and road traffic collisions, improve community safety and enforce fire safety legislation. We work evermore closely with other blue light responders to maximise the benefit of public spending and ensure that Suffolk remains a safe county. This means that deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions are at the lowest level possible; fire-related crime is low; businesses are aware of their responsibilities regarding fire safety; people feel safe in their homes; and that our community is assured they have a fire service able to respond to all reasonably foreseeable emergencies.



Mark Hardingham  
Chief Fire Officer



### **3. Scope of Responsibility**

Fire and rescue authorities carry out their functions within a defined statutory and policy framework. The key legislation and acts defining these requirements are:

- a. Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- b. Local Government Act 1999
- c. Localism Act 2011
- d. Policing and Crime Act 2017
- e. Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- f. Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- g. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- h. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- i. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

An annual Statement of Assurance is a requirement to enable communities, local authorities, central government and other partners to make an informed assessment of their fire service's performance. The Statement is also used as a source of information for the Secretary of State's biennial report, required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

This Act is the principal legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales and imposes upon every fire and rescue authority a duty to provide a fire and rescue service that is: equipped to extinguish fires; protect life and property from fires; rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Services must also receive and respond to calls for assistance, ensure that staff are properly trained and equipped, and gather information to deliver a safe and effective service.

The Act additionally requires fire and rescue authorities to provide communities with fire safety education and advice to reduce deaths and injuries from fire. The Act allows the Secretary of State to publish National Framework requirements that set central government's priorities for authorities. Fire and rescue authorities are required to pay due regard to the Framework.

### **4. Financial Statement**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority has duties under the Local Government Act to ensure that public money is properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. As part of Suffolk County Council, the Service follows the council's financial procedures for budget setting, monitoring and the production of final accounts.

The county council's Chief Finance Officer prepares an Annual Statement of Accounts, which includes the fire and rescue service. The accounts detail the council's financial performance in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practice. The final accounts are submitted to the Audit Committee for approval.

Suffolk County Council's Annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors who provide independent assessment that the statement presents a true reflection and that appropriate accounting and financial systems are in place. Their report reviews arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The council's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2017 was externally audited in line with Audit Commission Act (1998) guidance. The Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 and external auditor's letter are published on Suffolk County Council's website:  
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/council-and-democracy/budget-and-finance/Statement-of-Accounts-2016-17-Final.pdf>

CIPFA publish annual financial performance data for all English fire and rescue authorities, enabling comparison between authorities. This information shows that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is in the lowest quartile of cost-per-head of population, with an expenditure of £29.33 per head, compared to the average cost of £35.18.

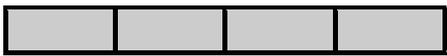
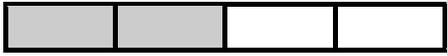
CIPFA benchmarking data

Service performance compared to other fire and rescue services is measured primarily through this CIPFA benchmarking data. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is routinely shown as low-cost and well-performing.

The following tables are drawn from a more comprehensive benchmarking report that compares Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to 43 fire and rescue authorities in England (where current data is available). The data is drawn from the CIPFA profile for 2016/17 (actuals).

Table 1 (below) shows Suffolk in the lowest quartile cost per head of population fire and rescue service in the country. Suffolk's current cost is £29.33, £5.85 below (83.4% of) the national average (£35.18 per person).

**Table 1. Efficiency - £ per head of population**

<b>Measure (comparison with all Fire Authorities)</b>	
<b>Efficiency - £ per head of population (average £35.18)</b>	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	<b>£39.05 - £46.18</b>
Mid to Upper Quartile 	<b>£34.08 - £38.53</b>
Mid to Lower Quartile 	<b>£31.63 - £33.61</b>
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	<b>£25.98 - £31.40</b> <b>SUFFOLK = £29.33</b>

**Table 2. Efficiency - £ per Hectare**

<b>Measure (comparison with all Fire Authorities)</b>	
<b>Efficiency - £ per Hectare (avg £269.97)</b>	
Upper Quartile - <b>HIGHEST £ COST</b> 	<b>£237.86 - £2,345.18</b>
Mid to Upper Quartile 	<b>£128.34 - £229.54</b>
Mid to Lower Quartile 	<b>£76.17 - £127.38</b>
Lower Quartile - <b>LOWEST £ COST</b> 	<b>£24.28 - £63.17</b> <b>SUFFOLK = £57.50</b>

Suffolk compares favourably to other authorities' expenditure. For example, the Service is in the lowest quartile in:

- a. Cost per head of population
- b. Cost per hectare
- c. Cost per incident
- d. Cost per fire station, fire appliance and incident
- e. Ratio of uniformed officers per fire station

The Suffolk Fire Service Budget for 2016/17 was £22.251m, with a confirmed full year spend of £21.857m. Throughout the year managers maintained robust budget management and an underspend of £0.394m was realised. The underspend was due largely to no ill-health retirements in year and managed vacancies across the Service in preparation for the introduction of agreed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) changes.

The underspend has been transferred to a capital reserve to both support Public Protection transformation work and make additional contributions to our renewals programme for emergency vehicles, the fire station PFI reserve fund, and IRMP implementation. Reserve funding continues to support projects such as increasing blue light collaboration, revisions to full-time firefighter shift systems, a more resilient on-call service, and enhanced fleet, equipment and property provision.

As of 1 April 2016, £1.323m was held as operational reserve funding; this increased slightly at year end to £1.516m. The agreed capital programme of £10.1m includes £5.7m brought forward from previous years. Except for a small contingency held for emergency and resilience purposes, capital funding is allocated to many projects, including collaborative property works, development of Wattisham Training Centre, and fleet and equipment renewals.

The capital programme allows us to meet statutory responsibilities (Policing and Crime Act 2017) and supports the creation of additional shared 'blue-light' stations. This is predominantly funded

by a £4.9m transformation grant awarded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), with new facilities recently completed at Felixstowe and Saxmundham. Spend in 2016/17 on blue-light integration was £0.9m. The balance is carried forward for shared facilities planned, or in progress, in Newmarket, Beccles, Sudbury, Ipswich and Leiston in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Further investment is required to other operational stations and the Service Training centre at Wattisham. This work is planned to take place in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The capital programme is also used to fund the rolling 10-year risk-critical renewal plan for fleet and equipment. In 2016/17 £1.7m was spent replacing vehicles and equipment and a further £0.08m updating IT equipment in fire stations.

The fire service is required to make additional savings of £1.0m by 2017/18 to meet the council's savings targets and central government grant reductions. To service this reduction, significant changes to service delivery set out in the current IRMP have begun, and changes to back-office support and senior management have been made. The Service seeks to meet statutory, legal and moral obligations in the most cost-effective way and will continue to explore and implement further innovative opportunities to do so.

## **5. Governance Assurance**

The fire and rescue authority for Suffolk is Suffolk County Council, which has 75 councillors. Most of the authority's daily business is discharged through the council's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is Councillor Matthew Hicks.

Suffolk County Council, as Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority, is responsible for ensuring Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates in accordance with the law. It must ensure public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and is used efficiently and effectively. The fire and rescue authority also have a duty to continually improve the way its functions are carried out and to collaborate with other blue light emergency services.

Governance principles adopted by the council follow those set out in the document: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' produced by CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. The Suffolk County Council constitution sets out commitment to good governance and describes the council's governance framework and processes. Suffolk's Constitution, which includes the Scheme of Delegation, is published on the council's website:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/theconstitution/>

The council publishes its Annual Governance Statement through the Audit Committee. The Statement sets out the council's governance arrangements, which apply to and include Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Performance is assured through several routes:

- SCC Full Council reviews performance of [SCC Priorities 2017-21](#) which include fire service performance

- SCC Cabinet considers fire service performance as part of their role in agreeing the IRMP
- SCC Audit Committee considers the annual Statement of Assurance. The committee also scrutinises other papers that have a fire service element; for example the SCC Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2016/17 ([Annual Governance Statement 2016-17](#))
- SCC Scrutiny Committee scrutinises performance
- SCC Leadership Team (Cabinet and Corporate Management Team) considers fire service outcomes within the SCC quarterly performance report
- SCC Cabinet Member meets informally every two weeks with the Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officers
- Labour and Liberal Democrat Group Leaders meet periodically with the Chief Fire Officer
- A cross-party group of seven Members constitute the SFRS Steering Group and consider performance reports and more general fire service achievements and proposed changes
- SFRS Operational Assurance and Performance and Improvement Boards provide assurance regarding operational matters and drive performance improvement
- SFRS Peer Challenges were completed 2010, 2013 and a further review is scheduled for late 2017

The Council's Constitution sets out the framework for political and managerial leadership. This framework, and the wider leadership of the Council and fire and rescue service, is applied through the ASPIRE organisational values to deliver the recently-agreed '[Suffolk Blueprint](#)' that sets out the priorities for Suffolk through to 2021. This planning approach is then reflected through the Council and into the fire service's IRMP and 3-year plan.



- A – Achieve: “We are the best we can be”*
- S – Support: “We work as one team”*
- P – Pride: “We take pride in and are proud of what we do”*
- I – Inspire: “We model the ASPIRE values”*
- R – Respect: “We give and earn respect”*
- E – Empower: “We empower, encourage and motivate people”*

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is a member of the council's Corporate Management Team and reports to the Chief Executive. Monthly Leadership Team meetings between the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet review policy development in advance of Cabinet and Full Council meetings. A close working relationship exists between the Chief Fire Officer and Cabinet Member, who has a much broader remit for Environment and Public Protection beyond the fire and rescue service. In addition to the informal day-to-day contact, the relationship is conducted through fortnightly one-to-one meetings, and regular more formal Directorate briefings for the Cabinet Member, supported by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Councillors from the different political groups contribute to fire and rescue service business through the Fire and Rescue Service Steering Group. This meets quarterly, has agreed terms of reference, and is chaired by the Cabinet Member. The Group provides a steering function, ensuring that the fire authority meets the expectations and requirements set out in the National Framework. The group also guides the development of the IRMP and annual Statement of

Assurance, and reviews service performance. Regular written briefings and meetings are provided and held with the lead member of the opposition party and other political groups, as required.

Political engagement with fire and rescue service representative bodies (Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers' Association, Unison, and the Retained Firefighters Union) is managed through a Fire Service Joint Forum. This is a cross-party councillor group supported by the Chief Fire Officer and senior staff. It is chaired alternately by the Cabinet Member and representative body. The Joint Forum considers issues associated with fire and rescue service employee relations and policy development. The forum complements the comprehensive arrangements that support effective industrial relations management.

A 'golden thread' links the county council and fire and rescue service governance and management arrangements:

- Suffolk County Council Leadership Team (Corporate Management Team and Cabinet) – CFO attendee
- Suffolk County Council Corporate Management Team – CFO attendee
- Fire and Public Safety Directorate Management Team (Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning and Health and Safety)
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Strategy Group (senior fire officers at the following levels: Brigade Manager, Area Commander) – CFO chair
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service functional, team and individual meetings

Leadership of the Service is supported through a range of communication channels and management arrangements. These include senior officer face-to-face visits and presentations, regular manager forums, weekly information bulletins to all staff, regular Chief Fire Officer Managers' brief, a Senior Managers' Forum, the publishing of key messages and a regular Chief Fire Officer Blog as well as the use of the council's Intranet site and Fire SharePoint system for sharing important news and information. In 2016/17 fire stations and departments were visited and updates provided by senior officers on relevant key issues, such as the financial and IRMP service delivery challenges and opportunities ahead. The fire service participated in the County Council's annual staff survey and followed this up with targeted focus groups with various staff groups.

To support effective blue light collaboration, a separate governance structure (with FRS, SCC, Police, PCC and Ambulance) leads and delivers an extensive programme of blue light collaboration. The detail of this is set out in the 2017 Scrutiny report '[SFRS Improving services through collaboration](#)'. This governance arrangement has been in place for almost three years and has matured into excellent professional and political relationships.

## **6. Risk Management**

Risk management is conducted within the council's risk management arrangements, linked to the Community Risk Register maintained by Suffolk Resilience Forum. Risk is monitored and reviewed, scored and then recorded on the council's JCAD system.

Control measures are developed to manage and mitigate risks and embedded within business continuity plans to reinforce delivery of mission-critical activities and minimum acceptable levels of service. The highest strategic level risks are reported to the council's Corporate Management Team, Directorate Management Team and Fire Strategy Group. Risk is also comprehensively managed through the IRMP process.

## **7. Performance Management**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service managers monitor and manage performance to ensure the best possible services are provided and that timely action can be taken where any performance issues are highlighted.

Managers have regular Performance Development Reviews (PDR's) in line with Suffolk County Council policy, following the ASPIRE principles. Frontline operational staff have yearly Training Needs Assessments conducted by their line manager. Performance issues are dealt with informally in the initial stages, moving to formal performance management procedures where necessary. Personnel wishing to develop and progress within the organisation are tested for their Personal Qualities and Attributes and, where suitable for development, are given development programmes that can lead to opportunities for promotion.

The Service celebrates the excellent performance of staff at its annual Fire and Rescue Service Awards ceremony and through further nominations to external awards events such as Stars of Suffolk.

Following the 2013/14 Peer Review, and considering the national reform programme for the fire and rescue service, the Service appointed a Performance Improvement Manager. This is not an additional post but instead a post re-directed from elsewhere in the Service.

A Management Information System and Key Performance Indicators assist in the recording, presentation and management of Service performance. Quarterly and annual outturn reports are submitted to the Suffolk County Council corporate management team. These reports are routinely monitored by managers, the Cabinet Member and elected members, providing opportunity to consider and, where necessary, improve performance.

To ensure the Service is transparent about performance, during 2016/2017 we published performance data on response standards <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/> ).

Some key areas of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service performance in 2016/17 are set out in this section.

### Incidents

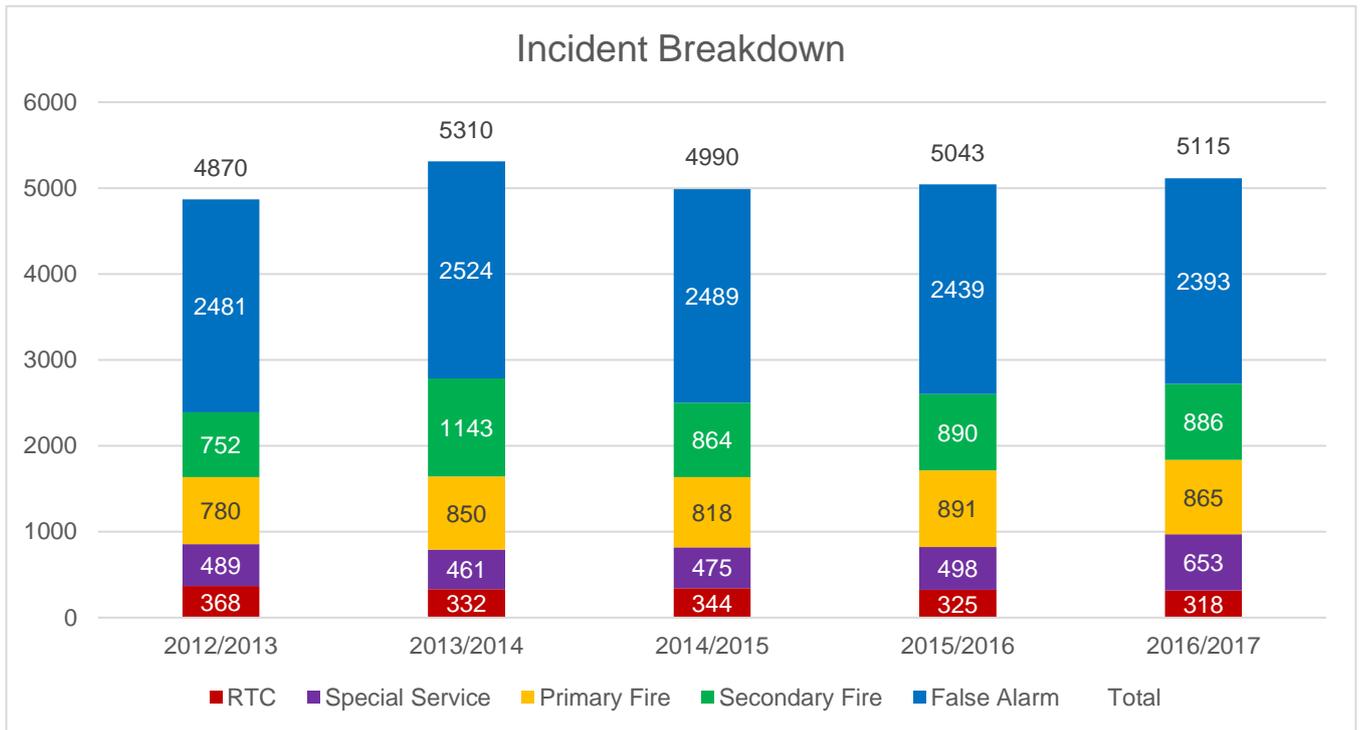
The number of incidents Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service attend has reduced significantly in the last 10 years and appears to have plateaued in the last 4 years. National fire statistics are

available on the Home Office website and can also be broken down by fire authority for a more detailed analysis.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

The statistics produced in this document may vary from the National Statistics and previously produced information due to subtle variances in the data sets used, e.g. the national statistics only include reports up to July 2017, whereas the data in this document includes information up to and including 12 November 2017.

**Figure 1.** Breakdown of incidents attended by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service in the last 5 years \*



N.B. Figures may differ to previously published figures; information is live data from published Incident Reports. Figures also include ‘officer only’ mobilisations and ‘over the border’ (OTB) incidents where our fire engines have attended incidents outside Suffolk. (\*All figures correct on 12 November 2017. The number of incident reports that remained unpublished were 2 from 2015/16 and 151 from 2016/17.)

In 2016/17, Combined Fire Control staff answered 9,561 999 calls for Suffolk and crews attended 5,115 emergencies.

### Fires

In 2016/17 there were 865 primary fires (fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures, or any fire involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more fire engines) which represents a decrease of 26 (-3%) in the number attended in 2015/16.

**Table 3.** Comparison of fires in 2015/16 to 2016/17:

Type of fire/premises	2015/16	2016/17	% Difference
Primary fires total	891	865	-2.92%
Secondary fires total	890	886	-0.45%
Dwelling fires (House, Bungalow, Flat, etc.) excludes chimney fires.	340	304	-10.59%
Commercial premises fires	143	164	+14.69%

#### People killed or injured in fires

Compared to national levels, Suffolk continues to have a relatively low annual fire death rate with an average of 4.8 deaths per year over the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. In 2016/17 there were 6 fire fatalities.

The average number of casualties in fires over the period 2012/13 to 2016/17, was 38.4 per year. The classification of fire casualty ranges from a minor injury such as a graze/cut that required first aid to life-threatening burns. In 2016/17 there were 41 fire casualties, a decrease of 27% from the 52 recorded in 2015/16. The ambition remains to achieve zero fire deaths and reduce the number of casualties to as few as possible. The Service's focus has remained on delivering effective fire prevention and protection advice to make people safer from fire in their homes and when at work, and providing an effective emergency response to fires where these do occur.

#### Road traffic collisions

The number of road traffic collisions has decreased from 479 annual collisions (1994-1998 average) to 318 in 2016/17. Since 2012/2013 the number of road traffic collisions attended annually by SFRS have reduced by 50. Road traffic collision prevention continues to be an important element of Prevention work. During 2016/17 the Service continued to work closely with stakeholders and agencies as part of Suffolk's Roadsafe Board.

#### People killed or injured in road traffic collisions

The average number of road traffic collision fatalities at incidents attended by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was 15.8 per year over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16. There were 15 fatalities in 2016/17.

Fire, road traffic collision and special service fatalities and casualties at incidents attended by SFRS

**Table 4.** Number of fatalities and casualties at incidents attended by SFRS in Suffolk

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Fire Fatalities	3	6	4	5	6
Fire Casualties	24	34	41	52	41
Road Traffic Collision Fatalities	13	17	9	21	15
Road Traffic Collision Casualties	195	195	187	171	171
Other Special Service Fatalities	10	9	17	15	44*
Other Special Service Casualties	38	34	53	53	86

N.B. The data set includes all published records (12 November 2017), including ‘over the border’ and ‘officer only’ mobilisations. (\* The significant increase in ‘Other Special Service Fatalities’ in 2016/17 is largely due to co-responding to ambulance emergencies.)

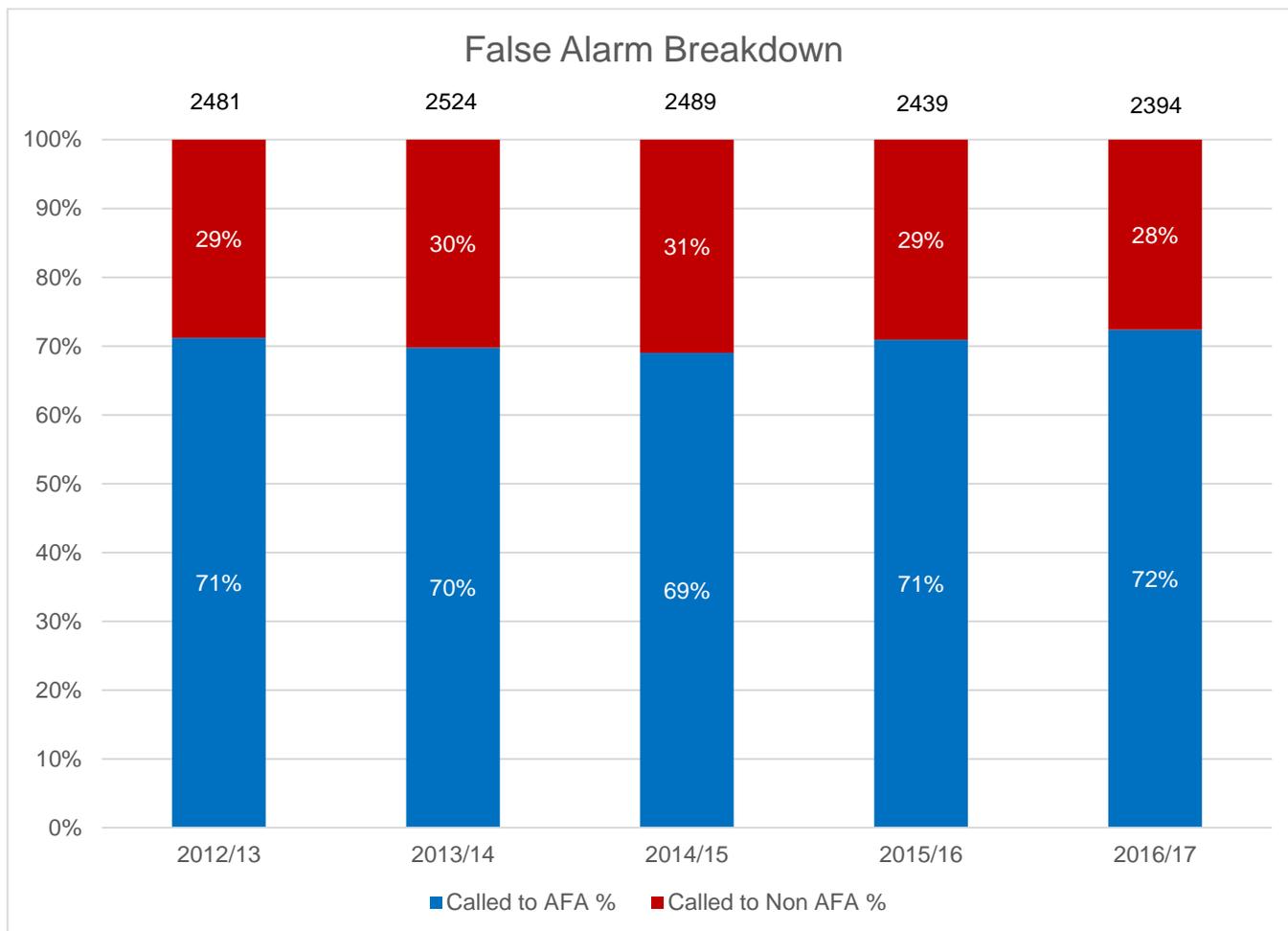
False Alarms

In 2016/17 we attended 2,394 calls which turned out to be false alarms. This is a slight decrease on 2015/16 when 2,439 calls turned out to be false alarms. False alarms represented 47% of the 5115 calls attended in 2016/17.

False alarms are classified as follows:

1. Those which are not related to Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems but where a fire alarm system is manually activated or where a person raises the alarm via a 999 call. These include hoax calls and emergencies reported in good faith where it is later found there is no fire (good intent fire calls) and;
2. AFA activations where there is no fire, which are emergencies raised by an AFA system where firefighters later find there is no fire. The alarm may have activated because of insects or dust inside fire detectors, obstruction of optical smoke detecting beams or smoke from an outside source entering a building and activating the AFA system.

**Figure 2.** The proportion of calls to each category



Only a small number of AFA calls are found to be fires. Where this is the case the call is later re-categorised as a fire. In 2016/17 approximately 51 AFA calls were classified as fires, representing approximately 3% of all AFA calls. Work continues to reduce the occurrences of AFA false alarms.

On-call firefighter availability

Every fire station in Suffolk has a complement of on-call firefighters. Outside of the main towns of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket, where full-time firefighters are also based, 29 stations are crewed solely by on-call staff. Full-time firefighters provide an immediate response to emergencies. On-call firefighters normally respond from their station within approximately 5-6 minutes, subject to availability.

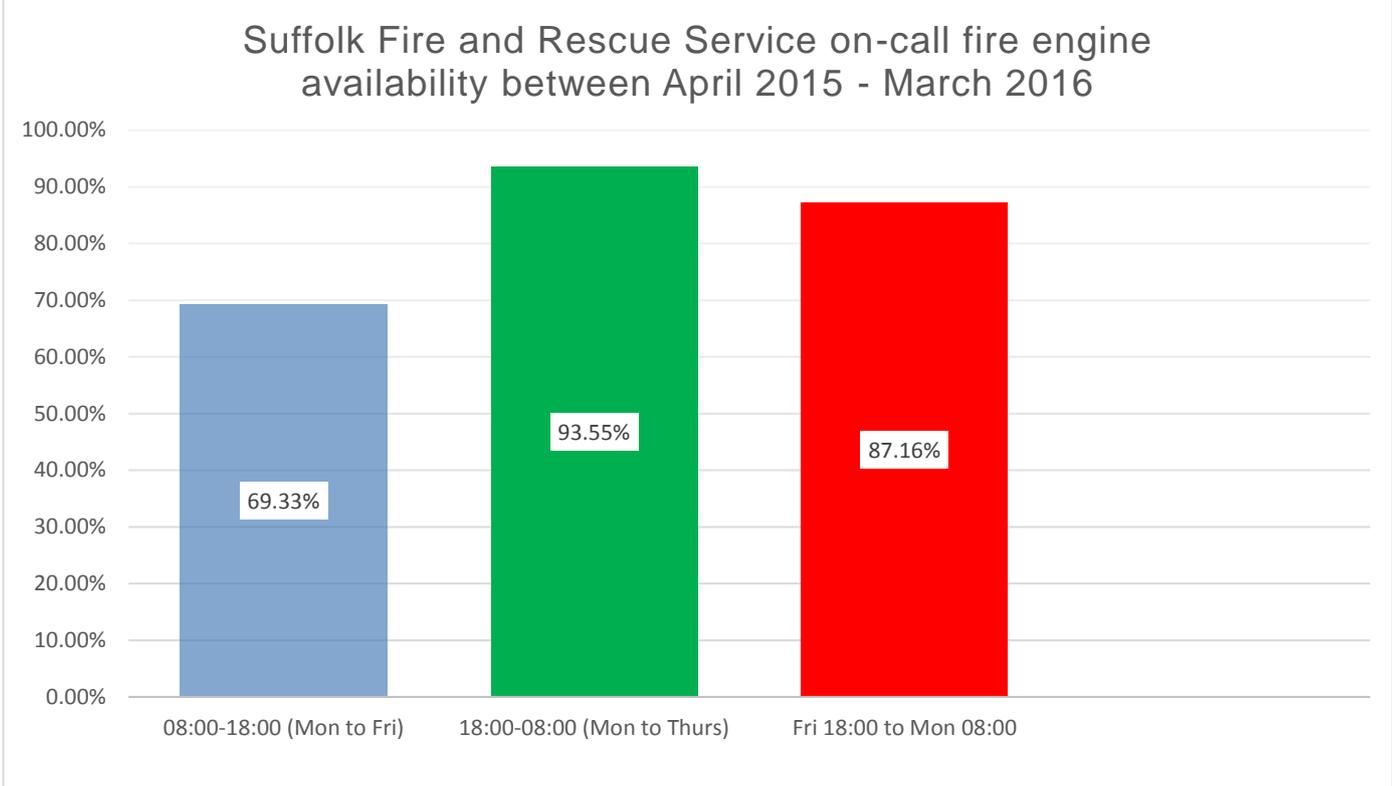
Overall on-call fire station availability (full availability) in 2015/16 was 83.98%, increasing in 2016/17 to 84.92%.

Availability improves at nights and weekends, but during working weekdays it commonly reduces due primarily to the employment commitments of on-call firefighters.

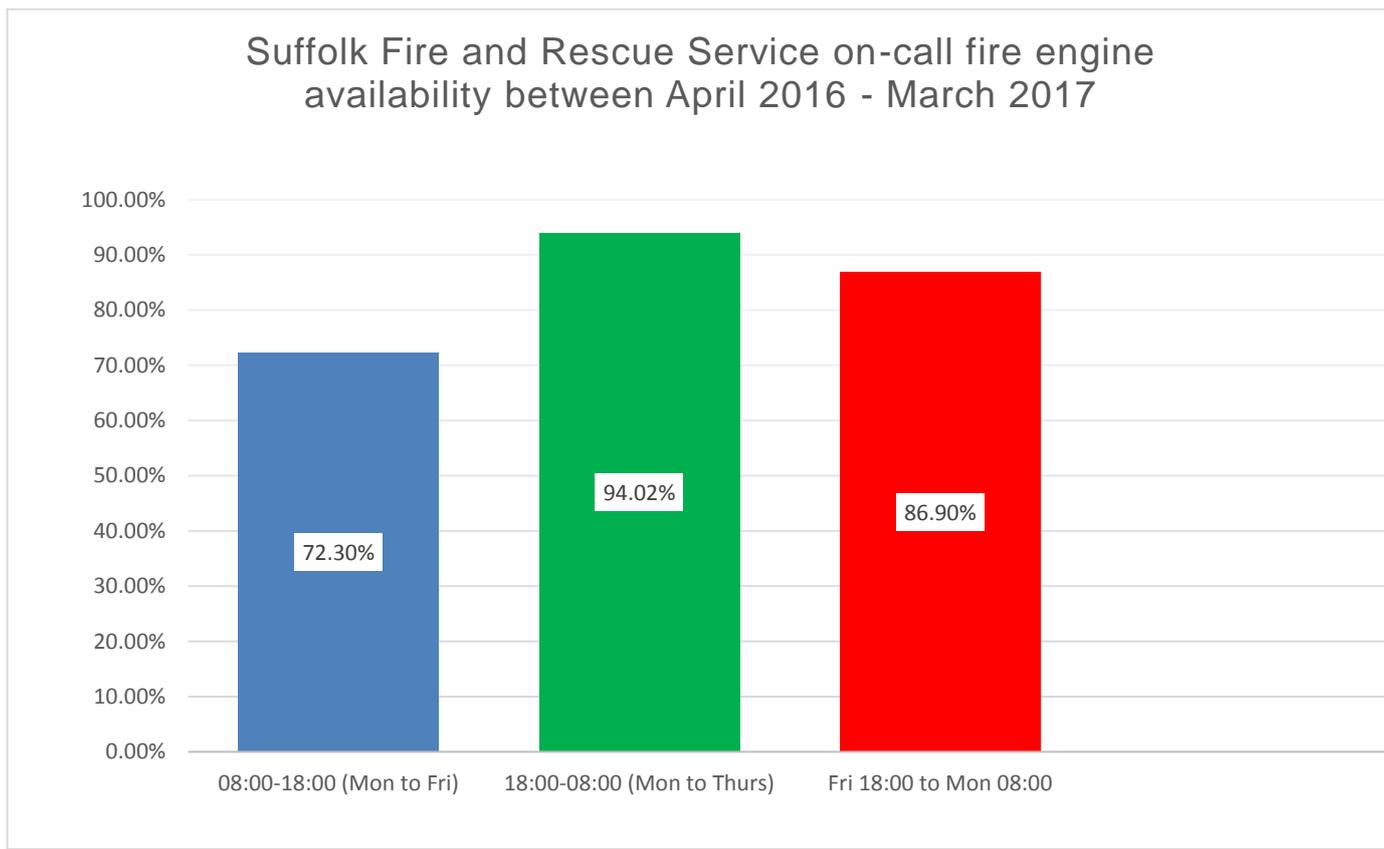
On-call availability is a priority for the Service and work continued in 2016/17 to seek improvements through several initiatives. Our on-call crewing reserve (OCCR) has made an

impact on the availability of key on-call stations during the working week, with an increased availability of 3% on previous years. 112 incidents were responded to by local crews whose availability was maintained by the OCCR crew. This means that the incident was responded to more quickly, and by local firefighters. This work will continue in future years.

**Figure 3.** On-call fire engine availability 2015/16



**Figure 4.** On-call fire engine availability 2016/17



### 999 Emergency Response Times

At a national level there is a trend, reflected in Suffolk, in increased response times. This is attributed in part to traffic volume and congestion on roads, particularly in urban areas. Other local factors, such as the adoption of safer driving techniques (drive to arrive) and the requirement for crews to dress in firefighting protective clothing before leaving station also contribute to increased attendance times, albeit these practices have been in place for several years.

The national statistics for response times for 2016/17 will be produced by the Home Office and are not available until December 2017. The statistics quoted below are therefore for the year 2015/16.

National data provided by the Home Office shows average response time to dwelling fires in England in 2015/16 was 7 minutes 42 seconds, a decrease of 3 seconds from the previous year.

### [Fire Incident Response Times: April 2015 to March 2016, England](#)

Home Office data shows average response time to primary fires in Suffolk being 11.3 minutes in 2014/15, decreasing to 10.9 minutes in 2015/16. Response time to dwelling fires of 11 minutes in 2014/15 decreased to 9 minutes in 2015/16.

Average response time to other building fires were 10.8 minutes in 2014/15 and 11 minutes in 2015/16. For road vehicle fires, response times were 11.6 minutes in 2014/15 and 11.4 minutes

respectively. This data shows a decrease in response times other than to ‘other building fires’, where times increased slightly in 2015/16.

For all Suffolk incidents, in 2016/17 the first fire engine arrived on average in 9 minutes and 13 seconds from the time firefighters were first alerted to the call. The average time for on-call crewed fire engines to arrive at an incident was 11 minutes and 9 seconds. Full-time firefighter crewed fire engines arrived in 7 minutes and 47 seconds on average. These figures are up to date to November 2017.

Response times in rural counties, such as Suffolk, are significantly influenced by the availability of on-call firefighters. Work has continued throughout 2016/17 to improve on-call availability and response times. This work is ongoing.

### Response Standards

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive framework of national standards. In 2004 fire and rescue authorities were provided with freedom to develop local response standards to reflect local risk. In 2010/11 the fire and rescue authority agreed a revised set of performance standards for response to emergencies.

**Table 5.** Performance against agreed standards

Performance Standard	Target	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Performance Standard 1 - Attend 80% of property fires within 11 minutes of alert (1 <sup>st</sup> fire engine)	80%	63.98%	72.74%	70.3%
Performance Standard 2 - Attend 80% of property fires within 16 minutes of alert (2 <sup>nd</sup> fire engine)	80%	71.56%	77.27%	76.89%
Performance Standard 3 - Attend 80% of Road Traffic Collisions within 13 minutes of alert	80%	75.74%	71.84%	72.03%

N.B. Data is taken from the Fire Service Manager (FSM) which analyses live data from Incident Reporting Forms (data recorded 12 November 2017). This information will be subject to validation at year-end.

### Internal and external operational assurance

A range of internal and external audit, review and assurance arrangements are established. Internal audits are overseen centrally and focus on fire station and functional areas and review of operational incidents. Internal audits focus on key areas such as operational incident command and risk-critical support functions, such as fire workshops, engineering and firefighter training.

Fire stations and departments are routinely audited every 3 years. However, more regular audits are carried out where a need arises. Ten internal audits were carried out in 2016/17 with outcomes reported to the Fire Strategy Group, which agreed appropriate actions and monitors progress.

Significant emergencies are followed up by formal debrief at which the main agencies, partners, officers and crews are represented. This is an established process, designed to highlight notable practice, identify any issues arising and seek continual improvement. In 2016/17, 12 formal debriefs were completed. Their outcomes were used to influence and improve the provision of training, equipment and operational guidance.

The Service's internal audit and review arrangements supplement formal audits carried out by the county council's Audit Service, who undertake separate and independent audits to those described above. As Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service sits within the overall governance framework of Suffolk County Council, the outcome of audits carried out across other council functions has a bearing on our practices, policies and ways of working.

In 2017/18 we plan to carry out between 12 and 14 station audits. Additional audits are planned for: our Wattisham training facility; the Port of Felixstowe fire station; 4 themed audits for the newly-introduced electronic training recording system; breathing apparatus sets and testing; road traffic collision district instructors; incident command paperwork. The results of all audits will be submitted to the Operational Assurance Board at the end of 2017.

SFRS is part of the National Framework relating to Occupational Safety and Health. The Eastern region group, of which Suffolk is a member, has signed a partnership agreement for regular external audit, utilising the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Safety Audit (QSA) process to scrutinise safety management systems. The last audit of Suffolk was carried out in 2014 and has been reported previously.

### Peer Challenge

The Local Government Association (LGA) and Chief Fire Officers' Association work in partnership to provide fire and rescue services the opportunity to access an external peer challenge service. The most recent review in Suffolk was carried out in December 2013. The [peer challenge report](#) is available on the council's website.

Our next peer challenge is scheduled for November/December 2017. During early autumn we will produce an Operational Self-Assessment document, written in accordance with the LGA toolkit. Peer reviewers from other fire and rescue services and local government will feed back on our performance and self-awareness, highlighting areas of notable practice and where we can make improvements to our delivery of services to the public. We expect the review outcome to assist us in preparing for the new Home Office inspection regime that is expected to commence in April 2018.

## **8. Operational Assurance**

Our property portfolio includes 39 sites, with 35 fire stations located in Suffolk's largest towns and villages. Four stations; Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft South, Ipswich East and Ipswich Princes Street are crewed around the clock, seven days per week. Two additional stations; Haverhill and Newmarket, are 'day crewed' and revert to on-call crewing in the evenings and at weekends. The remaining stations are solely crewed by on-call firefighters, who respond to the station when required.

The Service employs around 420 on-call and 200 wholetime staff. Due to the largely rural nature of the county, fire cover is heavily reliant on on-call firefighters.

Operational uniformed roles in Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are based on seven nationally recognised and defined roles, set out below:

- a. Firefighter
- b. Crew Commander
- c. Watch Commander
- d. Station Commander
- e. Group Commander
- f. Area Commander
- g. Brigade Manager

Non-operational support roles are established in line with county council policy and associated local pay and grading arrangements. Fifty-nine non-operational staff were employed in support functions. Most middle and senior managers are uniformed officers; Suffolk has 26 flexible duty operational officers (up to and including the Chief Fire Officer) and a further 30 supervisory uniformed officers who work in prevention, protection, support services and training.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates a fleet over 144 vehicles, including 49 fire engines, and a range of equipment to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergencies. The number and type of vehicles and operational equipment is kept under review to ensure this remains fit for purpose and appropriate for the use intended.

Of our 35 stations, 11 are conditioned to a c£80m Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme and have been completely re-provided or undergone extensive refurbishment. Twelve of our fire stations are shared with either the Police or Ambulance Services, with 4 more in the construction phase and a further 4 in the planning stage to be delivered in 2018/19.

#### Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Fire and Rescue National Framework was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2012 and sets out central government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. The Framework identifies the high-level expectations of Government but does not prescribe operational matters, which it considers are best-managed by local authorities in consultation with communities. The priorities in the Framework are for authorities to:

- a. Identify and assess foreseeable risks, making provision for prevention and protection activities and for appropriate response to operational incidents
- b. Work in partnership with local communities and partners
- c. Be accountable to local communities

The fire and rescue authority has considered the expectations of the National Framework and ensured that these are being met in an appropriate manner.

#### Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

The Authority adheres to the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework in producing Integrated Risk Management Plans. In November 2015, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority

embarked on a public consultation as part of reviewing its IRMP and to meet the financial challenge facing the County Council.

The 3-year plan, published in May 2016, set out the programme to manage foreseeable risk across Suffolk. In accordance with requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, the Authority reviews and evolves its Plan annually.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan details how foreseeable risks such as house fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies are reduced and effectively managed. Risks are identified using professional judgement and information about previous emergencies attended, supported by computer software; mapping information; national intelligence, planning information supplied by local authorities, and other relevant information from partner and other organisations. This data is brought together to enable the identification of resources and risk control measures to ensure the effective and safe delivery of services.

### Mutual aid arrangements and agreements

The fire and rescue authority is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid Protocol through the fire and rescue service National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) for England. The NCAF guidance sets out the terms under which a fire and rescue authority may expect assistance from, or provide aid to, another authority in the event of a serious national incident such as wide-scale flooding or terrorist attack.

Local plans and operational guidance are in place to provide and receive assistance through NCAF arrangements by using the Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre in London. Local guidance has been informed by operational deployments and experiences during winter flooding in Somerset and Thames Valley and also East Coast tidal surge events.

Formal mutual aid arrangements are also in place with neighbouring fire and rescue authorities for Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. These arrangements provide for regular cross-border support and assistance in the event of a fire or another emergency incident. Specific arrangements are also in place with Norfolk FRS, to provide a joint Fire Special Operations Team capability to deal with significant incidents involving firearms and local or national response to a terrorist firearms attack. These plans are embedded and regularly exercised with Police and Ambulance for effective multi-agency response.

The Authority has an agreement in place with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority for the provision of a 999 Fire Control Service. The Combined Fire Control is based in Huntingdon and serves both counties. The arrangement is governed through a formal legal agreement and performance is managed through Executive and Operational Governance Boards, which met regularly in 2015/16.

The Service is an active partner in the Suffolk Local Resilience Forum, a multi-agency partnership of emergency responders and other organisations involved in supporting the emergency response in Suffolk. The Forum ensures that agencies work together to develop, agree and test the plans made to respond to and manage community risk in the event of an emergency.

## Health and Safety

Firefighting, responding to emergencies, training and other public protection related activities can present risk to employees. Alongside the statutory and common law requirements to provide health and safety for our employees and those affected by our actions, SFRS continues to improve and develop its health and safety systems and culture; this remains a priority for the service as identified in the annual [Service Plan](#).

There is a clear structure within the county council and fire and rescue service to support the effective management of health, safety and wellbeing. The Chief Fire Officer chairs the Council's Strategic Health and Wellbeing Board and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer represents the fire and rescue service and also chairs the fire and rescue service Health and Safety Committee.

The Health and Safety Manager role is a dedicated management post and associated role responsibilities are based on Health and Safety Executive guidance and Approved Codes of Practice.

'Safe systems of work' are established for operational incidents, training and general non-operational work activity. A library of operational procedures, written with national Fire and Rescue guidance, are used to support the safe system of work. They contain key risk and control measures and supporting information and are maintained to assist firefighters resolve operational incidents effectively and safely. They underpin training, assessment and development for all staff.

All staff are provided with health and safety training for their role. Senior managers attend the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health 'Directing Safely' course and uniformed middle managers complete the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) managing safely qualifications. Many managers are trained in accident investigation techniques to enable the Service to identify any potential failure in health and safety systems.

The Service closely manages health and safety performance, including the number of accidents and near misses. These are reported to the Fire Strategy Group, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Home Office. A manager investigates every near miss and accident.

In 2016/17, staff reported a total of 60 personal accidents, a decrease of approximately 14% on the 70 recorded in 2015/16. There were 22 vehicle accidents compared to the 37 reported in 2015/16, a decrease of approximately 40%. Six accidents were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) in 2016/17 an increase of one report from those recorded in 2015/16.

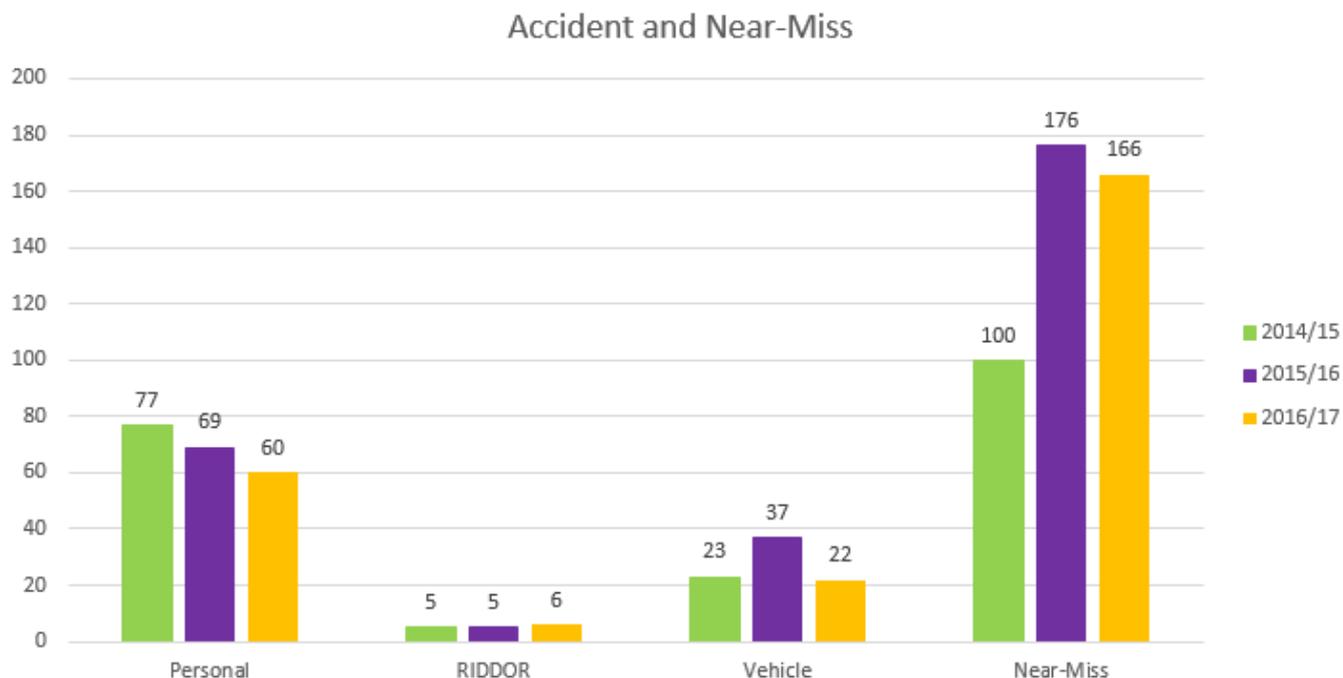
Staff also reported 166 near-miss events in 2016/17 compared to 176 in 2015/16 a decrease of 10. Near-miss events are circumstances where staff report a potential hazard e.g. impact, trip, slip or fall but where there is no associated accident or injury. The reporting of near-miss incidents helps to reduce the risk of accidents and staff were actively encouraged to report these.

The main causes of the 60 personal accidents in 2016/17 were split between three categories or work types. 53% of injuries occurred whilst undertaking operational training with 'Hot-Wear' injuries of skin-discolouration prompting a review of the tactical fire-fighting training.

'Bumps and bruises' were reported during water rescue training at Lee Valley and musculoskeletal injuries arose from ladder, hose and dummy handling activities. 25% of injuries

occurred on, or travelling to, the incident ground which was slightly less than the previous year. The largest reduction of accident category was in vehicles where a decrease of 15 accidents were observed. The campaign of tackling slow speed reversing accidents is seen as a major factor in the reductions.

**Figure 5.** Accidents and Near Misses 2014/15 – 2016/17



### Business Continuity

Business continuity plans are in place to mitigate the impact of an incident which may interrupt the delivery of mission-critical activities and services; for example, industrial or strike action by staff, flu pandemic, severe weather or national fuel shortages. An audit of the fire and rescue service business continuity arrangements was carried out by the council’s Audit Service in 2012 with the outcome stating broad compliance with requirements.

Business continuity activity and plan development is coordinated with multi agency partners through the Local Resilience Forum. Exercises with partner agencies have enhanced resilience arrangements and awareness. All plans are reviewed and exercised by managers and plan owners at regular intervals to ensure satisfactory compliance with requirements.

### Training and Development

The training and development of all Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service personnel is one of the priorities for the Service and sits firmly within our Service Plan. Training is provided to all firefighters, officers and non-uniformed staff throughout the year to improve knowledge, skills and experience in key areas, and ensure staff can carry out their roles safely and effectively.

Suffolk works with its five regional fire service partners to embed regionally-agreed tactical operational guidance derived from strategic National Operational Guidance (NOG). The close relationship with Cambridgeshire FRS, manifesting itself practically through Combined Fire Control, has been a strong driver for rationalisation of mobilisation policy and procedure across the two Services, each benefitting from the other’s best practice arrangements.

Prior to implementation in Suffolk, national operational guidance is reviewed by the Operational Guidance Group, chaired by the DCFO. This group achieves strategic level sign-off and agreement between department representatives. Outcomes are actioned by the Implementation Group, led by the Area Commander Response. Information includes tactical guidance (Operational Guidance), Additional Hazard Information and Operational articles. The pre-determined attendance (resources required) derived from the task analysis is agreed with Combined Fire Control. Risk assessments are updated by Health and Safety and any prior or additional training is actioned. The Equipment Officer addresses any need for new or additional equipment.

Training and development needs are identified through various avenues, from face-to-face management meetings, national guidance requirements, routine maintenance-of-competency training and representative bodies' consultation outcomes.

Collaborative opportunities with regional colleagues and partner agencies are explored to support Training and Development activity, including assistance to quality-assure our practices.

### Training Centre

Facilities include: classrooms and welfare; realistic breathing apparatus facilities; rail incident infrastructure; road traffic collision and heavy rescue infrastructure. This is also where recruit firefighters receive basic training to ensure they are safe when first responding on a fire engine.

Plans are in place to further enhance facilities to meet the demand for training in emerging new technologies.

### Training Development Team

The team oversees the development needs of our personnel. Work includes: assisting with firefighter recruit selection; coordinating and carrying out assessment of Incident Command skills; maintenance and coordination of development programmes; facilitating promotional assessments; coordination of external training for uniformed and non-uniformed personnel, e.g. leadership and management skills.

### Driver Training

This department oversees: Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) licencing and training; Emergency Response Driver Training (ERDT); assistance with driver and operator training for all new fleet vehicles; Driving Licence checks.

### On Station and External Training

Routine maintenance of firefighter skills is carried out at station level. Some specialist training is delivered utilising district instructors, e.g. Breathing Apparatus instructors, Road Traffic Collision instructors, Swift Water rescue leads etc. Core skill and risk-critical input is delivered by SFRS training instructors and/or subject matter experts. We also access training provided by Suffolk County Council; e.g. coaching and mentoring or management and leadership skills through the comprehensive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Manager programme. External providers are used to develop staff in areas that are not currently facilitated within service, e.g. the Fire Service College and other subject specialists.

## 9. Prevention and Protection

### Prevention

Prevention is about reducing risk by preventing deaths, injuries and damage to property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

The Service delivers many different programmes that enhance community safety, including:

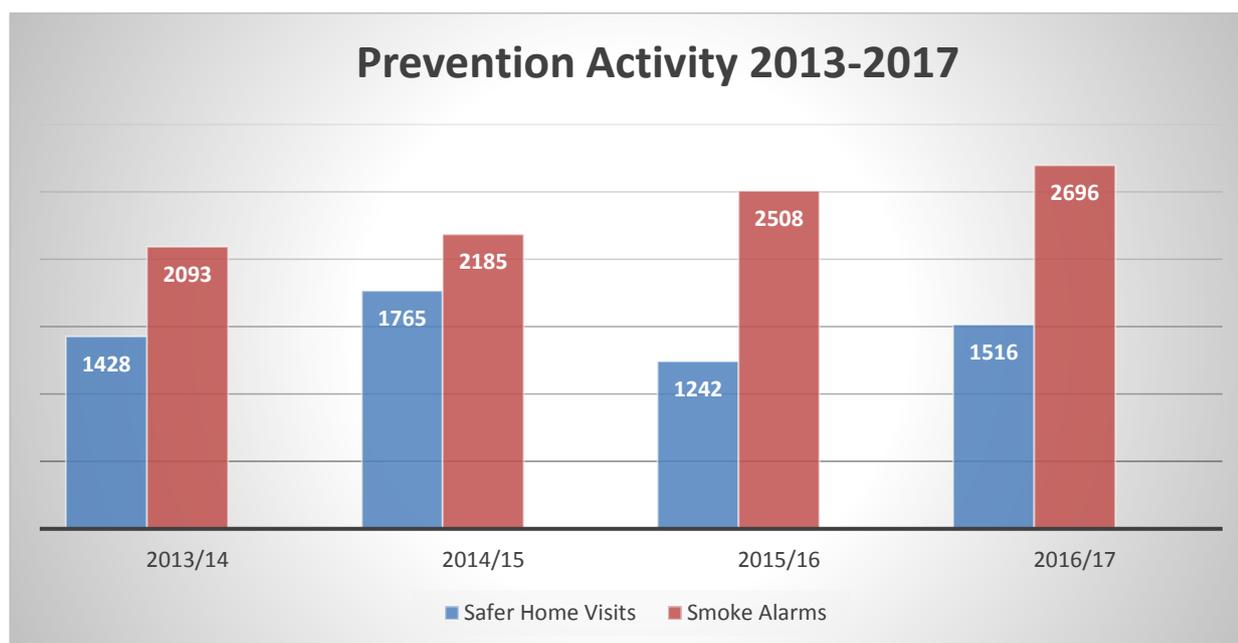
- a. Road safety education, including a new 'Firebike' safety scheme
- b. Working with disaffected young people
- c. Working with young people in education
- d. Promoting healthier lifestyles with young people
- e. Helping older people to live independently
- f. Thatch fire safety

Community Fire Volunteers, Prevention staff and firefighters carry out free Safer Home Visits and safety in the Home checks for the most vulnerable people in Suffolk. They fit safety features in homes such as smoke detectors and provide advice on safety, security and wellbeing. Where appropriate, people are referred to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care and the Benefits Agency etc.

In 2016/17 staff carried out 1516 Safer Home Visits, an increase of 274 on 2015/16. This is partly due to the increase in enhanced multi agency visits which have shown an upward trend. 2696 smoke detectors were fitted in 2016/17 which is an increase of 188 on 2015/16, again due to enhanced visit trend and an increase in sensory alarm fittings.

Not included in the figures for Safer Home Visits are secondary visits due to faulty replacements and 'information only' engagements via post; these contacts represent over 1,400 interactions by the Prevention department with vulnerable people in Suffolk.

**Figure 6.** Prevention Activity – No. of Safer Home Visits and Smoke Alarms fitted



### Protection

Protection is primarily about the enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Officers carry out audits of buildings to establish compliance with fire safety law. Audits are generated through the annual Service Risk Based Inspection Programme.

Premises are selected for audit based on the risk they may present to those who work in or visit them. Buildings where people sleep, such as hotels and residential care homes, are considered higher risk and are audited more frequently. Premises are also audited on receipt of information regarding poor fire safety conditions or where there has been a fire.

The number of audits carried out in 2016/17 was 386, a reduction of 360 on the 743 audits undertaken in 2015/16. The reduction is due to fewer Protection officers in post, combined with additional training and workload generated to achieve necessary qualifications. Five formal notices were issued under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order; six Enforcement Notices and nine Prohibition Notices. The time spent processing these formal notices impacted on the number of audits undertaken and indicates that we are targeting premises that put people most at risk.

36 premises were rated as 'Satisfactory' following enforcement action by SFRS.

Running concurrently with premises audit is a special initiative, "Joint Agency Impact Days". These days involve Protection, Prevention and Local Authority Environmental Housing Officers. Targeting a different town each month, our aim is to provide education, advice and a balanced intelligence-based joint inspections programme for premises with both residential and commercial areas.

These premises types were chosen following investigations into:

- Local and national incidents.

- Historic and current risks/high activity Protection areas.
- Results/feedback from trials.

## 10. Achievements in 2016/17

### On-Call Improvement

We continued to work hard last year to improve on-call fire station availability. Work undertaken included:

- Staff engagement and consultation for new on-call firefighter availability contracts which we plan to introduce.
- Review of on-call firefighter training arrangements to reflect staff views and operational needs. More evening and weekend training opportunities were introduced.
- An on-call Crewing Reserve (OCCR) was established to help improve on-call fire station availability levels. The OCCR consists of:
  - Eight wholtime positions to specifically to support on-call fire engine availability. They work flexibly across different locations and areas where staffing levels may need supporting and include a coordinating manager.
  - A flexible pool of on-call and wholtime firefighters who are available for deployment to fire stations Suffolk where staffing levels are deficient.
  - Use of Protection and Training personnel, working remotely from their permanent place of work to support fire stations as required.
- A permanent On-call Crewing Reserve Coordinator was appointed to oversee and coordinate resources to target and improve on-call availability.

### IRMP Implementation

The agreed IRMP 2015-18 proposals were introduced. These included:

- a) Removal of a wholtime fire engine from Princes St fire station and sixteen wholtime posts
- b) Removal of on-call fire engines from Ipswich East, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft fire stations
- c) Work commenced to replace the fire engine at Wrentham with a light rescue appliance (LRP)

Extensive staff consultation and engagement ensured the sixteen wholtime posts removed from Princes St fire station were facilitated through natural wastage and associated movement of staff to other appropriate posts through an agreed selection process.

### Blue Light Integration

The Joint Programme Manager, appointed following receipt in 2015 of £4.93m DCLG grant funding for projects relating to property sharing with blue light partners, completed projects for sharing facilities with Suffolk Constabulary at Felixstowe and Saxmundham.

Feasibility studies for the creation of shared facilities at Stowmarket, Leiston, Beccles, Newmarket and Princes Street, Ipswich were considered. Building work at Leiston and Beccles is scheduled to commence and works at Newmarket are expected to complete in 2017. The

inclusion of the fire service at the Mildenhall Hub was withdrawn reflecting the outcome of a public consultation. The Service continues to work with both Police and Ambulance partners to share facilities and reduce public sector estate.

### Emergency Medical Trials

Since May 2015, 31 UK Fire and Rescue Services have taken part in a national trial for Emergency Medical Trials (Co-Responding). In September 2016 five stations from Suffolk (Sudbury, Long Melford, Lowestoft South, Felixstowe and Haverhill) began to participate in extended trials. Sourcing of equipment and station training was concluded by mid-August 2016. A Standard Operating Policy was drafted and Suffolk contributed to the trial until its national conclusion in 2017.

### Procurement – New Vehicles and Equipment

In pursuing methodologies and equipment to maximise firefighter safety, we reviewed the conventional methods of entering a fire compartment. Temperatures within an ordinary property fire can reach more than 900°C, and can be associated with an explosive phenomenon known as ‘backdraught’. Introduction of fine water spray into a compartment from outside is an extremely effective means of reducing both the temperature and explosive range of fire gases without the immediate need to enter. The Service invested in equipment to allow this means of tackling fires and took delivery of three new appliances with this technology for an extended evaluation.

The three 15 tonne pumping appliances were introduced into the Service in Autumn 2016 and wholtime staff at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich East trained in their use. The appliances were brought fully into service in summer 2017.

The new fire engines were also equipped with battery operated hydraulic rescue equipment (BRE) meaning that the equipment does not require a generator or hydraulic hose. The BRE is extremely powerful and its compact size has allowed the normal full inventory of equipment to be provided on the fire engine, despite the additional fitment of the Cobra system - a first in the UK fire service.

Three new Unimog 4x4 vehicles replaced two older Unimogs and crews were trained in their use and in support of the Service’s large animal rescue capability, rural firefighting and water rescue and flooding capabilities.

### Firefighting Clothing - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The current contract for supply and management of PPE will end in April 2019. SFRS representatives have contributed for nearly two years to a much larger collaboration which amounts to almost half of UK fire and rescue services.

Our involvement has helped shape and influenced preliminary work and practical trials which began in Autumn 2016. Firefighting PPE is worn at nearly all incident types yet is specifically designed for the small amount of times firefighters are exposed to direct heat from fires within buildings. One of the main aims was to identify equipment to provide protection that is more suitable to all incident types. Practical trials were completed mid-2017 and staff are currently providing feedback on their preferred combination of the PPE selected.

## Organisational Review

Following a review of roles and responsibilities at Group and Station Commander levels, changes were implemented in early 2017. These included alterations to command functions at various officer levels and a change to flexile duty officer arrangements and mobilisation to incident types.

## Transparency with Performance Information

We worked hard to display emergency response standards on the Suffolk County Council website. All performance data required by the Home Office, including response times, incidents, fatalities and casualties available on the Home Office website; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#fatalities-and-casualties>

A new 'Fire Service Manager' information system is currently being developed to produce information internally for Fire Strategy Group and councillors to view. This system will help us monitor, manage and present operational and other performance information to a wide range of audiences.

Information is published on our website in the form of 'Your Fire and Rescue Service at a Glance'; this displays all the headline figures often requested by the public will be implemented in 2017.

## Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)

ESMCP is a central government project to replace current radio communications and provide the next generation communication system for emergency services and other public safety users. This system will be called the emergency services network (ESN) and will provide a resilient and integrated voice and broadband radio and data services. In 2016/17 the Service continued to work with the Regional Fire Customer Group in influencing national strategy and making regional decisions.

A Project Manager and Support and Training Officer have been jointly employed by CFRS and SFRS to manage the activity of the Services in preparation for, and during the migration to the ESN. The team members are working with the East of England Delivery Team to ensure the region successfully transitions within the timescales proscribed by central government, and that opportunities for collaboration are maximised reducing the burden to individual counties and services.

In September 2017, the Home Office announced that Transition would not commence as expected. Originally, the East of England was due to begin Transition in February 2018. It is likely that this region will now Transition no earlier than June 2019. A base-lined transition schedule is expected to be released by the Home Office in early 2018.

## Prevention Activities

Further improvements were made to Safer Home Visits to better target these to the most vulnerable people using data and knowledge from other local authority partners such as Public Health. Plans were also realised to broaden the remit of these visits to a 'Safe and Well' visit.

## Wholetime firefighter shift system

A review of the wholetime duty system allowed for a different approach to be taken to the management of wholetime firefighters' duty shifts. Autonomy and responsibility for management was passed to managers at the level best-placed to determine effective and resilient crewing of fire appliances through an extended trial with only 'broad brush' management principles applied. The changes followed extensive engagement with watch commanders and will be reviewed during 2017/18.

## National Operational Guidance

The National Operational Guidance Programme is a partnership programme, working with fire and rescue services to deliver new national operational guidance that is consistent, easily accessible and can be quickly revised and updated if necessary.

In 2014/15 the Service established a Programme Board to oversee the implementation of National Operational Guidance and to help contribute to the work taking place nationally and regionally. During 2016/17 146 individual pieces of Operational Guidance passed through the Programme Board and Implementation Group, giving surety that operational practices and procedures were up-to-date and in line with national best practice and guidance.

## Culture and Staff Engagement

We want our Service to be a great place to work for everyone and have completely revised and improved our approach to Equality and Inclusion to support this. We are key partners in the Council's Equality and Inclusion work and have established Strategic and Practitioner E&I groups in the Service. We continue to use positive action to increase the firefighter recruitment of women and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

In 2016 we were part of a wider SCC staff survey. The outcomes of this survey led to us establishing an independently-led series of 16 focus groups and several one to one interviews across the Service. The findings from this work will be used to drive future culture change. One initial outcome has been the establishment of a Staff Engagement Group of 14 people who represent all parts of our Service. With support from SCC colleagues they are working on specific tasks regarding the purpose and objectives of our Service, followed by culture and behaviours.

## **11. Future Plans**

The Service produces an annual [Service Plan](#) covering a three-year period. The plan sets out a range of tasks for delivery in 2016-19 and is published on the Council's website. The plan, which is updated annually, sets out improvements to services, some of which are summarised below:

### Light Rescue Pump

The 2015/18 SFRS IRMP initially proposed the closure of Wrentham fire station and the loss of the fire appliance. Following public consultation and consideration by SCC Cabinet, the proposal

was amended to replacement of the full-size fire engine with a smaller, more versatile vehicle that could be crewed more flexibly, as crewing availability dictated.

Station personnel have been working with Engineering and Support Services to resolve a vehicle specification that best meets the local emergency call profile and allowed a flexible crewing resource to respond safely and effectively. The resultant vehicle specification was progressed through the tender/framework process and we expect to receive the finished appliance into Service by the end of 2017. The specification includes Cobra cold-cut equipment and battery powered rescue equipment.

The new vehicle will provide a flexible fleet profile that includes 15, 12 and 10 tonne fire engines that will help influence future vehicle deployment to reflect both local risk and support flexibility in crewing arrangements.

### Culture and Staff Engagement

We are building on the staff survey work completed during early 2017 to ensure that the organisation is the best it can be. We intend to maximise the input from Equality and Inclusion work and the Strategic and Practitioner E&I groups. The groups will agree an E&I statement that drives everything that the group are currently doing. We also are looking forward to the outcome of the work of external consultants Equality Works (EW), who have reviewed our E&I culture through interviews and focus groups across the Service. We will receive the outcome of their work in November and that will further inform our plans. Our aim is to develop a culture of trust where people are empowered to use their own good judgement on all occasions and are supported to make decisions at the lowest appropriate level.

We recognise that our organisation can improve in generic areas of:

- Leadership, development and progression
- Communication and engagement
- Relationships and Support
- Decision making

and during 2017/18 will be resolving and agreeing plans of how best to achieve our aspirations. One such approach will be the use of positive action 'taster days' to encourage a greater diversity in the application for firefighter roles in the Service.

### Mental Health

The service facilitated workshops run by MIND for line managers in 2016. Feedback from the outcomes were presented at the H&S committee; our Health and Safety adviser is leading on mental health issues and SFRS signed the MIND blue light pledge on 31 October 2017. A resultant action plan will support our activity in this important area. We used an initiative from Kent Fire and Rescue Service to produce a presentation, with videos featuring Suffolk FRS staff, to support positive mental health and to promote discussion. This presentation will be included in the station training planners and our strategic group will include this in discussions on station visits.

We have a Sharepoint site dedicated to mental health which signposts staff to help and assistance in service and externally.

## High rise and operational risk

The terrible event at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 was the catalyst for a great deal of work both locally and nationally to ensure the safety of people living and working in high rise premises. The Service reacted immediately to the safety requirements from central government and the National Fire Chiefs' Council, forming a specific High-Rise Project Team.

Joint exercises were undertaken, with Protection Officers providing information to Building Control on our procedures to help them better understand the practicalities of fighting fires in high rise premises. Over a 4-week period approximately 100 premises were inspected jointly; residents were provided with prevention leaflets; operational risk information was updated, and operational firefighting aids checked.

We will continue to work to ensure the safety of residents through a number of activities, including closer working with other inspecting authorities and responsible persons, provision of up-to-date risk information and realistic training for our firefighters.

## PPE

We will complete the assessment of new personal protective equipment (PPE) with a view to finalising Service requirements and negotiating the best-value solution within the consortium framework. Our intention is to provide a seamless transition from our exiting provider at the conclusion of the existing contract in April 2019.

As the PPE clothing (layering) options become apparent, we will engage with a broad spectrum of staff to ensure that we select the PPE that is best suited to their requirements and affords the best protection possible.

## Wattisham Training Centre

We are proud of our Training Centre and relationship with the Army Air Corps at Wattisham Flying Station. However, we understand that further investment in the site and facilities would enhance the training we are able to deliver and potentially open opportunities for use by other organisations. During 2017 we intend to explore options for site development and will examine classroom, welfare, 'live' fire, and other potential improvements.

## ICT review

In April 2016, in response to a perceived need, we appointed a Performance and Improvement Manager to produce and manage statistical information. This appointment confirmed suspected gaps in our ability to produce information quickly and simply using IT processes. This realisation was further confirmed in our recently-commissioned Fire IT Review. We will appoint a temporary 'Transformation Manager' to work with both the Performance and Improvement manager and Fire IT to improve our reporting and analytical capabilities, and maximise assistance from County ICT. It is intended that this appointment will result in closer and more effective reporting and analysis capability.

## Blue Light Collaboration and Sudbury, Newmarket, Stowmarket, Leiston, Beccles

We have an excellent track record of collaborating with our blue-light partners, particularly with regard to provision of shared accommodation across Suffolk. Plans are already in place to extend this shared provision at Newmarket, Leiston and Beccles, with work set to complete (Newmarket) or commence in late 2017.

We expect to agree shared accommodation with the Ambulance Service at Sudbury and are working hard to resolve a multi-agency shared new-build premises in Stowmarket.

A 'governance' options appraisal was completed by the Police and Crime Commissioner(PCC) in autumn 2017: the Policing and Crime Act 2017, amongst other requirements, allowed for a PCC to examine the benefits in taking control of the fire and rescue service; the Act also requires further blue light collaboration. We will work closely with the PCC and Suffolk Police to maximise all opportunities to reduce costs and provide a more effective community risk management and response service across Suffolk.

### Peer Review

In November 2017, we will welcome a team of subject matter experts from the fire sector to formally review our performance and plans. Peer review is a voluntary inspection performed by the fire sector and the Local Government Association. Our last peer review was in 2013 and, with changes to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to now include Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), this Peer Review will help us to focus on our strengths and weaknesses for future improvement.

In Autumn we prepared an 'Operational Self-Assessment' document which will provide information and evidence for the review team and help focus their inspection. As well as the Key Operational Assessment Areas of: Community Risk Management, Prevention, Protection, Preparedness, Response, Health and Safety, Training and Development, the team will also look at themes under the heading of 'Leadership and Corporate Capacity'.

### Home Office Inspection

The move nationally of fire and rescue services from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office will introduce a new inspection regime for fire and rescue services nationally. Inspection of the fire services across England and Wales is expected to commence in April 2018. We anticipate a need to prepare to meet the inspection requirements and intend to access advice and guidance from Police colleagues who have been subject to similar inspections for many years.

### SCC and Fire Service Strategies

To help shape our organisational culture and to reinforce the clarity of both our own and SCC's priorities, we will revisit our core governance documents and strategies. We want to build a picture that enables simple identification of a strong 'golden thread' running throughout the fire service, supporting the SCC Priorities and strong governance arrangements we enjoy. We intend also to analyse demand on our services, particularly Prevention and Protection, to inform

our work with partners in targeting our community risk management strategies and interventions to support the most vulnerable. This will further inform collaborative outcomes with Suffolk Police and inform our future risk planning.

### Sizewell C

The proposals for Sizewell C nuclear power station will continue to require significant analysis and response to the consultation phases from the Service. We must be well-placed to influence factors that will encompass: emergency response; the built environment; road, rail and marine transport infrastructure; site safety; fire prevention and protection for workers and citizens; recruitment and retention of staff; ability to respond to foreseeable emergencies; correct equipment, vehicles, training and personnel.

## **12. Links to Key Documents**

[Fire and Rescue National Framework](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-18](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999](#)

[Audit Commission Act 1998](#)

[Regulation 11 of the Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)

[SCC Priorities 2017-21](#)

[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 Health and Safety Act at Work, etc. Act 1974](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Peer Challenge Report 2013](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2016-19](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Response Standards](#)

[Home Office National Statistics](#)