



**Suffolk Fire and
Rescue Authority**

Statement of Assurance

2017 – 2018

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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 2017 to 31 March 2018. 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 'further 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 Richard Rout
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 2017/2018.

The Statement was first made a requirement of the 2012 [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) (revised May 2018). It 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, enforce fire safety legislation and reduce risk in the community. We work ever more closely with other blue light responders to maximise the benefit of public spending and ensure 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 framework. The key legislation and Acts defining these requirements include:

- 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 (revised May 2018)

Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the National Framework in carrying out their functions, and every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework.

The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard, in the period covered by the document, to the National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to any strategic fire and rescue plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is the principal legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. It 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 be equipped to receive and respond to calls for assistance, ensure that staff are properly trained and equipped, and gather risk 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 permits the Secretary of State to publish National Framework requirements that set central government priorities for authorities. Fire and rescue authorities are required to pay due regard to the National Framework.

4. Financial Assurance

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority is required 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 (SCC), 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 2018 was externally audited in line with Audit Commission Act (1998) guidance. The Statement of Accounts for 2017/18 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/2017-18-Statement-of-Accounts-Combined-Post-Audit-unhighlighted.pdf>

CIPFA benchmarking data

CIPFA publish annual financial performance data for all English fire and rescue authorities, enabling comparison between authorities.

Service financial performance is measured primarily through CIPFA benchmarking data. In comparison to other fire and rescue services, Suffolk is routinely shown as low-cost and performing well. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is in the lowest quartile of cost-per-head of population, with an expenditure of £31.61 per head, compared to the average cost of £34.96.

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 2017/18 (actuals). Four fire and rescue authorities have not reported actual spend figures for 2017/18; estimated reports have been included for these authorities. One authority has not reported actual or estimated figures and has been excluded from calculations.

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 £31.61, £3.35 below the national average (£34.96 per person).

Table 1. Efficiency - £ per head of population









Measure (comparison with all Fire Authorities)	
Efficiency - £ per head of population (average £34.96)	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	£38.26 - £45.13
Mid to Upper Quartile 	£34.42 - £38.06
Mid to Lower Quartile 	£32.50 - £33.99
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	£24.31 - £32.40 SUFFOLK = £31.61

Table 2. Efficiency - £ per Hectare

Measure (comparison with all Fire Authorities)	
Efficiency - £ per Hectare (average £256.40)	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	£236.24 - £2,265.45
Mid to Upper Quartile 	£138.72 - £225.72
Mid to Lower Quartile 	£81.52 - £132.01
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	£22.30 - £68.96 SUFFOLK = £62.95

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

- a. Cost per head of population (table 1)
- b. Cost per hectare (table 2)
- c. Cost per incident
- d. Cost per fire station, fire appliance and incident
- e. Ratio of uniformed officers per fire station

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's budget for 2017/18 was £21.587m, with a confirmed full year spend of £21.629m. Throughout a challenging year, managers practised robust budget management, restricting Service overspend to £0.04m. The overspend was due largely to an unfunded co-responding trial, and an increase in claimed additional hours for training and operational cover. An underspend afforded by no ill health retirements in-year, and vacancies in the Protection team, offset overspend in other areas.

Reserve and grant funding continues to support projects such Service Redesign (2015-2018 IRMP), Private Finance Initiative (PFI), increasing blue light collaboration, a more resilient on-call service, and enhanced fleet, equipment and property provision.

As of 1 April 2017, £1.225m was held as operational reserve funding; this has decreased from £1.516m (April 2017) to meet one-off costs in-year, such as resolution of unexpected fire engine suspension failures. SFRS earmarked reserve balance as of 1 April 2017 was £4.197m, and at year-end 2018 was £3.787m. The renewals reserve balance reduced from £1,304m at 1 April 2017 to £0.513m at year-end.

The established capital programme supports realisation of statutory responsibilities (e.g. Policing and Crime Act 2017) with the creation of additional shared 'blue-light' fire, police and ambulance stations. This is predominantly funded by a £4.9m transformation grant awarded in 2014 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). New facilities have

been recently completed at Felixstowe, Saxmundham, Leiston, Newmarket and Beccles fire stations. The total grant spend at the end of 2017/18 was £1.7m; a balance of £3.2m is carried forward for shared facilities planned, or in progress, during 2018/19 and 2019/20 in Sudbury, Stowmarket and Ipswich.

Of our 35 stations, 11 are conditioned to a c£80m Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme; these facilities have been completely re-provided or undergone extensive refurbishment.

Spend on the rolling 10-year risk-critical renewal plan for fleet and equipment in 2017/18 was £2.2m, funded from the renewals reserve. In 2017/18, five new fire engines with 'COBRA' cold-cut firefighting technology replaced aging fire engines, and a light rescue pump (LRP) replaced a traditional fire engine at Wrentham.

A further £0.3m was invested in mobile data terminals for operational vehicles and upgrades to the incident reporting system used to collect data from emergency incidents.

The fire service is required to make additional savings of £0.05m by 2018/19, contributing to the council's savings targets and reflecting central government grant reductions. It is anticipated the shared station collaboration charges will generate additional income to meet this target, whilst still providing significant savings to public sector spending.

5. Governance Assurance

The fire and rescue authority for Suffolk is Suffolk County Council, consisting of 75 elected councillors. Most of the authority's daily business is discharged through the council's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for 2017/18 was 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, 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 2017/18 <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/council-and-democracy/budget-and-finance/2018-05-25-Annual-Governance-Statement-2017-18.pdf> ([Annual Governance Statement 2017-18](#))
- SCC Scrutiny Committee considers 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 matters
- 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 2017.
- SFRS completed a pilot inspection to support Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) new inspection regime in March 2018. The Service's full inspection is scheduled for Spring 2019.

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 underpinned by the ASPIRE organisational values. These values help us deliver the Council's priorities for Suffolk through to 2021. This planning approach is reflected through the Council and the fire service's IRMP and three-year Service 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 Leadership Team and reports to the Chief Executive. Monthly meetings with the Corporate Leadership 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 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, the annual Statement of Assurance, and reviews Service performance. Regular written briefings are provided for Councillors, and meetings 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 (now Fire and Rescue Services Association)) is managed through the 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 daily 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 Leadership Team and Cabinet) – CFO attendee
- Suffolk County Council Corporate Leadership 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 Manager) – CFO chair
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service assurance, 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, the publishing of key messages and a regular Chief Fire Officer blog. The Service also uses the council's intranet site and Fire SharePoint system for sharing important news and information. In 2017/18 fire stations and departments were visited, with updates provided by senior officers on relevant key issues such as financial and IRMP service delivery challenges and opportunities. The fire service participated in the County Council's annual staff survey and undertook considerable work to follow up survey results with targeted focus groups to better understand, and respond to, staff feedback.

To support effective blue light collaboration, a separate governance structure (with FRS, SCC, Police, Police and Crime Commissioner and Ambulance) leads and delivers an ambitious 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. 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 crewed solely by on-call firefighters, who respond to the station when required.

The Service employs around 420 on-call and 195 wholetime staff. Due to the largely rural nature of the county, operational cover is heavily reliant on on-call firefighters.

Fifty-nine non-operational staff were employed in support functions, established in line with county council pay and grading arrangements. 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 140 vehicles, including 49 fire engines, and a range of equipment to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergencies. The number and types of vehicles and operational equipment is routinely reviewed to ensure their fitness to react to the risk identified within the county, and beyond.

The three core activities delivered by Fire and Rescue Services are; Prevention, Protection and Response.

Prevention

Prevention aims to reduce risk by preventing deaths, injuries and damage to property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

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

- a. Road safety education, including a 'Firebike' motorcycle 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

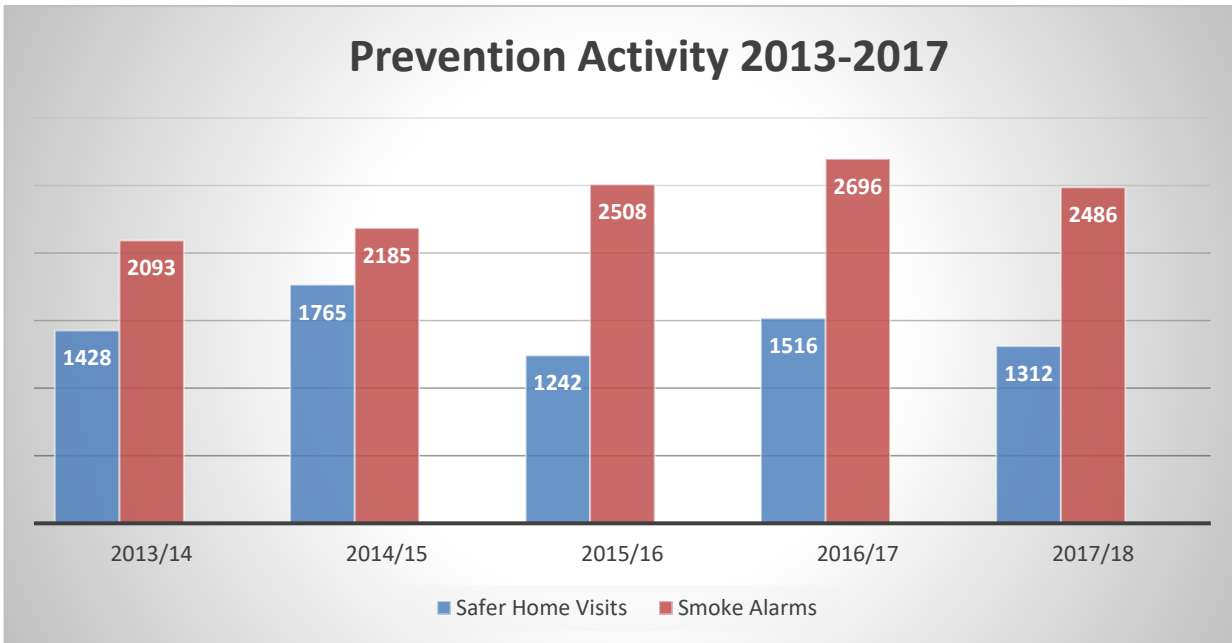
Community Fire Volunteers, prevention staff and firefighters carry out free Safer Home Visits and Safety in the Home checks for Suffolk's most vulnerable residents. They fit safety features in homes such as smoke detectors and provide advice on safety, security and wellbeing. Where appropriate, people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

In 2017/18 our staff carried out 1312 Safer Home Visits, of which 810 were for older people (+65 yrs of age), 287 for vulnerable adults, and 159 for disabled people. We fitted 2486 smoke detectors over the same period; this figure does not include replacement detectors or batteries.

Also not included in the number of Safer Home Visits are secondary visits made for replacement of faulty equipment, and 'information only' engagements via post.

2017/18 also saw 392 fire prevention campaigns and initiatives delivered; these included 25 Youth Diversion schemes, 151 Youth Fire Safety events, 1 Antisocial Intervention, and 215 other fire prevention campaigns/initiatives (e.g. road safety campaigns)

Figure 1. Prevention Activity – Number of Safer Home Visits and Smoke Alarms fitted



Protection

Protection staff are trained to Level 4 Certificate in accordance with national best practice, and may also work towards a Diploma. The team includes staff working to differing terms and conditions; all training and roles are mapped to ensure staff receive role-appropriate training and acquire the skills they need.

Protection is primarily focused on enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Officers complete audits generated through the annual Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) of buildings to establish compliance with fire safety law.

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 2017/18 was 294, a reduction of 92 on the 386 audits undertaken in 2016/17. This reduction is due to fewer protection officers in post, combined with additional training and associated workload needed to achieve necessary qualifications. Eleven formal notices were issued under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order; two Enforcement and nine Prohibition Notices. Thirteen premises were subsequently rated as 'satisfactory' following enforcement action.

The time spent processing formal notices also impacted on the number of audits undertaken; however they indicate that we target, through events such as 'Joint Agency Impact Days', premises that put people most at risk. 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 inspection programme for premises in both residential and commercial areas.

These premise types were chosen following investigations into:

- Local and national incidents.
- Historic and current risks/high activity protection areas.
- Results/feedback from trials.

Our Protection department undertakes activities in addition to the work directly related to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. In 2017/18 officers completed 625 Building Regulation referrals, 469 other consultations (e.g. licences or Houses of Multiple Occupation), and 22 other protection activities.

High rise and operational risk

The fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 highlighted the need for work both locally and nationally to ensure the safety of people living and working in high rise premises. Our Service reacted immediately to the safety requirements of 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 118 premises were inspected jointly; residents were provided with prevention advice, operational risk information was updated, and operational firefighting aids checked.

We 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 operational risk information and realistic training for our firefighters.

Response

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

- Staff engagement and consultation for new on-call firefighter availability contracts
- Review of on-call firefighter training arrangements to reflect staff views and operational need; more evening and weekend training opportunities were introduced
- The on-call Crewing Reserve (OCCR), established in 2016 to help improve on-call fire station availability levels, was reviewed. The OCCR now consists of:
 - Eight wholtime firefighter positions to specifically support on-call fire engine availability, working flexibly across locations where staffing levels need support; the team is directed by a coordinating manager
 - On-duty wholtime firefighters, where watch establishments permit their release
 - Limited use of on-call and wholtime firefighters who are available for deployment to fire stations at short notice

- Protection and Training personnel, working remotely from their permanent place of work to support fire stations

To improve speed of response and availability of on-call fire engines, we developed a new light rescue pump that operates from Wrentham with a crew of between two and five personnel. We also trialled a 'reduced crew' response from seven fire stations from March 2018.

We work closely with the SCC Joint Emergency Planning Unit. Plans for responding to changes in threat level were tested in 2017 when the level rose to 'critical' from 'severe'. Exercise Eagle '17 provided operational assurance for a Sizewell B off-site emergency. Early 2018 saw Flood Recovery and Counter Terrorism exercises involving SFRS.

Regional training supports operational readiness through Joint Operating Principles for wider response to terrorist attacks.

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. 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 request assistance through the Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre in Merseyside. Local guidance has been informed by operational deployments and experiences from winter flooding in Somerset and Thames Valley, and East Coast tidal surge events.

We have formal mutual aid arrangements with Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire fire and rescue authorities. These provide for regular cross-border support and assistance in the event of a fire or 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.

The Service is an active member of the Suffolk Local Resilience Forum (LRF) currently chaired by the CFO. This is a multi-agency partnership of emergency responders and other organisations supporting emergency response in Suffolk. The Forum ensures agencies work together to develop, agree and test plans made to respond to and manage community risk in the event of an emergency.

Business Continuity

The Service has business continuity plans to mitigate the impact of an incident which may interrupt 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, with the outcome stating broad compliance with requirements.

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

Internal and external operational assurance

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

Fire stations and departments are routinely audited every three years, with more regular audit undertaken where a need arises. Fifteen internal audits were completed in 2017/18, their outcomes and actions monitored by the Fire Strategy Group.

Response to significant emergencies is assessed through formal debrief at which the main agencies, partners, officers, fire control, and crews are represented. This is an established process, designed to highlight notable practice, identify any issues arising and promote continual improvement of service delivery. In 2017/18, 11 formal debriefs were completed and their outcomes used to influence and improve 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 2018/19 we plan to carry out ten station audits. Additional audits are planned for: our engineering facility; the Port of Felixstowe fire station; four themed audits for the electronic training recording system; breathing apparatus sets and testing; mass decontamination capabilities; and response to spate conditions. The results will be submitted to the Operational Assurance Board during the year.

SFRS is part of the National Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. The Eastern region group, of which Suffolk is a member, has 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 in Suffolk was carried out in 2014, and has been reported previously.

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 is taken where any performance issues are highlighted.

Managers complete regular Performance Development Reviews (PDR), following the ASPIRE principles. Frontline operational staff undertake yearly Training Needs Assessments, conducted by their line manager. Performance issues are dealt with informally in 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 found suitable for development, access formal development that can lead to opportunities for promotion.

The Service celebrates the excellence of its staff at an annual Fire and Rescue Service Awards ceremony and through further nominations for external awards such as 'Stars of Suffolk'.

Following the 2013/14 Peer Review, and to support the national reform programme for the fire and rescue service, the Service appointed a Performance Improvement Manager. This was not an additional post, but resource 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 leadership team. These reports are monitored by managers, the Cabinet Member and Elected Members, providing opportunity to consider and, where necessary, improve performance.

To support transparency regarding performance, during 2017/2018 we published data on response standards (<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/>); this is updated every 6 months.

Some key areas of our 2017/18 performance are set out in this section.

Incidents

The number of incidents we attend has reduced significantly in the last ten years, and appears to have plateaued over the last four years. National fire statistics are available on the Home Office website, and can be broken down by fire authority for a more detailed analysis.

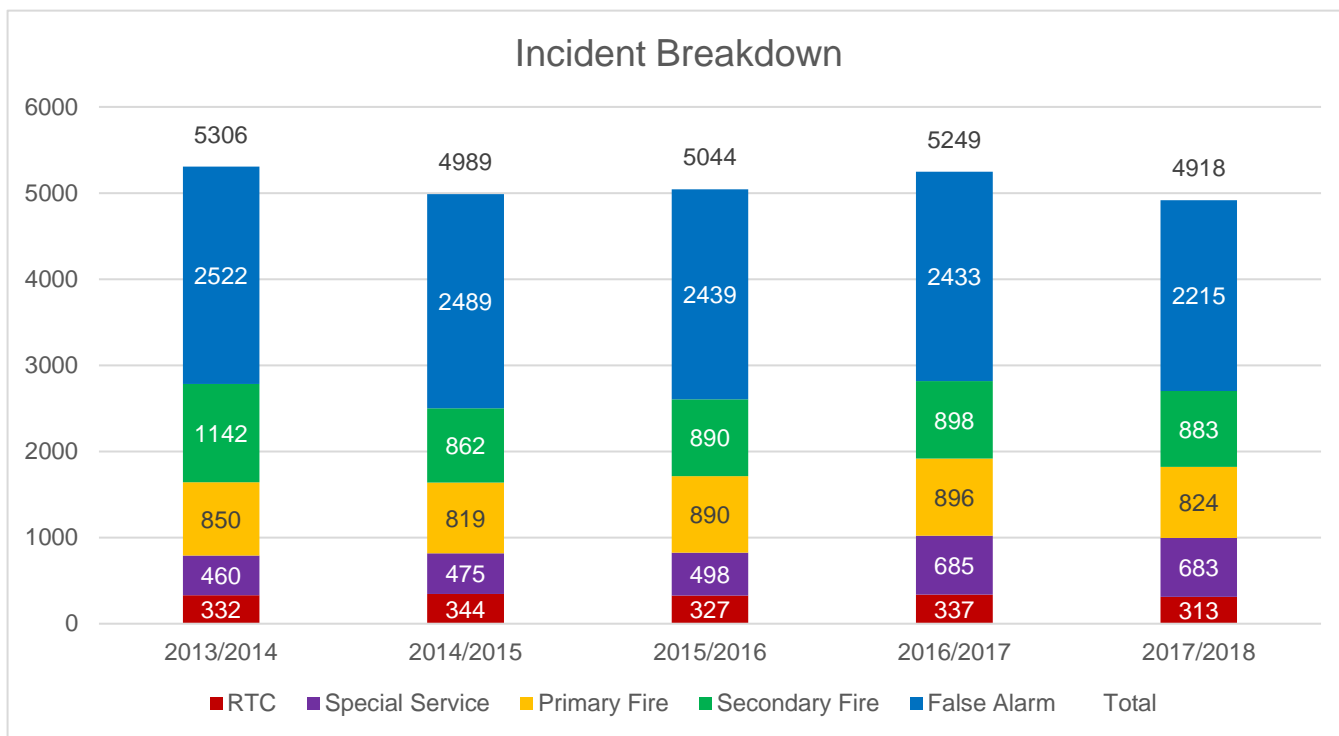
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

The national statistics include incident reports up to July 2018.

To provide the most up to date information on Suffolk incidents, Figure 2 shows locally-produced information using data up to, and including, 8 November 2018. The figures may therefore differ from those previously published, and those published by the Home Office.

The information is drawn from published incident reports. Figures include all incidents in Suffolk, 'officer only' mobilisations, and 'over the border' (OTB) incidents where our fire engines have attended incidents outside Suffolk.

Figure 2. Breakdown of incidents in Suffolk and incidents attended by SFRS in neighbouring counties (OTB's) in the last 5 financial years (locally produced data)



In 2017/18, Combined Fire Control staff answered 8,687 '999' calls for Suffolk, and our crews attended 4918 emergencies.

Fires

In 2017/18 we attended 824 primary fires (fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures, or any fire involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more fire engines). This is a decrease of 72 (-8.4%) from the number attended in 2016/17.

Secondary fires (grassland, wasteland, derelict buildings, chimney fires etc) totalled 883 in 2017/18, a drop of 2% from the 898 of the previous year.

Road Traffic Collisions

The number of road traffic collisions has decreased considerably from 479 (1994-1998 average) to 311 in 2017/18. Since 2013/14 the number of road traffic collisions attended annually by SFRS has reduced by 21. Road traffic collision prevention continues to be an important element of Prevention work. During 2017/18 the Service worked closely with stakeholders and agencies as part of Suffolk's Roadsafe Board.

Special Service

The increase in Special Service incidents in 2016-18 reflects a co-responding trial (response to medical emergencies by firefighters), a collaboration between SFRS and the East of England Ambulance Service Trust. This trial has now concluded.

False Alarms

In 2017/18 we attended 2,215 calls which turned out to be false alarms. This is a decrease of over 200 from both 2016/17 and 2015/16. False alarms represented 45% of the 4,918 calls attended in 2017/18.

Only a small number of automatic fire alarm AFA calls are found to be fires. Where this is the case the call is later re-categorised as a fire. In 2017/18, 37 AFA calls were classified as fires, representing approximately 3% of all AFA calls. Work continues to reduce the occurrences of unwanted fire signals.

The following figures are drawn from National fire statistics which are available on the Home Office website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

Figure 3. Comparison of fire figures in 2016/17 to 2017/18 (published Home Office data)

Type of fire/premises	2016/17	2017/18	% Difference
Primary fires total	878	801	-8.88 %
Secondary fires total (+chimney fires)	878	851	-3.1%
Dwelling fires (House, Bungalow, Flat, etc.) excludes chimney fires	315	293	-7.30%
Non-Domestic Buildings	165	127	-23.03%

Fatalities and Casualties

In comparison to national levels, Suffolk continues to have a relatively low annual fire death rate, with an average of four deaths per year over the period 2013/14 to 2017/18. In 2017/18 there were three fire fatalities.

The annual average number of casualties (from minor injury to life-threatening burns) in fires over the period 2013/14 to 2017/18, was 77.4. In 2017/18 there were 75 fire casualties, a decrease of 8.64% from the 81 recorded in 2016/17. Our ambition remains to achieve zero fire deaths and reduce the number of casualties to as few as possible. Service 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 in providing effective emergency response to fires when they do occur.

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

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Fire Fatalities	3	4	4	5	6	3
Fire Casualties (0502b)	57	64	75	93	81	75
Road Traffic Collision Fatalities (0904a)	15	18	10	21	15	Not yet Available
Road Traffic Collision Casualties (0904b)	224	233	240	211	208	Not yet Available
Other Special Service Fatalities (0904a)	8	8	17	14	43	Not yet Available
Other Special Service Casualties (0904b)	44	41	60	74	98	Not yet Available

People killed or injured in fires (tables and information taken from National fire statistics from the .GOV website.)

People killed or injured in road traffic collisions

The average number of fatalities at road traffic collisions 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. (2017/18 data is not yet available from the Home Office)

Appliance and Firefighter Availability

Four of Suffolk’s fire stations are crewed 24/7 and a further two fire stations are crewed during weekdays by full time firefighters; there are also on-call crews at these stations. When the full time crew of these stations is on an emergency call, on-call crews are called in, providing 100% availability of the station’s fire engines.

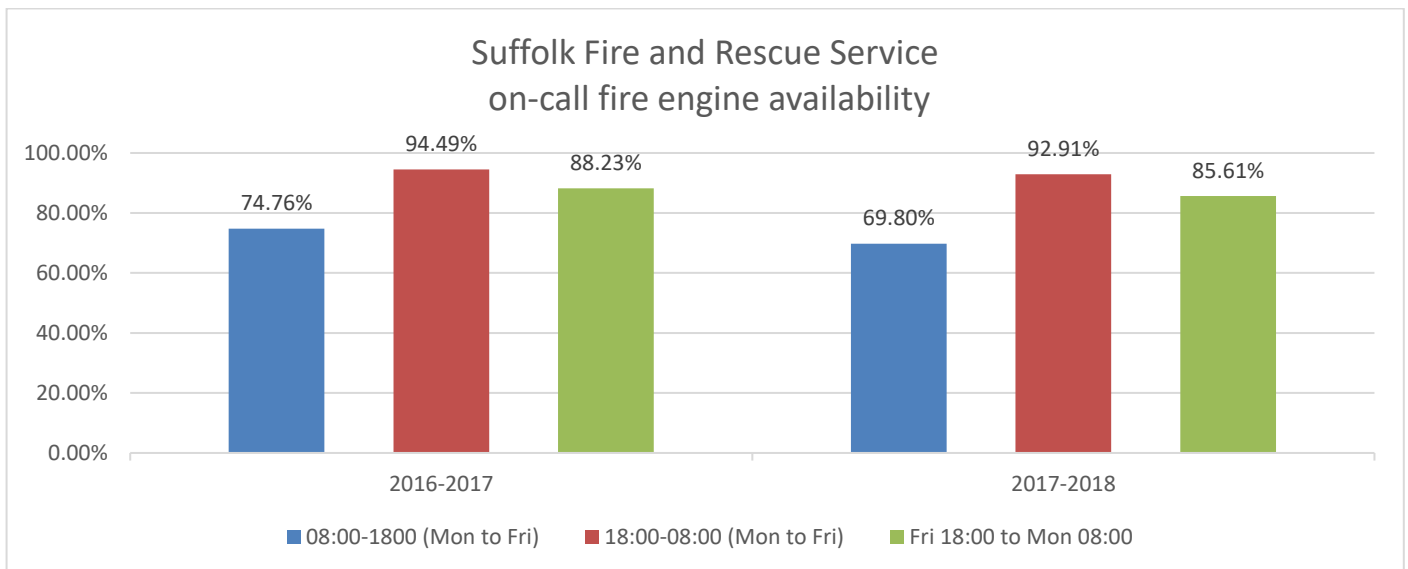
On-call firefighter availability

Outside of the main towns of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket, 29 stations are crewed solely by on-call staff. Full-time firefighters provide an immediate response to emergencies, with on-call firefighters normally responding to their station within 5-6 minutes.

On-call fire station availability (full availability) in 2016/17 was 84.92%, reducing to 82.93% in 2017/18. Availability improves at nights and weekends, but falls during working weekdays due primarily to the employment commitments of on-call firefighters.

On-call fire engine availability is a priority for the Service and work continued in 2017/18 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: in 2016/17, 112 incidents were responded to by local crews whose availability was maintained by the OCCR and in 2017/18, this number increased almost 28%, to 143. This means that incidents were responded to more quickly, by local firefighters. This strategy will continue in future years, complementing our continued efforts to recruit and retain more on-call firefighters.

Figure 5. On-call fire engine availability 2016/17 and 2017/18



999 Emergency Response Times

Nationally there is a trend, reflected in Suffolk, for increased fire service response times. This is attributed in part to traffic volume and road congestion, 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 2017/18 are produced by the Home Office and are not available until December 2018. The statistics below are therefore for the year 2016/17.

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

Home Office returns show:

- Average response time to primary fires in Suffolk of 10.9 minutes in 2015/16, increasing to 11.4 minutes in 2016/17
- Average Response times to dwelling fires in Suffolk of 9 minutes in 2015/16, increasing to 9.9 minutes in 2016/17
- Average response time to other building fires in Suffolk was 11.0 minutes in 2015/16, decreasing to 10.4 minutes in 2016/17
- Average response times to road vehicle fires in Suffolk was 11.4 minutes in 2015/16, increasing to 12.2 minutes in 2016/17.

Overall in Suffolk, for all incidents in 2017/18, the first fire engine arrived on average in 9 minutes and 20 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 25 seconds. Full-time firefighter crewed fire engines arrived in 7 minutes and 45 seconds on average. (These figures are obtained from locally produced live data and were correct on 8 November 2018.)

Response times in rural counties such as Suffolk are significantly influenced by the availability of on-call firefighters. Work continued throughout 2017/18 to improve on-call availability and response times. This work is ongoing as described in Section 6 (Operational Assurance).

Suffolk's locally-set Response Standards

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

Figure 6. Performance against agreed Response Standards

Performance Standard	Target	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Response Standard 1 - Attend 80% of property fires within 11 minutes of alert (1 st fire engine)	80%	72.74%	69.03%	67.23%
Response Standard 2 - Attend 80% of property fires within 16 minutes of alert (2 nd fire engine)	80%	77.27%	75.62%	72.99%
Response Standard 3 - Attend 80% of Road Traffic Collisions within 13 minutes of alert	80%	71.84%	70.03%	76.38%

N.B. Data is locally produced, from incident reporting forms (data recorded 1 October 2018). This information will be subject to validation at year-end.

Performance & ICT Review

In April 2016, in response to a identified 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 reliable IT processes. This was further confirmed in a 2017 review of Fire IT.

In response to the review findings, we appointed 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 and access efficient and cost-effective digital solutions.

8. Fire and Rescue National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework was revised and re-published in May 2018, setting out central government priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. The Framework identifies 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 revised Framework are for authorities to:

- make appropriate provision for fire **prevention** and **protection** activities and **response** to fire and rescue related incidents
- **identify and assess** the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related **risks** their areas face
- **collaborate** with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- be **accountable** to communities for the service they provide
- develop and maintain a **workforce** that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse

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

Prevention, Protection and Response

These are set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this document.

Identify and Assess Risk

Corporate risk management is completed within the council's internal risk management arrangements and monitored, reviewed, scored, and recorded on the council's JCAD system. Community Risk Management is managed through the national and local community risk registers maintained by Government and the Suffolk Resilience Forum.

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

To better identify and link FRS and partners' developing risks to our IRMP, a FRS Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) has been developed with the assistance of SCC Knowledge and Intelligence team. We are utilising the team's skills and knowledge of existing and developing risk within our County to improve our risk identification and mitigation strategies.

The SAoR is a strategic document that informs the Fire Authority's IRMP, and the associated Service Plan. The SAoR captures summary information about SFRS workforce, and response, prevention and protection data. It is informed by 38 different data sets and sources of information such as; Suffolk demographics, ethnicity and diversity, health, housing, deprivation, transport infrastructure, industry and associated risks, tourism, and environmental risks. The document concludes with a summary assessment of predicted changes in Suffolk over the next 20 years.

Our IRMP sets out how we assess, understand, and manage risk. It considers what creates risk, (e.g. analysis of deprivation and special risks); what that means for SFRS, (e.g. types of incidents expected, and attended); how that risk is assessed through National and Local Risk Registers; and how SFRS manages that risk through Prevention, Protection and Response activities and provision.

SFRS has a strong risk-reduction focus through the LRF, and collaboration with blue-light services and local authorities. These relationships help us form a clearer appreciation of the risk environment to develop approaches to manage risk to an acceptable level. We are making progress with gathering more information and building understanding of high-risk and COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazard) sites. We have assessed and gathered risk information for around 500 risk sites or premises and enjoy strong relationships with key providers such as Sizewell and Felixstowe Port. Site-specific response plans have been developed with site owners and are linked to the Community Risk Register.

The proposals for Sizewell C nuclear power station will continue to require significant analysis and a Service response to consultation phases. We will influence factors that encompass: emergency response; the built environment; road, rail and marine transport infrastructure; site safety; fire prevention and protection for workers and the public; recruitment and retention of our

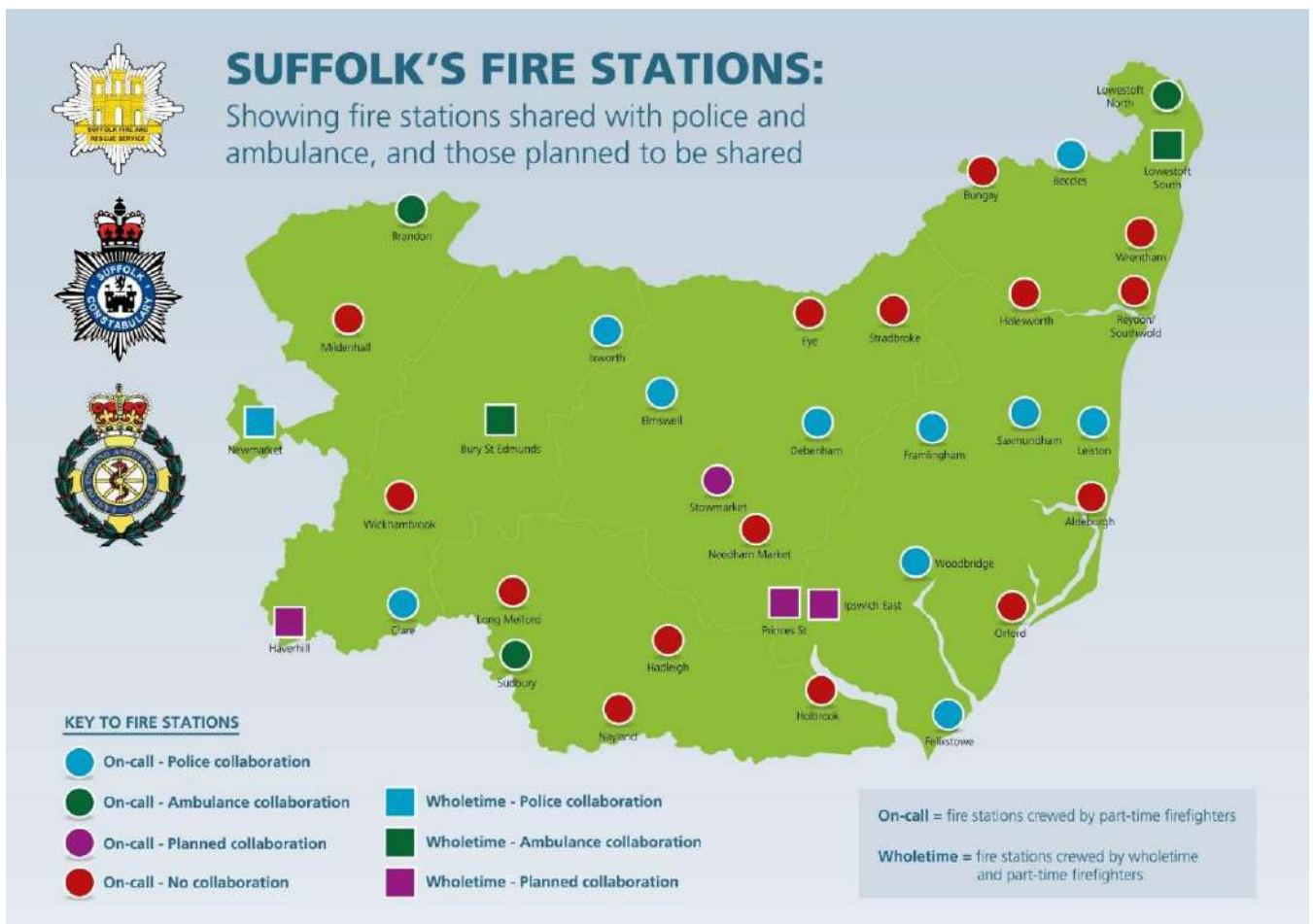
staff; ability to respond to foreseeable emergencies; correct equipment, vehicles, training and personnel. Further emerging risks are identified through the LRF risk assessment working group.

Our Risk-Based Inspection Programme directs the work of our Protection officers and ensures premises are inspected from a risk score based on occupancy, size, type, date of last inspection, number of fires and national and local trends or incidents.

Collaboration - Blue Light

In June 2014 Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service secured £4.93m DCLG grant funding to establish an emergency services shared estates programme. Our plan was to develop and share a number of fire stations with Police and/or Ambulance colleagues. This year we completed shared facilities in Leiston, Newmarket, Beccles and Sudbury, and now share 16 stations with blue light partners, with plans for a further four collaborations.

Feasibility studies for Stowmarket, Haverhill and the two Ipswich stations are under development and we aspire to share more sites with partners where opportunity occurs. In addition to creating more efficient public sector estates, we are assessing how the sharing of other resources and information can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service to the public.



Our commitment to property sharing has underpinned further collaboration. Examples include; Emergency Services Cadet Schemes, unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles (drones), analysis of cross-service operational and non-operational demand, Prevention initiatives, and closer operational working that supports national Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

Collaboration - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our current contract for supply and management of firefighting PPE ends in April 2019. SFRS representatives have been involved for nearly two years in a significant collaboration which includes almost half of UK fire and rescue services. Following in-depth technical assessment and subsequent staff consultation on their preferred PPE solution, replacement is scheduled to commence May 2019. Our intention is to provide a seamless transition from our exiting provider at the conclusion of the existing contract.

Collaboration - Combined Fire Control

Our Combined Control, based at Cambridgeshire HQ, has been in operation for more than seven years. It is established under a Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 16 agreement which details its governance, performance and funding.

The Control has a well-established suite of policies and procedures for call handling and incident support. These are based on national guidance and are subject to regular audit and review.

Combined Fire Control employs dynamic mobilising protocols and staff are empowered to deviate from the pre-determined attendance should the need arise. This flexibility can result in the resources sent being either increased or decreased, depending on the intelligence gathered during the call-handling phase of the emergency.

Control has effective fall-back arrangements in place with West Sussex Fire Control, with plans to create a networked link between the control rooms.

The venture has substantially reduced control and mobilising costs in both Services – c£400k per annum in Suffolk. Suffolk and Cambridgeshire were awarded a £3.6 million grant from Central Government to improve resilience and secure better technology for future 999 Fire Control arrangements. The benefit of this is being maximised through the shared service arrangement.

Collaboration - SCC

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is a service delivery area of the SCC Fire and Public Safety Directorate. As such, the Service benefits from generic ICT, Finance and Human Resource services provided through County Council shared services. Other corporate functions such as Property, Procurement, Facilities Management, Communications, Democratic Services and Legal are provided through the County Council or other parties.

Such provision of back office services is cost-effective and allows access to the extensive support and knowledge afforded by a major local authority employer.

Accountability - Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

An IRMP is a requirement of central government, through the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The IRMP must identify and assess all reasonably foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The IRMP is informed by both the established National and Community Risk Registers, linked through Local Resilience Forum, and Civil Contingencies responsibilities.

The IRMP must demonstrate effective consultation with the community, workforce, representative bodies and partner organisations. The current IRMP was subject to pre-consultation engagement, followed by a 14-week public and stakeholder consultation facilitated by an independent third party to ensure the finalised IRMP reflected public and other comment.

The Plan must cover a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary to ensure fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements of the Framework. This review must include reaction to regional or national events such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The Authority's current IRMP is available on our website [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-18](#). The authority's next three-year IRMP will be consulted upon in early 2019.

Accountability - Peer Challenge

Fire and Rescue services have not been subject to formal inspection since 2010. In early 2017, under a national change of fire service governance from DCLG to the Home Office, a new formal inspection regime for English fire and rescue services was proposed. Later in 2017, legislation was enacted that extended inspection powers of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICFRS) to include English fire and rescue services.

Prior to this change, SFRS accessed external peer challenge provided as a partnership by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Chief Fire Officers' Association. Suffolk's most recent review was carried out in November/December 2017. The [peer challenge report](#) is available on the council's website.

Feedback from the peer review team recognises we;

- Continue to be a well-run service with a well-deserved reputation for keeping its community safe and offering good value for money
- Are staffed with excellent people who are committed to the Service
- Are making good, measured progress on collaboration and, to a large extent, the Service is driving the collaboration agenda. There are sound partnerships with Suffolk Police and the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST). Work with the LRF is effective
- Have issues with organisational capacity, as it is the norm for most Services.
- Need to reprioritise existing work and analyse emerging priorities against capacity.
- Have started to address culture, equality and inclusion issues and are engaging well with staff to move the agenda forward. A more open culture of challenge and dialogue is emerging
- Understand that performance management could be improved

Accountability - HMICFRS

As a pre-cursor to a revised inspection regime, the new Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services selected three Services to pilot, test, and refine their proposed inspection programme. Suffolk was chosen, together with Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. Our Service was the first of the pilot Services visited, assisting in development of the programme and hosting inspectors for a trial inspection in March 2018. The learning for both parties was significant and gave SFRS opportunity to build upon the Peer Review outcomes with objective feedback from the inspectorate.

Learning from the review and the pilot inspection focused managers on areas for improvement and also highlighted successes. Suffolk will be formally inspected by HMICFRS in late Spring 2019.

Accountability - Transparency of Performance Information

All performance data required by the Home Office, including response times, incident numbers and types, fatalities and casualties is 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 being further developed to produce information internally for managers, Fire Strategy Group and Councillors. This system will help us monitor, manage and present operational and other performance information to a wide range of audiences, address any negative trends and confirm and identify positive performance.

Information is published on our website; '[Your Fire and Rescue Service at a Glance](#)'. This link displays headline figures commonly requested by the public, and is refreshed every six months.

Workforce - Health and Safety

Firefighting, responding to emergencies, training and other public safety-related activities presents risk to employees. Alongside statutory and common law requirements to provide a safe and healthy environment for our employees and those affected by our actions, SFRS continues to prioritise the development of systems and culture, identified in the annual [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2016-19](#)

There is clear structure within SCC and SFRS to support effective management of health, safety and wellbeing. The Chief Fire Officer chairs the Council's Safety Health and Wellbeing Board, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer represents the fire and rescue service and the Community Risk Management Area Commander chairs the fire and rescue service Health and Safety Committee.

The Health and Safety Manager role is a dedicated management post, with role responsibilities based on HSE guidance and Approved Codes of Practice.

'Safe systems of work' are established for operational incidents, training and general non-operational work activity, based on national guidance. They contain key risk and control measures and supporting information to assist firefighters resolve operational incidents effectively and safely. They also underpin training, assessment and development of staff.

All staff are provided with health and safety training relevant to their role, such as; senior managers' health and safety workshops, the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing safely qualifications. Selected managers are trained in accident investigation techniques to identify any potential failure in health and safety systems.

The Service monitors and reacts to health and safety data such as accidents and near misses. These are reported to the Fire Strategy Group, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office. Accidents and near miss occurrences are investigated.

In 2017/18, 57 personal injuries were recorded, a slight reduction from the 60 recorded in 2016/17. There were 26 vehicle accidents, an increase of 4 from the 22 reported in 2016/17. Three accidents were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) in 2017/18 a decrease of 50% from the previous year.

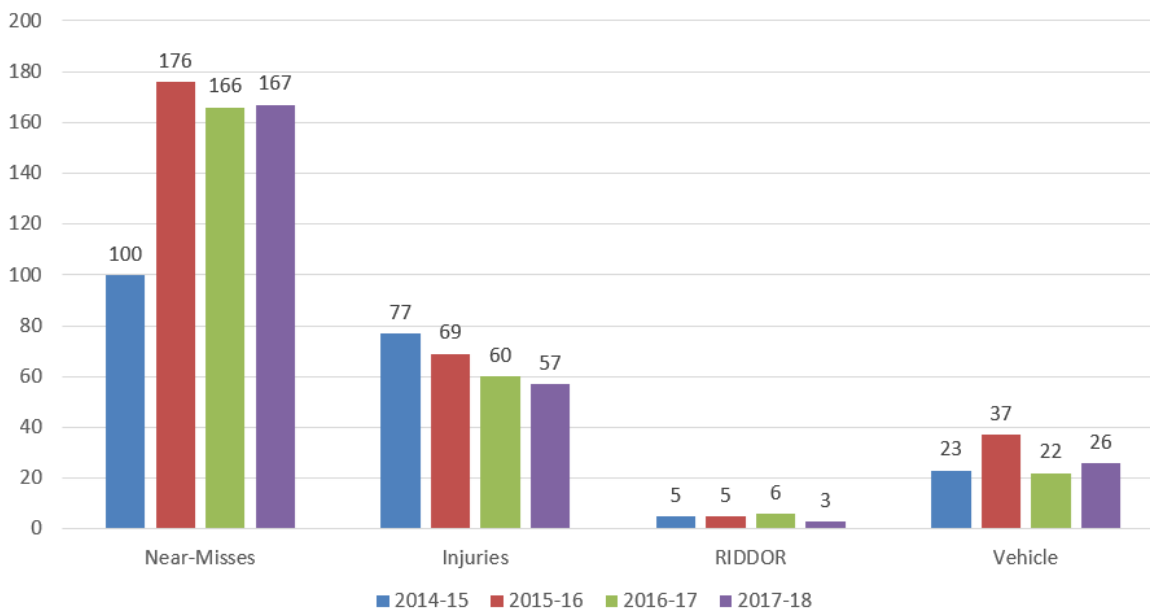
Staff reported 167 near-miss events in 2017/18, compared to 166 in 2016/17. Near-miss events are circumstances where staff report a potential hazard but where there is no associated accident or injury. Reporting near-miss incidents helps reduce the risk of accidents and staff are actively encouraged to report these. Safeguarding events are also recorded on the near-

miss system but they are progressed via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) through a senior duty officer.

Mirroring previous years, injuries during operational training were the most common.

Figure 7. Accidents and Near Misses 2014/15 – 2017/18

Reported Incidents – SFRS
Cumulative April 2014 – March 2018



Workforce - Wellbeing

Our approach to wellbeing is linked to SCC Working Well for Suffolk Strategy. The fire and rescue service accesses the benefits of the SCC Occupational Health contract, with specific FRS considerations. In recognition of emerging mental health issues, we have a developing Mental Health toolkit; post-incident mental health support is embedded and we are integral to the SCC launch and pilot of the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Our health, safety and wellbeing team works closely with managers, staff, and representative bodies. Focus on firefighter safety is front and back-loaded, evidenced through investment in training, PPE, appliances, equipment, innovative firefighting technologies, operational guidance and learning from incidents to inform new, safer approaches.

We support staff with issues such as dyslexia and, wherever possible, have made reasonable adjustments to ensure staff are retained and feel supported and valued.

Workforce - Training and Development

The training and development of personnel is a Service priority, reflected within our Service Plan. Training is provided to all firefighters, officers and non-operational staff throughout the year to improve knowledge, skills and experience in key areas, and ensure people 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. Collaborative opportunities with regional colleagues and partner agencies are explored to support Training and Development activity, including assistance in quality assurance.

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

The training development team oversees the development needs of our staff. 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.

Workforce - Staff engagement and focus groups

We are committed to be an improving organisation, evidenced through staff survey, focus groups, engagement with external consultants, and peer review. The outcomes from this comprehensive engagement and inward reflection are being developed into a Continuous Improvement Plan. This plan is the 'roadmap' for development of organisational culture and many of its workstreams have already started; e.g. the Staff Engagement Group work on Vision and Values.

We are determined our Service will, for everybody, be a great place to work 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 Equality and Inclusion groups. We continue to use positive action to increase recruitment of women and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

In early 2017 staff were encouraged to complete a survey that sought their views on organisational culture, leadership and inclusivity. Survey results will be addressed through the Continuous Improvement Plan and other avenues such as equality and inclusion work and the Strategic and Practitioner Equality groups. The groups will agree an Equality and Inclusion statement that will steer group activity to influence cultural change. Consultants, Equality Works (EW), reviewed our Equality and Inclusion culture through interviews and focus groups across the Service and fed back their findings during 2018.

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.

9. Future of Finance, Governance and Operational Assurance

Finance

Financial assurance is detailed within Section 4 of this document.

Governance

A 'governance' options appraisal was completed by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in autumn 2017. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 allows for a PCC to examine the benefits in taking control of the fire and rescue service; the Act also requires proactive blue light collaboration.

The PCC's appraisal did not identify significant benefits in a change of governance for the fire and rescue service; no further business case was therefore progressed. Scope for further collaboration with Suffolk Constabulary was identified and we continue to work closely with the PCC and police to reduce costs and provide more effective community risk management and blue-light response across Suffolk.

During 2017/18 we re-examined our internal planning structure and developed a revised, linked strategy. Plans for the next three years, aligned to the SCC Key Priorities and Business Plan, were finalised in April 2018. Service-specific plans and high-level statements are aligned to a new 'golden thread' that translates strategic SCC priorities through a number of stages into FRS tactical plans and individual responsibilities. When complete, this thread will be communicated, accessible and visible across the Service.

Operational Assurance

The Peer Review and pilot HMICFRS inspection of 2017/18 were catalysts for introduction of a more formal assurance structure within the Service. Review of the remit of the Fire Strategy Group precipitated the formation of three new assurance boards;

- Operational Assurance
- Performance and Improvement
- Project and Programme Management

All three boards consist of senior and specialist managers and report to the Fire Strategy Group. The boards have terms of reference that support the Service's improvement and transparency programmes and will provide an enhanced structure for efficient and effective management of resources. The boards will be embedded and further developed during 2018/19, supporting the 'Golden Thread', the requirements of the National Framework and HMICFRS improvement agenda.

A new cross-organisation Police and Fire demand analysis assessment will inform blue-light collaboration work, with terms of reference and high-level timeline now in place. 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.

Completion of the 2015-18 IRMP necessitates the consideration of a new IRMP which will include proposals related to Speed of Response measures, automatic fire alarm attendance, shift and duty systems, and how we respond to road traffic collisions and non-fire emergencies.

Further plans include:

- Investment in Control infrastructure and review of performance
- Embedding of our Continuous Improvement Plan
- Improved Equality and Diversity training and development
- Programme and project management approach
- Implementation of smartphone-based 'SFRS Communications App'
- Externally provided Inclusive Leadership Programme
- Refresh of fire engine mobile data terminals

10. Links to Key Documents

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

[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](#)

[Police and Crime Act 2017](#)

[Your Fire and Rescue Service at a Glance](#)