

Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2012

1. Background

East Sussex Fire Authority, as the authority which runs East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of Corporate Governance which facilitates the effective exercise of the Fire Authority's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Department of Communities and Local Government recognise "proper practice" in relation to Corporate Governance, as contained in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2007)*. The new "proper practice" builds on existing disclosure statement requirements by extending the existing legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes relating to the whole organisation and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its community.

This Annual Governance Statement summarises how the Fire Authority has complied with its Local Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. A copy of the Local Code is on our website at www.esfrs.org or can be obtained from the Fire Authority's Clerk.

2. Scope of responsibility

East Sussex Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Fire Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The latest required arrangements are set out in new DCLG guidance issued in 2011/12 which have been included the latest version of our Service Planning, Use of Resources and Value for Money Strategy. In discharging this overall responsibility, Members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the Fire Authority's affairs, the effective exercise of its functions, the management of risk and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal. To this end, East Sussex Fire Authority has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.

3. Purpose of the governance framework

Good governance is about how a local authority, including a Fire Authority, ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Our governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Fire Authority is directed and controlled. Through effective governance, the Fire Authority is accountable to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community.

The Fire Authority has agreed procedures forming a constitution which sets out how it operates, how decisions are made and the processes which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to the community. Many of these processes are required by statute, while the Fire Authority has determined others locally. The constitution sets out the basic rules governing its formal business.

From 2007/08, the governance responsibilities were charged to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and also to the Standards Panel. The role of approving this Statement and recommending the Code of Corporate Governance for adoption by the full Fire Authority falls to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. Also the responsibility for the approval of the Statement of Accounts and the related Annual Governance Report falls to this same Panel.

The Local Code of Corporate Governance can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that the Fire Authority achieves its aim of good governance. Equally, the Fire Authority's system of internal control is designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement our policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and impact of those risks being realised and to manage those risks efficiently, effectively and economically. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that our policies, aims and objectives are achieved.

The Local Code, which was substantially revised during 2008/09, and the system of internal control have been in place at East Sussex Fire Authority since 31 March 2009.

4. Policy and decision making

In discharging its statutory duties in the provision of services the Fire Authority's constitution provides details of the decision making process for the Fire Authority as a whole. The Fire Authority's constitution is available on our website and is reviewed by the Monitoring Officer on a regular basis and regular reports are received by the relevant Panels relating to proposed changes. The Fire Authority's key Panel for policy and resource planning is the Policy & Resources Panel. Reports of all Panel meetings are presented to the full Fire Authority for consideration at its next meeting. All Fire Authority and Panel meetings held are open to the public, unless the items being discussed are considered to be private under the Local Government Act 1972; these will include staffing, legal matters and those of a contractual nature.

All Fire Authority and Panel agendas are posted on the Fire Authority website and copies of agendas are posted at Service Headquarters and issued for posting at Brighton & Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council main reception offices.

5. Establishment and monitoring of corporate and service objectives

The Fire Authority's Medium Term Plan (five year) is approved by Members and provides details of the medium term corporate priorities and community risks it is seeking to improve. The Fire Authority's Annual Plan summarises the improvement agenda for the forthcoming year to meet our 3 Strategic Aims. Targets for the forthcoming year are also provided along with a summary of its performance achievements for the previous year. Targets are reviewed and updated on an annual basis and, where appropriate, further refined during the year based upon actual results.

The Annual Plan also sets out a key summary of resources being used to meet service commitments.

Copies of both documents can be found on our website at: <http://www.esfrs.org>. The Annual Plan establishes in detail our improvement priorities and these feed down through to Corporate Business Plans for each Directorate to follow as well as our Borough Plans for each of our 6 Borough Command areas and local station action plans. Our personnel can then understand where they fit into achieving our overall policy priorities and staff development appraisals help to ensure there is a "Golden Thread" from the strategic to each functional area.

Our key Performance Plans include information on our corporately agreed performance targets. These targets are cascaded through all the Plans and are time specific. Performance is monitored by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on a quarterly basis giving details of the progress to date and what management action is being taken to correct any adverse performance. Work was completed in 2010/11 to further refine the performance targets to a reduced set of key indicators with supporting performance measures to focus strategic attention on key issues.

Since 2009/10, our key plans have provided improved community profiling information commensurate with the particular aims of the Plans. Local community risk information is also being included to ensure they are properly aligned to meet the diverse needs of local communities and help to mitigate the community risks across our local areas. This key intelligence will help us to ensure our services are prioritised to meet the greatest needs of vulnerable people and work with our partners to ensure our collective efforts protect them from life risk and injury.

6. Audit Commission Annual Audit Letter 2010/11

The Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) ceased in 2010/11 following the change in government, although the complementary Operational Assessment regime continues in force. Copies of all previous Audit Commission assessments are available on our website at www.esfrs.org and a summary of their conclusions is also included in our Annual Plan. The most recent Audit Commission Annual Audit Letter was considered by the Fire Authority in December 2011, which summarised the Fire Authority's current arrangements as set out below:

“I considered whether the Authority is managing and using its money, time and people to deliver value for money. I assessed your performance against the criteria specified by the Audit Commission and have reported the outcome as the value for money (VFM) conclusion. The Authority has adequate arrangements to secure, economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. My conclusion on each area is set out below:

Value for money criteria and key messages

Criterion	Key Messages
1. Financial resilience	
The organisation has proper arrangements in place to secure financial resilience.	
Focus for 2010/11:	
<p>The organisation has robust systems and processes to manage effectively financial risks and opportunities, and to secure a stable financial position that enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>East Sussex Fire Authority has good systems and processes in place to manage financial risks. Its corporate governance arrangements are clearly documented and are adhered to. The leadership team has a clear understanding of the financial challenges faced by the organisation and this has been communicated in the Corporate Plan and budget setting reports. The Authority has brought forward a range of measures to ensure the continued delivery of the Authority’s priorities in the future. A review of service provision in rural areas has been completed and it has recently launched consultation on further collaboration or merger with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>The Authority’s financial planning and budgetary control is strong. It has a history of managing effectively within available resources. In 2010/11 there was a 1.2 per cent under spend.</p> <p>The Authority has continued to make investments in its property, vehicles and equipment, spending £2.7 million in 2010/11, without needing to increase borrowing. It has reviewed and scaled down the future capital programme to match the level of expected resources and avoid additional borrowing.</p>

2. Securing economy efficiency and effectiveness	
The organisation has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.	
Focus for 2010/11:	
The organisation is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, for example by achieving cost reductions and by improving efficiency and productivity.	East Sussex Fire Authority has good arrangements which allow it to challenge and prioritise resources. It has an established planning framework. A mature strategic plan is supported by divisional plans and a review process to monitor delivery of priorities. The plan and priorities are developed in consultation with stakeholders. There is ongoing monitoring and scrutiny of performance and challenge where targets are not being achieved. The Authority's medium term financial plan has been agreed, which includes a programme of savings to be implemented in 2011/12 and 2012/13, with a further savings package approved in principal for 2013/14 and future years. These plans are aside from potential savings which may result from the outcome of the consultation on further collaboration or merger.

The effective targeting and usage of our resources has always been a Fire Authority as well as a Service corporate priority, and for 2011/12 this is being achieved in several ways:

Securing Financial resilience

- the production of an effective Five Year Financial Strategy which is supported by annual service planning and related budget setting on the most prudent principles.
- the mature corporate risk assessment processes in place
- the investments made and continuing to be made on capital and asset infrastructure
- Investing unused Balances to fund Capital investment to minimise need for borrowing
- Full business appraisals for every financial investment
- Agreeing a new policy for recruitment that requires a full business case to be completed prior to proceeding to recruit to a vacancy for CMT approval.

Prioritising resources within tighter budgets

- The latest IRMP has unlocked capital resources in Service housing to release it for operational capital investment over the next 4 years which will yield a full year revenue budget saving in excess of £0.5m per annum in relation to essential capital spending.

- A previous, yet sustained, fundamental review of the Capital Programme has taken place to meet reduced resourcing projections which has yielded an immediate revenue saving well in excess of £0.5m per annum for the foreseeable future
- A comprehensive service prioritisation programme is underway that has ensured the Fire Authority's Medium Term Plan is balanced in terms of the expected 25% reductions in formula grant over the next four years until 2015/16.
- The preparation of a draft business case for merger/increased collaboration with West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (WSFRS) is in progress. (see below for current status)
- A decision to merge the existing control rooms of ESFRS and WSFRS into a Sussex Control Centre with an implementation project now underway for delivery in the second half of 2013/14.

The draft business case for increased collaboration and possible merger was completed following a successful public consultation outcome in the autumn of 2011, with the exception of some key financial information. After the work on the business case was commenced, the Government announced the Local Government Resources Review which, if approved, will have fundamental consequences on local government funding arrangements. As such the DCLG was unable to assist or respective authorities with the projected grant information for a new Sussex CFA and, as such, the medium term financial planning work could not be finalised and financial settlement issues could not be completed. DCLG promised to assist both authorities with the required information as soon as it is possible to do so. The whole position was to be reviewed in December 2012 to assess whether the business case for merger could be completed and respective decisions made by both authorities as to whether to apply to the DCLG for a voluntary combination order for a possible merger date of 1.4.2014. However, West Sussex County Council has recently advised that it does not consider a merger to be possible for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile work on increased collaboration continues to take place, the most significant of which is the decision already taken to create a Sussex Control Centre which is expected to deliver joint savings of £0.95m per annum once implemented in 2013/14.

7. Complaints and confidential reporting policies

The Fire Authority operates a formal complaints procedure which is available to both staff and stakeholders either on request or on our website. The procedure is well documented. The Complaints Investigation Officer formally investigates every complaint and a summary of complaints made is reported to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel in September each year. The Fire Authority has dealt with less than 30 complaints each year for the last five years. There have been no findings of maladministration against the Fire Authority for 2011/12.

The Fire Authority also has a Whistleblowing Policy along with an Anti Fraud & Corruption Strategy. Staff are informed of these at their induction and are reminded on a regular basis. Both the Whistleblowing Policy and Anti Fraud Strategy are reviewed and updated where necessary on a regular basis and leaflets issued to all staff. One potential issue was reported under the Fire Authority whistleblowing arrangements in 2011/12, but following investigation, was found to be unsubstantiated, but did lead to a further tightening of internal controls and policy clarifications. In April 2011, an Employment Tribunal claim was received from a previous employee and has now been settled.

8. Compliance

The Fire Authority has a duty to ensure that all activities undertaken are in accordance with the law. This is discharged in part by the Fire Authority's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders. Other policies or strategies covering both internal and external issues are available to staff and the public via the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service intranet and our Fire Authority internet sites respectively and can be found on the Fire Authority website at www.esfrs.org These include:

- Anti-fraud Strategy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Freedom of Information

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service also has a complementary set of Manuals to ensure operational, personnel, health, safety and welfare, financial procedures and corporate administrative arrangements are executed effectively. All strategies, policies and Manuals are allocated to a lead officer who is responsible for the periodic review and updating of each.

9. Review of effectiveness

East Sussex Fire Authority reviews the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, including its system of internal control, on a continual basis. This review of effectiveness is informed by:

1. the work of Members through the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and the Standards Panel as well as the full Fire Authority;
2. the work of Corporate Management Team as well as other senior managers within East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, who have primary responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment;
3. the Statement of Internal Financial Control and the work of the Treasurer of the Fire Authority as the Fire Authority's Chief Financial Officer and officers of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service with financial management responsibilities;
4. the work of the Monitoring Officer (who is also the Head of Law at Brighton & Hove City Council); and officers of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service with corporate governance responsibilities;
5. the annual risk management report and periodic review of strategic risks conducted by Corporate Management Team and considered by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel;

6. the work of the internal audit service including their annual report and opinion;
7. the external auditors in their various audit and annual governance reports;
8. the Audit Commission's assessment processes for governance and internal control arrangements.
9. any judgements made by a range of external inspection and other statutory bodies including the Local Government Ombudsman and the Standards Board for England (to be disbanded) (no referrals have been reported by either organisations in 2011/12).

10. Key elements of the governance and internal control environments

The key elements that comprise the Fire Authority's governance arrangements are set out in the Local Code and they include:

Fire Authority Constitutional arrangements

- the Fire Authority's constitution which sets out clear arrangements for decision making, scrutiny, communication and the delegation of powers to officers and Members;
- codes of conduct for Members and employees which set out clear expectations for standards of behaviour;
- a clear framework for financial governance based on Contract Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Standard Financial Procedures;
- a risk management strategy and detailed risk management framework, which takes account of both strategic and operational risks and ensures that they are appropriately managed and controlled;
- Fire Authority Panels (committees of Members of the Authority) with clear responsibilities for governance, audit and standards;
- established arrangements for dealing with complaints and whistle-blowing, and combating fraud and corruption.
- The Fire Authority has appointed the Director of Corporate Resources at East Sussex County Council as its Treasurer who fulfils the role of the Chief Finance Officer. The Treasurer or their Deputy, attends all CFA and Panel meetings and is represented on the Corporate Management Team by the Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Services) and the Director of Financial Services. The Fire Authority is satisfied that these arrangements and its financial management more generally comply in all material respects with the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer. "

Strategies

- a range of supporting Strategies that link the constitutional arrangements with our Vision, Strategic, Aims, supporting corporate objectives and our values which we wish to uphold in everything we do. It also provides links to the functions of the organisation.

Performance Plans

- an established medium term planning process including the process for reconciling policy priorities with financial resources, which takes account of the need to improve both customer focus and efficiency; and which feeds into:
 - a Medium Term Plan that sets out our medium term vision for our local communities and the outcomes we intend to achieve for them. Included in it is the Community Risk Management (Integrated Risk Management) Plan that covers a three year period detailing the key service priorities, proposed areas for review over the medium term and to seeks consultation and active engagement with our affected local communities through the lifetime of the Plan;
 - an Annual Plan that sets out our annual aims and objectives for our local communities and the outcomes we intend to achieve for them each year;
 - 4 Directorate Business Plans that identify the functional work targets across the organisation to meet the strategic aims;
 - related Borough Plans that identify the functional work targets across the 6 Borough Commands for local stations to deliver local services targeted to their needs and summarise local community profiles and risk and how the Plan will help to support those with particular and diverse needs as well as mitigate local risks.

Performance Management Framework

- a business planning and performance management framework which includes setting clear objectives and targets, both financial and otherwise;
- regular reporting of performance against the Fire Authority's key corporate objectives, national and local performance indicators and their related performance improvement targets as set out in the Annual Plan, to officers and Members;
- established budgeting systems, clear budget management guidance and regular reporting of financial performance against budget forecasts to officers and Members;
- delegated financial management processes to promote ownership of financial issues within our four Directorates;
- a partnership review framework that ensures our partnership working arrangements meet the objectives set;
- a range of policies and processes designed to ensure best practice and legal compliance for personnel matters, IT security, access to information, data protection and project management;
- Borough Commanders attend CMT on a quarterly basis to report on their respective teams' performance.

Operational Assurance

- the Operational Assurance action plan is being completed to the agreed timetable set and monitored by CMT;
- the Fire Authority has agreed the continued, but tapered, funding for the Operational Improvement Team;
- the Retained Duty System contracts have been revised to secure more effective and resilient retained appliance availability;

- a review of the Incident Command System is underway to provide a resilient command and supervision structure to be supported by an operational assurance framework that assesses our performance at all levels of incidents;
- business continuity plans are in place and testing commenced in 2011/12 and will continue in 2012/13;
- the feasibility study for the Sussex Control Centre is now providing a basis on which to plan for the future effectiveness of our call handling providing dynamic mobilising of appliances based upon their ability to attend quickest not on location of fire station.

People and organisational development

- assessment under the Equality Framework ensures legal compliance as well as fundamental linkage with business aims schemes for identifying the development needs of Members and officers, supported by appropriate training; ESFRS has just received 'Excellence' as an outcome to the latest external peer review.
- development programme in place for Corporate Management Team learning and development approaches to not only ensure operational or professional competencies are sustained and enhanced, but building our middle managers to be our local community leaders;
- learning and development competency framework which received a national commendation in 2010/11;
- strategies for communication and consultation with our key stakeholders, partners and our local communities;
- achievement of Charter status for Member Learning & Development, following an amended induction and development programme along with a Member mentoring scheme;
- reviewed and implemented new procedures for discipline, grievance, attendance and performance management ;
- introduced managing change policy (redundancy) and a flexible retirement package;
- revision of staff contracts to improve capacity.
- introduction of the new Firewatch HR and training software in early 2012/13 following the project creation in 2011/12.

Information Management

- the Business Plan incorporates developing frameworks including the Information Technology Infrastructure Library V3 (ITIL V3) to focus on organisational objectives and drive up productivity with emphasis on performance and quality.
- Information Management Strategy is designed to provide IT solutions to organisational business requirements and also assign resources for acquiring or developing such solutions. The Strategy also maps the solutions to the organisational objectives thereby providing a link between the solutions and the business objectives it supports.
- the Strategy is based upon a fundamental principle of providing IT solutions by not limiting technologies supplied by Microsoft or Novell thereby maintaining a platform that can support either system or format.

- the Strategy is introducing a unified communication system to foster collaborative working, sharing of information and task management. This will negate the need to circulate or store multiple copies of the same information.
- External and internal IT audit reviews. Regular external and internal audits take place on our IT infrastructure. An external audit undertaken in 2010/11 on IT security arrangements required the implementation of a number of key actions which have been monitored by CMT throughout 2011/12. All high and medium priority actions are scheduled for completion to a defined timetable until all key priorities have been addressed. This work has been further supported by external consultants who are working with both Services on the Sussex Control Centre project and related joint IT issues. A revisit from the external auditors to assess progress with action plan implementation will take place in 2012/13/

Corporate Risk and Insurance

- corporate risk management arrangements are mature and corporate training is refreshed annually with different approaches being used to ensure continual improvement in skill sets and competencies.
- a fundamental review of corporate insurance cover took place in 2010/11 to consider current and future risks and costs of insurance relative to those risks. The review was considered by Corporate Management Team and whilst most of the portfolio remained unchanged, decisions were taken to enhance cover in some areas and raise excesses on motor insurances and establish an internal fund to meet the self-insured costs as this was likely to be cheaper over the long term. No other changes in insurance cover have taken place in 2011/12.

11. Incident at Marlie Farm

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) undertook a review of the work undertaken by East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service following the incident at Marlie Farm, East Sussex on 3 December 2006 where two personnel from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service tragically lost their lives. A formal letter was received from the HSE on 19 March 2008 raising concerns on matters relating to operational communication to station personnel, operational training and risk management arrangements. A formal action plan was agreed to ensure all issues raised have been, or are being substantially resolved, within the timescale set by the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Executive reviewed the final position and approved the actions taken which demonstrated that ESFRS met all the concerns raised. Civil claims are being handled via our insurers.

12. Equality and Diversity

ESFRS met the latest 'Achieving Excellence Standard' of the Equality Standard for Local Government in March 2012. This involved all parts of the organisation ensuring that not only are our employment practices sound, but diversity and equality principles are embedded in everything we do. All our strategies have had Equality Impact Assessments completed on them, and the strategies adapted accordingly.

13. Assurance and Significant Governance Issues

No assurance can ever be absolute; however this statement seeks to provide a reasonable assurance that there are no significant weaknesses in the Fire Authority's governance arrangements. On the basis of the review of the sources of assurance set out in this statement, we are satisfied that the Fire Authority has in place satisfactory governance arrangements which are operating effectively.

A major review of our constitutional framework took place in 2007/08. A further update took place in 2009/10 with changes approved for the release of the Members' Handbook in July 2010. Various updating for legislative changes or internal requirements takes place throughout the year with a new Handbook being released for the AGM in June each year.

Other related development work in 2011/12 has now been completed. The year's work has included:

- Keeping under review the effectiveness of the final implementation of the action plan achieved in 2010/11 arising from the self-assessment of our corporate governance arrangements using the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance.
- Keeping under review the action plan following the original self-assessment review of Managing the Risk of Fraud and in line with all subsequent Audit Commission /CIPFA guidance; again, our base level of compliance was good and the remaining action points have been completed. The latest Audit Commission guidance has also been reviewed, a compliance assessment undertaken and reported to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel for monitoring purposes.
- Continuing to finalise our directorate/functional business continuity plans to the previously agreed corporate template so that every functional area can relocate and continue to work in an alternative premises, if required to meet our own responsibilities and are in keeping with our Civil Resilience responsibilities.
- Continuing to develop our directorate business plans to include the new challenges identified by the Audit Commission for managing the finances, governing the business and managing the resources now assisted by using Interplan so that our business plans are kept up to date throughout the year and corporate monitoring takes place more easily.
- Continuing to develop the Fire Authority's information security policy and put in place consistent and robust approaches to information security management in line with relevant national standards – the monitoring of which takes place on a quarterly basis by CMT.

On the basis of the review of the sources of assurance set out in this statement, we are satisfied that the Fire Authority also has in place a satisfactory system of internal control which is operating effectively. On the basis of the internal audit work completed, it is internal audit's opinion that "the Fire Authority has in place a sound framework of internal control that provides a reasonable assurance regarding the efficient and effective achievement of its objectives."

Although Internal Audit was able to provide this assurance, the Internal Annual Report for 2011/12 drew to the attention of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel weaknesses in the control environment of the Lewes and Bexhill refurbishment project.

Despite these weaknesses, the overall opinion reflected the positive response by management to our recommendations and its commitment to addressing the issues identified as well as other recommendations made in other audit reports. Clearly, it is important that all agreed actions are completed to the timescales set and formal follow up reviews will be undertaken by internal audit during 2012/13, as appropriate. The respective senior managers within ESFRS have given their commitment to ensure that all the issues identified are addressed. Apart from these latter issues, we have not identified any significant gaps in assurance over key risks or significant governance and internal control issues. The Fire Authority will continue to regularly monitor issues that may seriously prejudice or prevent achievement of its key objectives through its strategic risk review process.

Both governance and internal control arrangements must be kept under review to ensure that they continue to operate effectively and meet changing legislative needs, reflect best practice and our intention to achieve excellence in all our activities.

The Fire Authority has progressed with a number of initiatives to enhance its governance arrangements which will continue for 2012/13 and beyond, as follows:

- Continue to implement outcomes achieved and further develop its strategic service prioritisation approach to assist with the bleaker financial context facing the whole of the public sector for the foreseeable future;
- Continue to rationalise the business agenda for the Fire Authority and its Main Panels to improve focus on strategic decision making and use the Members seminars and bulletins for information sharing;
- Further develop the Member Lead arrangements where 16 of the 18 members on the Fire Authority now have a lead responsibility for progressing a strategic issue and reporting progress to fellow Fire Authority members, as supported by ESFRS staff and CFA appointed officers as appropriate;
- Continue to improve in embedding equality and diversity principles and practices following the 'Achieving Excellence' Equality Standard for Local Government;
- Enhance management and control over energy usage and promote its environment strategy objectives to gain commitment from all staff and improve performance across all organisational activities;
- Complete our community profiling development work including the development of social marketing concepts to aid local and strategic decision making by better understanding the needs of our local communities and the diverse needs of individuals within our local area and ensure the information can be accessed and used simply and effectively across the organisation by having the right support systems and information management processes in place;
- Complete the action plans following the recent self-assessments identified above;
- Keep under review corporate health, safety and welfare arrangements including the health and safety values within the organisation;
- Make further adaptations, if required, to our constitutional arrangements and delegations to meet requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health and Localism Acts.

Actions plans will be put into place to address these issues, and their implementation will be monitored and reviewed.

Councillor Paul Sparks
VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY
and
CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL

Desmond Prichard
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER &
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

25 May 2012