

# Communities Committee

Item No.....

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>NRFS Annual Statement of Assurance 2015/16</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2017</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe - Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> This report enables the County Council, as the Fire and Rescue Authority for Norfolk, to meet its statutory obligations to produce an annual Statement of Assurance.	

## Executive Summary

Fire and Rescue Authorities have a legal duty to provide both local communities and the Government with an annual Statement of Assurance that covers what they are doing to implement the local Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to meet the requirements of the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2012. The statement primarily looks backward to the previous financial year and must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. It is not expected to duplicate existing information but to signpost to where it can be found.

Norfolk County Council is the Fire and Rescue Authority for Norfolk with these responsibilities being carried out by the Communities Committee. Members of this committee are requested to review and approve the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2015/16.

## Recommendation

- **To note the assurances that financial, governance and operational management of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service meet statutory requirements.**
- **To consider and approve the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2015/16 (Appendix 1).**

## 1. Proposal

- 1.1 Fire and Rescue Authorities have a legal duty to provide both local communities and the Government with an annual Statement of Assurance that covers what they are doing to implement the local Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to meet the requirements of the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2012. The statement is mainly backward looking to the previous financial year and must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and is not expected to duplicate existing information but to signpost to where it can be found.

- 1.2 Government guidance states “*Fire and Rescue authorities may wish to include a section in their statements of assurance on any potential improvements they have identified across their accounting, governance or operational responsibilities to communities, particularly where plans are underway*”. The following areas are highlighted in our Statement of Assurance 2015/16:

Accounting

- A dedicated Finance Business Manager will strengthen financial management and support the delivery of a balanced budget

Governance:

- We will publish more data online and in an annual report to increase transparency.
- Creation of a new Audit and Review team to co-ordinate and improve internal scrutiny of service delivery and link with the Finance Business Manager.

Operational assurance:

- We will develop our IRMP Action Plan which will include restructuring the service and making some changes to the way we use resources to achieve best operational effect.
- We will increase collaboration with other services, including moving our Control room to our shared Headquarters with Norfolk Constabulary at Wymondham.
- We will develop workforce and succession plans to ensure we have the employees we need for the future.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2012 sets out the Government’s priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England. These are high level expectations that guide the development of the IRMP. The IRMP is a strategic plan that sets out the Fire and Rescue Service’s objectives for at least a three year period and it is part of the Norfolk County Council Policy Framework.
- 2.2 The purpose of the IRMP process is for fire and rescue authorities to consider and evaluate all risks to communities including risk to life, the economy, heritage and the environment and then to determine the use of resources to meet the requirements of the risks. Operational priorities and responses are locally determined as part of the process and through engagement with a broad range of partners across the public, business and voluntary sectors and members of local communities. The development of the IRMP provides an opportunity for a fundamental review of fire and rescue provision in Norfolk. Norfolk’s Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-20 was endorsed by Full Council in February 2016.

### **3. Evidence**

- 3.1 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is a county fire and rescue service that operates within the financial, governance and performance frameworks of the County Council. These corporate systems are subject to annual audit and review so the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2015/16 links to corporate information wherever possible, rather than duplicate it.
- 3.2 There is 'light touch' guidance on what Statements of Assurance should cover with authorities able to judge for themselves what to include according to local need and circumstance. However, there is an expectation that as a minimum it should include:
- Financial information – the Council's Statement of Accounts.
  - Governance arrangements – the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
  - Operational matters – the IRMP, compliance with legislation, cross border and multi-agency working arrangements.
  - Framework requirements – assurance the Service meets the National Framework.
  - Future developments – plans in place to deliver improvements to communities.
- 3.3 The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2015/16 (Appendix 1) has been devised as a short, accessible summary document on the basis that it draws together a wide range of information on performance, finance, governance and planning that is already in the public domain. Rather than reproduce all of this material, internet links are provided to previously published documents.

### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Statement of Assurance provides assurance that NFRS's budgets are being governed and managed in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

### **5. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 5.1 The Statement of Assurance must take into account any issues which may affect operational competence or delivery, such as when advice is received under health and safety of other legislation, and inform communities that these matters have been considered and, where appropriate acted on.

### **6. Background Documents**

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-20  
<http://www.norfolkfireservice.gov.uk/nfrs/nfrs-business/publications/irmp-integrated-risk-management-plan-2014-17>

Department for Communities and Local Government (2013) Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statements-of-assurance-for-fire-and-rescue-authorities-in-england>

## **Officer Contact**

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