

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Overview & Audit Committee
DATE OF MEETING	9 March 2016
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Watson (Chairman, Overview & Audit Committee)
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	2014/15 Statement of Assurance
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The revised Fire and Rescue National Framework, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in July 2012, introduced the requirement for fire and rescue authorities in England to produce a 'statement of assurance' on an annual basis. The first statements were published in the 2013/14 financial year. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's first statement of assurance for 2012/13 was reviewed and approved by the Overview and Audit Committee on 12 March 2014 & the 2013/14 statement on 11 March 2015.</p> <p>The statements are intended to provide assurance to the public on financial, governance and operational matters and demonstrate that National Framework requirements, including those relating to integrated risk management planning, are being met.</p> <p>The precise form, content and methodology used to prepare the statements are left to local discretion. Where authorities "<i>have already set out relevant information that is clear, accessible, and user-friendly within existing documents</i>" they may draw on these in preparing their statements of assurance.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority already produces and publishes a variety of separate statements relating to financial, governance and operational performance such as the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Financial Statements. The draft 2014/15 Statement of Assurance, shown at Annex A, draws on, summarises and includes relevant extracts from these more detailed assessments. Officers are of the view that collectively the assurance processes underpinning the range of existing statements covers the scope and nature of what is required for the statement of assurance.</p> <p>The statement of assurance should be signed off by an</p>

	<p>elected member of the authority who is able to take responsibility for its contents. It is for authorities to decide who the most appropriate person is.</p> <p>In respect of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, officers are of the view that the most appropriate person is the Chairman of the Overview and Audit Committee.</p>
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the 2014/15 Statement of Assurance be approved for signature by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer.
RISK MANAGEMENT	Financial, governance and operational assurance processes form part of the Authority's risk management framework. The effectiveness of these contributes to the identification, reduction and mitigation of corporate and operational risks.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	There are no direct financial implications arising from the introduction of the statement of assurance.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) provides the statutory authority for the National Framework and requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to 'have regard' to it in carrying out their functions. However, Section 22 of the Act gives the Secretary of State the power to intervene if he considers that "<i>...a fire and rescue authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework prepared under section 21</i>".</p> <p>Also "<i>The Secretary of State must report to Parliament on—</i></p> <p>(a) the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Framework prepared under section 21;</p> <p>(b) any steps taken by him for the purpose of securing that fire and rescue authorities act in accordance with the Framework".</p> <p>The Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information by the Secretary of State when preparing biennial reports required by section 25 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004.</p>
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION	The statement is designed to provide assurance in relation to the operations of the Authority and details any relevant collaborative work with the other Thames Valley Fire Authorities and other agencies.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	There are no direct health and safety implications arising from this report.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>Communication and consultation</p> <p>The officers with responsibility for the areas reported on in the Statement of Assurance have been responsible for supplying the information and responses necessary for its preparation.</p>
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>The requirement for Statements of Assurance arose from the revisions to the National Framework published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in July 2012. An evaluation of the implications of the new Framework was reported to the Fire Authority at its 27 September 2012 meeting:</p> <p>http://www.bucksfire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E6EE2A89-79F6-45B3-B02E-CE3675D252A3/0/270912Agendaandreports.pdf</p> <p>The Authority's first Statement of Assurance for 2012/13 was approved by the Overview and Audit Committee on 12 March 2014:</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/2914/0620/7328/ITEM5201213StatementofAssurance.pdf</p> <p>The 2013/14 Statement of Assurance was approved on 11 March 2015:</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/1114/2529/7877/Overview_Audit_Committee_Agenda_Pack_110315.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	<p>Annex A: Draft 2014/15 Statement of Assurance</p> <p>Annex B: CLG Guidance on Statements of Assurance</p>
TIME REQUIRED	15 Minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Stuart Gowanlock</p> <p>sgowanlock@bucksfire.gov.uk</p> <p>01296 744435</p>