

Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service

Annual Assurance Statement for the year 2012/13

The revised Fire and Rescue National Framework was published in July 2012. The Framework sets out the requirement for all English fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) to provide an annual assurance statement on financial, governance and operational matters and to demonstrate how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Further guidance on these statements was issued by Government in May 2013 with an expectation that the first statements would be published within the financial year 2013 / 14 and annually thereafter. This is the first annual statement of assurance for the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service and is in effect a look back on 2012/13.

I certify that this Statement of Assurance gives a true and fair view of the financial, governance and operational arrangements that the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

Cllr Phil Jordan

Cabinet Member for Public Protection

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Jordan', with a horizontal line underneath.

Steve Apter

Chief Fire Officer

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Apter', with a horizontal line underneath.

Scope of responsibility

The Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (IWRS), is the statutory fire and rescue service for the Isle of Wight, and is part of the Unitary Authority of the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) which is also the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA).

The purpose of this Statement of Assurance is to provide information in an accessible way. The Statement also demonstrates how IWFRS has had due regard to the expectations set out in its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the requirements placed upon fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) by Government in the Framework . However, there is also a realisation that information already exists and should not be duplicated. Therefore, where this is the case, and in particular within a County Fire Authority, readers are directed through hyperlinks to that information.

Background

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the Act”) is the core legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales and details the statutory responsibilities of FRA's. Under the Act FRA's have a statutory duty to provide a fire and rescue service that;

- is equipped to extinguish fires,
- protect life and property from fires and other incidents,
- rescue people from road traffic collisions
- and respond to other emergencies.

Adequate provision must be made to receive and respond to calls for assistance, to ensure staff are properly trained and equipped and to gather information to facilitate delivery of an effective service. The Act also includes a statutory duty for FRA's to provide communities with fire safety education and advice with the aim of reducing deaths and injuries from fire and other incidents.

Under the Act the Secretary of State produced a Framework that set out the Government's priorities and objectives for FRAs.

Introduction

IWFRS provides a 24 hour emergency response service for fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents. It also delivers a range of prevention and protection activities aimed at reducing fires and other incidents, including enforcement of Fire Safety legislation in order to help keep the people and businesses of the Island safe. A detailed risk profile of the Island is provided in the IWFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan [Fire and Rescue Service - Service Details](#)

Financial

IWFRS carries out its duties, as part of IWC, under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, in respect of ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

IWFRS adheres to IWC financial procedures including; budget setting, budget monitoring, and the production of final accounts.

The Head of Financial Management is responsible for the preparation of the Council's annual Statement of Accounts, which is used to present the Council's financial performance in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. The final accounts are then submitted for approval to the Audit Committee.

The annual statement of accounts [Financial Management - Service Details](#) is also subject to robust examination by external auditors who provide an independent assessment and report as to whether or not IWC's Statement of Accounts present a true and fair view and that they have appropriate accounting systems in place. This report also includes a review of and comment on arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The financial statements of IWC for the year ended 31st March 2013 have been audited externally in line with guidance in the Audit Commission Act 1998 the external audit process concluded that the accounts presented provide a true and fair view of the financial position of IWC.

Governance

IWC as the Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. As a component part of IWC, the FRA has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council's governance arrangements which also apply to the Fire & Rescue Service, are the subject of an annual review in accordance with the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2011. The council publishes the results of that review, in the form of an [Annual Governance Statement](#) with its financial accounts.

Operational

The IWFRS operates as All Fire Services do, under the following legislative framework:

- the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- 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 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

- the Health and Safety Act at Work etc Act 1974

The IWFRS operates within a unique geographical location, an island isolated from the mainland and this creates its own resilience and operational risk considerations. As part of our risk management process, we have entered into a number of resilience partnerships:

- 999 Call Handling and mobilisation now undertaken through Surrey FRS
- We have an arrangement for mutual assistance with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service under Section 13 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act which enables cross service support to be called upon when required.
- We have a section 16 arrangement with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service whereby we have services delivered where a costs/ benefit / risk basis is justified. This includes specialist Urban Search and Rescue capabilities as well as other highly specialist operational capabilities.

As mentioned earlier, the IWFRS has an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in place which details locally agreed attendance standards to property fires, road traffic collisions (RTCs) and incidents involving hazardous materials. These attendance standards are agreed and set by IWFRS following due consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The IRMP can be viewed at [Fire and Rescue Service - Service Details](#)

The IWFRS conducted wide consultation on its Plan which covers 2012 – 15. However, in light of significant and ongoing financial challenges, and a shift in local risk profiling, a broader and longer term strategy is to be consulted on in 2014 which will set out a 2020 vision.

IWFRS will conduct an annual review of both the planned activities contained within the Corporate Plan and the effectiveness of the IRMP and in practice will operate a continuous process of review and improvement.

Rigorous monitoring ensured that IWFRS achieved its Response Standards, which relate to the time which residents can expect a fire engine to attend an emergency incident. Detailed information in respect of IWFRS performance can be found at [Fire and Rescue Service - Service Details](#) and utilises detailed mapping software, emergency incident data, local intelligence and the effective use of partner referrals to produce a detailed, effective community risk profile which is used to target resources and activities. This is in accordance with the duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make arrangements to obtain necessary information for the purposes of:

- extinguishing fire,
- protecting lives and property from fires;
- rescuing and protecting people from harm from road traffic accidents;
- or for dealing with any other emergency function other than fires and road traffic accidents.

The IWFRS sets out an annual business plan to detail how it plans to achieve the priorities set out in the IRMP. This can be found at:

<http://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2719-Final-Fire-and-Rescue-Service-Business-Plan-2013-to-2014-v1.pdf>

Within the 2012/13 business plan we set out to:

1. Develop a Wildfire Strategy
2. Technical Fire Safety and Enforcement Re-Inspection Programme
3. Review of retained duty system
4. Develop a new Response Strategy
5. Transfer Service Headquarters
6. Transfer Fire Control Centre
7. Implement Business Continuity Plans

Prior to the introduction of the annual assurance statement, the IWFRS produced an annual report against those priorities and this is available as part of the IRMP at [Fire and Rescue Service - Service Details](#)

In essence, our progress can be summed up as:

1. Wildfire strategy in place. Operational procedures and equipment outcomes now being developed based upon the CFOA good practise.
2. Our Technical Fire Safety and Enforcement programme has been reviewed in accordance with the revised risk profile and new procedures in place using resources including front line firefighters to undertake lower level risk inspections.
3. The review of our on call retained firefighters is ongoing. A project is ongoing evaluating two different models for terms and conditions and these will be reported on in subsequent IRMP reports.
4. Transfer Fire Service HQ took place in November 2012 with the subsequent sale of the old HQ. Streamlining business processes, shortening communication lines and also realising the capital receipts by selling the old building.
5. Transfer of Fire control to Surrey FRS is completed. Ongoing monitoring of the performance continues and this has realised increased resilience through better technology and support, savings and improved command support processes.
6. New business continuity plans were needed due to changing risks and challenges. This work is complete and supports the wider council.

Future Improvements

Operational Assessment and Peer Review 2013/14

The IWFRS has been continuously improving since the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2005. In 2012 we set a priority of undertaking a national Operational Assessment which resulted in a self assessment that we published in December 2013 at <http://www.iwight.com/azservices/documents/2719-Ops-Self-Assessment-2013-v4.7-final.pdf>

This sets out a reflection of our key operational and organisational performance. This was followed up in February 2014 with a full on site Peer Review. The report and associated improvement plan will be published and reported upon in next year's statement of assurance.

Furthermore, the IWFRA has, as part of its 3 year Budget Strategy, tasked the Chief Fire Officer with developing a business case to consider future governance and operating models for the IWFRS.