

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

# Towards 2020 update

An integrated risk management plan for Kent and Medway



**Kent** Fire &  
Rescue Service

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## Introduction

I am proud to have spent 14 years with the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, and seven as its Chairman. Throughout that time the Service has developed, innovated and responded to the changing needs of the people of Kent and Medway. It remains an excellent organisation that I believe is valued by the community it serves.

Part of that excellence is a willingness to look forward, modernise and if necessary take tough decisions, but always with one end in sight – the safety of local people.

The projects we have been working on since April 2012 all help us to do one thing: save lives. To do this we are using cutting edge technology to improve how we fight fires and give our staff the best and most realistic training they have ever had. We are also working hard to provide people with the essential information they need to keep themselves safe, which we hope means that you never experience a life-threatening emergency.

In last year's plan we put the foundations in place to build a Service ready to meet the needs of the 21st century. In this year's document we will give you an update on the progress we have made, outline the next steps on the plans agreed last year and provide information about what we want to do in the future. As a result there are far fewer supporting documents this year. We think this is the right strategy as the changes agreed last year will take time to deliver.

We're not asking for specific comments on any plans about the Service this year, but if you do have any comments, please send them in. We are however asking for your views on where we set our part of the Council Tax.

We have sent this update to everyone who responded to last year's plan to give you an update on our progress, but if you don't want us to do that anymore just drop us a line at the address below. We have tried to make this document as easy to read as possible. We have had to use some fire service jargon but there is a glossary explaining these terms at the end of the plan.

Best wishes

**Bryan Cope**

Chairman – Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority

If you would like to take part or want any further information on our proposals please contact us at [irmp@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:irmp@kent.fire-uk.org) or at this address:

**Chief Executive**  
**Kent Fire and Rescue Service**  
**FREEPOST NAT 9369**  
**Maidstone**  
**ME15 6BR**

## Update on last year

Last year's plan summarised the results of the biggest review of fire cover we have ever done – balancing risk, demand and isolation. The review found that the fire stations at Halling, Horton Kirby, Matfield, Queenborough, Rusthall, St Margaret's at Cliffe, Seal and Sturry were no longer needed. These stations have now been closed, except for Horton Kirby. As soon as the new fire station at Ash-cum-Ridley is operational, then Horton Kirby will close. The staff that worked at the former fire stations have either been redeployed to other stations, or have decided to leave the Service. Nobody was made compulsorily redundant, and in the current financial climate, we are very proud of this.

### Join the team: be an on-call firefighter

As part of our investment in the Service that includes building five new fire stations, we committed to recruiting 80 new on-call firefighters. The first are already trained and working at stations around the County. The ongoing recruitment campaign has aimed to break down stereotypes of what kind of people can be firefighters, and make sure we reach out to as wide a pool of potential candidates as possible. Usually, recruits need to live or work within five minutes of a fire station, but in some specific locations, we may accept applications from people who live up to ten minutes away.

Full details of which stations are recruiting, information on becoming an on-call firefighter and an application pack are available at [www.kentfirejobs.info](http://www.kentfirejobs.info)

A new fire station near Rochester Airport will incorporate an innovative safety centre that will provide vital road safety information to help keep drivers safe. It will have a number of interactive 'zones' focused on road safety, alongside practical demonstrations and an auditorium.

New fire stations are also planned in Ramsgate and Herne Bay. We will also redevelop the existing site at Watling Street in Gillingham with a smaller fire station. Not only does this location give us the best cover for the Medway area, redeveloping the site avoids significant costs from improving the current building which is very old. More information on our plans in Medway is available in the technical appendix on our website [www.kent.fire-uk.org](http://www.kent.fire-uk.org)

### Ash-cum-Ridley fire station

Ash-cum-Ridley will be a brand new, contemporary fire station which we have worked with the local community to develop. Built to the latest environmental standards, it will be crewed by on-call firefighters, newly recruited from neighbouring villages to provide improved emergency cover in an area where we have always struggled to reach incidents in the times we would want to. It will have space for one fire engine as well as office space.



Having completed a comprehensive county-wide review, we do not plan to review the total number of fire stations again for at least the next five years. The only reason for this to change would be if the financial cuts required by the Government meant that we had no other option. We will though continually look at development plans published by councils as there may be opportunities to move some older fire stations to different locations nearby as part of a land-swap deal. We'd only consider this where it's financially right for us, and most importantly, doesn't have a significant impact on how quickly we can reach incidents.

## Automatic fire alarms in business premises

In April 2012 we changed how we respond to calls from automatic fire alarms (AFAs), most of which are in business premises like factories and shops. More than 98% of those calls had been false alarms, often caused by problems such as poor maintenance of systems. From April 2012 we changed our policy so that between 6am and 6pm we respond only to calls from AFAs where someone has confirmed that there are signs of a fire. Since then the number of calls attended during the day has fallen by 59%, which means that there were 898 occasions when fire engines have not had to be called out to false alarms and so were available for genuine emergencies.

From April 2013 we will implement the full policy to cover 24 hours. We have been working with the business community over the past two years to help them adjust to this change. A guide is available on our website which provides advice and examples of businesses that have made simple changes to put an end to false alarms. They include a pub that moved their 'break glass' call points out of reach of vandals; an office manager who stopped kettles and burnt toast sounding the alarm by switching from a smoke to a heat detector; and a supermarket bakery that stopped regular early morning false alarms (caused when oven doors were opened) by simply moving their heat detector to a more sensible location.

We will continue to monitor the impact very closely, and where there is any doubt, we will still send fire engines to the location. We want to thank businesses for their positive response to this change in our policy.

## Working with parish councils

We work closely with parish and town councils to identify potentially vulnerable people that might benefit from our help. We can also do similar work in areas that don't have parishes through the local forums run by local authorities. We have been working with the Kent Association of Local Councils to develop training events for parish and town councils across the area.

We have given local parish and town councils the opportunity to buy the closed fire stations for community use, at a price that is right for the taxpayer across Kent and Medway. We hope they are able to develop community resources like parish offices, youth clubs or outreach centres, but if not the plan is to sell the former stations on the open market and re-invest in the five new stations that we plan to build.

## Where next?

We think it is right that we focus on you, our customers. The way we will do this will be set out in five new strategies. These will be developed in Spring 2013 and published on our website. In summary though, we want to put YOU and your safety at the centre of what we do.

## Focus on you

### This will focus on...

**Promoting safety:** Communicating safety messages is essential to protect the public and prevent emergencies. We will continue to identify new ways to do this effectively, making sure that we give the right messages to the right people – and in a way that is relevant to them. Through the use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, we are developing an even better understanding of what people’s concerns are, and how to get that information to them in a timely way. We will continue to listen to the public and use their thoughts and comments to shape our communications and engagement work in a way that benefits them.

**Reducing the impact of anti-social behaviour:** Recent tragic cases have shown us how fire can be used as a weapon. Domestic violence sadly seems to be an increasing issue and when it involves fire the outcomes can be devastating. We can supply products which reduce risk from fire, like external letter boxes so nothing can be put through the door to start a fire. We are committed to working with the community to help those at risk from arson and have increased the size of our vulnerable persons team. We are also working with partner agencies on the Government’s ‘Troubled Families’ initiative and want to continue this.

**Supporting vulnerable people:** We are involved in a national project around care for people with dementia. This is to make sure that when people are referred to us for our help we can understand their needs and help them to stay safe in their own homes for longer.

**Helping you during an emergency:** If anyone is injured at an incident, special burns treatment packs are carried on all fire engines including burn gels, dressings and film which help to reduce any damage to the skin. Firefighters will also be receiving more training on the treatment of these kinds of injuries. We will also continue to work with the British Red Cross to provide emergency clothing and shelter at the incident if it is needed.

**Helping you after the emergency:** Having a fire in the home is very distressing, and we think we can play an important role in supporting people afterwards, as well as dealing with the fire itself. If you have a house fire (but no serious injuries) we now plan to contact you a few days afterwards to make sure you’re okay, and offer you further support.

**Encouraging volunteering in the community:** We would like to develop our volunteering work, especially with young people. The fire and rescue service is well thought of, and we are considering setting up a cadet force. Not only would this help get safety messages to young people, and encourage a culture of volunteering in the community, it would also promote the Service as a potential employer in the future to people from more diverse backgrounds.

**Medical care:** Being overweight is a rising medical problem and we are increasingly being asked to assist other emergency services, for example, when an obese patient needs to go to hospital, or has passed away. We have the skills and equipment to do this, and are willing to take on this service in a dignified way for those that need us.

## Focus on businesses

### This will focus on...

**Supporting small businesses:** There are approximately 57,000 active businesses in Kent and Medway, the majority of which are small or medium-sized. However whilst the largest may have up to 250 employees, just over 89% have fewer than ten. Around 20% of UK businesses will suffer a major disruption each year, and this could include the threat of fire. 80% of small businesses never recover from a major disruption and close within 18 months. Businesses with even the most basic level of fire awareness and with plans in place could avoid this fate. We have a role to help businesses cope with this kind of disruption.

**Supporting economic growth:** The Government has very clearly said that the route to financial recovery is through the private sector. We have a role to play here, by helping businesses to stay in business, and to help them meet their own responsibilities under the law, including avoiding false alarms. We are developing a business advice service to do just that. We will also keep our existing risk-based approach to safety inspections.

**Supporting safety in the workplace and in homes:** We will lobby the Government both directly, and with other fire and rescue services, to encourage safety to be built into buildings especially where the potential occupants are likely to be older or vulnerable in some way.

## Focus on resilience

### This will focus on...

**Planning for the worst:** The Kent Resilience Forum maintains a community risk register, to which we contribute significantly. We plan for all emergency incidents we could reasonably be expected to go to, be they natural disasters, terrorism, or the impact of major events like the Olympics on day-to-day work. We don't risk-assess everything as in many cases other agencies, like the Police, local authorities or the security services, are much better placed to gather this information. However we do plan for the outcomes of these incidents, be they fires or dealing with a large number of people who become contaminated by a chemical at an incident.

Using our experience we believe there is also a broader role we can play around emergency planning for the community of Kent and Medway, helping other organisations to develop their own response plans.

**Right people...:** Last year's review of emergency response said where we should respond from. We are now working on two further projects: who should respond; and how they should respond. The variable crewing project looks at who responds, and the various contracts offered to firefighters. The shift system used by full-time firefighters continues to serve us well, and we don't want to change it substantially. However we do think we can get better value by offering different types of contracts in addition to the basic full-time contract. We are looking at ways that staff can work additional flexible shifts for us at mutually agreed times and in locations where we need them. These might be at any station in the county, subject to negotiation. In the future, we expect the number of fires and other incidents we attend to continue to decline and money to get tighter, so it is likely that the overall number of employees we have

will shrink across the whole of the Service. We will therefore need to be innovative and offer different types of contracts to maintain the excellent service you expect from us, but using fewer people.

**...with the right equipment:** Currently, not all the fire engines sent to large incidents are needed, as they have been used simply to get extra firefighters to the scene. This ties up valuable engines and equipment that are not actually needed. The simple solution is to take the additional firefighters to the incident in a vehicle other than a fire engine. This will free up fire engines and, by bringing in other crews, we can get those engines on the road again, ready to tackle other incidents. We are developing a system which allows us to say in real time how quickly we could re-crew a fire engine. It could also be used for incidents that last a long time where firefighters need to be replaced. To help us do this, we'd like to move on-call firefighters across the county much more than we do now, as well as full-time staff.

We are looking at how we use our specialist vehicles, which tend to travel with a whole crew of firefighters, which is often unnecessary. We will also be reviewing the number of height vehicles we have and where they are kept.

We are also looking at how we deal with the incident itself in a project called the operational capability review. A traditional fire engine might not be the best vehicle for every incident. For grass fires, we have already invested in an off-road vehicle that can get to places a traditional engine would have trouble reaching. We have also invested in a new system for fighting fires in buildings from the outside. Called Cobra, it punches a hole through brick walls and sprays a fine mist of water inside, bringing the temperature down very quickly. Anyone inside the building would have a far better chance of surviving, and our firefighters would be safer too when they need to enter to rescue someone. As the project progresses, more different types of vehicles will be evaluated.

**Managing the 999 system:** Our 999 team now work at the Joint Fire and Police Control Room in Maidstone. There are real benefits from working in the same building as the Police. For example, at a recent incident in the Thanet area, 999 operators were able to view the fire on CCTV and update firefighters on what they would be faced with when they arrived.

The second phase, which is the replacement of the computer system we use to take emergency calls and send fire engines to the right locations, has started. We think a common software product with Kent Police would be best for both organisations. Our staff remain very important to us, and we have no plans to move our call handling to Police employees.

## Focus on staff

### This will focus on...

**Learning and development:** Learning and development of our staff is important for us. We want to continue to enhance the existing processes we have for leadership skills, recruitment and development, giving all staff the skills they need to work for a changing organisation and make the best possible contribution. We will focus strongly on staff being able to demonstrate and record their competence to do their jobs, which is going to become even more important as the number of emergencies we attend continues to fall.

**Realistic training:** We also want to focus on the things that are really important to us. We have invested in live-fire training so staff can experience what it is like to fight a fire in a controlled environment before they go to real incidents or as a refresher for their skills. Staff now have access to the best managerial training they have ever had, helping them to lead their teams and allowing decision-making to be pushed down through the organisation.

**Working smarter:** We will continue the working smarter project, to replace paper-based processes with electronic systems, and to improve our business processes to drive out efficiencies.

## Focus on the environment

### This will focus on...

**Reducing carbon:** How we protect the environment is important to us, both as an owner of buildings, and when we go to incidents. We measure what we do through something called a carbon footprint. This records how much carbon dioxide we produce throughout the year from gas, oil (including fuel), electricity, and water. Last year our overall level of carbon dioxide decreased as we invested in more efficient heating and better insulation in our buildings. We want to maintain this improvement and all the new fire stations we build will include energy-saving measures and, where possible, solar panels to provide electricity.

**Improvements to operational procedures:** Working with the Environment Agency, we have already significantly improved our operational procedures to make sure we don't damage the environment at incidents. Developments in how we fight fires will also reduce water use.

**Reducing business mileage:** Last year we made more journeys, but in the future we want to introduce different ways of responding and fighting fires which will reduce mileage. We will also make use of technology to reduce the need to travel for meetings and also to save electricity through energy efficiency when in the office.

## Planning our financial future

In last year's plan we talked about the need to save around £12m over the next few years, partly because the Government is going to cut the amount of money we receive from them and partly because we want to continue to be able to pay for improvements to the way that we deliver our service to the community.

### Key financial facts

<b>Our 2012/13 Revenue (Day to Day) Budget</b>	£73.4m
<b>Our 2012/13 Capital Budget</b>	£11.6m

Of the £12m savings we are planning, we have achieved £2.1m in 2012/13, and we are planning to save up to another £5m in 2013/14. However, there is still a lot of uncertainty in the economy, and the level of support we will receive from the Government is likely to go down again next year. At the same time the Government is trying to give us greater flexibility over our finances by making changes to business rates and Government grants, which is where some of our funding comes from. Whilst these changes may be beneficial to us in years to come, the move to the new arrangements could take some time to settle down.

Last year we consulted you on a proposal to freeze Council Tax for the second year running. We were able to do this because the Government gave us a grant of £1.3m, equal to a Council Tax increase of 3%, but this was for one year only. At the time of writing, the Government intends to offer another grant for 2013/14 and 2014/15 equivalent to a Council Tax increase of 1% in return for us freezing Council Tax for another year. The Government has also proposed that any increase over 2% should be subject to a binding referendum. It is likely that we will accept the Government's offer but if we do not, we would not increase Council Tax above 2%. However we would welcome your views on either a 0%, 1% or 2% Council Tax increase in 2013/14. The table below shows the increase per week for the average Band D Council Tax payer and the additional money that we would receive for each of the increases:

### Possible Council Tax increase in 2013/14

	0%	1%	2%
<b>Average additional cost per week above the current Council Tax</b>	0p	2p	3p
<b>Additional money raised</b>	£0	£425,000	£850,000

If we can, we would like to use any extra money we raise to help to pay for the five new fire stations and the road safety centre which we are planning to build in the next few years. We are interested in your views about this proposal.

## Have your say

We're not asking for comments on any specific issues this year, other than on the level of the Council Tax. But if you do have any comments, please send them in. We will report the outcomes in full to the meeting of Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority on 13 February 2013.

If you would prefer a paper copy of this document or the questionnaire, please contact us at [irmp@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:irmp@kent.fire-uk.org) or on **01622 692 121**.

The closing date for comments is **9am on 14 January 2013**.

If you would like to receive this document in a different format or language please telephone **01622 692 121**.

If you would like to receive this document in a different format or language please telephone **01622 212 428**.

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إذا أردت هذه الوثيقة بصيغة مختلفة أو بلغة أخرى، فيرجى الاتصال برقم الهاتف 01622 692 121

आपनि यदि एहे प्रमाणपत्र (डकुमेन्ट) अन्ना केन आकार अथवा भाषा चान ताहने अनुग्रह कर 01622 692 121 नम्रर टेलिफोन सोगासोप करन।

اگر دوست دارید این مدرک را در فرمت (شکل) متفاوتی یا به زبان دیگری دریافت کنید، لطفاً با شماره تلفن 01622692121 تماس بگیرید.

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य रूप या भाषा में चाहिये तो कृपया नंबर 01622 692 121 पर फोन करें।

هنگام دستاویزیت هم نووسراوت به شیوازیکی تر یان به زمانیکی تر بق دابین بکرت، تکایه ته له فون بق ژماره 01622 692 121 بکه.

यदि तपाईं यस डकुमेन्टलाई अन्य कुनै भाषा अथवा फर्म्याटमा चाहनुहुन्छ भने, कृपया 01622 692 121 मा फोन गर्नुहोला।

Jeżeli ktoś chciałby otrzymać ten dokument w innym formacie lub języku powinien zatelefonować pod numer 01622 692 121.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਖੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਨੰਬਰ 01622 692 121 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Haddii aad dokumentigaan ku jeceshahay hab ama luqad kale, fadlan soo wac 01622 692 121.

如欲索取本文件的其他格式或語文版本，請致電 01622 692 121。

اگر آپ کو یہ دستاویز کسی مختلف وضع یا زبان میں درکار ہے تو براہ کرم 01622 692 121 پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજ બીજી રચના અથવા ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો, કૃપા કરી 01622 692 121 ઉપર ટેલિફોન કરો.

## Glossary

<b>Activity</b>	The incidents attended by each individual fire engine in the local area or elsewhere.
<b>Annualised contract</b>	A contract for a specified number of hours to be worked over a fixed period of time.
<b>Bariatric</b>	A medical term referring to the control of obesity and allied health issues.
<b>Call</b>	A request for assistance by the public or any other body or agency made to the fire and rescue service.
<b>Capital budget</b>	The money spent on buying big physical things, like fire engines, buildings, or our IT systems.
<b>Cluster</b>	Two or more stations which have been grouped based on those that most frequently work together. Two or more clusters form a 'group' for management purposes.
<b>Co-responding</b>	An agreement with the ambulance service to send specially trained on-call firefighters to provide initial emergency medical care in the event of e.g. someone suffering a heart attack in their home. An ambulance is also always sent.
<b>County</b>	The whole geographical area known as Kent. This includes the area where local services are provided by Medway Council as well as Kent County Council.
<b>Demand</b>	The number of incidents that happen in a defined area over a defined period of time.
<b>Height vehicle</b>	A type of fire engine which has an extendable ladder used to provide a safe working platform at height. Sometimes they are also called aerial appliances. They generally don't carry water, although we have one that does, which is called the combined aerial rescue pump.
<b>Incident</b>	Any call to which the Service sends a response. As a lot of people may call us about the same incident, this number is always lower than the number of calls we receive.
<b>Isolation</b>	The distance of a place or community, measured in travel time, from the nearest fire engine when it's at the fire station and ready to respond.
<b>On-call duty system</b>	A duty system where firefighters respond from their own homes or work places located near to the fire station on an on-call basis.
<b>On/off the run</b>	When a fire engine is available for calls, it is described as "on the run". Conversely, when a fire engine is not available, it is "off the run".
<b>Part-time fire station</b>	A fire station crewed entirely by firefighters working the on-call duty system.
<b>Revenue budget</b>	This is the day-to-day budget used to deliver the service provided by firefighters and other staff across the county.
<b>Risk</b>	The combination of factors that add up to the likelihood of an incident in an area.



