

**Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**Kent Fire and Rescue Service**

**Corporate Plan 2013/14**

**This is a text only version of the Corporate Plan  
as agreed by the Authority on 13 February 2013**

**For the most current version  
including performance information  
please visit [www.kent.fire-uk.org](http://www.kent.fire-uk.org)**

## **Introduction and Overview**

Welcome to Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority's Corporate Plan. Kent is one of the best performing Fire and Rescue Services in the country and this is achieved through careful planning to ensure that we are able to respond to change. This plan describes our achievements over the last year and our ambitious plans for the future – through to 2020. Although the Authority faces some significant challenges, especially funding restraints, we are confident that we will continue to improve.

In our most recent **safety plan** we provided an update on how we are modernising the organisation and redesigning our operations to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. This includes a comprehensive station development programme to ensure we have the stations and equipment in the right locations to deal with emergencies across the county.

This Corporate Plan also covers many other areas of service improvement. We have already saved money in back-office support and will continue to do so. We are using some of these savings to invest in new equipment. We are challenging how we respond to emergencies with standard fire engines, and looking at more flexible staffing models, to see if there are better and more efficient ways of working.

We have been working with businesses to cut the number of calls we receive from automatic fire alarms as nearly all of them are false alarms. We have already stopped attending most automatic fire alarm calls received during the day, unless we receive a telephone call to confirm a fire, and will extend this to night-times, in most cases, from April 2013.

All of the changes outlined in this plan are designed to make us leaner, more agile and more effective. With the funding pressures we are under, staying still is not an option, nor is ignoring the issue. All of the changes are being made with the safety of local people, businesses and firefighters in mind. Above all, we are focusing on our customers' needs, ensuring we put YOU at the centre of everything we do.

### **Ann Millington**

Chief Executive, Kent Fire and Rescue Service

### **Bryan Cope**

Chairman, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

## **Our Aim: To save lives and reduce risks**

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is a complex organisation but everything we do is in support of our overall aim of saving lives and reducing risks.

This plan sets out how we have been performing over the last year, providing details about some of our achievements, and explains what we hope to achieve over the next few years. Our objectives are set out below. Some of these we achieve through our normal daily activities and therefore we may not currently have projects for each one – but this does not mean they are not all important to us.

### **Objectives:**

We are committed to:

- Reducing the numbers of fires, deaths and injuries
- Reducing road accidents, deaths and injuries
- Providing high quality and value for money services
- Engaging with communities to raise awareness
- Being well prepared to deal with emergencies
- Reducing our impact on the environment
- Helping to improve the quality of life for local people
- Working with businesses to support the local economy

We also have four values which underpin how we work.

### **Values:**

As an organisation we will always:

- Put people first
- Value our staff
- Be open to change
- Work with others

## About the area

There are over 1.7 million people living in Kent and Medway in around 720,000 homes. There are also over 52,000 other properties, such as businesses, schools and hospitals, in an area of just over 3,700 km<sup>2</sup>. Kent is known as the 'Gateway to Europe' - there are 250 miles of motorway and major roads, six ports, four small airports and the Channel Tunnel. More than half of the UK's goods pass through Dover and 10,000 foreign lorries travel through Kent each day. Rail connections to the continent have been further enhanced with the opening of High Speed One services in December 2009.

The current recession may have slowed down development in the area but we know this is only temporary. Kent has two major growth areas - Ashford and the Thames Gateway. In the Thames Gateway alone there will be 53,000 new homes and 225,000 new jobs in the next 20 years.

The area is divided into one county authority, with 12 local district authorities and one unitary authority for Medway. The area is relatively affluent with Kent being one of the least deprived local authorities nationally, despite having some significant pockets of deprivation such as Thanet - one of the most deprived areas in the country. Life expectancy and the proportion of the population over 65 are predicted to increase, with a related rise in mobility problems and disability, and a reduction in the proportion of young people.

### **Our risk assessments suggest in the future there will be:**

- More elderly people living alone, with mobility problems
- More people living independently with physical disabilities and mental health issues
- More people living in poor and overcrowded homes as a result of the recession
- More transient people moving through a series of shared rented housing
- More extreme weather events, including flooding and droughts
- More traffic on the road networks
- New building materials and methods which change how fires spread

## How we are performing

***Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority has been recognised for its high performance over a number of years. In its most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Authority was assessed as 'Excellent' by the Audit Commission.***

The government has abolished its performance framework called Comprehensive Area Assessment and as a result the Authority has not received an organisational assessment since 2009. Details of previous assessments are available on the Authority's website. The role of the Audit Commission in local government largely ceased in November 2012 as new providers from the private sector took on this work. Grant Thornton has been appointed by the Authority as its new external auditors.

## Performance targets

Performance in 2012/13 has been exceptionally good with significant decreases in the number of fires, especially outdoor fires. Whilst this was undoubtedly helped by the predominantly wet weather experienced in the spring and autumn the medium to long term improving trend demonstrates that our community safety initiatives continue to be effective. The organisation has also been introducing a number of significant changes, for example implementing new part-time firefighter contracts. These changes will improve performance further once they have bedded in. Overall, we are well placed to achieve our three-year targets.

## Annual Audit 2011/12

The annual audit letter no longer provides a scored rating for the Use of Resources assessment, but it does cover the Authority's financial and governance arrangements, as well as looking at Value for Money.

The auditors issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. It recognised that the Authority has a very good process in place for producing its annual accounts and that papers were produced to a very high standard.

It also said that the Authority *'has a good track record of achieving savings targets over recent years. Savings targets have been achieved in 2011/12, and savings plans for 2012/13 are identified and achievable.'* and that *'the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan remains on course'*.

## Managing our performance

The Service records information about every incident it is called to, and uses this to analyse the location and causes of fires, road accidents and other emergencies. For the last few years, we have been developing and using computer modelling to predict risk. We are increasingly using this information to focus our attention where it's most needed, both through operational response and community safety work.

Performance indicators allow us to measure our own performance year-on-year and also to compare our performance with other fire authorities. Comparative information is included within the summary tables and charts. Comparative data has been taken from provisional 2011/12 data published by the government. KFRS performance for 2012/13 is based upon our own data. (This performance data will be updated at the beginning of May 2013).

In most cases targets have been set to achieve an improvement in performance compared with the previous three-year average. In a few cases, where performance has been particularly strong, or in areas of low priority, we have set targets to maintain current performance. Most targets have been set over a three or five year period but are reviewed every year to ensure they remain challenging but achievable. In some cases no annual milestones are set where the level of activity fluctuates or time is needed to bring about change. In most cases 2012/13 is the first year of the three-year period.

In the past we have classified fires as 'primary' or 'secondary' but we have stopped using these terms as they are not helpful to us and difficult for people to understand. We have instead used terms like accidental and deliberate fires, which our research shows the public understands. We have been very successful in reducing deliberate fires over a number of years and we are therefore now able to move our focus to reducing accidental fires. The set of performance indicators reflects this change of focus.

## **Our Values**

The Service has a set of values which describe how we will work as an organisation. As finances become tighter it can be tempting to push through change quickly at the expense of these values but we do not think that is the right approach. We believe these values are even more important at the current time as they ensure we do what is best for our customers and staff.

Whenever you come into contact with the Service, whether as a member of the public, a partner, a business or a member of staff, these values should always be evident.

As an organisation we will always:

- **Put people first**
- **Value our staff**
- **Be open to change**
- **Work with others**

### **Putting people first**

We are shifting our focus to ensure we put you at the centre of everything we do. How we intend to achieve this is set out in our new strategy entitled 'Focus on Your Safety'. Everyone that lives in Kent and Medway deserves excellent public services that reflect their individual needs and circumstances. This is why we are committed to an approach which recognises diversity and individual needs. We have placed these needs at the heart of how we do our work. We are committed to the highest standards of equalities practice in service delivery and employment.

We need to ensure that all staff understand how equality and diversity is incorporated within their day-to-day roles and how this impacts at a local level. This has led us to developing a clear link between reducing risk and promoting equality and diversity. We have developed the term 'operational diversity' to describe this approach.

The Authority has already achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, demonstrating a clear commitment to achieving best practice. However, we know there are areas where we can still improve and have set an ambitious target to achieve an 'Excellent' rating under the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.

The Authority's Equality Vision and Objectives 2013/15 take account of our analysis and understanding of people in the community and our duty to challenge any discrimination towards people based on their age, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or any other social factors, both as a service provider and as an employer. We aim to deliver services which provide for the needs of everyone working and living in our changing community. We have described how we will know that we are achieving this vision and have set seven objectives which will help us get there.

We monitor the profile of our staff by gender, race, disability, age, religion and faith, and sexual orientation. This information is provided on a voluntary basis and we are seeking to ensure the working environment means individuals feel able to disclose this information. When staff feel that they are not able to do this, it has an impact on them reaching their full potential. Information on the profile of the organisation helps us to measure the impact of our policies, identify any trends and ensure we put into place arrangements that meet the needs of all staff. Monitoring our workforce also helps us to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that discrimination in any form is eliminated.

## **Valuing our staff**

In order to achieve the ambitious plans set out in this document we will need to continue to invest in the training and development of our staff. Over recent years we have introduced changes which have achieved efficiency savings. This in turn has allowed us to divert more resources into new equipment and more training.

Although in Kent and Medway we have not had any firefighter fatalities for many years, we know there are significant risks associated with fighting fires and attending other incidents. We will continue to treat health and safety as a priority and continue to invest in training. We have introduced a live-fire training programme to maintain firefighting skills as the number of real incidents continues to decline. We are also developing management skills to allow responsibility to be devolved to a more local level where appropriate.

We have invested in new equipment, like positive pressure ventilation which allows firefighters to clear the building of smoke before entering, reducing risk and making firefighting easier. Compressed air foam systems have been introduced which allow fires to be suppressed more quickly than is possible with water alone, again reducing risk. The protective gear available to firefighters has improved remarkably over recent years, reducing the possibility of long-term health conditions associated with the job. We will continue to ensure equipment is as good as it can be, for example by replacing protective clothing and breathing apparatus. We will continue to look for new innovative ways of tackling fires or dealing with other incidents such as road traffic collisions. We will continue to introduce new equipment where this is proven to improve efficiency, effectiveness or the safety of our firefighters.

As the number of incidents we attend continues to reduce, and budgets become tighter, it seems inevitable that the number of staff we employ will reduce. However, we will always treat staff with the respect they deserve, ensuring they have the opportunity to influence change through



consultation. Because we have planned ahead, we have been able to avoid compulsory redundancies and will continue to do so wherever possible.

## **Being open to change**

The Authority has already responded to many changes but we know that we are entering a period of even greater change. We are constantly challenging the way we do things and looking to see if we can do things better. There are many examples throughout this document of the changes we are planning which are designed to improve or maintain excellent service delivery.

Performance has improved significantly over recent years and we are striving to ensure this continues. We have set ourselves challenging goals throughout this plan because we want to continue to be one of the best fire and rescue authorities in the country. We try hard to embed this way of thinking amongst all our staff, encouraging them to work innovatively. Our staff are well placed to develop improvements for service delivery as they engage with the public and businesses daily.

## **Working with others**

We know that we cannot achieve our objectives by working on our own. As resources become tighter it will become even more important for the Authority to work effectively with other local authorities and agencies to improve efficiency.

As we understand and engage with the community more, we increasingly appreciate that often the best way to improve the local area is to empower people. Working with other agencies, we want to equip the most vulnerable people to live both safely and independently. This is quite a new area for us and one we want to develop. We are working with partners that have more experience in this field and learning from them. We also want to empower people to have more of a say in the way we deliver our services. We already consult widely before we make changes, but we want to increase the level of engagement. One of the ways we are achieving this is by introducing volunteers to work in and with the community.

## **Embedding these values**

We expect all of our staff to reflect these values in the way they work. We therefore assess this through appraisals and have clearly defined the personal attributes and qualities we expect from every individual. We develop these behaviours in our staff and provide training or support where this is needed.

## Towards 2020

Kent Fire and Rescue Service is changing to make sure we can continue to provide an excellent emergency service. Towards 2020 is a change programme which will ensure that the organisation is fit for the future. It is designed to help us do what we need to, which is to get our staff with the right skills and the right equipment quickly to any emergency situation. But we are doing this knowing that funding is going to reduce so we need to work smarter to improve efficiency.

In 2012, we completed our biggest ever review of emergency cover - balancing risk, demand and isolation. The aim was to ensure that we put our resources in the right places to respond to changes such as new housing, business and road infrastructures. As well as carrying out reviews on a local basis we looked at county-wide strategic cover to ensure we maintain sufficient resources to respond to large or multiple incidents. 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 too. The staff that worked at the former fire stations have either been redeployed to other stations, or have decided to leave - nobody was made compulsorily redundant.

New fire stations are planned in Ramsgate, Herne Bay and Ash-cum-Ridley. 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 the significant costs of improving the existing – very old – building.

In Rochester we are planning a new station near the airport which will incorporate an innovative 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.

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 review the resources we have available to ensure they reflect any changes in risks or demand.

We have now started to look at *how* we respond to incidents. For example, in some remote areas, a traditional fire engine may no longer be the best vehicle to send to an incident. We might respond more effectively with a smaller vehicle which can arrive more quickly. At the same time we want to explore every opportunity to introduce new innovative ways of working and equipment which enables firefighters to do their job better or more safely. We are looking at the options in a project called the Operational Capability Review.

We have made changes to how we employ on-call firefighters. These firefighters respond to emergencies from either their home or workplace unlike wholetime firefighters who work on a shift system. We decided to move all retained staff on to on-call contracts from June 2011. Moving to these new contracts means that we are now able to predetermine when our firefighters are available according to the risk and demands in an area.

In April 2012 we changed how we respond to calls from automatic fire alarms, 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 during the day we respond only to calls from AFAs where there are other signs of a fire. 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.

At the same time we have continued to remove unnecessary bureaucracy from our systems, and to use more IT to replace paper-driven processes. This has allowed us to reduce the number of people we employ in back-office support roles. We will continue to look at every process to simplify, remove or find an e-solution which is easier and takes less time.

## Strategies

As a single-service local authority, we don't need a large number of strategies, when compared to larger or more complex organisations such as Kent County Council or Medway Council. We are therefore introducing just five *primary* strategies:

- **Focus on Your Safety**
- **Focus on Business**
- **Responding to Emergencies**
- **Workforce Strategy**
- **Caring for the Environment**

This Corporate Plan provides some information about each of these themes but the strategies will provide more detail. The strategies are currently being developed and will be added to the website as soon as they are agreed.

All these strategies will interact. For example changes to how we fight fires with less water (responding to emergencies) will have a knock-on effect on how much natural resources we use (caring for the environment). Above all, the strategies will be focused on the service we provide to you, whether you are at home, in your car or at work.

The intention is for the primary strategies to have a four-year lifespan to match the political cycle of the Authority more closely.

### **You may come in contact with Kent Fire and Rescue Service in a number of ways:**

- The first *planned* time in your life that most people will come across the fire and rescue service is when we come to your school at key stages one and two, to talk to you about fire safety;
- At key stage four, when you start to think about learning to drive, we talk to you again at schools and colleges about road safety;
- When you leave school and choose to go to university we have information on our website to help you stay safe when moving away from home for the first time;
- If you decide to get a job, we enforce the fire safety regulations for businesses, helping you to stay safe at work. If you own or manage a business, then you can get help from us to do your risk assessment for your business, to comply with the law;

- If you decide you want to work for us, then we will help you by investing in your training and development;
- When you drive home after work, we provide information on how to drive safely throughout the year and regardless of the weather;
- If you have specific needs, we provide services to help you. For example, if you are a smoker and not very mobile, we can provide safe ash trays that reduce the risk of fire starting in your home;
- When you buy or rent your home, we will have been talking about the safety issues with your local authority. This is especially true if you are buying a flat which shares a front door with other properties;
- As you get older, we will do all we can to help you stay safe in your home. This includes adaptations to your home to help you cope with issues like dementia.

Of course there might be times in your life when you need us and it's not planned. If you do, call 999 and trained firefighters will be there to help you as quickly as they can.

- **Focus on your safety:** this document will refocus how we keep people safe. It will place the individual at the centre of our activity whether it is safety in the home, on the road or near open water. By placing the person at the centre of what we do, we will be better able to understand the issues that make them at risk and provide the most suitable means to reduce that risk. The main emphasis of the strategy will be towards assisting the vulnerable people in our communities but it will also set out how we intend to improve engagement and transparency.
- **Focus on business:** we have never developed a strategy for how we work with the business community. We have had a number of separate delivery plans, for example related to how we reduce the number of calls generated by automatic fire alarm systems which are mostly within the business community. The intention under this strategy is to collect all this good work and give it an outward looking strategic framework. The document will focus on business education; how businesses can recover after an emergency; improving safety and checking compliance; working with partners to streamline regulation, and will also look at enforcement of the Fire Safety Order. It is also hoped that this will raise the profile of business safety.
- **Responding to emergencies:** this new strategy will set out how we plan for and respond to risks in the community from fires and other emergencies. It will set the framework by which new innovations in firefighting can be developed as part of the operational capability review, as well as how we may be able to take a more active role in local emergency planning. It will also set out the

Authority's vision for how it will contribute to the requirements of the Government's national resilience programme, and how this will be maintained.

- **Workforce Strategy:** this is the most inwardly-focused strategy within the set. Members of the Human Resources and Equalities (HR&E) Committee last considered the Workforce Strategy in July 2010. The intention is to take forward additional enhancements to the way we train, develop and maintain the competence of our staff across the organisation, and to ensure that processes are as simple to administer as possible. It will also focus on the delivery of flexibility of the workforce in contractual terms which will be needed in the future.
- **Caring for the environment:** being a responsible owner of assets and of emergency services to the public remains important to us, even in financially limited times. Partly, this is a financial response as the fines possible for damaging the environment at operational incidents are potentially huge and not insurable against. Additionally, taking cost effective measures to reduce fuel and energy use not only reduce carbon emissions but save money.

## The context of change

The table below summarises the major changes made since 2007

### 2007

- First Workforce Strategy developed – capturing the learning and development aspirations for the Service and the delivery mechanisms.
- Improvements to leadership and operational training e.g. live fire training.
- Developed a performance appraisal system covering all staff.
- More focus to performance management and improvements to processes.
- More engagement of staff in organisational development and personal development of managers.
- Increase in education provision.
- Development of new Partnerships in key areas: eg Clean Kent campaign with local authorities in Kent; Margate Task Force – an inter-agency response to the problems suffered by a deprived area in Margate.
- Introduced a new process of self assessment and peer review to assess operational assurance.

### 2008

- Organisational Development team created, focusing on individual support and coaching for managers
- Began a review of HR policies to better meet our needs
- Re-focus of equality agenda to 'operational diversity'
- Renewed the Community Safety strategy focusing on hard to reach groups and the vulnerable in society
- Reviewed our technical fire safety division to improve the service provided to businesses and improve efficiency

### 2009

- Began the 'Smarter Working' programme – e-enabling of systems away from predominantly paper driven processes

- Significantly increased regional working with other fire and rescue services in the South East on collaborative procurement (workwear, breathing apparatus, firegear)

### 2010

- Project to standardise operational response procedures across the region commissioned
- Review of Emergency Response Provision in Kent and Medway (where we respond from) commissioned, focusing initially on
  - Medway
  - Thanet
- Creation of vulnerable adults unit to focus on complex needs

### 2011

- Retained duty system converted to Part-Time On Call giving guaranteed part-time cover for the first time in the Authority's history
- Restructured organisation creating groups/clusters to move decision making closer to the front line
- Outcomes of review of Medway/Thanet implemented: closure of Thanet, Chatham and Gillingham fire stations
- Reviewed the Officers' Flexible Duty System reducing overall officer numbers, but giving more exposure to incidents
- Restructured senior management, removing the Deputy Chief and Director of Human Resources posts
- Operational Capability review commissioned – which looks at what we respond with in terms of equipment
- Variable crewing project commissioned – which looks at what we respond with in terms of people and duty systems
- Strategic partnership and conversations with Police and Ambulance

2012

- Review of Emergency Response Provision completed
  - Stations closed in places we don't need them
  - 5 new stations commissioned
  - Recruitment of new Part Time On Call staff
- Section 13/16 arrangements improved through new model agreement
- Scrapped the lease car and senior officer car schemes – introduced pool cars
- Relocation of Control to the joint Fire and Police Control Centre at Kent Police HQ



## Management Action Plan

Project title	Description	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Theme(s)
Automatic fire alarms	Introduce new policies and procedures to reduce the number of calls from automatic fire alarms that are attended	Partially Implement and consult further	Implement			Focus on business Improving efficiency
Review flexible duty system	Change FDS rota to increase officer time available for management and improve efficiency	Completed				Workforce Strategy Improving efficiency
Moving retained firefighters to part-time on-call contracts	Introduce new part-time contracts to improve availability and to allow pre-planning	Implement and evaluate	Review/refine			Workforce strategy

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Review of Emergency Response Provision and station redevelopment programme	Comprehensive review of stations, personnel and fire engines. Includes reviewing numbers required and locations, in order to meet identified risks and demand					Responding to emergencies
	Close stations at St Margaret's at Cliffe, Halling, Sturry, Matfield, Queenborough, Rusthall, Seal	Completed				
	Remove second pump from Hythe	Completed				
	Replace the fire station at Ramsgate	Review		Implement	Implement	
	Replace the fire station at Medway with two new stations (Rochester <sup>1</sup> and Watling Street)	Review	Implement	Implement		
	New fire station at Ash-cum-Ridley	Review	Implement			
	Close station at Horton Kirby	Review	Implement			
Replace the fire station at Herne Bay				Review	Implement	

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Review of Operational Capability	Review of how we respond to incidents and the equipment needed. Aim to improve outcomes, response performance and efficiency (includes bariatric care) (includes review of height vehicles)	Review and consult	Implement			Responding to emergencies Improving efficiency
Increase flexibility of operational working patterns	Introduce more flexible working to reflect risks identified through the RERP (includes extension of turnout times at selected on-call stations)	Review and consult	Review, consult and start implementation	Implement		Workforce strategy Improving efficiency
New payroll and HR system	Procure and implement a new payroll and HR system	Implement	Implement			Improving efficiency
New arrangements for taking emergency calls and mobilising	Following the demise of the national FiReControl project, KFRS has reviewed the best option for handling emergency calls and mobilisation of resources. Phase 1 moved staff to Police HQ. Phase 2 is to migrate to a common mobilising system with Kent Police	Review and Implement phase 2	Implement	Implement		Responding to emergencies

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<sup>1</sup> Rochester fire station includes a new life skills centre

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
New station mobilising equipment and mobile data terminals	Procure new mobile data terminals and station end equipment to ensure mobilisation and risk information is delivered to crews efficiently	Procure and Implement	Implement			Responding to emergencies
New Officer Mobilisation and Communications equipment	Introduce new radios and phones for officers	Completed				Responding to emergencies
Prepare for the Olympics	Kent will be impacted by huge numbers of visitors, increasing risk in some areas and potentially impacting response times to incidents. This project is designed to ensure that KFRS is well prepared and can continue to deliver an excellent service during the period of the Olympics	Completed				Responding to emergencies
Channel Tunnel Contract	Negotiate and renew the contract for providing first line of response to the Channel Tunnel	Implement	Implement			Responding to emergencies

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Improve operational equipment	KFRS is introducing state of the art firefighting equipment including positive pressure ventilation, compressed air foam, new breathing apparatus and Cobra. We will continue to explore opportunities to innovate to improve response/ efficiency/ firefighter safety	Review Procure / Implement /	Review Procure / Implement /	Review Procure / Implement /		Responding to emergencies
Review of Marine Operations	Review of KFRS capability and arrangements for marine incidents.	Review/ Implement	Implement			Responding to emergencies
Premises Risk Management	Introduce new premises risk management system. Will introduce a single system for all premises information, used for fire safety inspections and to deliver risk information to operational crews	Implement	Implement			Responding to emergencies Focus on business
Introduce new intranet	Develop the KFRS intranet to improve efficiency	Implement	Implement			Workforce strategy
Introduce new website	Procure new website provider and develop new website. Will provide greater integration with intranet by sharing common platform. Will improve functionality of website	Procure	Implement			Focus on your safety

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Carbon Management Programme	This programme contains a range of initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint. Includes improvements to premises, changing behaviour of staff, reducing travel	Implement	Implement	Implement		Caring for the environment
Waste management	Implement an agreed approach to waste management including initiatives to reduce, reuse and recycle	Implement				Caring for the environment
Environmental protection	Introduce procedure to reduce the risk of environmental impact from fires and other incidents, training and all other operational activities	Implement				Caring for the environment
Vulnerable people	Introduce new methodology for delivering home safety advice to those that are most at risk including those with dementia (includes the use of local forums alongside parish councils for access to referrals for vulnerable people). (We are also working with partner agencies on the government's Troubled Families initiative)	Review/Implement	Implement	Implement		Focus on your safety

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Fleet review	Review how we procure, maintain and use fleet with the aim of reducing costs and the impact on the environment. Phase 1 – light fleet (cars and vans). Phase 2 – heavy fleet (incl. fire engines)	Implement phase 1  Phase 2 - review	Implement phase 1  Phase 2 - review	Implement phase 2		Improving efficiency Caring for the environment
Standard operating procedures	Introduce standard operating procedures for fire and rescue services in the South East. This will improve cross-border working and improve efficiency	Review and Implement	Implement	Implement		Responding to emergencies  Improving efficiency
Cadet force	Set 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		Review	Implement		Focus on your safety
Business advice service	Set up an advice service to help businesses to stay in business, and to help them meet their own responsibilities under the law.	Review	Implement			Focus on business

<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Theme(s)</b>
Firefighter training	Develop new live fire training facilities to maintain and enhance fire fighting skills, including development of new facility at Westwood Cross in Thanet	Review	Review/Implement	Implement		Workforce strategy
Post-incident customer care	Develop post-incident care package for customers experiencing a fire	Review	Implement			Focus on your safety
Emergency planning	Review the role we play in emergency planning and inter-agency resilience	Review	Review/Implement			Responding to emergencies



## **Focus on Your safety**

*We think it is right that we focus on you, our customers. We want to put YOU and your safety at the centre of what we do.*

### **Fire safety at home**

*Our aspiration is that by 2020 there are zero deaths and far fewer injuries from fires.*

We know that this will be difficult to achieve and maintain but it shouldn't be impossible. In 2010/11 no one died in an accidental house fire in Kent and Medway but sadly most years that is not the case. Although in recent years the number of people injured each year in fires has not reduced significantly we are encouraged by the fact that the severity of the injuries has reduced.

We are increasingly using risk analysis to ensure we reach the people most at risk. Each year we carry out a range of community safety activities, including home safety visits and educating young people to make them safer. We have adopted a new approach to targeting home safety advice. We offer advice to everyone but only those most at risk will be visited. This allows us to target our resources more effectively and reach a greater proportion of vulnerable people.

### **Road Safety**

*Our aspiration is by 2020 to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road crashes by 33%, and the number of children killed or seriously injured by 40%, compared with 2004/08.*

Each year over 500 people are killed or seriously injured on the roads in Kent and Medway, but this number is steadily declining. We do not have any enforcement, traffic management or engineering responsibilities, so our focus is on delivering education and working in partnership with other agencies. Young people are particularly vulnerable on the roads as young drivers are likely to be less experienced, more likely to drink or take drugs, and more likely to be distracted by mobile phones or their passengers. We are also looking at ways of improving how we respond to the road traffic collisions we attend.

We are in a good position to deliver road safety education because we already work with schools and colleges. We are also more likely to be trusted by young people because they know we don't have any enforcement powers regarding road safety. Typically this education is delivered through practical demonstrations, such as cutting students out of a car, film or theatre to get across the message in an interesting way. Building on this experience we plan to develop a road safety centre in Rochester. This will enable us to deliver a wider range of practical courses to children and potentially drivers.

## **Understanding and responding to people's needs**

Life expectancy and the proportion of the population over 65 are both increasing with a related rise in mobility problems and disability. People are being encouraged to live independently rather than relying on care provision and this can make some of these people more at risk from fire. We are working hard to reach the most vulnerable people especially those who do not routinely use public services.

Research suggests that the number of people with mental health problems is also increasing. The Authority is leading on a national project responding to the Prime Minister's dementia challenge. Work has involved developing a national pledge for fire services to highlight and increase safety in the home. The pledge intends to ensure that fire and rescue authorities help families and carers to be aware of fire risks and to raise awareness of home safety checks and advice.

We have given our staff child protection training so they are able to spot danger signs and refer cases to the appropriate agencies. We are increasingly working with social services and other partners to exchange information. This helps us to identify people that are at risk from fire and offer them the advice or support they need – at the same time we can help our partners to provide care where it's needed.

## **Working with communities**

We work in partnership with local authorities, including parish councils, and agencies such as Kent Police through the community safety partnerships to understand local needs. This not only helps us to identify where the most vulnerable people live but also to reduce anti-social behaviour and other crime, including deliberate fire ignition. 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 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.

We know that there is a link between poor living conditions and fire risk. Better quality of housing would improve the quality of life for residents and make them safer, but we recognise that this is unlikely to be achieved in the short term. We work with our partners to identify where this is an issue and provide support to keep people safer. In extreme cases we are able to use our powers to ensure landlords provide safe housing for their tenants. We also want to ensure homes being built in areas of flood risk are designed to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding.

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. We have developed a FireFit programme in partnership with local communities. This initiative involves firefighters and volunteers using a variety of sporting and cultural initiatives targeted at those people least likely to be involved in such activities and who are generally more likely to be at risk in the home.

We would like to develop our volunteering work, especially with young people. 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.

In some areas we think we could provide some critical emergency care over and above the 'co-responding' service we currently run. This would mean us investing in medical skills' training for our firefighters in this area, but it would contribute a lot to the safety of the local people. We are also exploring the possibility of providing a prescription delivery service to remote rural areas when the weather is especially bad: for example, if there is snow like that experienced last winter.

## **Deprivation**

The impact of the recession is likely to increase deprivation in those areas already housing the most vulnerable and we know there are links between deprivation, poor living conditions, and the risk of fires. In addition, there is a growing transient population, many of whom may be living "off the radar" and in poor housing conditions. Recent joint operations with local housing authorities have succeeded in making some of these buildings safer but concern is growing about whether we know the full scale of the problem.

## **Helping you during and after an emergency**

We know that the consequences of a fire, road accident or other emergency can be very severe and that is why we put so much effort into prevention. Unfortunately however, accidents will still happen and we want to provide the best possible service when they do. We are working with other agencies, such as the ambulance service, to enhance the care we provide to casualties. We are putting defibrillators in all of our marked vehicles so we can improve the chances of survival for people suffering heart attacks.

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 as well as post trauma care. We will continue to work with the British Red Cross to provide emergency clothing and shelter at the incident if it's needed. We are also investigating whether we could commission an agency or charity to provide support to casualties or witnesses to incidents, in much the same way as victims of crime receive support.

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 someone has a house fire (but no serious injuries) we now plan to contact them a few days afterwards to offer further support.

## **Research and analysis**

For many years we have been collecting data about the incidents we attend. Increasingly we are using data from lots of other sources to understand and respond to risks. For example, we use a marketing tool to understand social groups and by cross referencing this data with real incidents we can predict which groups of people are most at risk. This information is then used to target community safety work in the most effective way.

We have increased our capacity to undertake fire investigation and research. This enables us to have a greater presence when a fire occurs. We are also undertaking more research to understand how people behave before and during fires in their homes. This research will help us to offer better advice on fire prevention and how to escape safely if a fire occurs.

## **Transparency and engagement**

We realise that public authorities need to be more accountable directly to the public, with less audit and inspection, a move we have welcomed. People need to be able to judge for themselves how well we are performing and providing value for money. That is partly why we publish extensive performance and financial information. As well as the information in this corporate plan, on our website we have already published all our spending over £250, a register of contracts, and the pay of our senior managers. We will continue to engage with the public and listen to any requirements for information. We are improving our website to ensure it provides information which is easy to access and understand. We are also using social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, more as this supports greater interaction

## ***Action plan***

- Develop post-incident customer care
- Create a Cadet Force
- Vulnerable people
- Introduce new website

## ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 134 – Fatalities/Causalities in accidental fires
- LPI 136 – People killed/seriously injured in RTCs
- LPI 105 – Accidental dwelling fires
- LPI 143 – Response times to life threatening incidents

## **Focus on Business**

*Your safety is important to us when you are at work just as much as it is when you are at home. We also want to support the local economy as we know there is a clear link between deprivation and risk.* If unemployment goes up in the area as businesses fail, then the risk of people dying or getting injured in fires also goes up. Helping businesses to survive the current economic climate is therefore an important objective for us and our partners.

## **Helping businesses to manage risk**

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, most have fewer than ten. Around one fifth of UK businesses will suffer a major disruption each year, and this could include the threat of fire. Most small businesses never recover from a major disruption and close within 18 months.

We are working with partners, such as the Health and Safety Executive, to improve engagement with businesses and raise awareness about the risks. We will also provide better advice on business continuity and will exercise our enforcement responsibilities sensibly and proportionately. We have also recognised that businesses owned or managed by people from minority groups may have different needs and by improving engagement we can help them to control risks better.

We also recognise that small businesses have less capacity to understand the requirements placed on them for managing a safe workplace, including the importance of completing a risk assessment, and would need greater support from the Service. This is already having an impact on our approach to inspection and enforcement. We have restructured our technical fire safety section to make it more flexible and able to offer a better service to local businesses. We are setting up a new team specifically to offer support to businesses.

## **Building-in safety**

New methods of construction, particularly timber-framing, can make property more vulnerable to fire, especially during the construction phase. If a building under construction does catch fire, then the fire spreads more rapidly, giving off huge amounts of heat, with sudden building collapse. Once built, timber-framed buildings are clad in fire resistant material but the continuing integrity of this protection can be hard to ensure in use. In January 2011 we launched a 'safer places' appendix to the Kent Design Guide. We are working with planners, developers and housing associations to promote the use of the guidance in new buildings.

## **Fewer fires**

The number of fires we attend in businesses and other non-domestic properties has decreased significantly over recent years. In 2009/10 we saw a slight increase in the number of this type of fire so we prioritised this area of preventative work. Encouragingly the number of fires, both deliberate and accidental, has fallen again since then.

Managing safety. Whilst we want to work more to support building owners, managers and those responsible for the safety of a building, we also need to make visits to some buildings to ensure this is having a positive effect and appropriate fire safety measures are in place. We have a programme of 'audits' where we visit specific buildings and conduct a review of the fire precautions and management arrangements. This programme is based on a risk assessment of building types, so making sure we use our resources carefully and look at those buildings which we believe present the greatest risk. We will also visit buildings if we receive information or have some other reason to believe there is a problem with the fire safety arrangements.

When we visit your building we will discuss our findings with you and tell you whether or not we think the fire safety arrangements are suitable. If we do think there is a need to make improvements we will tell you, and either offer guidance or give directions as to how these can be achieved.

We will continue to 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 at greater risk

## **Automatic fire alarms**

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. Only about one in fifty of these calls turn out to be fires as most are 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 only respond 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 two thirds, which means that there are now many more occasions when fire engines are available for genuine emergencies, when in the past they would have been responding to a false alarm.

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. We will continue to monitor the impact very closely, and where there is any doubt, we will still send fire engines.

## **Using technology**

We recognise that some of the biggest improvements we can make to the efficiency of our service can be achieved by using technology to improve the way we work and the services we offer. We are introducing a Premises Risk Management system. In addition to improving the way we hold and manage this our records, the system will also allow us to highlight specific building risks to our staff should they be called to a fire in that building.

We have also started to look at other electronic systems which will allow businesses to access some of our services on line and improve the availability of information about completing a risk assessment and managing a building safely.

## **Procurement**

Whilst we need to work within European procurement rules and achieve best value, we ensure that local companies have the opportunity to bid for contracts to supply to us where possible. This should help to support the local economy and protect local jobs.

## ***Action plan***

- Automatic fire alarms
- Premises risk management
- Business advice service

## ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 103 –Fires in non-domestic properties
- LPI 145 – Calls to unwanted automatic fire alarms

## Responding to emergencies

*We work hard to reduce risks but we also need to ensure we are well prepared to respond to emergencies when they do occur.*

We ensure we provide the best possible emergency service – from dealing with small fires and road accidents on a daily basis to much larger incidents which thankfully only happen very rarely. We work with partners such as the Police, the Environment Agency and local authorities to assess specific risks and ensure that we have plans in place to deal with them.

We constantly review our plans, changing them if we see a change in risk. For example, extreme weather events, possibly caused by climate change, are becoming more common. We have therefore improved our ability to respond in severe weather like snow or floods.

## Right people in the right places

Last year we completed our biggest ever review of emergency cover. The review of emergency response considered *where* we should respond from - balancing risk, demand and isolation. The aim was to ensure that our fire stations are in the right places to respond to emergencies quickly. We are now implementing these changes under the Towards 2020 programme. Although we do not intend to carry out another full review like this for at least another five years, we will constantly consider the resources we have available at different times of day to ensure we can provide a flexible and efficient emergency response.

We are now considering *who* should respond. We are looking at the various contracts offered to firefighters to ensure they give us the flexibility we need. The shift system used by full-time firefighters continues to serve us well, and we don't want to change it substantially.

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 organisation. We will therefore need to be innovative and offer different types of contracts to maintain the excellent service people expect from us.

## Right tactics and right equipment

We are also looking at *how* we deal with emergency incidents in a project called the operational capability review. We are challenging the traditional firefighting tactics and looking to see if there are new methods we could adopt in order to work more effectively or safely. For example, 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.

When we have a large incident we sometimes have to send many fire engines just to get enough firefighters to the scene, and this ties up valuable fire engines and equipment that are not actually needed. Therefore we are considering using other vehicles to transport additional



firefighters to the incident. This will free up some of the fire engines to respond to other incidents if they are needed. We are also looking at how we use our specialist vehicles. These tend to travel with a whole crew of firefighters, which is often unnecessary. At the same time we are reviewing the number of height vehicles we have and where they are kept.

We have already introduced positive pressure ventilation equipment which allows firefighters to clear some of the smoke and hazardous fumes before entering a room. We are introducing compressed air foam on to many of our fire engines which allows crews to put fires out quicker with less water. We have provided our firefighters with new protective clothing and breathing apparatus. We are introducing an extinguishing system, called Cobra, which allow crews to pierce through walls and spray water into a building under high pressure before entering. This lowers the temperature of the gases and reduces the risk of flashover. We will continue to look for new innovative ways of fighting fires effectively and safely.

## **Responding to road traffic collisions**

We attend over 800 road traffic collisions each year but this is only about a quarter of the total number of road accidents. In the past we have aimed to reach 94% of the incidents we are called to within 15 minutes. However, we have reviewed this and want to increasingly respond to most life-threatening incidents within 10 minutes. Although the new fire stations we are building will help us to achieve this we may also need to change how we respond. For example, in some areas we will probably need to introduce new vehicles which can get to road accidents more quickly than a traditional fire engine.

Vehicles have become very complex structures which offer new challenges to the crews that respond to road collisions. For example when our firefighters need to cut through door pillars or panels they need to know where airbags are located. We will be introducing new mobile data terminals which can be used to provide this information to the firefighters at the scene which will allow them to work more quickly and safely.

We are also speaking to other emergency services to see whether we can improve the care we provide to casualties. This may mean doing more joint training with the ambulance service so we understand each other's procedures. Our staff are already trained in first aid, but we think this could be enhanced to specifically focus on the needs of road accident casualties, as we sometimes arrive at the scene first.

## **Planning for the worst**

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.

We also work closely with other fire and rescue services and other agencies to assure national resilience and capability. This involves planning and exercising for large scale incidents. Our urban search and rescue team, based in Maidstone, work locally, nationally and internationally. The team are able to respond quickly to large scale incidents, which could be natural disasters such as earthquakes or flooding, as well as assisting with incidents in Kent and Medway such as road traffic collisions when specialised equipment or expertise is needed.

We work with other agencies as part of the Kent Resilience Forum to prepare for major risks in the area. Multi-agency plans are developed and maintained to help all partners to be better prepared and reduce the effects of major emergencies should any of the risks materialise. Multi-agency co-operation is very important when responding to major emergencies and having a good understanding of how these agencies work leads to better co-ordination. We take part in all multi-agency KRF exercises and also carry out our own regular exercises, often with partner agencies. We are investigating whether partners would like us to take more of a lead role in emergency planning.

## **Handling emergency calls**

Over the last couple of years we have looked very carefully at ways of improving how we receive and handle 999 calls. It soon became obvious to us that the best solution was to move our control staff into the same building as Kent Police – which we already used as a back-up. This move has been successfully completed and allows our staff to work more closely with the Police, and this has already achieved operational benefits.

The next stage will be to replace the computer system we use to take emergency calls and send fire engines, officers or specialised crews to an emergency. We think a common software product with Kent Police would be best for both organisations. This will bring further efficiencies and will give us the opportunity to modernise our system. We will also replace the mobilising equipment on stations and mobile data terminals on fire engines to ensure they remain completely reliable.

We are also taking the opportunity to review how we handle calls. For example, when someone dials 999 to report a fire in their home, we think there may be opportunities to give them more advice and for us to get more information about the fire than we currently do.

## **Marine operations**

Kent is strategically placed on the South East coast of England, with the busiest shipping lane running along the English Channel, and major ports including Dover. In the past we have been part of national arrangements for responding to fires and other emergencies which may occur at sea. The government removed this funding but we made a commitment to maintain the capability for a marine response as we believe this is

a vital emergency service. We have continued to lobby government for funding but have not been successful. This means that individual fire and rescue authorities will decide whether they continue on a collaborative basis without central funding although alternative sources of funding are being sought.

We have however successfully secured EU funding for a project which aims to promote better collaboration on marine firefighting with other European fire services, including those in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Work is ongoing to develop common operational policies and training as well as a large scale exercise to test arrangements.

### **Standard operating procedures**

We are working with other fire and rescue services to develop and introduce standard operating procedures. Ensuring that we work in the same way as neighbouring services will allow more effective cross-border working, reduce administration and allow for the introduction of standard equipment. Many of the procedures have now been agreed and we are in the process of introducing them into the way we work.

### ***Action plan***

- Review of emergency response provision and development of new fire stations
- Review of operational capability
- Improve operational equipment
- New arrangements for taking emergency calls and mobilising
- New station mobilising equipment and mobile data terminals
- New officer mobilisation and communication equipment
- Prepare for the Olympics
- Channel Tunnel Contract
- Premises risk management system
- Review of Marine Operations
- Standard operating procedures
- Review of local emergency planning arrangements

## ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 143 – Response times to life threatening incidents
- LPI 144 – Response times to non life threatening incidents

## **Workforce strategy**

The services we provide are totally reliant on having well trained, competent and committed staff. The organisation has been going through immense change over recent years. This has been necessary in order to respond to reductions in public spending and changes in demand for our services. This rate of change has only been possible because of the positive nature of our workforce and the excellent relationships across the Service.

Over recent years we have introduced changes which have achieved efficiency savings. This in turn has allowed us to divert more resources into training and staff development; as well as providing them with the innovative equipment and facilities a modern fire service needs. As mentioned elsewhere in this Corporate Plan, we have invested in new equipment, like positive pressure ventilation which allows firefighters to clear the building of smoke before entering, reducing risk for firefighters. We have also provided crews with new personal protective equipment and breathing apparatus. We will continue to introduce new equipment where this is proven to improve efficiency, effectiveness or the safety of our firefighters.

As the number of incidents we attend continues to reduce, and budgets become tighter, it is inevitable that the number of staff we employ will reduce. This may mean that jobs need to change in content, and staff will need to work more flexibly. However, we will always treat staff with the respect they deserve, ensuring they have the opportunity to influence change through consultation. Because we have planned ahead, we have been able to avoid compulsory redundancies and will continue to do so wherever possible.

## **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. These skills will become even more important as we meet the difficult challenges ahead.

## **Realistic training**

As the number of fires continues to decline there is more reliance on training and ensuring staff can demonstrate their competence to do their jobs. This is key to ensuring firefighters stay safe and can work effectively. We have invested in live-fire training so staff can practice and enhance these skills in a controlled environment before they go to real incidents, or as a refresher for experienced staff. We will carry out a review of the facilities we have available to ensure they meet our future needs and develop a new training facility at Westwood Cross in Thanet.

## **Flexible working**

We have been very successful in improving people's safety. As a result we are attending fewer emergencies, especially fires, and we expect these to reduce even further. We are committed to providing a first class emergency service with fast response times and in order to achieve this we need to have firefighters available where and when they are needed. At the same time we know that the funding we receive from government and local taxpayers will continue to reduce. One way we are able to meet these conflicting demands is to have a more flexible workforce.

In 2011 we introduced new contracts for on-call firefighters which means that managers can plan when firefighters work in order to ensure fire engines are available when and where they are needed. These firefighters were previously on retained contracts and availability was impossible to plan ahead. The move to new contracts was the first step in ensuring a more robust and reliable operational on-call workforce system. We are also recruiting on-call firefighters in areas where additional staff are required to maintain effective emergency cover, including new fire stations such as the one at Ash-cum-Ridley.

We have also introduced a range of new contracts for staff that want to offer additional hours. These contracts are available to both full-time and part-time staff. One example of this is the introduction of annualised-hours contracts which provide a pool of staff that are prepared to work flexibly where and when required. These staff ensure that fluctuations in demand, coupled with the day-to-day issues that arise with maintaining emergency cover arrangements, can be managed more effectively. We will continue to explore new ways of working that improve service or efficiency through working flexibly.

## ***Action plan***

- Review flexible duty system
- Moving retained to on-call contracts
- Increase flexibility of operational working patterns
- New payroll and HR system
- Introduce new intranet
- Firefighter training

## ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 500 – Incident rate of RIDDOR reportable incidents
- LPI 406 – Sickness rates

## **Caring for the environment**

*The Authority is committed to protecting the environment.*

Our work to reduce the number of fires is helping to protect the natural beauty of Kent and Medway and make our communities pleasant places to live. We also take steps to protect the environment when we attend incidents.

### **Protecting the environment**

Most fires and other emergencies will generate pollution if controls are not put in place. We have therefore looked at how we deal with these incidents to make sure we are taking all the steps we can to protect the environment. We have introduced new procedures to identify and control the risk of damage to the environment.

We have formed good working partnerships with the Environment Agency and Natural England to ensure that environmental, wildlife and heritage sites remain unaffected as a result of our actions.

### **Reducing carbon emissions**

We know that our routine business has the potential to damage the environment, not least through using non-renewable energy. Energy used in our buildings, fuel for vehicles and water usage is currently responsible for over 4,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. In January 2009, the Authority signed the Nottingham Declaration, demonstrating its commitment to address climate change. The declaration places a responsibility on the Authority to reduce climate change by reducing greenhouse gases emitted.

We have set ourselves a tough target to reduce these emissions by 35% over the five year period ending 2013/14. In order to achieve this we engaged the Carbon Trust to help develop a Carbon Management Plan. As part of this plan we are improving insulation in our buildings and introducing energy efficient solutions into our new stations.

We have reviewed our use of cars and vans for business travel. We are now implementing a new travel policy which will dramatically reduce the use of private and leased cars and make greater use of pool vehicles. This will reduce carbon emissions associated with travel without any negative impacts on how we respond to emergencies. We are also investigating whether electric powered vehicles would offer a viable alternative for some business travel.

As explained elsewhere in this plan, we are reviewing how we respond to emergencies. Currently if we need more firefighters at a large incident we send them in a fire engine, even if the vehicle and equipment are not required. We are looking at using smaller vehicles to get



firefighters to where they are needed, when a fire engine isn't required. This will not only be far more efficient, it will reduce the carbon produced as a result.

We will continue to explore opportunities for sharing buildings and other resources with our partners. This helps to ensure buildings, which are using energy, are not under-occupied.

### ***Action plan***

- Carbon management programme
- Waste management
- Environmental protection
- Fleet review

### ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 100 – Total fires
- LPI 128 – Accidental fires
- LPI 101 – Deliberate fires
- LPI 703 – Percentage of CO<sup>2</sup> reduction from operational activity

## Improving efficiency

*The Authority is dedicated to improving the quality of the services it provides but at the same time ensuring that it offers the best possible value for money.*

### Financial planning

Since the start of the first year of the Comprehensive Spending Review (2010) which was 2011/12, this Authority has saved in excess of £6m through efficiencies, savings and streamlining processes. Some of these savings have been reinvested enabling the Authority to carry out more Live Fire training, purchase new vehicles and equipment, as well as improving its infrastructure. The funding mechanism for local government has changed significantly for the 2013/14 and future financial years, reflecting a move in financial autonomy away from central government. Funding from central government for 2013/14 is 9.2% lower than the previous year and this trend will continue in future years. Over the next three years the Authority anticipates that it will be required to make a total of £15m savings (2013-16). To achieve this it is constantly looking for innovative ways of working, for example by considering more efficient and effective ways of responding to incidents, in terms of appliances, equipment and staffing.

The Authority's three-year medium term financial plan is an integral part of our corporate planning to ensure that resources are allocated where they will achieve our aim and objectives. Through prudent financial planning we have been able to avoid any increase in Council Tax, for a third consecutive year, whilst at the same time ensuring that the quality of our services is maintained. This year, for the first time, the Authority has published a **Budget Book** [hyperlink] which explains in more detail many aspects of the development of the medium term financial plan.

### Working with our partners

We work on a local level through partnerships and community safety groups. These partnerships allow us to serve the needs of the community much better than we ever could on our own. The partnerships for Kent and Medway set out the priorities which the organisations have agreed to work towards together. We also want to enable people to improve their own safety and quality of life, becoming less reliant on the services we provide.

We have a good working relationship with the Police, the ambulance service, other fire and rescue services, local authorities and many other agencies. Working more closely together also improves efficiency by sharing best practice, joint procurement and sharing back-office functions where appropriate. As described in the Responding to Emergencies section we have co-located the team that take emergency calls with Kent Police and we are now looking at adopting the Police call-handling and mobilisation system. This will be far more efficient than it would be to replace our own ageing system.

## **Changing the way we work**

We have described in this plan how we are modernising the way we work through the Towards 2020 programme. This change has been planned over many years, and is designed to meet the changing needs within the area. However, the changes have also been designed to make the organisation more efficient. For example, having fire stations where we need them, rather than based on an historical legacy, introducing new ways of fighting fires, considering smaller response vehicles and introducing new equipment will not only improve our service but will also cut costs.

We have changed the flexible duty system for officers to increase the time they are available for management roles. We are now looking at how we can gain the most from our firefighters by using more flexible working arrangements, whilst also maintaining safe working conditions. To do this, we will continue to develop a range of employment contracts either on an annualised basis to meet peaks of activity, or for specific hours throughout the year. These will build on our recent changes to working practices.

We have changed how we respond to calls from automatic fire alarms (AFAs), most of which are in business premises. From April 2012 we changed our policy so that during the day 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 two thirds. From April 2013 we will implement the full policy to cover 24 hours.

## **Reducing administration**

In 2012/13 the Authority continued to reduce back office costs, achieving £220k by the deletion of 7 administration posts, £170k from lease car costs as a result of the Fleet review, £100k in insurance excess and £243k in various supplies and services headings. Over the next 3 years the Authority plans to continue to look for further efficiencies across all areas of the Service, for example the Authority plans to tender for a new HR and Payroll service, which is expected to automate and streamline many processes.

## **Asset management**

As we develop more flexible ways of delivering our emergency service we need to ensure our assets are fit for purpose. As part of last year's safety plan we set out a programme to close, relocate or build new fire stations to ensure we have the right infrastructure for the future. This is now being implemented, stations which have closed are being sold in order to help fund the development of new stations in the places we need them most. The infrastructure programme incorporates not only our buildings but also our vehicles and information systems. These assets are often dependent on one another and therefore a single plan is more helpful.

## **Fleet review**

We have reviewed our use of cars and vans for business travel. We are now implementing the changes which will dramatically reduce the use of private and leased cars and make greater use of pool vehicles. This will reduce travel costs without any negative impacts on how we respond to emergencies.

## ***Action plan***

- Review of flexible duty system
- Review of operational capability
- Increase flexibility of operational working patterns
- New payroll and HR system
- Fleet review
- Automatic false alarms
- Standard operating procedures

## ***Performance indicators***

- LPI 100 – Total fires
- LPI 406 – Sickness levels