

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

Corporate Plan 2014/15

**This is a text only version of the Corporate Plan
as agreed by the Authority on 11 February 2014**

**For the most current version
including performance information
please visit 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 can continue to maintain the level of service we provide to the public.

In our most recent **safety plan** we provided an update on how we are modernising the organisation and redesigning our operations to meet these demands. This includes a comprehensive station development programme, changing how we crew fire engines and reviewing how we deal with emergencies across the county. The intention is to maintain or enhance services whilst achieving the cost savings we need to make.

The projects in this plan will create around £10m savings over the next three years, but we know more will be needed after 2016/17. We have not changed any of the fundamental principles published in our previous Corporate Plan but rather continued to build on those foundations. In 2014/15, we are not proposing to downgrade or close any fire stations, although one fire engine is to be decommissioned. Some of the changes will have an impact on our staff and how they work. This is necessary if we are to achieve the savings we need to make while protecting services to the public.

The proposed changes to the workforce will be phased in and, at the moment, because of the current rate of turnover of staff, there are no plans for any compulsory redundancies of firefighters. We are however talking to our staff about their retirement plans and encouraging those who can retire to do so. After consulting with the public, the Authority has agreed a small increase in Council Tax. This will help us avoid compulsory redundancies of firefighters for as long as possible. In 2013, we had to make some back-office staff redundant and it is likely that the number of back-office staff will reduce by a further 20% over the coming years.

With the funding pressures we are under, standing still is not an option, nor is ignoring the issue. All of the changes outlined in this plan are being made with the safety of local people, businesses and firefighters in mind. Above all, we are focusing on our customers' needs.

Ann Millington

Chief Executive, Kent Fire and Rescue Service

Nick Chard

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 km². 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 70 are both predicted to increase, with a related rise in mobility problems and disability, but the proportion of young people in the county is expected to reduce.

Kent and Medway has a diverse population with a wide range of ethnic groups, although approximately 89% of people consider themselves White British. There are areas, including Medway and the Thames Gateway, where there are significant communities of Asian-Indian, Black-African and Other White residents. Around 65.5% of people state they have a religion or belief. Christianity is the most prominent group in Kent but there are large numbers of residents that are Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu or have other religious beliefs.

How we are performing

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority has been recognised for its high performance over a number of years.

The Government abolished its performance framework called Comprehensive Area Assessment and as a result the Authority has not received an organisational assessment since 2009. 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 Audit Commission as the new external auditor to the Authority for the next five years.

Performance targets

Performance in 2012/13 was exceptionally good with significant decreases in the number of fires, especially outdoor fires. This was undoubtedly helped by the predominantly wet weather experienced in the spring and autumn of 2012. In 2013/14, we were called to more fires, but we expected this as the weather was warmer and drier than 2012. In the medium to long term the trend is still improving and we believe this clearly demonstrates that our community safety initiatives have been effective. Overall, we are well placed to achieve our three-year targets.

External Auditors' Annual Governance Report for 2012/13

The [External Auditors' Annual Governance Report](#) was reported to the Authority in June 2013. The report highlights the following key points:

- The External Auditors identified only minor amendments to the Statement of Accounts, which were subsequently incorporated within the final accounts;
- In their overall Value for Money assessment they are satisfied that the Authority has proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;
- The External Auditor expected to issue an unqualified audit report on the Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 (**Appendix 1**, page 28 to 30) and subsequently did so the following month.

The Auditors also said:

- “There is a clear link between the Authority's IRMP [now referred to as the Safety Plan], Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan;”
- “A well established performance management process is in place, and this has operated effectively during 2012/13;”

- “Whilst the financial environment remains challenging for the foreseeable future, the Authority has a sound framework for assessing financial risk;”
- “Financial reserves are being maintained at a healthy level and the budget monitoring process is strong;”
- “The Authority is adopting a prudent low risk approach in respect of treasury management;”
- “Whilst efficiency savings targets have been achieved in 2012/13 and earlier years, the Authority has managed to ensure that savings have been reinvested in new service initiatives...”

Operational Assessment 2014

There has, in recent years, been a shift to local accountability and a desire from the Government that fire and rescue authorities should take a more sector-led approach to performance management. To support this, the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers’ Association have introduced an Operational Assessment. The process involves us undertaking a self-assessment against a toolkit to demonstrate how well we provide our operational services.

We completed a self-assessment in 2013/14 which is available on our website. A peer review team is due to visit us in April 2014 in order to challenge and test our self-assessment. The results of the peer challenge will be published on our website when they become available.

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. On average we respond to Freedom of Information requests within eight days. 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 more social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, as this supports greater interaction with the public.

Governance Assurance Statement

The Authority publishes an **Annual Governance Assurance Statement** and this now incorporates the **Operational Assurance Statement**.

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. Figures shown for other fire and rescue authorities have been taken from provisional 2012/13 data published by the Government; whereas the 2013/14 performance figures for Kent and Medway are based on our own data. (This performance data will be updated at the beginning of May 2014).

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 2013/14 is the second 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 find easier to understand. 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 so we 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 by staff on a voluntary basis and we are seeking to ensure that the working environment encourages individual members of staff to 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 continue to develop our live-fire training programme to make sure we maintain and increase our range of 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, such as 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 updating protective clothing and breathing apparatus when we need to do so. 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 largely 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 to 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 our 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

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. The projects within the change programme are described in more detail under the relevant sections of the Corporate Plan.

In 2011, 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, businesses and road infrastructure. As well as carrying out reviews on a local basis we looked at county-wide strategic cover to ensure we maintained sufficient resources to respond to large or multiple incidents. The review found that a number of fire stations were no longer needed or were in the wrong place. These stations have now closed and most have already been sold. The staff that worked at the former fire stations have either been redeployed to other stations, or have decided to leave – no firefighters were made compulsorily redundant. This review is described in detail in the Responding to Emergencies section.

Following the review of emergency response we have started a programme to build [new fire stations](#). A new on-call fire station at Ash-cum-Ridley opened in November 2013 and is now operational with a mixture of new local recruits and existing staff who have moved from the old Horton Kirby fire station. In Rochester we are building a new full-time fire station near the airport which will incorporate an innovative road safety centre. The fire station and road safety centre are due for completion by 2015.

We are also redeveloping the existing full-time station at Watling Street in Gillingham to create a new, smaller fire station. Not only does this location give us the best cover for the Medway area, redeveloping the site avoids the significant costs needed to improve the existing very old building. We have also bought land for a new full-time fire station in Ramsgate which we hope to have completed by the end of 2015. We are also planning to redevelop our current day-crewed fire station at Herne Bay, but at the moment we cannot say when this will be.

During 2013/14 we reviewed how we responded to incidents. We decided, for example, to increase our fleet of more compact fire engines, backed up by larger fire engines when needed, so, that they can manoeuvre through smaller roads which are often restricted by parked cars. These vehicles carry the essential equipment used at the majority of incidents. This will mean that we won't have to train as many firefighters to

use the full range of specialised rescue equipment that is carried on our larger fire engines. At the same time we explored new innovative equipment and ways of working which would enable firefighters to do their job better or more safely. The outcomes of the review were included in our most recent Safety Plan which was agreed by the Authority in February 2014. This review is described in detail in the Responding to Emergencies section.

In order to improve both efficiency and service delivery we need to use firefighters in a more flexible way. We have therefore challenged the traditional model and made changes to employment contracts where necessary. In 2011 we changed how we employed part-time firefighters by moving retained firefighters to on-call contracts. Moving to new contracts meant that for the first time we were able to predetermine when we wanted our firefighters to work according to the risk and demands in an area.

In 2013 we reviewed the contracts for day-crewed firefighters as we wanted to ensure that they are working on station at the times when they are needed most, including evenings and weekends. In 2014 we will introduce new contracts, including self-rostering, which will enable the establishment to be reduced whilst improving service delivery. We included these proposals in our Safety Plan, along with changes to the number of firefighters based at full-time fire stations, in order to improve efficiency further. These changes are described in more detail in the Workforce Strategy.

We have 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 (6am – 6pm) we responded only to calls from AFAs where there were signs of a fire. From April 2013 we implemented the full policy to cover 24 hours. We have been working with the business community over the past three years to help them adjust to this change.

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 have started using Lean methodology, learning from the experiences of Kent Police, in order to rationalise and simplify processes.

Strategies

As a single-service local authority, we don't need such a large number of strategies as larger or more complex organisations such as Kent County Council or Medway Council. We therefore have 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 themselves provide more detail. You will find a link to the strategies under the relevant section. The strategies focus on the services we provide to you, whether you are at home, in your car or at work.

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

- The first *planned* time in your life that you are likely to 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 will talk to you again at your school or college about road safety;
- When you move away from home for the first time we have information on our website to help you stay safe in your new accommodation;
- 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 help you ensure that you 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;
- If you drive, we provide information on how to drive safely in all weather conditions;
- 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 strategy refocuses how we keep people safe. It places 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 focus is on assisting vulnerable people in our communities, but the strategy also sets out how we intend to improve engagement and transparency.
- **Focus on business:** this is our first strategy on how we work with the business community. In the past, we 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 new strategy collects all of this good work and gives it an outward-looking framework. The document focuses on business education; how businesses can recover after an emergency; improving safety and checking compliance; working with partners to streamline regulation; and also looks at enforcement of the Fire Safety Order.
- **Responding to emergencies:** this new strategy sets out how we plan for and respond to fires and other emergencies. It sets 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 also sets 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. 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 deliver flexibility in 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 uninsurable. Additionally, taking cost effective measures to reduce fuel and energy use not only reduces carbon emissions but also saves money.

The context of change

In order to understand the culture within KFRS and the changes we are implementing, it is helpful to summarise where we have come from. The list below includes 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 on 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: e.g. 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;**
- **Began calculating the carbon footprint for the organisation.**

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, fire gear).**

2010

- **Started a project to standardise operational response procedures across the region;**
- **Started to review the Emergency Response Provision in Kent and Medway (where we respond from), focusing initially on Medway and Thanet;**
- **Creation of vulnerable adults’ unit to focus on complex needs.**

2011

- Retained duty system converted to On-Call giving guaranteed part-time cover for the first time;
- Restructured organisation creating groups/clusters to move decision-making closer to the front line and free-up Area Managers;
- 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 and giving incident commanders 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;
- Developed strategic partnership with Police and Ambulance;
- Developed operational procedures and guidance to mitigate the impact on the environment of our actions at incidents.

2012

- Review of Emergency Response Provision completed
 - Stations closed in places we don't need them
 - 5 new stations commissioned;
 - Recruitment of new On-Call firefighters;
- 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.

2013

- First phase of the review of Operational Capability completed
 - Agreed to reduce the number of height vehicles
 - Agreed a model of using smaller fire engines;
- Completed a review of day-crewed system;
- Agreed arrangements for more flexible use of firefighters including crews of fewer than four;
- Agreed changes to the 24/7 shift system by deleting the ridership factor;
- Further recruitment of new on-call firefighters;
- Developed and agreed the five primary strategies;
- Started a programme to build five new fire stations;
- Designed and secured a site for an innovative road safety centre at Rochester;
- Progressed plans to move control and command system on to common software with Kent Police;
- Removed remaining cooks from stations and catering facilities from our headquarters and training centre;
- Started implementing new Standard Operating Procedures;
- Carried out our first Lean review, with assistance from Kent Police, and started to implement the recommendations;
- Reviewed our Project Management arrangements and introduced new processes.
- Reviewed our Corporate Management Board to meet the future needs of the Service.

Focus on Your Safety

We know that the consequences of a fire, road crash or other emergency can be severe and that is why we put so much effort into prevention. Our community safety initiatives have had remarkable success over the last 15 years, but we have only recently reviewed how these services are delivered and set out a new strategy to ensure our prevention activities are as effective as possible.

In our new Strategy, titled **Focus on Your Safety**, we focus on prevention of three types of emergency:

- Fires in the home or outside;
- Road traffic collisions;
- Flooding in the home or across broad areas, and incidents involving water.

Understanding our communities

To achieve our objectives we strive to understand our local communities and engage effectively. We aim to ensure that all our community safety activities are informed by research. For many years we have been collecting data about the incidents we attend but increasingly we are using data from lots of other sources. For example, we use a marketing tool which identifies social groups and, by cross-referencing this data with real incidents, we can predict which groups of people are most at risk. We are also increasingly working more closely with other agencies and local authorities who understand the needs of local people.

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.

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.

We are also working with partners on the Government's '*Troubled Families*' initiative. Troubled families are those that have difficulties and cause problems to the community around them. The Government is committed to working with local authorities and their partners to help 120,000 troubled families turn their lives around by 2015.

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 lead the Margate Task Force, which is a multi-agency approach to dealing with significant issues in two electoral wards in the Margate area.

We considered whether to set up a cadet force, but having reviewed the options available, we feel that the benefits of improved citizenship skills can be achieved in other ways, such as through the FireFit scheme, or other schemes run by our partners. Instead we are going to focus efforts on recruiting part-time firefighters as this is a more pressing organisational need for us.

A new approach to Community Safety

Over the last ten years the number of fires we are called out to has dropped by 70% and the severity of fires in the home has decreased. This is thanks to a number of factors such as better designed homes, fewer people smoking, and the efforts both nationally and locally to promote fire safety. The number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads has also fallen. We were one of the first fire and rescue services in the country to focus attention on preventative work and our community safety initiatives have had remarkable success.

We want to increasingly focus on groups who are at greatest risk. We need to move away from a role that is focused on giving information and develop a model that is informed by an in-depth understanding of our target groups and the behaviours that put them at risk. We have therefore looked at our planning process for these activities.

As a result we are introducing a social marketing approach to engage with key groups. This approach has been successfully used in the NHS and other organisations wishing to influence public behaviour. Through audience segmentation of our risk groups and qualitative research we aim to get a more thorough understanding of people's behaviour and motivations. We can then use that information to design measurable interventions that have real relevance to those audiences.

The Issues in Kent and Medway

Through our research we have identified the following issues:

An ageing population: 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 and this can make some of these people more at risk from fire.

Mental health issues: Research suggests that the number of people with mental health problems is also increasing. We are the lead fire service on a national project responding to the Prime Minister's dementia challenge. This project includes raising awareness of the issues, providing advice to carers, and training for our staff.

Deprivation issues: Our research shows that the risk of fire increases with a rise in deprivation. There is also a growing transient population in the private sector housing market and some of these properties are in poor condition with little regulation.

Domestic abuse: Recent tragic cases have shown us how fire can be used as a weapon. Domestic abuse sadly seems to be an increasing issue and when it involves fire the outcomes can be tragic.

Road safety: Although the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has fallen in recent years there are signs that this decline is slowing or coming to an end. We have identified that young drivers are more at risk of being involved in accidents. This is mainly caused by inexperience in assessing and reacting to risk, and being distracted by passengers.

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 have committed to engage effectively and ensure that any prevention activity we undertake is informed by research and evidence. We will continue to improve our understanding of our local communities and their needs in order to ensure that our resources are targeted effectively where they will have measurable value to local people. For example, 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 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 film, theatre, or practical demonstrations, such as cutting students out of a car, to get across the message in an interesting way. Building on this experience we are developing a road safety centre in Rochester. This will enable us to deliver a wider range of practical courses to children and young people.

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. Having a fire in the home is very distressing and we want to help people recover and return to normality. We are exploring whether we can provide more support for longer. This is covered in more detail in the **Responding to Emergencies** strategy.

Action plan

- Improve post-incident customer care
- Introduce new website
- Introduce a road safety centre at Rochester
- Explore opportunities for joint agency working
- Introduce new process for community safety commissioning and evaluation

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 as important to us when you are at work, out shopping or enjoying a night out, just as much as it is when you are at home. Therefore we want to work with businesses to help prevent fires and reduce risk. We also want to support the local economy as we know there is a clear link between deprivation and risk.

Our strategy, titled [Focus on Business](#), sets out how we will provide education, advice and other support to businesses.

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.

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 of these 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.

There are clear benefits in us working with businesses to reduce risk. Most small businesses never recover from a major disruption and close within 18 months. If a fire does occur, good fire precautions and training will mean that people do not get hurt and can safely do the most they can to put it out. The building layout, management and fire-resisting features when properly used will limit the extent of fire and protect the business as much as possible. We also provide advice on business continuity, so that businesses can be up and running again quickly if a fire does occur.

We have recently launched a specialist business education unit offering practical advice. The first step is for businesses to complete a fire risk assessment and there is information on how to do this on our website, but we can also provide further guidance and support if necessary. We do still have extensive enforcement powers but we use these proportionately and only when businesses do not follow our advice or disregard the law.

We are working with partners, such as the Health and Safety Executive, to improve engagement with businesses and raise awareness about the risks. 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.

Support for larger businesses

Our business education team will provide guidance, advice and support for all businesses that request it, but it is small and medium sized enterprises that will benefit most from this service. This is because larger businesses are often part of national organisations, chains or franchises. The Government has recently established a 'Primary Authority Scheme' which allows for these businesses to establish a relationship with one fire and rescue authority whose requirements will then be consistently applied to that business's premises throughout the country. We will develop and implement a partnership with one large business under the national scheme which is expected to be in place by April 2014.

Building-in safety

We know that new building designs, materials and methods are constantly evolving. Timber-framed construction, sustainable designs, ventilation, and the use of wide expanses of glass, all contribute to different 'fire behaviours' and pose different risks to manage. Our specialist staff work with architects, technical bodies and research centres to understand and, if appropriate, influence the latest developments. We then offer practical guidance to the industry and ensure our own firefighters are fully trained in how to deal with fires in buildings of this nature.

The planning process also gives us an opportunity to engage with those planning new buildings, and to look at opportunities for improving safety at the design stage, well before any formal application for planning approval is made. We seek to be involved at an early stage as we believe there are often missed opportunities to agree a more cost-effective and safer building design.

Ensuring compliance

Whilst our approach is to support businesses and owners of buildings, there will be occasions where we need to take a more formal approach in order to keep people safe. We know from experience that there are times when the condition of a building becomes unsafe, and our informal approach of offering guidance and advice does not result in the necessary improvements. There are also some occasions when we find buildings with an immediate and serious threat of fire and injury to those people using it. Under these circumstances we will use our enforcement powers. Wherever possible, we will give the person responsible for the building the opportunity to resolve the issues we have identified. When we do take enforcement action we will always explain the reasons for doing so.

We have a programme of 'audits' where we visit specific buildings and conduct a review of the fire precautions and management arrangements. The majority of our audit visits are focused on buildings and areas which our research indicates pose the greatest risk to life. We will also visit buildings if there has been a fire or we receive information to suggest there is a specific fire risk in the building. This way we can make the best use of the resources we have available to us by achieving the greatest reduction in 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 alarm systems. We changed our policy so that between 6am and 6pm we only respond to calls from AFAs where someone confirms that there are signs of a fire. From April 2013 we extended this policy to cover 24 hours. As a result, the number of AFA calls attended has fallen by a further 45%, which means that there are now many more occasions when fire engines are available for genuine emergencies, whereas in the past they would have been responding to a false alarm.

We worked with the business community when introducing these changes, and phased in the policy over two years in direct response to some of the feedback we received. We will continue to monitor the impact very closely, and where there is any doubt, we will continue to 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 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.

Action plan

- Introduce new premises risk management system
- Implement new business advice service
- Work with businesses to improve on-call availability

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. Like other public services we are anticipating tighter financial restraints but we still want to provide an excellent emergency service when it's needed. To achieve this we need to make the best use of our resources by investing in the right places and increasing flexibility. This flexibility applies equally to the way we manage our workforce as it does to our fleet. Our recently approved **Responding to Emergencies** strategy sets out ambitious plans to transform the way we deliver our core business.

Right people in the right places

In 2011 we completed our biggest ever review of emergency cover. The review 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**, by building some **new fire stations** but closing others. We constantly consider the resources we have available at different times of day, and move resources around if necessary, so that we can provide an efficient emergency response.

In our most recent **Safety Plan** we consider *who* should respond. We are looking at the various contracts offered to firefighters to ensure they give us the flexibility we need. In the future, we expect that our overall number of employees will continue to shrink. We will therefore need to be innovative and offer different types of contracts to maintain the excellent service people expect from us. There is more information about how we are increasing flexibility in the **Workforce Strategy** section.

We are also challenging how we crew fire engines. For example, in the past we have not sent fire engines to emergencies if the number of firefighters on the crew falls below four. We now think this is wrong and, although we will still aim to have at least four on a crew, we will mobilise fire engines to some incidents with fewer staff if that is all we have available. However, we will always send an appropriate number of firefighters with the right skills and equipment to incidents as quickly as possible, and provide additional firefighters to back them up if necessary.

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 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, we are increasing the number of smaller, more manoeuvrable, fire engines in our fleet. Although these carry less equipment than full-size fire engines, they are backed up by the larger vehicles when required. For grass fires, we have already invested in an off-road vehicle that can get to places a traditional fire engine would have trouble reaching.

By understanding what equipment and staff we are likely to need at any given incident we are able to identify what options are available to transport them there most effectively , which may not always be fire engines. 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. We have already reviewed the number of height vehicles and agreed to reduce this from five to three.

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

Offensive or defensive firefighting?

The fire and rescue service in the UK is seen by some as 'risk averse'. There have been well-publicised examples from outside Kent where firefighters have been accused of standing back from an incident, rather than intervening. This is referred to as defensive firefighting.

We do not want to be in this position. Our firefighters have the best training and the best protective equipment they have ever had. We have therefore set a clear expectation that they should try to deal with incidents offensively – but safely - when they arrive, rather than defensively. This approach relies on our staff doing really good risk assessments when they get to incidents in order to make the right decisions. We trust our staff to be able to do this in line with their training.

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 try to respond to most life-threatening incidents within 10 minutes, although we now accept that it is going to be hard to improve our response times with the current restraints on spending. The new fire stations we are building will help us to achieve our 10-minute target on more occasions but we also need to change how we respond. For example, in some areas we will be introducing new vehicles which can get to road accidents more quickly than a traditional fire engine.

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.

Preparing 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.

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 technical rescue team, based in Maidstone, work locally, nationally and internationally. The team is able to respond quickly to large scale emergencies anywhere in the world, such as natural disasters like earthquakes or flooding, as well as assisting with incidents in Kent and Medway, such as road traffic collisions, where their specialised equipment or expertise is needed.

We work with other agencies as part of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) to prepare for major risks in the area. Multi-agency plans are developed and maintained to help all partners to be better prepared and to 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.

The Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme

The Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) is a national programme jointly owned by Police, Ambulance and Fire. The programme will improve integration and co-operation between the three emergency services in both routine operations and major or complex incidents. We will take the outcomes from JESIP and make sure they are embedded in our operational planning and procedures. This is likely to generate further opportunities to share resources and provide more efficient service to the public.

Handling emergency calls

Over the last few years we have looked very carefully at ways of improving how we receive and handle 999 calls. It 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. This has already achieved operational benefits.

The next stage is to replace the computer system we use to take 999 calls and then send fire engines, officers or specialised crews to respond to them. We believe a common software product with Kent Police will be best for both organisations. This will bring further efficiencies and will give us the opportunity to modernise our system. We are also replacing 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. Our research has shown that when people have a fire in their home they do not always follow the advice to 'get out, stay out and call the fire service out'. People often go back into their homes before we arrive, in order to save their pets or personal possessions. Therefore, in the future, our staff who take 999 calls will try to keep callers on the line so we know they are safe, and to get more information to help the firefighters travelling to the incident.

This will enable us to send the right resources immediately to an incident. This means we can be more efficient by not sending resources which are not needed, but it also means we can send the right resources to a serious incident more quickly - rather than waiting for the first crew to request additional firefighters or specialist equipment.

Marine operations

Kent is located on the South East coast of England, next to the busiest shipping lane running along the English Channel, and with 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 have made a commitment to maintain the capability for a marine response as we believe this is a vital emergency service.

We are currently involved in an EU-funded project to establish an off-shore marine capability 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.

Specialist firefighting and rescue

As well as our statutory duty to provide an emergency firefighting and rescue service, there are a number of other specialist services we currently provide. We have reviewed these services and found that they are all highly valued and that there is very little merit in stopping any of them. This means that, for the foreseeable future, we will continue to rescue large animals, assist in bariatric rescues and perform line rescues. We will also maintain a specialist chainsaw team based in Maidstone.

We have changed how we deal with some rural fires, especially barn or haystack fires. Having our firefighters maintaining a watching brief over a fire as it dies down is a waste of time and resources. We have changed this now, so that we will hand back responsibility to the landowner as soon as it is safe to do so.

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.

After an emergency

Having a fire in the home is very distressing and we want to help people recover and return to normality as quickly as possible. We already work with the British Red Cross to provide emergency clothing and shelter at an incident if needed, and we are now exploring whether we can use our volunteers to provide more support for longer.

Action plan

- Develop new fire stations
- Review operational capability
- Increase flexibility of operational working patterns
- Introduce new software for taking emergency calls and mobilising
- Procure new station mobilising equipment and mobile data terminals
- Renew the Channel Tunnel contract
- Introduce new premises risk management system
- Review marine operations
- Introduce standard operating procedures
- Introduce new local emergency planning unit
- Carry out the second review of emergency response provision
- Explore opportunities for greater integration with other blue light services
- Introduce new firefighting tactics and response to road traffic collisions
- Remove two height vehicles
- Remove Medway's third fire engine
- Introduce more compact fire engines into our fleet

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. The Authority has recently agreed its third **Workforce Strategy** which will ensure that we continue to develop and support staff to respond to the changes ahead.

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 and improving the survivability of anyone trapped inside. 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 largely 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 to 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 will ensure that firefighters stay safe and can work effectively. We have invested in live-fire training so staff can practice and enhance their firefighting skills in a controlled environment before they go to real incidents, or as a refresher for experienced staff. We are carrying out a review of the facilities we have available to ensure they meet our future needs, including 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 our most recent **Safety Plan** we have set out a number of initiatives which will help us to achieve this.

In 2011 we introduced new contracts for on-call firefighters which mean 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 have been 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 which opened in November 2013. We are beginning to speak to some large employers in the county where we think there are opportunities to use on-call staff in a different way which would benefit both those employers and us.

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.

Further efficiencies and improvements

We have reviewed the contracts for day-crewed firefighters. These firefighters work at the station during the day but respond from home at night and some of the weekend. We identified that the working hours spent on station did not align with when we get most calls. We will introduce new working patterns which will increase the hours when firefighters are on station, including at weekends. This will include self-rostering which will lead to a reduction in establishment (which we hope to achieve through natural wastage) whilst actually improving service delivery.

We have also set out options for changes to the full-time 24/7 duty system. By changing how we crew our full-time 24/7 fire engines, we can give the same level of service for at least the next two years, without changing the number of 24/7 fire engines, or firefighters' working hours. We can achieve this by removing one firefighter from each full-time watch. This still allows time for training, annual leave and sickness. This

proposed option will reduce the number of our whole-time shift firefighters based at fire stations by around 94, saving £5.4m over the next two years. It will also allow us to reduce the number of temporary annualised-hours contracts we offer to firefighters, although we may need to have a small bank of staff to fill any short term gaps which cannot be managed locally. More information about these proposals is included in the **Safety Plan**.

If enough firefighters do not leave through natural wastage, and more savings are needed, then we may have to return to other options such as removing whole-time fire engines or reducing the time they are crewed. However, we do not plan to do this before 2016/17.

Action plan

- Increase flexibility of operational working patterns
- Introduce crewing with fewer than four
- Implement new payroll and HR system
- Introduce new intranet and migrate to new document management system
- Review operational training facilities
- Work with businesses to improve on-call availability
- Introduce self-rostering
- Introduce a virtual learning environment
- Develop new competency record system

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.

Reducing carbon emissions

In 2012/13 we spent £1,360k on energy for our buildings and fuel for our vehicles. As energy prices increase this bill is bound to rise, so reducing energy use is not just better for the environment, it is also an essential way of reducing costs.

Energy used in our buildings, fuel for vehicles and water usage is currently responsible for over 3,800 tonnes of CO₂ annually. We have set ourselves a tough target in line with our new **Caring for the Environment** strategy to reduce these emissions by 35%, compared to our baseline set in 2008/09. 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.

Property

As part of our strategy we are improving insulation and using new technologies in our current buildings where this proves practical and cost-effective. This includes the use of more energy-efficient heating and lighting systems. We will continue to explore opportunities for sharing buildings and other resources with our partners. This helps to ensure that buildings, which are using energy, are not under-occupied.

We are in the process of planning and building five new fire stations to meet operational needs, the first of which opened in November 2013. These new buildings will be highly energy-efficient and include, where possible, renewable technologies and other related environmental improvements such as solar photo-voltaic systems and rainwater harvesting.

We will continue to reduce waste and ensure that recycling is increased where possible. We are in the process of moving our bulk fuel tanks above ground where there is much less risk of groundwater contamination.

Fleet

We have reviewed our use of cars and vans for business travel. We have implemented a new travel policy which has dramatically reduced the use of private and leased cars and makes 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 or hybrid 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 introducing smaller fire engines in some places, as well as alternative ways of getting 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.

Changing behaviour

By working smarter we are able to reduce the amount of energy we use. We have introduced video-conferencing facilities at every work station to encourage staff to work virtually, rather than travel to meetings unnecessarily. We are also investing in a virtual learning environment which can be used to deliver training to staff in their normal workplace. Where journeys are necessary then there is clear guidance for staff to follow to ensure the most efficient travel arrangements, for example by car sharing.

The amount of energy used in our buildings and by our vehicles can be influenced greatly by how our staff behave at work. This can be simple things like turning lights off when offices are not in use, closing windows and doors to retain heat, or avoiding unnecessary journeys. We will continue to encourage staff to act in this way through communication and our network of Green Guardians. Managers are also expected to encourage this behaviour through normal line management processes and we have set local environmental targets for them to achieve.

Protecting the environment operationally

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.

Action plan

- Continue the carbon management programme
- Review and improve waste management
- Continue to review and improve environmental protection
- Introduce energy saving solutions as part of new station builds

Performance indicators

- LPI 100 – Total fires
- LPI 128 – Accidental fires
- LPI 101 – Deliberate fires
- LPI 703 – Percentage of CO² 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 Comprehensive Spending Review (2010), we have saved in excess of £11m 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 changed significantly in 2013/14 reflecting a move in financial autonomy away from central government. Funding from central government for 2014/15 is 7.4% lower than the previous year and this trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. As a result we estimate that we will need to make further savings of approximately £10m by March 2017. To achieve this we are 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. This Plan describes how we intend to achieve those savings, but it is very likely that further savings will be needed from 2017/18 onwards.

The Authority's five-year medium term financial plan is an integral part of our corporate planning, which ensures that resources are allocated where they will achieve our aim and objectives. We continue to face many challenges in the current economic climate, not least ensuring that we have sufficient resources to deliver a high-quality and effective service to the people of Kent and Medway. Whilst we have been able to do this over the last three years without increasing Council Tax, to ensure that this is sustainable into the future we are proposing for the first time since 2010/11, and after consultation, to increase Council Tax by just under 2 per cent which is just under 3p a week for an average Band D household. For just over £1.30 a week (for a Band D property) – less than the price of a litre of petrol – Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) provides you and your family with a round-the-clock, 365 days a year service.

More **financial information** is available on our website.

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 combining 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 in the process of adopting the Police call-handling and mobilisation system. This will be far more efficient than it would have been to replace our own ageing system.

Changing the way we work

We have described in this plan how, through the Towards 2020 programme, we are modernising the way we work. This modernisation 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; increasing our use of 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 we respond only to calls from AFAs where someone has confirmed that there are signs of a fire.

Reducing administration

Each year we continue to review all forms of back-office costs to ensure that we are efficient and effective in the service that we provide. Consequently, over the last few years we have been able to reduce the number of administrative posts as well as making further savings in a variety of supplies and services headings. In 2013/14 we also closed canteens at our headquarters and training centre and changed catering provision across the Service, resulting in an annual saving of £300k. We will continue to streamline back-office support to help deliver further financial savings wherever possible. We are already in the process of tendering for a new human resources and payroll system, which is expected to automate and streamline many processes.

We will continue to look at how we pay staff, consolidating or simplifying payments where possible, in order to reduce payroll and other administrative costs. For example, we are currently looking at day-crewed firefighters, who at the moment are paid a number of allowances in addition to their monthly salary,. For instance, if they are sent to an incident during the night, they are paid an attendance fee. These claims are expensive and time-consuming to process.

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 our Towards 2020 programme we introduced 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 and our first new fire station became operational in November 2013. 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.

Action plan

- Review operational capability
- Increase flexibility of operational working patterns
- Introduce crewing with fewer than four
- Introduce self-rostering
- Introduce a virtual learning environment
- Implement a new payroll and HR system
- Explore opportunities for joint agency working
- Introduce standard operating procedures
- Introduce new local emergency planning unit
- Explore opportunities for greater integration with other blue light services
- Remove two height vehicles
- Remove Medway's third fire engine
- Continue the carbon management programme

Performance indicators

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

Management Action Plan

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Automatic fire alarms	Introduce new policies and procedures to reduce the number of calls from automatic fire alarms that are attended	Completed				Focus on business Improving efficiency
Explore opportunities for further joint-agency working	Explore and develop joint working in order to gain efficiencies or improvements in service delivery		Review			Focus on your safety Improving efficiency
Commissioning and evaluation of community safety	Develop new processes for the commissioning and evaluation of safety initiatives	Review	Implement			Focus on your safety
Working with businesses to improve on-call availability	Develop partnerships with large employers to improve availability of on-call firefighters		Review			Focus on businesses Responding to emergencies
Review of Emergency Response Provision 2	Carry out a further review of the number and location of fire stations and fire engines across the county		Review			Responding to emergencies
Greater integration with other emergency services	Explore opportunities for greater integration with other blue-light services		Review			

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Station redevelopment programme	<p>Comprehensive review of stations and fire engines. Includes reviewing numbers required and locations, in order to meet identified risks and demand</p> <p>Replace the fire station at Ramsgate</p> <p>New Fire Station and Safety Centre at Rochester</p> <p>New fire station at Ash-cum-Ridley</p> <p>Close station at Horton Kirby</p> <p>Replace the fire station at Herne Bay</p> <p>Replace fire station at Watling Street, Gillingham</p>	<p>Plan</p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Plan</p>	<p>Implement</p> <p>Implement</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Implement</p>	<p>Implement</p> <p>Implement</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>Implement</p>		Responding to emergencies
Road Safety Centre	Development of a new road safety centre at Rochester	Plan	Implement	Implement		Focus on your safety

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Review of Operational Capability	Review of how we respond to incidents and the equipment needed. Aim to improve outcomes, response performance and efficiency	Review and consult	Phase 2 - Review and consult Implement - Firefighting tactics and responding to road traffic collisions Implement – removal of two height vehicles Implement – remove Medway’s third pump Implement – introduce smaller fire engines	Phase 2 - Review and consult		Responding to emergencies Improving efficiency
Increase flexibility of operational working patterns	Introduce more flexible working patterns for firefighters	Review and consult	Implement			Workforce strategy Improving efficiency
Crewing with fewer than four	Implement arrangements for crews with less than 4	Review	Implement			Workforce strategy Improving efficiency
Introduce self-rostering	Introduce self-rostering system for firefighters	Review	Implement	Implement		Workforce strategy Improving efficiency

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Virtual Learning	Introduce a virtual learning environment system to support remote training	Review	Implement			Workforce strategy
Competency Record System	Develop and implement a new competency record system	Review	Review / Implement	Implement		Workforce strategy
New payroll and HR system	Procure and implement a new payroll and HR system	Procure	Implement			Improving efficiency
New arrangements for taking emergency calls and mobilising	Phase 2 - migrate to a common mobilising system with Kent Police	Plan and procure	Implement			Responding to emergencies
New station mobilising equipment and mobile data terminals	New station end equipment and mobile data terminals to ensure mobilisation and risk information is delivered to crews efficiently	Plan	Procure / Implement			Responding to emergencies
New Officer Mobilisation and Communications equipment	Introduce new radios and phones for officers	Completed				Responding to emergencies
Channel Tunnel Contract	Negotiate and renew the contract for providing first line of response to the Channel Tunnel	Implement				Responding to emergencies

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Improve operational equipment	KFRS is introducing state of the art firefighting equipment including positive pressure ventilation, compressed air foam, new breathing apparatus and Cobra.	Completed				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

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
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
Environmental protection	Introduce procedure to reduce the risk of environmental impact from fires and other incidents, training and all other operational activities	Completed				Caring for the environment
Fleet review	Review of the management and maintenance of heavy fleet (including fire engines)	Phase 2 - review	Implement Phase 2			Improving efficiency Caring for the environment
Standard operating procedures	Introduce standard operating procedures. This will improve cross-border working and improve efficiency	Review and Implement	Implement			Responding to emergencies Improving efficiency
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.	Completed				Focus on business

Project title	Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Theme(s)
Firefighter training	Develop new live-fire training facilities to maintain and enhance firefighting skills, including development of new facility at Westwood Cross in Thanet	Review	Implement			Workforce strategy
Post-incident customer care	Develop post-incident care package for customers experiencing a fire	Plan	Implement			Focus on your safety
Emergency planning	Review the role we play in emergency planning and inter-agency resilience	Review	Implement			Responding to emergencies