



# County Durham and Darlington **Fire and Rescue Authority**

## **Statement of Assurance 2016/17**

## Foreword

This statement of assurance is provided and published to show how County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority, have met and continue to meet our commitment to the communities of County Durham & Darlington to provide a first-class fire and rescue service.

Having the safest people and safest places is at the heart of everything we do as a fire and rescue service and is the golden thread running through every emergency call we take, every incident we attend and every home or business we make safer.

The last few years has seen some of the most significant cuts to public spending ever known. Continuing to provide a first-class fire and rescue service to people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington has meant we have had to innovate and do things differently. The past year has seen us collaborating with our partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and widen the traditional fire fighter role, changing the way we recruit our people and developing our culture.

We are extremely proud to be a top performing fire and rescue service which strives to put the public at the heart of what we do. We currently have the fifth lowest number of accidental dwelling fires in the country, a number we are constantly striving to decrease through proactive work such as our safe and wellbeing visits with us visiting over 30,000 households since the safe and wellbeing initiative began.

Although the future will undoubtedly be challenging we are committed to the delivery of a professional, innovative and effective fire and rescue service and will build upon on our current position of strength as we work towards our vision of the safest people and safest places.

As Chair of County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Chief Fire Officer of the Fire and Rescue Service, we are satisfied that business has been conducted in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Additionally, we are satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

Cllr John Robinson

Chair

Stuart Errington

Chief Fire Officer

## The communities we serve

### Our community

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is situated in the heart of the North East of England, bordered to the north by Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, Cumbria to the west, Cleveland to the south east and North Yorkshire to the south.

We protect a population of 627,789 who occupy 285,135 households and 18,628 business premises across an area that covers approximately 2,432 km<sup>2</sup>/939 miles<sup>2</sup>.

The city of Durham and town of Darlington are the major centres in our service area, with both situated on the east coast main line and close to the A1(M).

Other significant towns are Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Crook, Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Peterlee, Seaham, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley.

### Our natural environment

The area is one of huge contrast and diversity with a rich history and heritage in coal and iron mining, farming and heavy railway industry.

From the North Pennines in the west to the Durham Heritage Coastline in the east it includes landscapes, habitats and features of local, national and international importance.

Durham City and the larger industrial and commercial towns are situated in the east of the region; in contrast, the west is predominantly rural consisting of open moorland and wooded river valleys and is sparsely populated; indeed 1420 km<sup>2</sup> of the county is agricultural land.

### Our built environment

Over the last 25 years the traditional industries, such as coal mining and steel manufacturing have disappeared. These have been replaced by high-tech factories and modern business parks in towns such as Peterlee and Sedgefield. Further regeneration is taking place in other local areas such as Darlington, Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland.

Approximately 20% of housing in the County is in social sector ownership with the majority concentrated in South and East Durham. The current stock is predominantly made up of terraced and semi-detached houses, with the proportion of flats and detached houses in the County lower than the national average.

The area has some outstanding transport networks including accessibility by rail via the East-Coast mainline, by road via the A1 (M) and A19 and by air via Newcastle and Durham Tees Valley International Airports.

Durham has a world class University which has been a leading centre of scholarship for over 1000 years with the students and graduates making a significant contribution to the local area and its economy. There are also strong links to Teesside University with their recently opened Business School located in Darlington.

## Our heritage

Tourism plays an integral part in the local economy. There are over 260 ancient monuments in the County including Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle that are classified as World Heritage sites. Other key attractions include Beamish Museum, the North Pennines and the Durham County Cricket Ground at Chester-le- Street attracting thousands of visitors each year.

In addition, the County has a mixture of mining and farming heritage, as well as the remains of a Roman Fort at Binchester and heavy railway industry, particularly in the southeast of the area.

## The risks we face

### Social risk

County Durham has 36 LSOAs\* (11.1%) ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England (\*A Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) is a geographic area designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales). These 36 LSOAs cover an area representing 10.2% of the county's population with 42.2% of the county's population living in areas in the top 30% most deprived nationally.

Darlington has 10 LSOAs (15.4%) ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England. These 10 LSOAs cover an area representing 13.6% of the county's population with 37.1% of the county's population living in areas in the top 30% most deprived nationally.

Nationally, 10% of LSOAs are ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in England. This equates to 10% of the population of County Durham and Darlington having poor health statistics and low life expectancies.

The proportion of the overall population aged 65 and over in County Durham will increase from one in five people (19.6%) in 2014 to one in four people (26.4%) by 2039. In Darlington, over 1 in 4 of the population is projected to be aged 65+ by 2034, an increase of 43%.

County Durham and Darlington has poor health statistics and low life expectancies. Many of the causes of ill health are greatly influenced by 'unhealthy' lifestyle behaviours, which are in turn greatly influenced by wider social, economic and environmental factors such as poverty, housing, education and transport.

### Environmental risk

There are a number of specific risks within the area that could significantly impact on our communities. There are industrial sites which fall under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) regulations in Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee; an ethylene pipeline entering the northern end of County Durham and passing southwest into Cleveland; National and Local Transmission natural gas pipelines crossing the County; Durham Tees Valley International Airport; the port of Seaham; major road routes (A1M, A19 and A66) as well as the East Coast Mainline railway.

Over the last few years County Durham and Darlington has experienced severe weather during the winter months leading to increased risk to vulnerable people in our communities and presenting a challenge in the way we deliver our critical services. The impact of climate change has also led to an increase in fluvial and flash flooding which, over the last couple of years, has impacted heavily on local communities. Around 4,500 people including 1000 domestic dwellings are at risk from river flooding across the County and borough of Darlington. The main high-risk areas are Bishop Auckland, Durham City, Darlington Town Centre, Stanhope and Lanchester.

There is a significant risk of wildfires occurring during the dry periods, more so in the western rural areas of the region which will have a dramatic impact on the local economy, farming, tourism and the environment.

## Economic risk

The recession has had a significant impact on the local economy with engineering and component manufacturing seeing by far the highest number of redundancies. The largest employment areas are the urban centre and edge of town business/industrial parks in Durham City, Darlington Borough, the south of Newton Aycliffe (mostly traditional manufacturing) and to the west of Peterlee (automotive manufacturing and call centre activity). The foremost locations for knowledge based employment are Durham City and Darlington Borough reflecting the presence of major hospitals, a university, various colleges and Durham County Council's Headquarters.

Newton Aycliffe was selected as the location for Hitachi Rail Europe Ltd's first train factory in Europe with construction commencing in late 2013. The £82m investment to assemble the next generation of high speed trains is creating over 730 jobs.

Darlington and Durham City comprise of large scale industrial, commercial and residential sites that present a diverse range of risks. These areas also have a large number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and several large housing estates.

## Risks beyond our borders

The Service responds to and attends incidents beyond its borders both regionally and nationally. We have a clear understanding of the cross-border risks that may occur where we need to deploy our resources in emergency situations or where the impact of an incident in another area could impact on our communities. We have specific arrangements in place with our neighbouring services to share resources and provide mutual support to each other. We endeavour to share information on operational policies and procedures to ensure that when mutual assistance is required it does so effectively.

We work with partners on the County Durham Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to identify very high and high risks through the Community Risk Register (CRR) and ensure relevant emergency plans are in place. We play an active role in leading and supporting the work of the LRF ensuring that everything possible is being done to protect the community. [County Durham Community Risk Register](#)

The Government monitors risks that the UK could face through the National Risk Assessment process, led by the Cabinet Office, and through other relevant risk

assessment and horizon-scanning processes. These risks are outlined in the National Risk Register, which can be accessed via the following link: [National Risk Register](#)

The Service also plays a full part in the National Resilience Programme which makes resources available from across the entire country to deal with major emergencies, wherever they occur. The resources we maintain to support this programme include High Volume Pumps (HVP), 3 HVP ancillary modules reducing the need for mobilisation of additional HVPs to any large incident in the region, Mass Decontamination Equipment and hazardous materials specialists who are trained to detect, identify and monitor chemicals at major incidents.

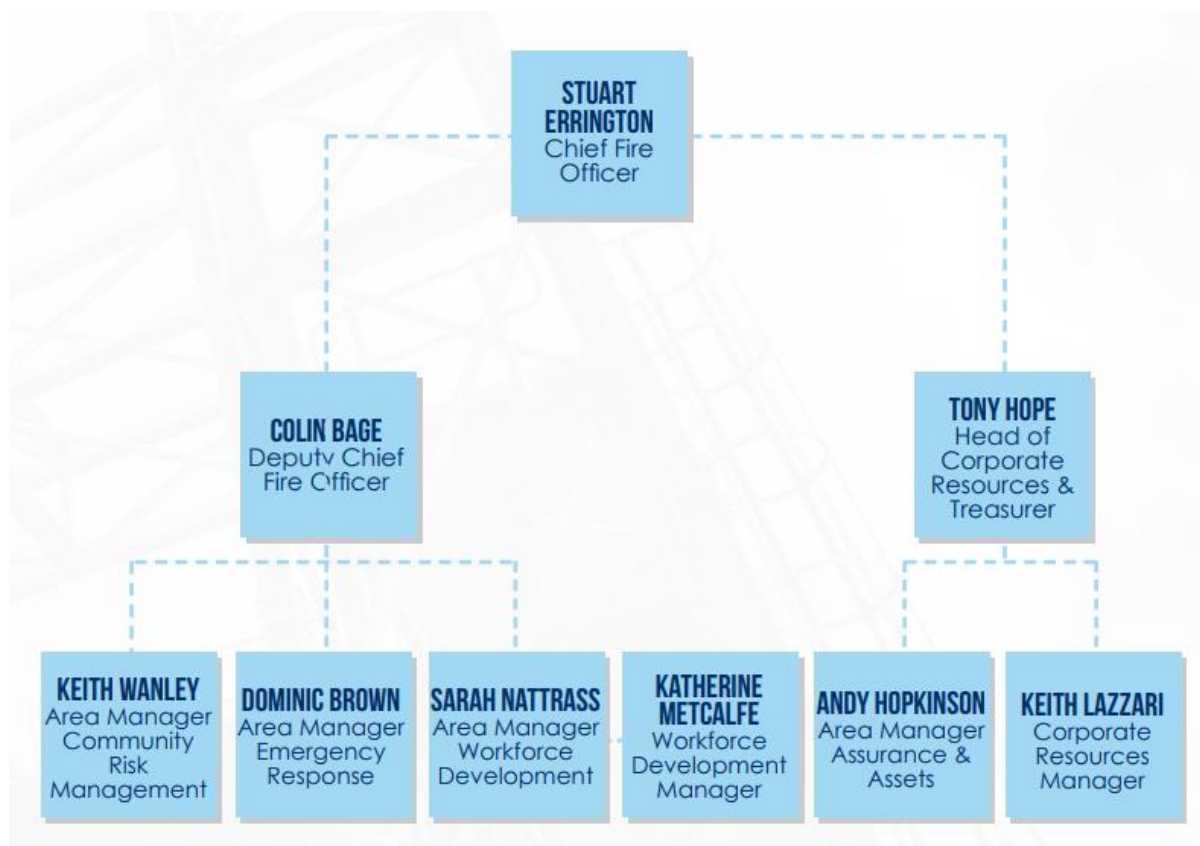
Our 3-year strategy contains more information on the risks within our area: [3-year plan](#)

## Overview of our fire and rescue service

### Overview of our structure

The Service Leadership Team (SLT) provide the senior executive officer function within the Service. The Fire and Rescue Authority delegates to the SLT, the effective management of the organisation and its resources, the delivery of the primary corporate, operational and support services and the execution of the statutory responsibilities.

The Service Leadership Team is comprised of:



## Our people & resources

The following table shows the number of staff employed (fulltime equivalents (FTE)) against the number of budgeted establishment posts as at 31 March 2017:

Employee Group	Establishment (FTE)	Strength (FTE)
Wholetime duty system firefighters	306	306.6
Retained (on-call) duty system firefighters	168	145.8
Fire Control	19	17.5
Corporate	76	71.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>541.7</b>

We have a front-line fleet of 27 fire engines and 18 specialist appliances to help deal with an ever-increasing range of incident type, including:

- Aerial ladder platforms for performing rescue at height;
- Specialist rescue unit for road traffic collisions, structural collapse & animal rescue;
- Water Rescue boats & Flood Response Units for water related incidents;
- High volume pump, foam unit & bulk water carrier to provide water & foam;
- Incident response, environmental protection units for hazardous material incidents;
- Incident command vehicle & welfare unit to support large protracted incidents;
- 4x4 tactical response & wildfire vehicles to access hard to reach areas.

Our staff operate from 15 fire stations, a headquarters & 999 control building in Belmont, a training centre and technical services centre in Bowburn.



## Our services to the community

The primary legislation associated with fire and rescue services in England and Wales is the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Authority for providing a fire and rescue service that has the people, equipment and training needed to carry out the following core functions:

**Promoting fire safety (community safety)** – the provision of information, advice and encouragement on the prevention of fires, restricting spread of fires in buildings and means of escape from fires. Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake more than 18,000 safe & wellbeing visits each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

**Fire safety regulatory enforcement (business fire safety)** – Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers to enable them to be compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, ensuring our communities are safe, using enforcement action where necessary.

**Emergency response** – We respond to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

## Governance arrangements

### Your fire and rescue authority

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority is a combined authority created by the Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996.

Membership comprises of 21 elected councillors from Durham County Council and four from Darlington Borough Council. The Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities. The Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service.

## Our legal responsibilities

The primary legislation governing the Fire and Rescue Service is covered by the following:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Service \(Emergencies\)\(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)



The main legislative provisions which determine the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority include the following:

- Promoting fire safety
- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property
- Rescuing people from road traffic collisions (and a large range of other risks determined through the Emergencies Order)
- Responding to other types of emergencies
- Enter into 'reinforcement' schemes with other fire authorities for mutual assistance
- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning; and in this regard to:
  - Put in place emergency plans
  - Put in place business continuity management arrangements
  - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
  - Share information with other local responders to enhance coordination; and,
  - Cooperate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency

## The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The National Framework outlines the high-level expectations and it does not require a detailed account of operational matters which are best determined locally.

The key priorities established by the framework are:

- The identification and assessment of a range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or a national nature;
- The provision for prevention and protection activities and the appropriate response to incidents within County Durham and Darlington;
- Collaboration with the communities of County Durham and Darlington and a wide range of partners both locally and nationally to deliver a fire and rescue service;
- Being accountable to the communities of County Durham and Darlington for the service we provide through an annual statement of assurance.

The full document can be found at the following link: [Fire national framework for England](#)

[Details of how we comply with the framework requirements can be viewed via this link](#)

## Management of Risk

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

## Integrated Risk Management Plan

The Framework requires the formulation of an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which captures and publishes the Fire and Rescue Authorities plans to meet current and future risks to our communities.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) was a process introduced by the Government to provide a modern, flexible and risk-based approach to the provision of fire and rescue services based upon locally identified needs. The assessment of risk is the initial stage of the IRMP process and requires quantitative and qualitative analysis of hazards and threats. The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling software, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough and complete analysis has been completed.

The IRMP is our analysis of the county's community risk profile, together with our strategic plans to effectively manage that risk over the period.

The IRMP identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the communities, including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or national nature. While risk to property, infrastructure, the environment and our heritage are of significant importance in the work we do – it is risk to life that is given our highest priority.

The full document can be found at the following link: [3-year strategy 2015/16-2017/18](#)

The Framework provides that the Fire and Rescue Authority must hold their Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for delivery of the fire and rescue service, also that the Authority must have in place arrangements to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.

An extensive, 12-week consultation is undertaken each year as part of the development process for the IRMP. At the end of the consultation period all responses are collated, analysed and the results included in a fire authority report where councillors approve the content for publication.

This document can be found here: [IRMP Consultation 2016/17](#)

## Governance assurance

The Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Governance is concerned with how the Authority manages its affairs on a day to day basis including business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

We have adopted an over-arching Organisational Assurance Framework based on the KPMG '3 lines of defence' model which forms an important part of our Authority's governance model.

### [Organisational Assurance Framework](#)

The Authority operates in accordance with a Code of Corporate Governance that sets out the approach it takes to ensuring it operates in accordance with appropriate standards and frameworks. The Authority's Code of Corporate Governance is available below:

### [The Code of Corporate Governance](#)

The Authority published an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that sets out the key governance issues that the Authority has identified during the financial year. The Authority works towards mitigating these risks as part of its approach to ensuring an effective governance framework is in place.

[Annual Governance Statement 2015/16](#)

## Financial Assurance

The Authority places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body.

An annual, independent audit is undertaken to review the Authority's Statement of Accounts, which summarise the financial position of the Authority at the end of the financial year and its performance throughout the year.

The primary function of the external auditor is to express an opinion as to whether the Authority's financial statements are free from material misstatement. However, the auditor also has responsibility for assessing whether the Authority has reliable systems of control in place and the arrangements for securing, economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

The annual statement of accounts is considered and approved by the Authority's Audit and Risk Committee prior to being published. [Statement of Accounts](#)

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being 'true and fair'. The auditor considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement. [Annual Audit Letter – audit of accounts](#)

## Operational Assurance

Our Organisational Performance Framework is underpinned by our Operational Assurance Framework that sets our approach to quality assuring that we can respond effectively and competently to the range of incidents we may be called to attend. A number of key performance indicators are used to monitor performance of our response arrangements. Managers at all levels are accountable for managing the day to day performance of their fire stations overseen by their District Teams and the Emergency Response Manager. The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) scrutinise performance and report, by exception, to the Performance & Programme Board (PPB) and the Service Leadership Team. Members play a key role in scrutinising performance through regular reports and presentations to the Policy and Performance Committee and the full Fire Authority. [Operational Assurance Framework](#)

Our Operational Readiness Audits (OpeRA) assess the operational readiness of our stations across six areas (Premises, Appliances, Equipment, PPE, Personnel, and Practical Skills). District Management teams undertake quarterly audits of their stations.

The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) exists to monitor, report and act on the outcomes from active monitoring, incident debriefs and national operational learning. Membership of the group is drawn from a cross-section of key departments with the chair of the OAG reporting bi-monthly to the PPB. The arrangements for reporting and escalating the outcomes from

active monitoring and debriefs have recently been strengthened to improve organisational learning and the latest national operational learning guidance. Outcomes from multi-agency debriefs are routinely shared.

## **Community & Business Safety (Prevention & Protection) Assurance**

All prevention activities carried out by the central team are subject to annual quality management auditing both internally and externally as well as performance being reviewed at all Section meetings and an overview provided at PPB. We have held ISO 9001 accreditation for our quality management system in Community Safety since March 2012.

A comprehensive Risk Based Audit Policy (RBAP) exists to support our protection activities, underpinned by an ISO9001 accredited Quality Management System. The RBAP is underpinned by a full suite of procedures and practice notes which give guidance to staff enforcing statutory fire safety legislation. We have taken account of our legal duties and guidance borne from the Fire & Rescue Services Act and the Fire Safety Order, National Framework, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) Circulars and any other relevant guidance. External ISO audits provide assurance that we are doing what we say we will do.

The RBAP & Annual Audit Workload Programme are refreshed annually using intelligence gained from a range of sources including national guidance, statistical data, as well as local and national trends. As well as local intelligence gained from engagement with partners and post incident audits, we also utilise the specialist CFRMIS (Community Fire Risk Management Information System) software to inform the RBAP.

A well-established Operational Risk Information (ORI) inspection process and programme exists to capture important information on risks that firefighters may face when responding to emergencies. This information is made available via appliance mobile data terminals (MDT). Processes exist to ensure premises risks identified by fire safety inspectors are shared with emergency response managers for onward dissemination to our firefighters.

## **Health & Safety Assurance**

We have an established suite of key health & safety (H&S) performance indicators that enable us to closely monitor performance at all levels. The indicators cover areas such as staff sickness, personal and vehicle accidents, near misses and cause for concerns as well as fitness assessment outcomes. Staff across the Service can access the information via SharePoint and the performance management software. The Assurance Manager produces a monthly H&S report which is reported to the SLT and Fire Authority. It is also discussed at the Joint H&S Committee which is attended by the Fire Brigades Union.

Our Operational Assurance Framework illustrates how the learning outcomes from internal and external events identified through accident investigations, debriefs, active monitoring reports and stakeholder engagement are implemented via forums such as the OAG, PPB, the Corporate Wellbeing Group and the quarterly joint H&S Committee. Information is shared with staff via H&S Newsletters and H&S Newsflashes.

Our Operational Active Monitoring and Debrief processes have H&S at the core and are managed within the same section as H&S and use the OSHENS software system to track actions arising.

Measuring and evaluating H&S performance is a key part of the OHSAS 18001 standard for which we have held accreditation for 5+ years. We actively respond to safety events when they do occur, ensuring learning is acted upon.

We have an established programme of proactive station inspections, undertaken jointly with the FBU, and internal audits led by the Assurance Section to provide assurance on the effectiveness of our health and safety management arrangements. Our OpeRA also provide a further level of quality assurance.

The Head of Assurance & Assets produces an annual H&S report that evidences how our approach to setting challenging targets for improving performance is delivering real results.

## **Training Assurance**

Our District Management teams are responsible for quality assuring the competency levels of their staff and ensuring that the competency recording system is kept up to date. Outcomes of the quarterly district audits are reported to the Head of Emergency Response.

The OpeRA framework use to provide assurance of operational readiness of all our fire stations includes dip-sampling of training records and also themed practical exercises undertaken at the training centre to further quality assure the competency of firefighters.

All internal and external delegates attending our training courses and development days are invited to complete evaluation forms. These are analysed by the Training Manager and used to inform improvements in delivery.

As a result of active monitoring, incident debrief outcomes and our OpeRA audits, we have changed our approach to training delivery in a number of areas. For example, we delivered enhanced water awareness training at three key fire stations to take account of the specific water risks in those areas.

Our training department have the ISO 9001 accreditation for our quality management system.

## Our Focus

### Our vision

To respond effectively to the challenges we face as a fire and rescue service, we need to be clear on our strategic direction. A defined vision, strategic priorities, values and behaviours are key to us doing this. During 2016/17, we undertook a full review of these. Our vision is simple...

We want to have the **safest people** and **safest places**.

### Our strategic priorities

The Authority is focussed on managing risks and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to reduce the number of emergency incidents and the associated risk of injury or death in the local area.

To help us achieve our vision we have six strategic priorities:



### Our values

These values are known in our organisation as the PIE values.

**Professional, Innovative, Effective.**

To be the best fire and rescue service in the UK there are certain behaviours all members of our organisation are expected to display at work. The range of behaviours fall into four areas:

- How we approach challenges;
- How we conduct ourselves;
- How we collaborate with others;
- How we drive change across the organisation to make a difference.

How well people are demonstrating these behaviours as part of their day to day job are assessed in the appraisal system.

## Equality & Inclusion

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. Equality, diversity and inclusion is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

We have published our strategic commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and our equality objectives in our Equality and Diversity Strategy. This is a public declaration and commitment of how we plan to meet the duties placed upon us by equality and diversity legislation and best practice, in managing our staff and meeting the needs and wishes of our local population.

Our equality action plan runs alongside the equality and diversity strategy and members of our equality, diversity and inclusion working group are responsible for developing and implementing the action plan. [Equality Action Plan May 2017](#)

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities like County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service have a legal obligation to comply with the general equality duty. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to the general duty, all public sector bodies are required to meet specific duties which are incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires us to:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the general duty;
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives;

Collecting and analysing equality data is an important way of developing our understanding about our employees and communities. We produce an annual equality report that shows how we comply with the general equality duty. [Annual Equality Report](#)

## Our challenges and priorities during 2016-17

We faced the most significant financial challenge in our history as a fire and rescue authority. Cuts to our central government funding totalling £4.9m (34 per cent) since 2010 meant we have had to make significant savings; with the three years from 2016/17 more challenging still, as we seek to deliver a further £3m of savings. Having implemented the vast majority of cost savings available to us, to run a lean and efficient Service, we are now looking at other measures which could help to generate income and/or reduce costs without affecting our frontline fire appliances, stations and community safety activities.

Our 3-year strategy 2015/16 -2017/18 set out 5 key development priorities. These were:

These areas were:

- Explore opportunities to collaborate with partners
- Maximise use of our buildings
- Expand the role of our fire fighters and staff
- Review our staffing levels and arrangements for emergency response
- Explore opportunities for income generation

## Our achievements include:

**Safe and Wellbeing visits** - The service introduced Safe and Wellbeing visits in February 2016 which enhanced the traditional home fire safety check to include assessment and referrals for health interventions and we delivered 18,884 Safe and Wellbeing Visits.

**Safer homes** – We have launched our Safer Homes project which has seen us working closely with our partners at Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council. This project involved working with social housing providers to fit properties with domestic sprinklers.

**Partnership with NEAS** - In January 2016 we began a trial with NEAS to provide an emergency medical response to people living in Darlington, Consett, Seaham and Stanhope. At the time of writing our fire fighters have attended 4,336 emergency medical response calls since the start of the trial. Two of our crews have received Chief Fire Officer commendations for the role they played in dealing with emergency medical response situation.

**Barnard Caste quad-station** - The opening of the UKs first ever quad-services station in Barnard Castle. Opened in March 2017 and shared by ourselves, Durham Constabulary, NEAS and the Teesdale & Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team.

**Training centre** at Bowburn - We opened a state of the art training centre at Bowburn near Durham offers a first-class facility for fire ground training and has substantially enhanced our capacity to offer classroom based leadership, management and incident command development training as well as a wide range of practical business safety courses.

**Collaboration with partners** - We have collaborated with partners to maximise the space and facilities offered at Durham fire station. Our incident command suite at our training centre are shared with Durham Constabulary.

**Police and ambulance tri responders** - The service along with Durham Constabulary and NEAS have introduced the regions first tri-responders. The tri-responders are based at Stanhope and fulfil the role of PCSO for Durham Constabulary, on-call fire fighters for ourselves and first responders for NEAS. This is only the second project of its kind in the country.



## Our performance during 2016/17

The following tables provide an overview of our performance during 2016/17. The latest statistics on fires, casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by all fire and rescue services in England are available online: [Fire Statistics - England](#)

### Community Safety (prevention)

Performance Indicator	Objective	2016/17 Actual	2016/17 Target	Actual vs Target	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 vs 2015/16
Number of Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings	Down	2	0	100%	5	+60%
Number of Primary Fires	Down	973	916	-6.2%	928	-4.8%
Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	213	260	+18.1%	229	+7%
Number of Injuries Arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	24	26	+7.7%	17	-41.2%
Number of Secondary Fires	Down	2151	2425	+11.3%	2142	-0.4%
Number of Safe & Wellbeing Visits delivered	Up	18884	18000	+4.9%	20553	-8.1%
The % of Safe & Wellbeing Visits delivered to High Risk People/Properties	Up	75.4	70.0	+7.7%	80.3	-6.1%

#### Commentary:

The Coroner determined that two people died due to injuries sustained in two separate accidental dwelling fires during 2016/17. Both incidents involved people over 65, one in Spennymoor and another in Bishop Auckland. Detailed joint investigations into the circumstances and cause of the fires was undertaken by our own specialist fire investigators and the police. Following these incidents, the Safe & Wellbeing Visit (SWV) referral process was expanded to include a wider range of mental health professionals, and more care workers are receiving training on the dangers of fire to improve vulnerable person referrals into the service. A MoU between the Service and Durham Housing Group has been signed to improve their focus on fire prevention and enhance mutual support.

Although injuries sustained at accidental dwelling fires were higher than the previous year, the reduction in accidental dwelling fires places the Service 5th highest performing in the country and 2nd only to Cleveland when levels of deprivation are factored in.

Safe & Wellbeing Visits exceeded the target again bringing the total delivered in the last 5 years to 87,694 (this figure includes both Home Fire Safety Checks & the newer SWVs).

Overall, primary fires increased by almost 5% last year with vehicles fires accounting for 45%, with the number of deliberate fires up by 8.8%. We continue to work with partners to further examine the causal factors and help identify initiatives to improve performance.

## Business Safety (Protection)

Performance Indicator	Objective	2016/17 Actual	2016/17 Target	Actual vs Target	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 vs 2015/16
Number of Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises	Down	82	110	-25.5%	86	-4.7%
Number of False Alarms caused by Automatic Fire Detection Eqpt	Down	716	750	-4.5%	713	+0.4%
Number of Fire Safety Audits undertaken	Up	2064	2124	-2.8%	2278	-9.4%

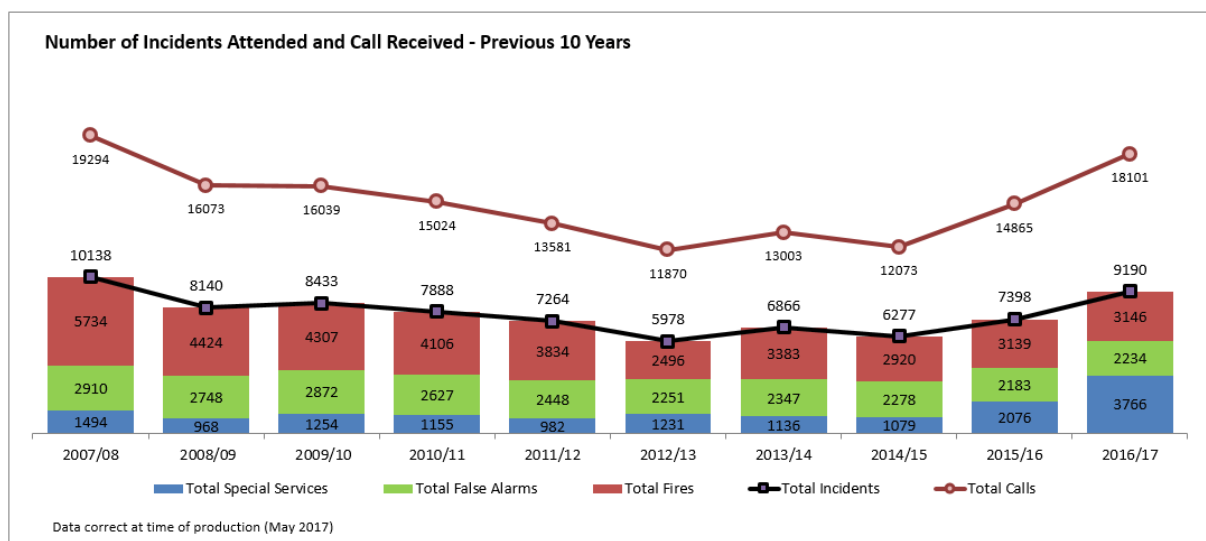
The level of non-domestic property fires has continued to reduce and is now at the lowest level on record.

Of the 82 fires, a number involved in food establishments so we have targeted our fire safety audits to include smaller food establishments, which has identified properties at potential risk with appropriate advice and enforcement action taken.

The Service secured a successful prosecution against a company and director for failings in meeting requirements under the regulatory reform order. Our approach to the prosecution has been recognised nationally.

## Emergency Response

The chart below shows the volume of calls received and incidents attended 2007/08-2016/17



The table overleaf provides further details of the 99 calls received and emergencies we attended.

Performance Indicator	Objective	2016/17 Actual	2016/17 Target	Actual vs Target	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 vs 2015/16
Total Emergency Calls Received (inc EMR)		18101			14865	+21.8%
Total Incidents attended (excl EMR)		6512			6442	+1.1%
Total Fires		3188			3139	+1.6%
Total False Alarms		2234			2183	+2.3%
Total Special Services (excl EMR)		1092			1120	-2.5%
Total Road Traffic Collisions		321			339	-5.3%
Total Emergency Medical Response incidents (EMR)		2674			956	N/A
The % of dwelling fires attended within 8 minutes	Up	71.5	70.0	+2.2%	70.6	+1.3%
The % of dwelling fires attended within 11 minutes	Up	92.5	90.0	+2.7%	93.0	-0.6%
The % of non-domestic property fires attended within 8 minutes	Up	55.4	70.0	-20.8%	57.8	-4.1%
The % of non-domestic property fires attended within 11 minutes	Up	81.9	90.0	-9.0%	83.1	-1.4%
The % of Road Traffic Collisions attended within 11 minutes	Up	81.8	75.0	+9.1%	76.3	+7.2%
The % of Road Traffic Collisions attended within 15 minutes	Up	93.9	90.0	+4.4%	91.9	+2.2%

In January 2016, we began working with the North-East Ambulance Service (NEAS) on a trial basis to provide an emergency medical response to people living in Darlington, Consett, Seaham and Stanhope. In 2016/17, these incidents accounted for approximately 29% of all incidents attended.

During 2016/17 we did not achieve our response time targets to the 82 non-domestic property fires we attended. This was due to a number being located more than 8 or 11 minutes from the nearest fire station coupled with the record low number of these fires meaning any failure had a bigger impact on performance. As a consequence, we are targeting those premises more than 8 or 11 minutes from their nearest fire station to help prevent the fires in the first place. Although not contained in the table above, we have focused our efforts to improve how quickly we process 999 calls and how quickly our fire appliances 'turnout' to incidents, leading to improvements in these key performance measures:

- % 999 calls received & mobilised in 90 secs UP by 14.1% – 86.7% vs 90% target;
- Average time to mobilise resources - 20% faster than last year – average 57 secs;
- Average turnout time – wholetime appliances - 6.3% faster – average 76.2 secs;
- Average turnout time retained (on-call) appliances - 1.9% faster - average 319 secs.

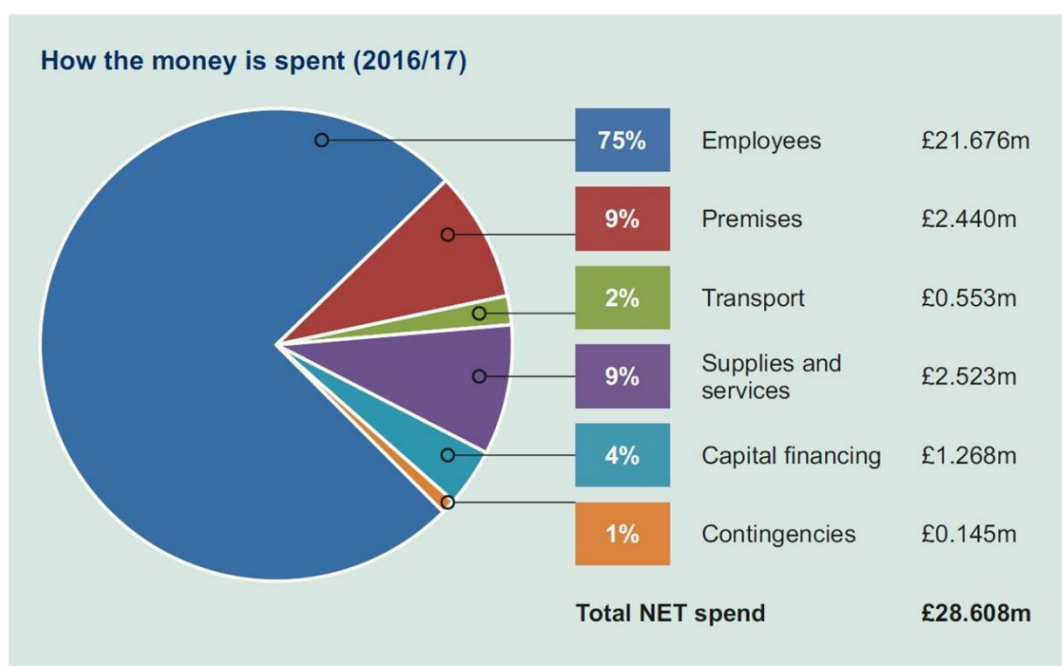
## Financial performance (statement of accounts)

### Our budget for 2016/17

The total net revenue expenditure for 2016/17 was **£28.679M** which was £70,000 more than the original budget of £28.609M. When the original budget was set the actual amount of grant due in relation to the business rates retention scheme was not known. We received £70k more than the original budget which offset the £70k increase in net expenditure.

Funding for our fire and rescue service is provided from two main sources: the government provides 42% of our funding by way of grant; the remaining 58% is received from local council tax payers and non-domestic ratepayers in County Durham and Darlington.

### Revenue expenditure 2016/17



During 2016/17 an additional revenue contribution of £4.511M was made to finance capital expenditure offset by transfers of £3.782M from reserves. The total underspend on ordinary activities (excluding capital financing and transfers from reserves) was £0.719M. This is broadly in line with the forecast underspend position of £0.655M reported at quarter 3.

### Capital Expenditure 2016/17

Budget Heading	Original £000	Actual £000	Variance	
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	1,403	1,453	50	3.56%
Estates Improvement Programme	3,788	4,080	292	7.71%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>5,191</b>	<b>5,533</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>6.59%</b>

The total capital expenditure for 2016/17 was overspent by £0.342M due to additional essential expenditure on ICT and furniture replacement not envisaged when the original budget was set. Changes to the estimated build times of capital projects resulted in expenditure originally planned for previous years slipping into the 2016/17 financial year.

## Our future plans

The last few years has seen some of the most significant cuts to public spending ever known. This means to continue offering a first-class fire and rescue service to people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington we must be innovative and do things differently. This means collaborating with partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and widen the traditional fire fighter role, changing the way we recruit our people and developing our culture.

Further details on our future plans can be found in our consultation on the next 3-year strategy which can be viewed here: [3-year strategy & IRMP 2018/19-2021/22 consultation](#)

## Our community engagement

### How you can become involved

You can get involved with the work of the Fire Authority by attending the public meetings that are held regularly by the Authority at our headquarters. You can find out more about the Fire Authority, its work and access documents from previous and future meetings on our website via this link: [Combined Fire Authority information](#)

We value the views of our communities to ensure we are providing the service you need. We consult formally on the ways in which we propose to deliver services – particularly when developing our 3-year strategy and our annual IRMP. More information about our plans and priorities can be found on our website. [www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)

You can also find us on social media by searching for @CDDFRS

### Access to information

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is committed to being open, accountable and transparent to the population it serves and the general public as a whole. The service is constantly striving to develop a culture of greater openness and awareness. It is important that information of public interest is widely and easily available.

More information on our arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on our website via the following link: [Access to Information](#)

## How to make a compliment or a complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible for people to let us know their views. Through listening and learning we improve the quality of the services we provide, and encourage and recognise good practice by our staff.

We want to hear from people if they:

- Would like to compliment us on a job well done;
- Have a suggestion on how we might improve services;
- Feel we have fallen short of their expectations;
- Feel we have fallen short of the standards we set ourselves in dealing with complaints.

There are several ways in which you can compliment, comment or complain about our services either online via our website: [www.ddfire.gov.uk](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk)

By phone: 0845 305 8383

By email: [ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk](mailto:ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk)

By post: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service HQ  
Belmont Business Park  
Durham,  
DH1 1TW