

Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13 (DRAFT, Version 1)

1. Foreword by the Chair of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority

This Annual Statement of Assurance for Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority sets out the challenges and priorities faced by the Authority in making Shropshire safer during 2012/13. Publication of the statement is a Government requirement¹ and one which assists the Fire Authority in one of its primary objectives of being open and transparent in providing community assurance.

(Photo of Chair to be inserted)

2. Introduction by the Chief Fire Officer

The current global financial crisis has brought significant challenges to all within the public sector, and particularly so for those tasked with public safety responsibilities. Despite budgetary pressures, the Service has successfully delivered its objectives during 2012/13. This Statement acts as a *signpost* for the local communities and other stakeholders, to sources of evidence that provide a measure of assurance regarding our performance and capabilities (please click on the relevant links² shown at the bottom of each page for more information).

(Photo of CFO to be inserted)

3. The communities we serve

We serve a community of approximately 473,900 residents who live within the two administrative council areas of Shropshire³ and Telford & Wrekin.⁴ In addition, the Service protects the 10 million visitors⁵ who come to Shropshire⁶ each year to visit for leisure, business or study purposes.

Shropshire⁷ is England's largest inland county (3,487 km² / 1,346 sq/miles) but one of the most sparsely populated. It is a diverse county with Lakes in the north, and hills to the south. It has a rich historic and cultural heritage dating back to the times of the Celts and the Romans. Whilst predominately rural in nature, Shropshire boasts some of the nation's most innovative businesses, with a vibrant and growing business sector based in Telford which includes a tourist economy based on the Iron

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9326/2219707.pdf

² The Fire Authority accepts no responsibility for the content or accuracy of information provided on externally linked websites.

³ <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/>

⁴ <http://www.telford.gov.uk/>

⁵ http://www.stmem.com/tourism_facts.php

⁶ The term 'Shropshire' should be interpreted as representing the geographical area of the county, including the area of Telford and Wrekin, unless otherwise stated.

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shropshire>

bridge Gorge area which hosted the birth of the industrial revolution in the 17th century and a farming and livestock industry which is one of the largest in the UK.

4. The risks we face

The risks faced by the Service range from the challenges in providing a first class fire and rescue service in a predominately rural, sparsely populated community,⁸ through to the potential impact of international terrorism.⁹

Our priority will always be the preservation of life, and the protection of property from fire and other emergencies. We also respond where needed to mitigate the impact of fire and other emergencies on the natural environment.

The communities within Shropshire present many challenges and risks, such as an increasing elderly population which poses particular issues for the fire service because elderly people are one of the most vulnerable groups to fire.¹⁰ The County appears affluent however it is a county that also experiences the impact and consequences of social deprivation¹¹ for those less fortunate in society in both the rural areas and in the towns.

The Service is very clear on the importance of a thriving business sector to the local economy and social wellbeing of the community and as such a proactive prevention and protection strategy¹² exists to reduce the incidence and impact of fire on the local business sector. The strategy extends to include the many heritage risks that lie within Shropshire, many of which are of national, and in the case of Ironbridge Gorge, of global importance.

Risks to which the Service, together with its partners¹³ are tasked to address, are recorded within local¹⁴ and national¹⁵ risk registers.

During 2012/13 The Service attended 4,218 incidents (compared to 5,278 in 2011/12) a breakdown of which is shown below:

⁸ <http://www.rsonline.org.uk/performance-profiling/shropshire>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/terrorism-national-emergency/terrorism-threat-levels>

¹⁰ <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/factsfigures.nsf/open/231E9A9F5ABCEF728025751A00504D76>

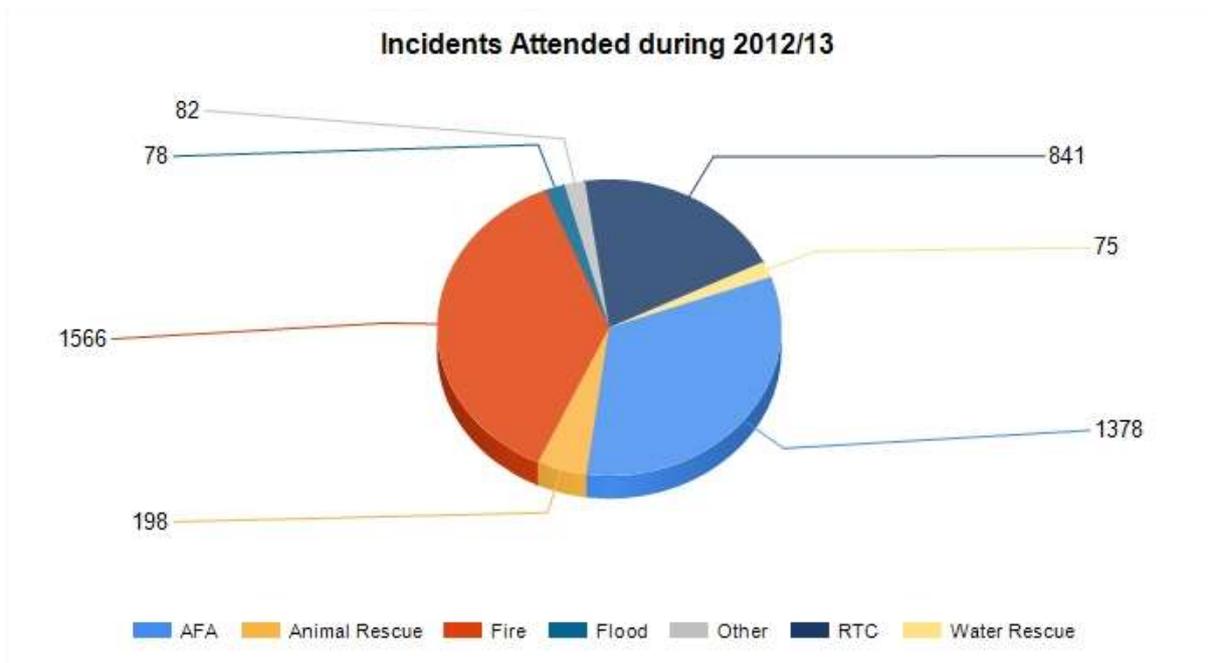
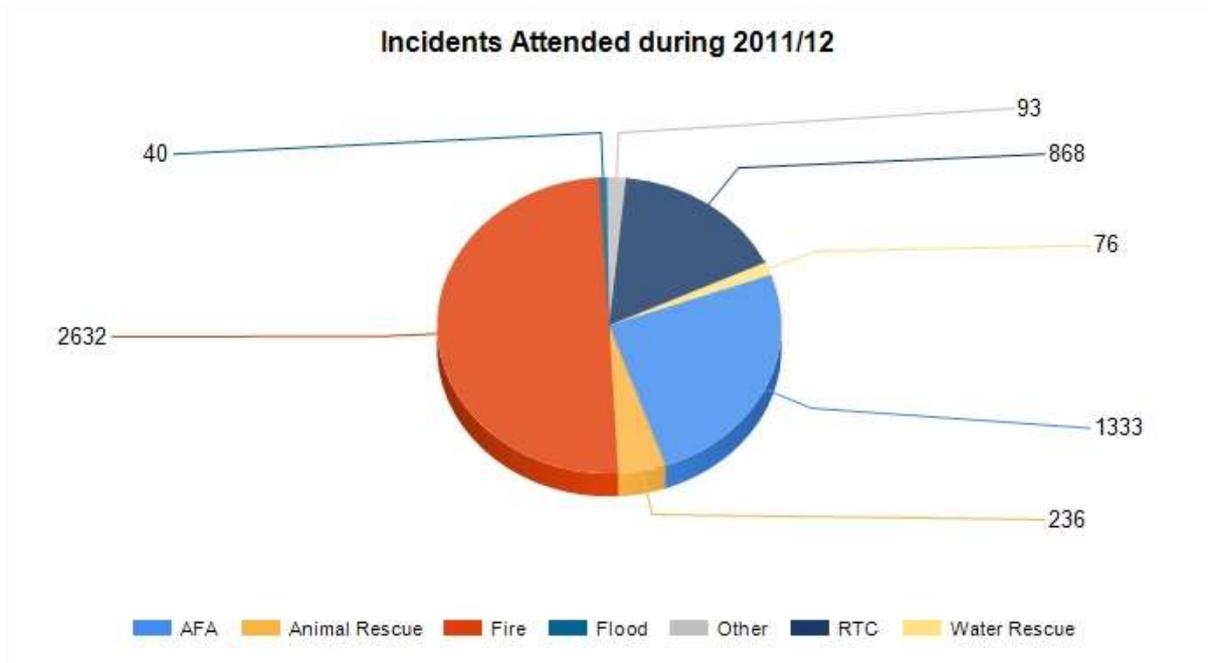
¹¹ http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/AppendixC-Map3-WM_tcm6-16726.pdf

¹² <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/promoting-safer-communities/community-fire-safety>

¹³ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/partnerships-and-community-engagement>

¹⁴ <http://westmerciaprepared.org/index.php?page=105>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-of-civil-emergencies>



The service experienced 3 fire deaths in fires in 2012/13. This compares with 10 in 2011/12

5. Overview of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

The Service is structured¹⁶ to afford maximum value and benefit to the community and essentially consists of an outward focused **Service Delivery Directorate**, underpinned and supported by a **Corporate Services Directorate**. Each directorate comprises of a range of functional departments.¹⁷ The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer and supported through the specialist services of a Finance Department and Resources Department.

The Service employs approximately 600 staff who operate from 23 locations¹⁸ across Shropshire. The Service's Headquarters, Workshops, Fire Control and Community Safety/Prevention functions are based in Shrewsbury, with the Training and Development facilities located at Telford. Located strategically within the community are 23 fire stations, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The majority of fire stations are crewed by part time staff¹⁹ who operate the retained duty/on-call system, where they are available at short notice to respond to incidents. Fire stations located in Shrewsbury and Wellington/Telford areas operate with a small contingent of fulltime firefighters, complemented with retained duty/on-call firefighters.

The deployment of fire engines to incidents is often seen as the last resort, with our primary focus on prevention activities.²⁰ Working with partners the Service engages widely with the local community and businesses²¹ to raise awareness of the dangers of fire and offers education (and where necessary enforcement²²) to achieve its aims.

The role of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is far broader than just preventing and dealing with fires.²³ The Service performs an essential civil protection role and provides an emergency response to road traffic collisions,²⁴ flooding,²⁵ animal rescues,²⁶ chemical incidents²⁷ and rescues from height²⁸ or water.²⁹

6. Governance arrangements

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is accountable to the community and is governed through locally elected councillors who form Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority (Fire Authority).³⁰ The Fire Authority is organised to provide proportional

¹⁶ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/organisation-and-management>

¹⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/policies-and-strategies>

¹⁸ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/brigade-resources/fire-stations>

¹⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/careers/job-roles>

²⁰ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/safer-communities>

²¹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/promoting-safer-communities/business-fire-safety>

²² <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/promoting-safer-communities/business-fire-safety/enforcement-policy>

²³ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/incidents>

²⁴ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/rescue-service/road-traffic-collisions>

²⁵ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/rescue-service/water-safety>

²⁶ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/rescue-service/animal-rescues>

²⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/hazmat-chemicals>

²⁸ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/line-safety>

²⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/the-emergency-service/rescue-service/water-safety>

³⁰ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra>

representation from Shropshire's two constituent local authorities^{31/32}. A number of committees exist to support the Fire Authority in carrying out its functions.

National legislation places the statutory responsibility for provision of fire and rescue services upon the Fire Authority. The key responsibilities are set out within:

- **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**³³
- **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**³⁴
- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**³⁵

In addition to the legislative requirements, the Fire Authority is also required to deliver Government's priorities for the nation's fire and rescue services which are set out with the Fire and Rescue National Framework.³⁶

The Fire Authority's governance and financial arrangements are published on the Service's website.³⁷

7. Our Purpose

Whilst the Fire Authority's statutory responsibilities are enshrined in law, the vision and purpose of the Service may be defined as:

Vision:

Putting Shropshire's Safety First

Purpose:

To save and protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

To fulfil the Fire Authority's vision the resources of the Service are structured to deliver four aims, which are:

- 1) **To be there when you need us in an emergency with a competent and well equipped team**
- 2) **To reduce the number of fires in our community**
- 3) **To reduce the number of fire related deaths and serious injuries**

³¹ <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/>

³² <http://www.telford.gov.uk/>

³³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

³⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/contents>

³⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1541/contents/made>

³⁶

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5904/nationalframework.pdf

³⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/node/145181>

4) To deliver an effective fire and rescue service at a cost that is acceptable to our community

Delivery of these aims is achieved through delivery of a range of strategic plans. At a strategic level, the alignment of resources to risk is set out within the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).³⁸ The financial requirements necessary to deliver the IRMP are set out within the Medium Term Corporate Plan.³⁹

The Service operates a Service Transformation Programme⁴⁰ to ensure the right resources are in place to deliver the Fire Authority's vision and IRMP. Reductions in budgetary expenditure are delivered through the Fire Authority's Public Value Programme.⁴¹

The Service is only one of several local services responsible for community safety within Shropshire. The Service is active in the delivery a variety of multi-agency initiatives.⁴²

As with any organisation, the Service is not immune to the internal and external risks that may impact upon business continuity. All potential and actual risks are the subject of regular review⁴³ with appropriate resilience and fall back arrangements instigated where necessary. Risks are recorded and monitored through the Corporate Risk Register.⁴⁴

In delivering our objectives we are uncompromising in providing a fair and equitable service to all within society and we focus in particular to protect the most vulnerable in society. Our staff pride themselves in maintaining and demonstrating high core values.⁴⁵

8. Our Performance

Performance against the Fire Authority's four key aims is scrutinised through a suite of eight measures, known as the Public Value measures. The measures set during 2012/13⁴⁶ were:

- 1) The first fire engine will arrive at an emergency incident with at least 4 firefighters within 15 minutes on 85% of occasions
- 2) The first fire engine will arrive with a minimum competent crew on 100% of occasions
- 3) Accidental fires will be maintained to not more than 586 fires during 2012/13

³⁸ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/irmp/strategic-plan>

³⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/budgets-and-finance/finance-documents>

⁴⁰ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/node/169814>

⁴¹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/about-sfrs/public-value>

⁴² <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/partnerships-and-community-engagement>

⁴³ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/node/169486>

⁴⁴ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/08%20-%20Risk%20Management%20Report%20Final%20dotx.pdf>

⁴⁵ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/equality-and-diversity>

⁴⁶ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/page/files/2012-03-15-service-plan-web.pdf>

- 4) Fire crimes will be maintained to not more than 1058 fires during 2012/13
- 5) Fire related deaths and serious injuries in the community will be maintained to not more than 35 during 2012/13
- 6) Injuries sustained to staff through firefighting will be maintained to not more than 35 injuries during 2012/13
- 7) The achievement of a minimum four star rating ('Good') in our customer satisfaction on not less than 75% of occasions
- 8) The achievement of a minimum four star rating ('Good') for service that represents Value for Money on not less than 75% of occasions

These measures were monitored on a monthly basis during 2012/13, with formal reporting every month to the Service's Senior Management Team and every three months to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance and Management Committee.⁴⁷ The measures are reviewed annually by the Fire Authority and adjusted to promote continuous improvement.⁴⁸

During 2012/13 the Service succeeded in relation to 7 of the 8 performance measures achieving the Fire Authority's set targets (compared to 4, i.e. 50%, in 2011/12).⁴⁹

The measures and targets set by the Fire Authority are unique to the Service and have arisen through local public consultation. Other national performance measures exist allowing comparison with other English fire and rescue services. A guide⁵⁰ to accessing comparative data on-line is provided by the Local Government Association.⁵¹

9. The National Fire and Rescue Framework

The Government has a responsibility to ensure that the public is adequately protected. For fires and other emergencies it does this by maintaining a statutory framework⁵² within which local fire and rescue authorities must operate. The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England.

⁴⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Audit-and-Performance-Management>

⁴⁸ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/07-service-plan-and-pv-measures-2013-14.pdf>

⁴⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/15a-pv-performance-measures-2012-13.pdf>

⁵⁰ <http://images.lg-inform.org.uk/sites/default/files/u28/1%20PDF%20User%20journey%20Public%20access%20pre%20November.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://lginform.local.gov.uk/about-lg-inform>

⁵²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5904/nationalframework.pdf

The priorities set out in the most recent Framework (issued July 2012) are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- **identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately**
- **work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service**
- **be accountable to communities for the service they provide**

The Fire Authority's IRMP/2020 Strategic Planning Process⁵³ sets out the process implemented by the Service during 2012 to accurately assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities (from fires to terrorist threats) and put in place arrangements to mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, more effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability. Our plans enable us to deliver effective and proportionate prevention and protection activities⁵⁴ and be ready to respond to incidents within our area and across the country to keep communities safe.

We recognise that community safety (both locally and nationally) is a partnership, and to that end during 2012/13 we have worked with partners⁵⁵ to raise awareness of the dangers of fire and offer education (and where necessary enforcement⁵⁶) to achieve the Framework's aims.

In demonstrating our accountability to communities for the service we provide we strive to be transparent and accountable for our decisions and actions, and always seek opportunities for communities to contribute to our objectives through effective consultation and involvement. Our website⁵⁷ holds reports from all of the Fire Authority's and delegated committees' meetings.

The Framework also requires us to provide assurance on financial (see Section 10, below), governance (see Section 6, above) and operational matters and on national resilience capability. Assurance regarding operational matters was assessed during 2012 using the nationally prescribed Operational Performance Assessment (OpA) and Peer Challenge Toolkit.⁵⁸ The review team's summary findings⁵⁹ state:

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has achieved a lot. In the areas the peer team examined, overall performance has been good. The Service has

⁵³ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/09-consolidated-2020-strategic-planning-process.pdf>

⁵⁴ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/safer-communities>

⁵⁵ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/promoting-safer-communities/business-fire-safety>

⁵⁶ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/promoting-safer-communities/business-fire-safety/enforcement-policy>

⁵⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings>

⁵⁸ http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=8ef22584-8a86-47c2-b67d-4bd999ae4801&groupId=10171

⁵⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/13-findings-and-recommendations-opa-2012.pdf>

developed a clear and concise vision which shapes its direction. Staff provided very positive feedback on working for the Service. The Service has made particularly good progress in managing revenue budget reductions to cope with the national funding reductions for Fire and Rescue Services.

In these turbulent times, this well run Service is managing uncertainty well, delivering improvement and seeking ways of delivering future services in different ways. SFRS can also point to a number of innovations which are worthy achievements, including; joint working with organisations like Age UK and Severnside Housing, 20:20 scenario planning and innovative arrangements to support trainers in conjunction with Telford College.

The Service produced a self-assessment which appears to have a mature awareness of the achievements and challenges of the Service.

(OpA Peer Challenge Report⁶⁰ October 2012, Pages 4 & 5)

10. Financial Performance

For the year 2012/13 the Fire Authority set a budget of £21.4 million,⁶¹ and with prudent expenditure spent £19.9 million. The budget was funded in part through a central Government revenue support grant but largely through local council taxes (£14 million). For Band 'D' council tax properties, the annual contribution towards Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service was £88.93p.⁶²

The Service spent the money in the following key areas:

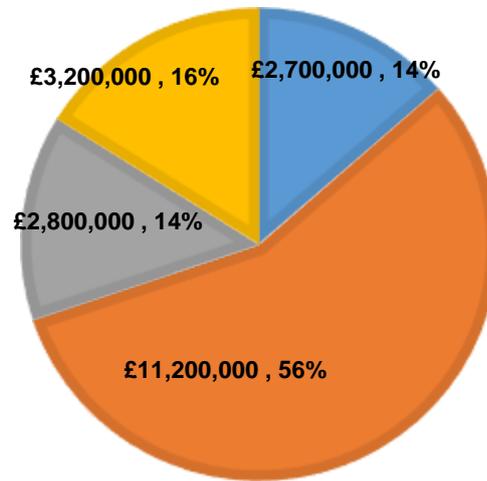
⁶⁰ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/13-findings-and-recommendations-opa-2012.pdf>

⁶¹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/12-revenue-budget-2012-13-precept.pdf>

⁶² <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/11-revenue-budget-2013-14-precept.pdf>

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE 2012/13

- Wages for non-operational staff
- Wages for Firefighters
- Appliances, Equipment & Fire Stations
- Overheads / Running Costs



A principal objective of the Fire Authority is to provide value for money and ensure that it acts responsibly in how it spends public funding. A range of audits by external auditors takes place on a regular basis allowing independent scrutiny of our financial and corporate governance. (See *following links*:^{63 64 65}) We regularly seek the views of those who have contact with the Service (through inspections, incidents or visitors etc.) regarding their perception of our performance in respect of value for money.⁶⁶

The Fire Authority is transparent in its financial affairs, publishing⁶⁷ an Annual Governance Statement, Annual Audit Letter and Statement of Accounts.

The future financial plans and commitments (2012-2017) of the Fire Authority are set out within the 'Medium Term Corporate Plan.'⁶⁸

11. Our Future Plans 2013/14 and beyond

The immediate and greatest challenge that the Fire Authority faces is that of funding. Financial support from the Government is set to reduce by over 30% over the next few years, whilst income from council tax receipts is likely to remain capped, frozen or reduced and is therefore not likely to keep pace with inflation.

⁶³ <http://www.fitting-in.com/reports/LGA%20going%20the%20extra%20mile.pdf>

⁶⁴ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/13-findings-and-recommendations-opa-2012.pdf>

⁶⁵ <http://www.fbu.me.uk/newspress/publications/pdf/6119FBUAuditReport.pdf>

⁶⁶ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/15a-pv-performance-measures-2012-13.pdf>

⁶⁷ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/budgets-and-finance/finance-documents>

⁶⁸ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/page/files/11--medium-term-corporate-plan-2012-17.pdf>

For Shropshire these funding reductions may compromise our ability to carry out risk-based budgeting and will undoubtedly impact upon our current Integrated Risk Management Plan.⁶⁹

Sir Ken Knight's recent efficiency review⁷⁰ of fire and rescue services highlighted the decline in call-outs and fire incidents in the last decade. The number of incidents in Shropshire continues to decline as a result of the excellent community safety programme, that SFRS staff have delivered, often with partners, throughout the county. The Fire Authority has been proactive in delivering an effective Public Value programme⁷¹ to force out efficiencies, which have resulted in a smaller but still efficient and effective Service.

Our future plans are being shaped through our '2020' planning process⁷² that seeks to assess the impact of a range of further cost-cutting options. The results of the initial Phase One impact assessment will be presented to the Fire Authority in September 2013, where the revised range of options will be considered for a more detailed impact assessment. This may involve public consultation where appropriate. The results of this second impact assessment will be presented to the Fire Authority in the spring of 2014, at which point a decision will be taken to enter into formal and full public and staff consultation on those finalised options that may be implemented in subsequent years.

12. Our Community Engagement

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is a community service paid for and provided for the community largely from local taxes e.g. Council tax.

You can have your say and influence in how the Service is managed and delivered. The meetings⁷³ of the Fire Authority and its relevant committees are open for the public to attend. Reports and minutes arising from these meetings are published on our website and we always welcome feedback.

In addition, you can also provide comments,⁷⁴ be these complaints or compliments via our website, by phone or in person. Equally, you can request information or data concerning the Service.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/irmp/strategic-plan>

⁷⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/facing-the-future>

⁷¹ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/about-sfrs/public-value>

⁷² <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/sites/alpha.shropshirefire.gov.uk/files/fra/15-2020-strategic-planning-process.pdf>

⁷³ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings>

⁷⁴ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/about-sfrs/contact-us>

⁷⁵ <http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/freedom-of-information/submit-a-request>