

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 DECEMBER 2013

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE RESCUE AUTHORITY – SAFETY PLAN 2014

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture

Author: Daniel Kalley, Democratic Services Officer

Summary

This report sets out at appendix A a briefing on the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority's (KMFRA) Safety Plan 2014, which is out for consultation until 13 January 2014.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 Under Chapter 4 – Rules, paragraph 22.2 (d) terms of reference for Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee has powers to review and scrutinise matters relating to Community Safety.

2. Background

2.1 On 24 October 2013 the KMFRA published its annual safety plan for 2014, which was approved for public consultation on 5 November at the KMFRA Planning and Performance Committee.

2.2 During the consultation period, officers of the KMFRA are prepared to provide any briefings to external partners or Members of other authorities as requested. The Consultation period runs until the 13 January 2014.

2.3 Members requested at the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Pre-agenda meeting, held on 26 November 2013, that an officer from KMFRA provide a briefing to the Committee. KMFRA are also attending the Council's Rural Liaison Committee on 3 December 2013 on the same point.

2.4 The Assistant Director, Service Delivery, from KMFRA has agreed to provide this briefing to Members of the Committee. Attached at appendix B is the draft Safety Plan 2014.

3. Risk management

3.1 Risks are identified in the KMFRA report, attached at Appendix A.

4. Financial and legal implications

4.1 There are no legal or financial implications for the Council.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to consider and comment on the KMFRA Safety Plan 2014, in so far as it affects Medway.

Background Documents:

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority Safety Plan 2014

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By: Chief Executive
To: Planning and Performance Committee – 5 November 2013
Subject: SAFETY PLAN 2014
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report summarises the background to the development of the Safety Plan and the proposed changes that are included in the consultation document for the current year. The report also covers the consultation questionnaire and the proposed timescales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the publication of the draft Safety Plan for consultation at **Appendix 1**, and the questionnaire at **Appendix 2**;
2. Approve that minor amendments to the text of the Plan be delegated to the Chief Executive.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. The Authority has published an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) annually since 2004, when the duty was brought in for fire and rescue authorities. This report summarises the context against which the Plan has been developed, and how it contributes to the overall estimated savings requirement that the Authority is likely to face given the current austerity measures being imposed by the Government.

The Safety Plan

2. The Plan for this year is attached for Members' approval at **Appendix 1**. Members will recall that, following the publication of the IRMP in February 2013, it was agreed to rename the document the Safety Plan, as this was felt to be more comprehensible to the public. Members will also be aware of the need to make significant savings over the coming years. The Safety Plan focuses on how the Authority can provide the best possible service to the public whilst also saving money, but does so in such a way that the public will not feel any degradation in service delivery. Indeed, in areas served by day-crewed stations, the extension of the times when firefighters are physically based at the stations improves emergency cover.
3. It is fair to say that the majority of savings are proposed to come from staff and salary-related payments across the organisation. In total the Plan proposes a net reduction in the number of grey book posts of 88, and a reduction of around 50 green book posts, or 20% of the green book workforce over the coming years. This is in addition to recent compulsory redundancies of 16 green book staff, although two were able to be redeployed into other roles. It is hoped that the majority of the savings being proposed from firefighting posts will be achieved through natural wastage, and the Plan specifically encourages those staff who can retire to do so, in order to protect firefighters who are at an earlier stage of their career. Whilst it is expected that the compulsory redundancy of firefighters can be ruled out for the coming financial year, it seems implausible to suggest that this will always be the case.
4. The Plan also covers:
 - An update on projects from previous years, including the opening of Ash-cum-Ridley fire station;
 - A reduction to the number of height vehicles operated by the Authority, in the light of the continued reduction in overall demand since they were last reviewed in 2008;
 - The deletion of the on-call fire engine from Medway fire station;
 - Crewing some on-call fire engines with three firefighters;

- Buying smaller more manoeuvrable fire engines in the medium to longer term;
 - Working more closely with other blue light services in the area, as well as other members of the local government family in Kent and Medway; and
 - Better supporting the needs of the business community.
5. The Plan does not include any proposals to close an entire fire station, nor does it propose to downgrade the status of any fire station within the coming two financial years. However, if the trajectory of decreasing demand, and increasingly tight financial settlements continues, it seems implausible to suggest that reports will not be brought to Members suggesting the conversion of whole-time shift fire engines to day-crewed or on-call status. For the moment though, taking the Plan as a whole, alongside the proposals for the level of the Council Tax precept, this can be ruled out for two years. This will take the Authority past the next general election and the next comprehensive spending review, and potentially past new primary legislation affecting the blue light services. At that point, different recommendations may need to be brought to Members.
6. The technical appendices that support these proposals will be published alongside the Plan on the website when it is launched.

The Questionnaire

7. The proposed questionnaire is attached at **Appendix 2** for Members' approval. It is important to note that Appendix 2 is only produced for the purposes of seeking approval to the wording from Members. It does not reflect how the document will be formatted when it is presented online using the 'SurveyMonkey' questionnaire tool, which is much more sophisticated than a committee report can do adequate justice to. Respondents are asked to comment on the significant proposals being made in the Plan, and the setting of the Council Tax precept.
8. The Plan and questionnaire will be sent, where possible electronically, to all respondents from last year; significant businesses; and key stakeholders, such as parish councils. Some limited marketing and press briefings will also be arranged. Consultation is proposed to run for nine weeks from 18 November until 9am on 13 January 2014. This is a more compressed timeframe than previous consultation programmes, which reflects the pattern of responses achieved in previous years.
9. Officers will provide any briefings to external partners or Members of other authorities as requested. We do not propose to attend or run any public meetings called by parish councils in relation to the Safety Plan, as experience during 2011/12 showed that this was not a mechanism which generated useful feedback. However, if any other local government body requests an attendance as part of a controlled agenda, officers will make arrangements to attend these sessions.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. Each proposal is supported by a technical appendix and a people impact assessment. No significant impacts have been identified from any of the proposals made.
11. Questions relating to the level of the Council Tax precept have been shared with Members of the General Purposes Committee, for input into this Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Members are requested to:
 - 12.1 Approve the publication of the draft Safety Plan for consultation at **Appendix 1**, and the questionnaire at **Appendix 2**;
 - 12.2 Approve that minor amendments to the text of the Plan be delegated to the Chief Executive.



safety plan

2014



Kent Fire & Rescue Service

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Chairman's introduction

As the Chairman of Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, I am pleased to introduce this edition of the Safety Plan. I took on this role in June 2013, and would like to pay tribute to the work of the previous Chairman, Bryan Cope. He led this Authority through some complex changes, such as changing the duty system for on-call firefighters, and closing fire stations which were no longer needed. It now falls to me to lead the Authority into the future, and I am excited by the challenges ahead.

In this plan, you'll find an update on projects we have been working on over the last two years. We have some new proposals for how we can still provide the best possible service to the public and save money. The proposals 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 2012. In 2014/15, we are not proposing to downgrade or close any fire stations, although one fire engine is proposed to be decommissioned in this plan. Some of the changes will have an impact on our staff and how they work. I think this is right. You would expect us to have done all we could to become more efficient before we reduce services.

The proposed changes 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 talking to our staff about their retirement plans and encouraging those who can retire to do so. A small increase in Council Tax will help us avoid compulsory redundancies of firefighters for as long as possible. In 2013, we had to make some back-office staff redundant. These were staff that worked in the canteen at our headquarters site and all cooks working on fire stations. It is likely that the number of back-office staff will reduce by a further 20 per cent over the coming years.

We have tried to make this document as easy to read as possible. We have had to use some fire service jargon but there is a glossary explaining these terms at the end of the plan.

If you have any comments on the plan, please send them in, or go online to read all the supporting information or complete the questionnaire. The closing date for comments is 13 January 2014.

Best wishes

Nick Chard

Chairman

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

If you would like to give us your views or want any further information on our proposals please email us at:

safetyplan@kent.fire-uk.org, tweet us via Twitter on [@kentfirerescue](https://twitter.com/kentfirerescue), Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentfirerescue, or write to this address:

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What's changed since last year?

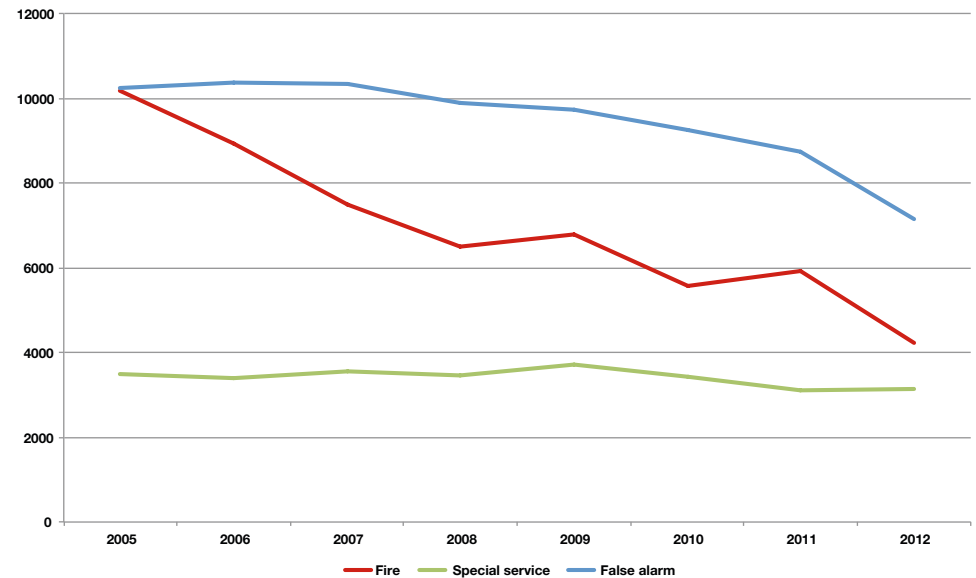
Reducing demand: Last year was another very successful year. Overall, demand for our emergency response service fell again in 2012, as shown in *Graph 1* (right). At the same time, our response times to life-threatening calls have not changed significantly, and the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads has also continued to fall. This proves that the fire and rescue service can be innovative and change the way it works, without performance declining.

Investing in new fire stations: Ash-cum-Ridley fire station, the first new fire station we have built in almost twenty years, opened in November 2013, and uses a mixture of new local recruits and existing firefighters that moved from Horton Kirby fire station. Whilst there will be a settling-in period as the new team comes together, we are confident that this will be a fantastic facility.

Two years ago it was agreed that Horton Kirby fire station would close when Ash-cum-Ridley opened. This has now happened. The building will be offered for sale initially to the local Parish Council, and if they don't want it, we will look to sell it on the open market, probably at auction.

We have now secured land for a new fire station in Ramsgate, as well as in Rochester, which includes the road safety centre. We hope that these two new fire stations, and the redevelopment of our existing one on Watling Street, Gillingham, will be completed by December 2015. We plan to redevelop Herne Bay fire station sometime in the future.

Investing in new equipment: Over the last three years we have made changes to firefighters' contracts and made sure our fire stations are in the best possible locations. Now our focus is on providing the right equipment and vehicles. Though traditional fire engines remain the core of the service, there are quicker and cheaper ways to tackle small fires and other types of incident. For example, we have invested in equipment that punches a small hole into a building and uses a very fine mist of water to bring the temperature down in seconds. New off-road vehicles based at Dartford and Herne Bay are helping firefighters deal quickly and effectively with grass fires that in the past would have been hard to reach. In addition we have replaced 21 fire engines that have reached the end of their life.



Graph 1: reduction in overall demand for emergency services covering 2005 to 2012 (these figures exclude co-responding calls).



The new fire station at Ash-cum-Ridley

Recruiting new staff: Last year we said we needed to recruit more on-call firefighters, as a number leave every year. We have now recruited almost 80, but we need more. Full details of which stations are recruiting, information on becoming an on-call firefighter and an application pack are available at www.kentfirejobs.info

Reducing false 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. Before this change, we received just under 5,400 calls a year from AFAs. More than 98 per cent of those calls were false alarms, often caused by problems such as poor maintenance of systems. We changed our policy so that between 6am and 6pm we would respond only to calls from AFAs where someone had confirmed that there were signs of a fire. In April 2013 this was extended to 24 hours a day.

These changes have meant that between 1 April and 30 August 2013, there were 981 occasions when fire engines were not called out to false alarms and so were available for genuine emergencies. We have been working with business owners and alarm monitoring companies over the past three years to help them adjust to this change. A guide is available on our website which provides advice and examples of businesses that have made simple changes to put an end to false alarm calls.

Setting our vision for the future: In last year's plan, we introduced five new strategies that set out what we want to achieve. These cover personal safety, business safety, how we respond to emergencies, how we protect the environment, and how we train and develop our staff. These were agreed by the Authority in October 2013, and are available on our website at www.kent.fire-uk.org

“there were 981 occasions when fire engines were not called out to false alarms and so were available for genuine emergencies”

This year's proposals

The next section gives details of the projects we want to carry out in the next three years. The questionnaire which supports the plan asks for your views about some of these projects. There are also technical appendices which include all the research behind our proposals.

Offensive or defensive firefighting?

The fire and rescue service in the UK is seen by some as 'risk averse'. In the national press there have been well-publicised examples from outside Kent where firefighters have been accused of standing back from an incident, rather than intervening, and as a result, people have suffered injuries, or even died.

We do not want to be in this position. Our firefighters have the best training and the best protective equipment they have ever had. Therefore, they should try to deal with incidents offensively when they arrive, rather than defensively.

We have now told our firefighters that this is what we expect of them. It relies on our staff doing really good scene assessments when they get to incidents and making the right decisions. We trust our staff to be able to do this. And so long as what they do is in line with what they have been trained to do, we will support them if something goes wrong.

“Our firefighters have the best training and the best protective equipment they have ever had.”

Duty systems for firefighters

As well as a range of specialist vehicles, the Service currently has 76 fire engines:

- Seventeen are crewed by firefighters using the whole-time shift duty system, which means firefighters are available on the fire station 24/7. Each fire engine costs about £1.1m per year under this system in salary and related costs;
- Nine are crewed by firefighters using the whole-time day-crewed duty system, where firefighters are available at the fire station during weekdays and parts of the weekend, and are called out from their nearby homes at other times. Under this system each fire engine costs about £650k per year in salary and related costs; and

- Fifty are crewed by firefighters using the on-call duty system, which is where firefighters respond from their own homes or work places located near to the station both day and night on an on-call basis. 34 of these are based at on-call fire stations, in villages and small towns. Each fire engine costs about £140k per year under this system in salary and related costs.

More than 80 per cent of our total budget is staff-related costs. Therefore how many staff we employ, particularly firefighters, is the main area where we have to make savings. We estimate we will have to save at least £10m by March 2017. We think we have two broad choices. We could change our operating model agreed in 2012, which was all about meeting risk, demand and isolation across Kent and Medway. (All the details of the model are still available on our website at www.kent.fire-uk.org). Alternatively we could change our duty systems to employ fewer firefighters overall but without changing the number of fire engines we have – which is what we are proposing.

Our preferred changes to how we use our full-time firefighters will stop us having to downgrade or close any fire stations. We will also get the best out of our existing on-call workforce. We are expecting a full review of local government funding during 2015/16. If the government requires further savings from us as a result, we may have to review our plans again.

Our proposals for 24/7 fire stations

Bearing in mind the comments above, we have reviewed how firefighters work at 24/7 fire stations, and three options are proposed:

- **Option one:** this option would mean changing how we staff some full-time fire engines so that they become day-crewed fire engines. We would do this at some of the seven fire stations which have one full-time fire engine. Option one, alongside other savings, would help meet our savings target, but would worsen our service to the public. It would mean that responding to incidents in some parts of Kent and Medway would be slower at some times of day.
- **Option two:** this option would mean removing some 24/7 fire engines from our fleet, as well as the firefighters that use them. We'd need to remove at least four, most likely from those fire stations that have two full-time fire engines. Option two, alongside other savings, would help meet our savings target, but would worsen our service to the public. It would mean that responding to incidents in some parts of Kent

“Our preferred changes to how we use our full-time firefighters will stop us having to downgrade or close any fire stations”

and Medway would be slower at some times of day, although less frequently than under option one, as one full-time fire engine would still be available at the fire station.

- **Option three:** this option would mean changing how we crew all our full-time 24/7 fire engines, so we can give the same service for at least the next two years, without changing the number of 24/7 fire engines, or firefighters' working hours. This is our preferred option.

Historically, a calculation was used to say how many firefighters were needed at a fire station. This was known as the ridership factor. This increased the number of firefighters at each station by a factor of 0.42, to cover annual leave, sickness and training. We do not use this calculation anymore, as it is no longer relevant and creates overstaffing. Instead we have invested in a workforce planning system, which is constantly monitored to make sure fire engines are available.

There are four groups (known as watches) of up to seven firefighters per full-time fire engine. We currently only send between four and six firefighters per fire engine to incidents. We want to remove one firefighter post from each full-time watch. This still allows for training, annual leave and sickness and for these issues to be managed locally.

This does not necessarily mean that fewer firefighters will go to incidents on fire engines. We will always send one incident commander, two users of breathing apparatus, and one driver on a fire engine. As one firefighter can have more than one of these skills, this can be achieved with between three and six firefighters, but at the moment, we aim for our full-time fire engines to always have at least four as this is the most efficient model. There may be occasions when we will use a 24/7 fire engine with three firefighters to respond to an emergency call, but only in a few exceptional circumstances. One example would be if a firefighter rings in sick, and an emergency call is received before another firefighter has arrived at the station to replace them.

This option will reduce the number of whole-time shift firefighters we have based at fire stations by 76, and we hope to do this by natural wastage over the coming years. We may need to have a small bank of staff to fill any short term gaps, which cannot be managed locally. Our early work suggests this would involve six full-time firefighters working as part of a central team.

If enough firefighters do not leave through natural wastage, and more savings are needed, then we may have to return to options one or two. However, we do not plan to do this before 2016/17. More information on this proposal is available in the *Duty systems – shift technical appendix*.

Our proposal for day-crewed fire stations

We have reviewed when firefighters work at day-crewed fire stations, and one option has been put forward. The proposal means that firefighters will be based at the station ready to respond immediately to emergencies more of the time, including weekends. We will also match times when firefighters are at the fire station to when they are most needed, on a station-by-station basis. The proposed times are shown in **Table 1** below. We will keep looking at these times, and will change them if risk or demand changes in a particular area.

Table 1: Proposed 'on-station' times for day-crewed fire stations¹

Fire station	On-station hours
Deal	9am to 9pm
Faversham	9am to 9pm
Herne Bay	10am to 10pm
Larkfield	9am to 9pm
Sheppey	10am to 10pm
Sittingbourne	9am to 9pm
Sevenoaks	8am to 8pm
Tonbridge	9am to 9pm
Whitstable	9am to 9pm

We want to move to a single-watch system, rather than the current two. Staff at these stations will manage their own time so that for all the hours in **Table 1**, there are always enough firefighters on duty to keep the fire engine available². Our preference is 12-hour shifts for day-crewed firefighters, as this gives the best service to the public in areas which are not busy enough overall to justify a 24/7 immediately available fire engine.

¹: Outside these times, cover will be provided by on-call staff, as now.

²: Once the scheme to allow firefighters to manage their own working hours is implemented for day-crewed fire stations, we will look at applying the same principles for working hours to full-time 24/7 fire stations.

We will also make sure that, wherever possible, we do not use day-crewed firefighters to fill any short-term gaps at other fire stations in the county. This is because any specialist equipment based at their fire station which they are trained to use then goes 'off the run' until they return. Fire engines will still respond on blue lights anywhere in the county, as they do now. We might use a day-crewed fire engine for a 'covering move' elsewhere in the county if required.

We will also look at how we pay these firefighters. At the moment, in addition to their monthly salary, they are paid a number of allowances. An example is 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. We want to consolidate all payments like this into their salary during 2014/15.

The new system needs 12 firefighters based close to the station, rather than the current 14. The number of day-crewed firefighters we have will therefore reduce by 18 as quickly as practicable. But importantly, our response times in the evenings and weekends will improve. Evenings, from about 4pm onwards, tend to be our busiest times. There is also not much change in demand at the weekend compared to during the week. In times when others are reducing the service offered to make savings, this is an improvement to our service, which also saves money. We also propose to change the name of the duty system from day crewing to demand crewing. This better reflects that we are matching when our staff work at the fire station to the demand in an area. More information on this proposal is available in the *Duty systems – day-crewed technical appendix*.

Our proposal for on-call fire stations³

Although we will always prefer to have four firefighters available on our on-call fire engines, this is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve consistently across the county. We now propose to change how we crew some fire engines using on-call staff so that they can operate with three firefighters when we need them to. After a year, we will assess what we have learnt from this change.

There are a number of reasons for this proposal:

- **Using our staff efficiently:** currently an on-call fire engine with only three firefighters on duty would not be available to use, unless we temporarily moved another firefighter to the station. The proposal makes the best use of the staff we have and the training time we have invested in them.

³: These proposals also apply to the 16 on-call fire engines attached to 24/7 or day-crewed fire stations.

- **They can perform a useful role:** three firefighters can take potentially life-saving actions. Some examples are taking control at the scene of a car crash when we are the first emergency service to arrive, sending back messages or requesting more resources, using defensive jets of water or performing snatch rescues.
- **Scale of incidents:** the vast majority of the time, fire engines in remote and rural areas deal with small incidents. We don't think it is right that people should wait longer than they have to for an emergency response, when it could be dealt with safely by three firefighters. This is an example of how we want our firefighters to positively intervene at incidents where they can.
- **Better training:** we used to use on-call fire engines with three firefighters, but stopped in the mid-1990s. Since then our equipment, our methods of incident command, and our training have completely changed. We have also adopted the principle of dynamic risk assessment. We therefore think that we can have confidence in our incident commanders to use firefighters in this way.
- **Recruitment:** in some areas, we are having problems recruiting enough on-call staff. This means we sometimes have to move a firefighter from another station to keep the fire engine available. When we do this, they have to be paid for being at the station, rather than being available to us at home or at work. This is much more expensive. Usually, recruits need to live or work within five minutes of a fire station, but in some specific locations, we may accept applications from people who live up to ten minutes away from their nearest fire station. We are also very keen to work with businesses that are prepared to make their staff available during working hours to be on-call firefighters. We are already in early discussions with a large employer in Medway about this idea. This could significantly improve the availability of our fire engines in more rural and remote areas.

Among the three on-call firefighters, there would need to be a driver, an incident commander, and preferably two qualified wearers of breathing apparatus. To be clear, one firefighter can have more than one of these skills. It does mean that the incident commander will have to assess what they can safely do with three firefighters, if they are the first to arrive at an incident. If the incident commander needs more resources, they will be sent immediately. We are also putting additional equipment on some on-call fire engines. One example we are looking at is equipment which allows us to fight fires from outside the building, and also increasing the number of thermal image cameras we have.

More information on this proposal is available in the *Firefighting tactics and road traffic collisions technical appendix*.

Changing the number of height vehicles we have

Height vehicles have an extendable ladder and are used to provide a range of functions such as lighting, a safe working platform at height or a water tower to fight large fires. Very rarely are they used for the rescue of people from fires. It is important to note that high-rise buildings are designed and built to allow people to evacuate using internal escape routes. Our records show only one rescue using a height vehicle between April 2009 and August 2013, when we helped two people to safety from the roof balcony of an adjacent property. However the people were not in a life-threatening situation.

Height vehicles were last reviewed in 2008, when we reduced from seven to five across the county. We have looked again at how many we need, taking into account how much demand overall has reduced since then (see *Graph 1* earlier in the plan). This has showed that we need two, based at Maidstone and Canterbury fire stations. However, to give us resilience, we will have a third at Ashford fire station. From these fire stations, they can reach 93.7 per cent of all the addresses in our database in the county within 30 minutes, compared to 98.9 per cent currently. This covers all the major built-up areas in Kent and Medway. They will all be the same type of vehicle, which will reduce our training costs, as currently there are three different types amongst the five we have.

Currently, we aim for a height vehicle to reach an incident within 30 minutes on 90 per cent of occasions and this is called the attendance standard. We do not think we need this anymore. We think it is more important to measure how quickly the first fire engine gets to the incident, which we already collect and report on. We will continue to monitor how quickly height vehicles reach incidents. More information on this proposal is available in the *Working at height technical appendix*.

Reviewing our fleet of fire engines

We have looked at the equipment fire engines carry. Over the years this has increased so much that fire engines are now large and heavy. At the same time, roads have become busier, and double parking in narrow residential streets is very common. As our aim is to get to you as soon as possible, it made sense to look at smaller, more manoeuvrable vehicles carrying the most frequently-used equipment. We have invested in smaller fire engines already that can respond to the majority of incidents and these are backed up by more specialist vehicles where necessary. They still look like fire engines however. Some more urban fire and

rescue services, where travel distances are usually shorter, use vans or 4x4s. Having reviewed all the options, we do not think vans or 4x4s would work in Kent and Medway. Buying smaller fire engines reduces our costs, as they are cheaper to buy. By carrying only the critical equipment, we can also reduce our training costs. Depending on prices at the time, we think this will save about £50k per fire engine. More information on this proposal is available in the *Firefighting tactics and road traffic collisions technical appendix*.

Decommissioning of the on-call fire engine from Medway fire station

When the on-call fire stations at New Cut in Chatham and Green Street in Gillingham were closed in 2011, the firefighters transferred to Medway fire station at Watling Street, Gillingham. The plan was to use them as a 'resilience crew'. This means that if both the full-time fire engines based at Watling Street were at incidents, then on-call staff would come to the fire station ready to respond to any further calls. This is the only on-call fire engine we have which works in this way. The benefit was that it didn't matter how close the firefighters lived to Medway fire station. But it did mean they were likely to be used less frequently if demand in the Medway Towns decreased.

Initially this system worked well, but the number of times we have needed to use the resilience crew has decreased significantly. Between 1 January and 31 August 2013, they went to 43 emergency incidents. In the same time period in 2012 they went to 97 emergency incidents. This is partly a result of us not attending AFAs, which was a large part of the work done by all the fire engines in the Medway Towns. We therefore believe that the on-call fire engine is no longer needed at Medway fire station.

If this change is agreed, the Medway Towns will be served most frequently by fire engines from Medway, Rochester, Strood and Rainham. The fire engines based at Rochester and Medway fire stations will both have equipment to deal with road crashes, which is an improvement on the current service provided. We will offer the same package to the 11 on-call firefighters based at Medway fire station that was offered when other fire engines were removed in 2012. The fire engine will be removed from the fleet during 2014/15. Making this change, together with the opening of Ash-cum-Ridley fire station, means we will have a maximum of 61 fire engines available during the day and 75 at night.

More information on this proposal is available in the *Medway on-call fire engine technical appendix*.

Specialist firefighting and rescue

We have no plans to stop any services we currently provide. This means that for the foreseeable future we will continue to rescue large animals when requested using the team based at Faversham fire station, bariatric rescues using the teams based at Faversham and Maidstone, and we will keep our 'line rescue' team in Deal. We have reviewed these services, and there is little to be gained from relocating these functions to other teams or other locations. We now have one chainsaw team based in Maidstone so we no longer have this equipment at Larkfield fire station. More information on this is available in the *Specialist rescue technical appendix*.

We have changed how we deal with some rural fires, especially barn or haystack fires. Having our firefighters maintaining a watching brief over a decreasing fire 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. More information on this is available in the *Firefighting tactics and road traffic collisions technical appendix*.

Working with other organisations

Since last year, a national review of the fire and rescue service has been completed. Written by a long-standing and well-respected fire officer and called 'Facing the Future', it gave some fairly radical views on how fire and rescue services should change. Most of the changes suggested have already been made, or are currently being worked on, in Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

'Facing the Future' posed the question "what is the right size for a fire and rescue service?" There are some very small fire and rescue services nationally, but Kent is a reasonable size. Its geography matches that of Kent Police, and we also serve a large county council area, as well as the densely populated Medway Towns. What other fire and rescue services choose to do is a local political decision, but we think that matching fire and rescue services to police boundaries nationally will reduce cost overall. There are 37 police forces in England, and 46 fire and rescue services. We expect there to be some new legislation in the next Parliament which may bring about voluntary mergers of some of the smaller fire and rescue services. We will watch developments closely especially if this involves any of our neighbouring fire and rescue services.

We already work closely with Kent Police and the ambulance service on a programme called the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP). This programme is all about blue light services working more closely together. There is more information on this programme in the *JESIP technical appendix*. We have started very early discussions with Kent Police, Kent County Council and Medway Council about how we could join up some of the functions we provide. Emergency planning is an example. All of us do this, so we can respond to any major emergency that may occur. However, we all do it in different ways and with different teams. We are not saying we want to take this service over – what we are saying is that since the financial challenges all local authorities face are so great, and emergency planning is something we all want to get right, can we bring things together? This might be as simple as all the people doing the work sharing the same office, or might be as radical as one authority providing the service for everyone else.

Another example is critical emergency care. Currently, we work with South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) to provide co-responding from five on-call fire stations. Last year we attended over 300 emergency calls, including cardiac arrests. We are considering whether in some locations that do not already provide co-responding, it would make sense for us to respond to life-threatening emergency calls as a first response using the nearest available vehicle, rather than always using a car as we do now at co-responding stations. We would always be backed up at these calls by a SECAmb crew. This has the added advantage that if a fire engine is used, the firefighters will be available to us for any further incidents more quickly after the medical emergency is dealt with. We will closely monitor any impact on our own emergency cover by doing this, but our principle has to be that saving life is our primary aim and working with SECAmb will improve outcomes for patients.

Supporting businesses in Kent and Medway

We believe that good compliance is good business, allowing you to keep your staff and customers safe and minimise the chance of a fire disrupting and possibly damaging your business. Legislation changed in 2006 which meant that businesses had a legal responsibility to complete a risk assessment and make their businesses safe from fire. Nationally there was a drive for fire and rescue services to focus on identifying businesses who were not meeting the law and take appropriate legal action, with an expectation that more prosecutions would happen. In Kent, we did not think this was the right approach, although we have, and will, prosecute businesses when all other options have been tried and failed.

There are a large number of small and medium sized businesses in Kent and Medway, and we will continue to focus on supporting this group as they are a significant contributor to the local economy. In last year's plan, we announced that we would be setting up a business advice service, to help businesses meet their obligations. This team will soon be in place. They will work with businesses directly; answering any questions they may have about how they can protect themselves and meet the requirements of the law in the most cost-effective way. We are interested to know how best we can get our messages to you and your business, and what information you would find most helpful. There are some options given in the questionnaire which sits alongside the plan, but if you can think of any other areas, we would be very interested in your views.

For larger businesses, such as national chains, which don't just operate in the Kent and Medway area, our approach will be different. We understand that, for these businesses, consistency between fire services on acceptable fire safety measures and decisions about enforcement is important. That is why we support the move to create a statutory Primary Authority Scheme for fire safety. This means that a fire and rescue service can form a partnership with a large business, agreeing the fire safety management approach for all the buildings from which the business operates across the country. That Service would also set standards and resolve any questions about how and when enforcement should be used, regardless of where the building actually is.

For businesses this means that you can expect the fire safety standards set for your buildings will be the same in Folkestone as they would be in Falmouth or Newcastle, and, where formal action is necessary, decisions about that will be consistent also. We hope to be able to establish partnerships through this scheme from April 2014, but this will be dependent on legislation. In the meantime we have already started to work informally with some Kent-based businesses to develop the basis for a future partnership.

As a package, and together with a small rise in the level of the Council Tax, the changes proposed in this plan will generate most of the savings we need in the next three years. The public shouldn't notice any difference to the service we provide. In fact in many areas, the proposals will improve the service we offer.

“We believe that compliance is good business”

Planning our financial future

The Budget in 2013 announced that budget cuts would still need to be applied to public sector funding for some years to come. So, as we explained in our plan last year, there is still the need to continue to save money and reduce spending for the foreseeable future. Significant savings will need to be found each year, but we want to achieve this whilst still providing the best possible fire and rescue service to the people of Kent and Medway. Sometimes this means changing how we work, whilst also keeping pace with improvements in equipment and technology.

Important financial facts	
Our 2013/14 revenue (day to day) budget	£70.9m
Our 2013/14 capital budget	£12.4m

We are already well on the way to achieving the £5.2m of savings set out in our budget for 2013/14. We plan to continue to make savings in future years, but we need to ensure that they are sustainable and deliverable. Many of the savings that we plan to make may take time to implement, for example changes to the duty systems for firefighters.

The 2013/14 financial year has been the first year in which some changes were made to the way we were funded by the government. This, in the longer term, will help provide greater flexibility to our finances, but the move to these new arrangements is likely to take some time to settle down.

Since 2010/11, we have not increased our share of the Council Tax, so the equivalent band D Council Tax has remained at £67.95 per household per year. That is just over 18 pence per day or just over £1.30 per week. At the time of writing, the government intends to offer another Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2014/15 and 2015/16 which is equivalent to a Council Tax increase of 1 per cent, in return for us freezing Council Tax in each of the next two years. Alternatively, the government is allowing authorities to increase Council Tax by up to 2 per cent, while any increase over that limit must be subject to a binding referendum.

The proposals made in this plan are based on us increasing our share of the Council Tax by just under 2 per cent. If we are not able to do this, it is very likely that we will have to look at reducing the service we offer, or making some firefighters redundant within the next two years.

We therefore welcome your views on the following options:

- **Option 1:** freeze Council Tax for a further year
- **Option 2:** increase Council Tax by 1 per cent which is 2p a week for an average band D household
- **Option 3:** Increase Council Tax by just under 2 per cent which is 3p a week for an average band D household
- **Option 4:** Increase Council Tax by over 2 per cent which would require a local referendum

How are we doing?

If you want to know how we are doing, there are a number of pages on the website to help you:

Assurance statement: this tells you how we are meeting the requirements the government sets us in the national framework. It's all on the website at www.kent.fire-uk.org

Performance information: routinely published on our website, and also reported to Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority.

Equality: last year we achieved the rating of excellent in the Fire Equality Standard. More information is available on the website.

Freedom of information: have a detailed query? Ask us and if we hold the data, and it's not restricted in some way, you can have it. We'll help you make sense of it too. Make a request via information.officer@kent.fire-uk.org and we will respond within 20 working days, often quicker. But check the website first as the information you want might already be published.

Complaints, comments and compliments: these are always welcomed, and complaints are fully investigated. Sometimes things do go wrong after all. But if we have done a good job, let us know, so we can let the firefighters know.

Operational assessment: we are due to have an assessment of how we perform at emergency incidents in Spring 2014. We will publish our self-assessment on the website in the early spring.

Accounts and financial information: another year, another clean bill of health financially. More information is published on the website, alongside all transactions over £200+VAT from across the Service.

The website: www.kent.fire-uk.org this is due for a major overhaul in 2014 to make it easier to find the information you want.

Facebook: Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentfirerescue

Twitter: follow us at [@kentfirerescue](https://twitter.com/kentfirerescue) for live incident updates, campaigns and general safety messages.

Comments on this plan: email us using safetyplan@kent.fire-uk.org

Have your say

If you have any comments on this plan, please send them in. We will report the outcomes in full to the meeting of Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority on **11 February 2014**.

If you would prefer a paper copy of this document or the questionnaire, please email us at safetyplan@kent.fire-uk.org or call **01622 692 121**.

The closing date for comments is **9am on 13 January 2014**.

Technical appendices and equality impact assessments

All the research used in the development of the proposals in the plan are supported by more detailed technical appendices and an equality impact assessment. These are much more technical in nature, and the content is summarised in the plan. However we feel it is important to be open about the data that supports the proposals we are making. This year's technical appendices are:

- *Focus on your safety strategy*
- *Focus on business strategy*
- *Responding to emergencies strategy*
- *Caring for the environment strategy*
- *Workforce strategy*
- *Duty systems review – whole-time shift*
- *Duty systems review – whole-time day-crewed*
- *Working at height*
- *Firefighting tactics and road traffic collisions (including crewing on-call fire engines with three firefighters, smaller fire engines and rural firefighting)*
- *Medway fire station's on-call fire engine*
- *Specialist rescue*
- *JESIP*

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

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

আপনি যদি এই প্রমাণপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) অন্য কোন আকারে অথবা ভাষায় চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 01622 692 121 নম্বর টেলিফোনে যোগাযোগ করুন।

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

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

ئەگەر دەتەوێت ئەم نووسراوەت بە شێوازێکی تر یان بە زمانێکی تر بۆ دابین بکەیت، تکایە تەلەفۆن بۆ ژمارە 01622 692 121 بکە.

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

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

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

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

如欲索取本文件的其他格式或語文版本，請致電 01622 692 121。

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

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

Glossary

Activity	The incidents attended by each individual fire engine in the local area or elsewhere.
Annualised contract	A contract for a specified number of hours to be worked over a fixed period of time, in addition to the standard 42 hour working week for firefighters.
Bariatric	A medical term referring to the control of obesity and allied health issues.
Call	A request for assistance by the public or any other body or agency made to the fire and rescue service.
Capital budget	The money spent on buying big physical things, like fire engines, buildings, or our IT systems.
Co-responding	An agreement with the ambulance service to send specially trained on-call firefighters to provide initial emergency medical care in the event of e.g. someone suffering a heart attack in their home. An ambulance is also always sent.
County	The whole geographical area known as Kent. This includes the area where local services are provided by Medway Council as well as Kent County Council.
Covering move	The planned movement of a fire engine to another fire station. This happens when our 999 staff think that an incident will last a reasonable length of time.
Day-crewed duty system	See whole-time day-crewed duty system.
Defensive firefighting	Where firefighters take a defensive position to prevent fire spread. This would be from outside the building as it may be too dangerous for firefighters to enter even wearing their protective equipment. The opposite is offensive firefighting (see below).
Demand	The number of incidents that happen in a defined area over a defined period of time.
Dynamic risk assessment	A process by which the scene of an incident is assessed by the incident commander taking into account any obvious or known risks.
Height vehicle	A type of fire engine which has an extendable ladder used to provide a safe working platform at height. Sometimes they are also called aerial appliances.
Incident	Any call to which the Service sends a response. As a lot of people may call us about the same incident, this number is always lower than the number of calls we receive.
Isolation	The distance of a place or community, measured in travel time, from the nearest fire engine when it's at the fire station and ready to respond.

JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme – a programme developed by the government to ensure all the blue light services are trained and exercised to work together as effectively as possible at all levels of command in response to major or complex incidents (including fast moving terrorist scenarios) so that as many lives as possible can be saved.
Line rescue	Firefighters who are trained to perform rescues using climbing equipment. Most often they are used at cliffs, or when someone is trapped underground.
Offensive firefighting	To actively take steps to put out a fire. This usually involves entering a building using breathing apparatus and getting as close to the fire as firefighters safely can. The opposite is defensive firefighting (see above).
On-call duty system	A duty system where firefighters respond from their own homes or workplaces located near to the fire station on an on-call basis.
On-call fire station	A fire station crewed entirely by firefighters working the on-call duty system.
On/off the run	When a fire engine or other specialist equipment is available for calls, it is described as “on the run”. Conversely, when a fire engine or other specialist equipment is not available, it is “off the run”
Referendum	A general vote by the electorate on a single political question that has been referred to them for a direct decision.
Revenue budget	This is the day-to-day budget used to run the service provided by firefighters and other staff across the county.
Risk	The combination of factors that adds up to the likelihood of an incident in an area.
Snatch rescues	High-risk actions that may be taken to save life before standard procedures are implemented. This is only used in very severe emergency situations.
Whole-time shift duty system	A duty system under which firefighters are available on the fire station 24/7.
Whole-time day-crewed duty system	A duty system under which firefighters are available at the fire station during weekdays and Saturday mornings, and are called out from their nearby homes at other times.

