



**Wednesday, 21 September
2016
10.30 am**

**Meeting of
Fire Authority
Fire Service HQ
Winsford**

Contact Officer:
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Cheshire Fire Authority

Notes for Members of the Public

Attendance at Meetings

The Cheshire Fire Authority welcomes and encourages members of the public to be at its meetings and Committees. You are requested to remain quiet whilst the meeting is taking place and to enter and leave the meeting room as quickly and quietly as possible.

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If you feel there might be particular problems with access to the building or car parking please contact the Reception Desk at Fire Service Headquarters on Winsford (01606) 868700.

Questions by Electors

An elector in the Fire Service area can ask the Chair of the Authority a question if it is sent to the Monitoring Officer at Fire Service HQ to arrive at least five clear working days before the meeting. The contact officer named on the front of the Agenda will be happy to advise you on this procedure.

Access to Information

Copies of the Agenda will be available at the meeting. A copy can also be obtained from the contact officer named on the front of the Agenda. Alternatively, individual reports are available on the Authority's website (www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)

The Agenda is usually divided into two parts. Members of the public are allowed to stay for the first part. When the Authority is ready to deal with the second part you will be asked to leave the meeting room, because the business to be discussed will be of a confidential nature, for example, dealing with individual people and contracts.

This agenda is available in large print, Braille, audio CD or in community languages upon request by contacting; Telephone: 01606868414 or email: equalities@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Recording of Meetings

Anyone attending the meeting should be aware the Authority audio-records its meetings. There is a protocol on reporting at meetings which provides further information. Copies are available on the Service's website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk or alternatively contact Democratic Services for details

Fire Evacuation

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**MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY
WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Time : 10.30 am

Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire

AGENDA

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Part 1 - Business to be discussed in public

1A Recording of Meeting

Members are reminded that this meeting will be audio-recorded.

1B Apologies for Absence

1C Chair's Announcements

To receive any announcements that the Chair wishes to make prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting.

1D Declaration of Members' Interests

Members are reminded that the Members' Code of Conduct requires the disclosure of Statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Non-Statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interests.

1E Minutes of Fire Authority

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting held on 15th June 2016.

(Pages 1 - 14)

1F Minutes of Policy Committee

To receive, for information, the minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2016.

(Pages 15 - 18)

1G Minutes of Closure of Accounts Committee

To receive, for information, the minutes of the Closure of Accounts Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2016.

(Pages 19 - 22)

1H Minutes of Staffing Committee

To receive, for information, the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 28th June 2016.

(Pages 23 - 26)

1I Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee

To receive, for information, the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee meeting held on 6th July 2016.

(Pages 27 - 30)

- 1J Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee** (Pages 31 - 38)
To receive, for information, the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee meeting held on 24th August 2016.
- 1K Notes of the Member Training and Development Group** (Pages 39 - 42)
To receive, for information, the notes of the Member Training and Development Group meeting held on 5th July 2016.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION / DECISION

- 2 Audit Findings Report 2015-16** (Pages 43 - 78)
- 3 Final Accounts 2015-16** (Pages 79 - 86)
- 4 Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16** (Pages 87 - 110)
- 5 Efficiency Plan and Four Year Funding Settlement** (Pages 111 - 126)
- 6 Publication of Annual Report 2015-16** (Pages 127 - 128)
- 7 Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-18 (IRMP 14)** (Pages 129 - 134)
- 8 Provision of Training Facilities - Future Options** (Pages 135 - 142)
- 9 Blue Light Collaboration Update** (Pages 143 - 150)
- 10 Proposal for Partnership under Primary Authority Scheme with Certas Energy UK Limited** (Pages 151 - 154)
- 11 Corporate Communication and Consultation and Engagement Strategies** (Pages 155 - 186)
- 12 Rectification of Title for Macclesfield Fire Station** (Pages 187 - 190)
- 13 Lease of Part of Macclesfield Fire Station to the National Probation Service** (Pages 191 - 194)
- 14 Surplus Land off Hallwood Link Road, Runcorn** (Pages 195 - 198)
- 15 Option to Purchase Land adjacent to Stockton Heath Fire Station** (Pages 199 - 202)
- 16 Exclusion of Press and Public** (Pages 203 - 204)

PART 2 - BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

17 Proposals Relating to Chester Fire Station

(Pages 205 - 216)

This report contains details of various potential options which it is hoped could lead to: the construction of a new fire station on part of the existing fire station site; and the sale of the surplus part of the existing fire station site to a developer.

The report is being considered in private because it contains commercially sensitive information.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 15 June 2016 at Fire Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors P Booher, H Deynem, A Dirir, D Flude, P Harris, D Mahon, E Johnson, G Merry, J Mercer, L Morgan, S Parker, R Polhill, K Mundry, S Nelson, B Rudd, J Saunders, T Sherlock, M Simon, M Tarr, J Weatherill and S Wright

1. Procedural Matters

A Recording of Meetings

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded Members that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bailey and D Marren.

C Appointment to the Fire Authority

It was noted that the following Members had been appointed to the Fire Authority by the respective constituent authorities:

Representing Cheshire East Borough Council:

Conservative

Cllr D Marren

Cllr G Merry

Cllr J Saunders

Cllr M Simon

Cllr J Weatherill

Labour

Cllr D Bailey

Cllr D Flude

Independent

Cllr D Mahon

Representing Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council:

Conservative

Cllr H Deynem

Cllr E Johnson

Cllr S Parker

Labour

Cllr P Booher

Cllr J Mercer

Cllr B Rudd

Cllr T Sherlock

Representing Halton Borough Council

Labour

Cllr P Harris

Cllr S Nelson

Cllr R Polhill

Representing Warrington Borough Council

Labour

Cllr A Dirir
Cllr K Mundry
Cllr L Morgan
Cllr M Tarr
Cllr S Wright

D Election of Chair

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services asked for nominations from Members for the position of Chair. Councillor B Rudd was nominated unopposed and was duly appointed Chair of the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor B Rudd be appointed as Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2017.

On taking the Chair Councillor B Rudd thanked Members for appointing him as Chair and thanked Councillor S Nelson for his support.

E Election of Deputy Chair

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Chair. Councillor S Nelson was nominated unopposed and was duly appointed Deputy Chair of the Fire Authority. Councillor Nelson also thanked Members for their continued support.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S Nelson be appointed as Deputy Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2017.

F Appointment of Group Spokespersons

RESOLVED:

**That the following appointments of Group Spokespersons be noted:
Conservative: Councillor G Merry
Labour: Councillor B Rudd**

G Appointment of Lead Members

RESOLVED:

**That the following appointments of Lead Members be noted:
Cheshire East: Councillor G Merry
Cheshire West and Chester: Councillor T Sherlock
Halton: Councillor S Nelson
Warrington: Councillor K Mundry**

H Chair's Announcements

A copy of the Chair's Announcements was distributed at this point in the meeting. It was noted that the document provided details of activities that the Deputy Chair and other Members had attended since the previous Authority meeting and also dates of

forthcoming events for Members diaries.

I Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' Interests.

J Minutes of the Fire Authority

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 30th March 2016 be approved as a correct record.

K Notes of the Member Training and Development Group

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Member Training and Development Group meeting held on 25th April 2016 be received, for information.

L Minutes of the Policy Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 29th April 2016 be received, for information.

M Appointment of Independent (Non-Elected) Members

Members were asked to confirm the arrangements for Independent (non-elected) Members on the Fire Authority's Committees and to approve the appointment of two Independent (non-elected) Members following a review of the role by the Governance and Constitution Committee.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] Independent (non-elected) members be appointed to the following meetings (in an advisory capacity):

Governance and Constitution Committee (2)

Performance and Overview Committee (1)

Member Training and Development Group (1);

[2] Aimee Ruddy and Lesley Thomson be appointed as Independent (non-elected) members for a term of office of four years.

N Appointments to Committees etc., Outside Bodies and Member Roles

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which covered the following items:

- a) Responsibilities of the Fire Authority;
- b) Political proportions on the Fire Authority;
- c) Political proportionality rules
(where they apply and where they don't and their affect upon the

- d) allocation of seats on committees etc.);
- e) Appointment of Members to available seats on committees etc.;
- f) Appointment of independent members;
- f) Appointments to outside bodies
- g) Appointment of Member Champions; and
- h) Endorsement of Member/officer buddy arrangements.

Appendix 2B of the report contained information about the political proportionality rules and allocations of seats on committees etc. Appendix 2C contained details of appointments required to committees, boards and groups. Appendix 3 showed the required appointments to outside bodies and Appendix 4 detailed the Member Champion roles. Details of the proposed nominations to the various committees, outside organisations and member champion roles were provided by both the Labour and Conservative Group. Following discussions the appointments were made. The number of positions on the Safety Centre Sounding Board was increased to 7 and additional Members would be appointed as Equality and Diversity Member champions to assist with this key area of work for the Authority.

A complete list of appointments made at the Fire Authority meeting is attached as an annex to these minutes.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the responsibilities of the Fire Authority set out in Appendix 1 be confirmed;**
- [2] the political proportions on the Fire Authority set out in paragraph 3 be noted;**
- [3] the approach to the allocation of seats explained in paragraphs 4 and 5 and Appendix 2B be agreed;**
- [4] the responsibilities of Committees, Boards and Groups set out in Appendix 2A be agreed;**
- [5] the appointments required as set out in Appendix 2C (see annex) be agreed;**
- [6] the appointment of independent members (to act in an advisory capacity) as set out in paragraph 11 of the report be agreed;**
- [7] the appointments to outside bodies set out in Appendix 3 (see annex) be agreed;**
- [8] the appointments of Member Champions set out in Appendix 4 (see annex) be agreed; and**
- [9] the continuation of the Member/officer buddy arrangements be agreed.**

O Timetable of Meetings 2016-17

RESOLVED:

That the Timetable of Meetings for 2016-17 be noted.

P LGA Annual Conference: 5th - 7th July 2016

It was noted that the Chair and the Deputy Chair had been invited to attend the LGA Annual Conference being held on 5th – 7th July.

Q Constitution

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that a revised version of Section 10 of the Constitution: Financial Regulations had been approved for submission to the Fire Authority at the Governance and Constitution Committee meeting held on 30th March 2016. Members were asked to approve the revised section on financial regulations and re-adopt the constitution.

RESOLVED:

That the Fire Authority's Constitution be re-adopted subject to the inclusion of the revised version of Section 10: Financial Regulations.

2 BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION - PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report to Members which provided details of the proposed Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) People Strategy and Member approval was sought. Policy Committee had considered the draft strategy at its meeting on 29th April 2016 and recommended that the document be submitted to the Authority for approval.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the People Strategy was a key document in relation to BLC and had been the subject of protracted discussions between fire and police staff. The key principles of the Strategy were outlined in the report and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided an overview of the information contained in the document.

A Member queried how the relationship with the newly appointed Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was developing and if this would have an impact on the programme. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services responded that initial discussions between the PCC and the Chair of the Fire Authority would be arranged over the next few weeks. A Member suggested that it would be useful for all Fire Authority Members to meet the new PCC and it was noted that the PCC and the Chief Constable would be invited to the Members Planning Day taking place on 8th July.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted; and

[2] the Blue Light Collaboration Programme People Strategy be approved.

3 END OF YEAR FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015-16

The Head of Finance introduced the end of year (Quarter 4) report of the Authority's

performance against Service plans and budgets.

The Head of Finance provided a summary of the financial information contained in the report. He drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report which showed the outturn position for the Authority for 2015-16 compared to the revised budget. He summarised the key variances and explained that additional information regarding the variances was provided in the departmental summary reports attached as an appendix to the report. He advised that the intention would be to transfer the £941k underspend identified against the revised budget together with the previously reported mid-year underspend of £1,099k to the Authority's reserves to offset the future costs of delivery of the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to fund capital expenditure. This would be formally recommended to the Authority at its meeting in September when approval of the annual statement of accounts would be sought.

The Head of Finance concluded by summarising the position in relation to the capital programme details of which were attached as Appendix 2 to the report. He highlighted the significant areas of capital spend which included the new station build schemes and the appliance replacement programme.

A Member queried whether the current high level of reserves held by the Authority were at any risk of being reviewed by the Home Office following the changes to the governance of Fire nationally. The Head of Finance responded that there was a risk but the Authority was mitigating against the risk and had developed a reserves strategy to provide the rationale for the current level of reserves.

The Head of Performance, Planning and Communications continued by presenting those sections of the report that related to the Service's performance which included an update on the delivery of the programmes and projects in the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2015-16 (IRMP12) and the end of year position against targets for the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were detailed in the accompanying Corporate Performance Scorecard attached as Appendix 4 to the report.

He summarised the headline progress against programmes and projects which included the launch of the Firefighters Apprenticeship Scheme, the Blue Light Collaboration programme, progress on the fire station build programme and the work with partners on the Complex Dependencies programme.

The report detailed the Service's KPIs and the changes over the past five year period illustrated the Service's improved performance in key areas of work. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications also highlighted areas where targets had not been met including deaths and injuries in primary fires. He added that numbers were still low and in respect of injuries a year on year decrease had been recorded.

A Member commented that a trend analysis showing performance in key areas over the last few years would be useful. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that the Service did use trend analysis when reviewing performance and this would be demonstrated when presenting future proposals for IRMP13 to Members.

He concluded by advising Members that the Performance and Overview Committee received quarterly performance and financial monitoring reports and would be able to scrutinise areas where targets were not being met in more detail.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the end of year financial and performance review 2015/16 be noted.

4 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2016/17 AND REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT 2015-16

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the Member Development Programme for 2016-17 to Members for approval. The Programme had previously been presented to the Member Training and Development Group (MTDG) at its meeting on 25th April 2016 and it had recommended that the programme be submitted to the Fire Authority for approval.

The report also contained a review of the Service's member development activities over the last year which included a summary of the delivery of the Member Development Programme and the implementation of the Member Development Strategy 2014-16.

Councillor Flude, Chair of the MTDG thanked all Members of the Fire Authority for their attendance and contributions to the Authority's member development Programme throughout 2015/16. She also wished to place on record her thanks to Rob Garner, who was previously the independent representative on the group, for his support during her time as Chair and also for his input into Member Development over the last few years. She thanked all the officers who had supported member development throughout the year and encouraged new Members to participate in the programme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the 2016/17 Member Development Programme (attached as Appendix 1 of the report) be approved; and

[2] the review of Member Development activities for 2015-16 (attached as Appendix 2 of the report) be noted.

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND GROUPS FOR 2016-17

There are 23 elected Members of Cheshire Fire Authority drawn from the four unitary authorities of Cheshire East (8), Cheshire West and Chester (7), Halton (3) and Warrington (5).

FIRE AUTHORITY – 23 Members Appointed as 8 Con: 14 Lab: 1 Ind

Chair: Cllr B Rudd
Deputy Chair: Cllr S Nelson
Lead Members: Cheshire East – Cllr G Merry
Cheshire West and Chester – Cllr T Sherlock
Halton – Cllr S Nelson
Warrington – Cllr K Mundry

Group Spokesperson(s): Conservative – Cllr G Merry
Labour – Cllr B Rudd

Representing Cheshire East Council (5 Con, 2 Lab, 1 Ind)

Conservative	Labour	Independent
Cllr D Marren	Cllr D Bailey	Cllr D Mahon
Cllr G Merry	Cllr D Flude	
Cllr J Saunders		
Cllr M Simon		
Cllr J Weatherill		

Representing Cheshire West and Chester Council (3 Con, 4 Lab)

Conservative	Labour
Cllr H Deynem	Cllr P Booher
Cllr E Johnson	Cllr J Mercer
Cllr S Parker	Cllr B Rudd
	Cllr T Sherlock

Representing Halton Borough Council (3 Lab)

Labour
Cllr P Harris
Cllr S Nelson
Cllr R Polhill

Representing Warrington Borough Council (5 Lab)

Labour
Cllr A Dirir
Cllr L Morgan
Cllr K Mundry
Cllr M Tarr
Cllr S Wright

BODIES COVERED BY POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY RULES

POLICY COMMITTEE – 10 Members

NB: Members must not be Members of Performance and Overview Committee

Chair: Cllr B Rudd Deputy Chair: Cllr S Nelson

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	INDEPENDENT
Cllr G Merry	Cllr B Rudd	Cllr D Mahon
Cllr S Parker	Cllr S Nelson	
Cllr J Weatherill	Cllr D Flude	
	Cllr K Mundry	
	Cllr T Sherlock	
	Cllr S Wright	

Substitute Members for Policy Committee

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr E Johnson	Cllr M Tarr

PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE – 7 Members and 1 Independent (non-elected) member

NB: Members must not be Members of Policy Committee

Chair: Cllr P Harris Deputy Chair: Cllr J Mercer

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	Independent member
Cllr H Deynem	Cllr P Harris	TBC
Cllr J Saunders	Cllr J Mercer	
Cllr M Simon	Cllr D Bailey	
	Cllr L Morgan	

Substitute Members for Performance and Overview Committee

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr D Marren	Cllr R Polhill

GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE – 6 Members and 2 Independent (non-elected) members

Chair: Cllr S Wright Deputy Chair: Cllr R Polhill

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	Independent members
Cllr E Johnson	Cllr S Wright	A Ruddy
Cllr D Marren	Cllr R Polhill	L Thomson
	Cllr P Booher	
	Cllr A Dirir	

Substitute Members for Governance and Constitution Committee

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr H Deynem	Cllr J Mercer

BRIGADE MANAGER'S PAY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 7 Members

Chair: Cllr B Rudd Deputy Chair: Cllr S Nelson

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr E Johnson	Cllr B Rudd
Cllr G Merry	Cllr S Nelson
Cllr S Parker	Cllr D Flude
	Cllr M Tarr

Substitute Members for Brigade Manager's Pay & Performance Committee

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr D Marren	Cllr L Morgan

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – 4 Members
NB: Members must not be Members of Policy Committee

Chair: Cllr R Polhill Deputy Chair: Cllr P Harris

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr M Simon	Cllr R Polhill
	Cllr P Harris
	Cllr D Bailey

Substitute Members for Joint Consultative Committee

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr D Marren	Cllr L Morgan

BODIES NOT COVERED BY POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY RULES

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP – 4 Members and 1 Independent member

Chair: Cllr D Flude

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	Independent member
Cllr S Parker	Cllr D Flude	TBC
Cllr M Simon	Cllr M Tarr	

RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD – 2 Members (drawn from Policy Committee)

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Cllr J Weatherill	Cllr S Nelson

PHOENIX BOXING CLUB BOARD – 2 Members (from Warrington Members)

Members	Substitute Members
Cllr K Mundry	Cllr A Dirir
Cllr S Wright	Cllr M Tarr

HEALTHY HEART RUNCORN TRAINING GYM BOARD – 1 Member (from Halton Members)

Member
Cllr S Nelson

SAFETY CENTRE MEMBERS SOUNDING BOARD

Members
Cllr S Nelson
Cllr A Dirir
Cllr E Johnson
Cllr J Mercer
Cllr G Merry
Cllr K Mundry
Cllr S Parker

PENSION BOARD – 1 Member

Member
Member Champion for Pensions Cllr D Marren

BODIES WHERE NO APPOINTMENTS ARE REQUIRED

CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

The Policy Committee sits as the Closure of Accounts Committee and meets once a year to close the Authority’s accounts.

STAFFING COMMITTEE – 4 Members

The Staffing Committee consists of four Members drawn from the Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee and, wherever possible the committee must be convened in political proportion.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY COMMITTEE

The membership of the Business Continuity Committee comprises the Chair, Deputy Chair Group Spokesperson(s) and Lead Member(s). The Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis, as required.

UNITARY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT GROUPS

The Unitary Performance Area Groups are the performance delivery groups in each of the Unitary Performance Areas and are chaired by the local Unitary Performance Manager, and attended by the local Members for that area.

OUTSIDE BODIES

REGIONAL APPOINTMENTS – NORTH WEST

(A) NORTH WEST FIRE FORUM

NB: 3 representatives only - Chair, Deputy Chair and Leader of Main Opposition

Members
Cllr B Rudd
Cllr S Nelson
Cllr G Merry

(B) NW FIRE CONTROL LTD – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NB: 2 representatives only - Chair + 1

Members
Cllr B Rudd
Cllr S Nelson

REGIONAL APPOINTMENTS – OTHER

(C) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) - FIRE COMMISSION

Member
Cllr B Rudd

(D) SAFER CHESHIRE EAST PARTNERSHIP

Member
Cllr M Simon

(E) SUB-REGIONAL LEADERS BOARD

Member
Cllr B Rudd

MEMBER CHAMPION ROLES

KEY MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON OTHER GROUPS – Non political – aligned to skills and interests

Equality and Diversity (2) Sits on Equality Task Group	Cllr A Dirir Cllr J Mercer
Health and Safety Sits on Health and Safety Committee	Cllr D Flude
Information and ICT Sits on ICT Steering Group	Cllr R Polhill

ADDITIONAL MEMBER CHAMPIONS – Non political - aligned to skills and interests

Environment	Cllr T Sherlock
Procurement	Cllr J Mercer
Finance (2)	Cllr G Merry Cllr S Nelson
Older People	Cllr D Flude
Young People	Cllr D Bailey
Performance Management	Cllr M Tarr
Commercial/Business Risk Reduction	Cllr S Parker
Industrial Relations (JCC Chair)	Cllr R Polhill
Road Safety	Cllr M Simon
Pensions (Pension Board Chair)	Cllr D Marren
Sprinklers	Cllr L Morgan

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 22 June 2016 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors B Rudd, S Nelson, D Flude, D Mahon, S Parker, T Sherlock, G Merry, K Mundry, J Weatherill and S Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Internal Auditor: Kevin Lloyd, Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) and External Auditor: Perminder Sethi, Grant Thornton.

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Chair and Membership of Committee 2016/17

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Policy Committee (who also acted as the Closure of Accounts Committee) for 2016/17, as agreed by the Fire Authority at their annual meeting on 15 June 2016 and listed below:

Councillors B Rudd – Chair
S Nelson – Deputy Chair
D Flude
D Mahon
G Merry
K Mundry
S Parker
T Sherlock
J Weatherill
S Wright

Substitutes E Johnson
M Tarr

C Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

D Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members interests.

E Minutes of Policy Committee

RESOLVED: That

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 29th April 2016 be approved as a correct record.

2 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Head of Finance introduced this report which provided a review of the Authority's treasury management activities during 2015-16. The report also provided information about compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices during the year.

The Head of Finance highlighted the key areas of the report and provided details on the following:

- a) the Authority's loans portfolio position at 31st March 2016;
- b) the Authority's investment portfolio position at 31st March 2016;
- c) a summary of performance for the year 2015-16; and
- d) the Authority's performance in 2015-16 against the key Prudential Indicators.

Members were satisfied with the content of the report and the explanatory notes provided.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report on Treasury Management activities for 2015-16 be noted.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION AND ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Corporate Programme Manager introduced the Assistant Director from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) who was in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

The Assistant Director informed Members that the annual report included the Director of Audit's Opinion and a summary of the implementation of the Internal Audit plan for 2015-16. Members were asked to note that the overall opinion was positive and provided significant assurance. He explained that this was a key document in preparing the Authority's Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which formed part of the Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance and used the intelligence gathered from all MIAA's work during the year to come to an overall conclusion. The Assistant Director explained that the appendices provided a summary of the audit reviews undertaken during the year, further information on the links to the AGS and assurance in respect of the quality of the service provided and compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. He added that engagement with officers during the year had been very good and a positive working relationship had developed.

Members discussed the report and were pleased that there were no major issues identified and a positive opinion had been issued. A Member queried whether the Authority was still having issues with Princes Trust funding. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there was still an annual issue when negotiating funding with colleges and officers were working hard to secure a more stable funding source. He added that this was a significant issue for the Princes Trust programme nationally and a report would be submitted to Performance and Overview Committee in respect of the current financial position.

Members thanked Officers for the considerable amount of work carried out that had resulted in the positive assurance.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Director of Audit's Opinion and the Internal Audit Annual Report 2015-16 be noted.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Programme Manager presented this report to Members. She explained that the annual Risk Management Board (RMB) report was presented to Policy Committee for review and assurance and provided a summary of the key activities and decisions of RMB during 2015-16 and the forward plan for 2016-17.

The Corporate Programme Manager highlighted the key areas of the report and provided a brief explanation of each of these key areas. She drew Members attention to the quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register, which was undertaken by RMB and explained that a number of strategic risks had been closed during 2015/16. These were summarised in the report. She commented that the risks that remained on the register were beyond the Authority's control as they were externally driven. However the Authority had mitigation action plans in place and these were monitored and updated on a regular basis.

The Corporate Programme Manager provided a summary of the analysis of emerging risks, risk management training and the annual refresh of the framework. She informed Members that the Crisis Management Plan (CMP) had been reviewed and business continuity exercises were scheduled for 2016/17. A full test of the CMP was currently planned for 2018.

The Chair drew Members attention to risk no 889: lack of commitment from housing providers to fit sprinklers. He stated that it was important for the Authority to continue to persuade key providers in the area to make a commitment to the sprinkler system programme as this could also assist in expanding the programme nationally. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided a brief summary of the current position for Members and explained that Officers were still working in all four constituent areas to try to get a commitment to retro-fit sprinklers in at least one high rise building in each area. He added that work was also being done on a proposal to target the most vulnerable and retro-fit sprinklers in individual homes. Members discussed the current position in relation to engaging with housing providers and the changes in demographics in certain high rise buildings. It was noted that if Members had any local intelligence it would be useful if they could pass the information on to the Head of Protection to help inform the programme.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted.

5 INTEGRATED CONSULTATION AND CORPORATE PLANNING TIMETABLE

The Corporate Programme Manager introduced this report which presented the annual Consultation and Corporate Planning Timetable to Members for approval. She explained that the timetable was designed as a strategic step process that integrated all the Service's corporate key planning dates in a simple visual format which enabled the delivery of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

RESOLVED: That

[1] the integrated Consultation and Corporate Planning Timetable covering development and delivery of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP 14) 2017-18 be approved.



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 22 June 2016 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire on the rise of Policy Committee.

PRESENT: Councillors D Flude, D Mahon, G Merry, K Mundry, S Nelson, S Parker, B Rudd, T Sherlock, J Weatherill and S Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: External Auditor, Grant Thornton representative: Perminder Sethi, Internal Auditor, MIAA representative: Kevin Lloyd

1. Procedural Matters

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Membership of Committee

Members were asked to note the membership of the Committee for 2016-17, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its Annual Meeting on 15 June 2016 and listed below:

Councillors	B Rudd – Chair
	S Nelson – Deputy Chair
	D Flude
	D Mahon
	G Merry
	K Mundry
	S Parker
	T Sherlock
	J Weatherill
	S Wright

C Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received for this meeting.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

2 2015-16 DRAFT FINAL ACCOUNTS

The Head of Finance introduced the report and advised Members that it was a statutory requirement that the Treasurer approved the draft annual accounts of the Authority by the end of June each year. He explained that, as part of the annual accounts process, a draft set of accounts was reported to this Committee for its consideration. He advised that the accounts were subject to External Audit and that this process had already commenced. Once the audit was completed the accounts

would be formally considered for approval by the Fire Authority at its meeting in September.

The Head of Finance introduced the External Auditor, Perminder Sethi from Grant Thornton, and Internal Auditor Kevin Lloyd from MIAA, who were in attendance at the meeting. He also introduced his colleagues Sue Mantle, Finance Manager, and Jerry Faulkner, Accountant, who would be assisting him in presenting the draft final accounts to Members. Members were provided with a copy of the draft accounts for review and reference at the meeting.

The Head of Finance drew Members' attention to the Narrative Report (formerly called the Explanatory Foreword), attached as Appendix 1 to the report, which was a context setting introduction to the accounts. He explained that each of the sections within the Narrative Report would be covered in more detail as he continued with his presentation of the draft 'Statement of Accounts 2015-16'. He advised that within the Explanatory Foreword there was a breakdown of expenditure by type and function, which confirmed that the majority of the Authority's actual expenditure was employee related and reinforced where the review of savings needed to be focused.

The Head of Finance explained that Appendix 2 to the report detailed the Treasurer's view as to why the Authority should be considered as a going concern. The Appendix considered a number of factors which he had taken into account in determining his view. He confirmed that, taking all these factors into consideration, it was a reasonable conclusion that the Authority should be viewed as a going concern when preparing the annual accounts.

The Head of Finance and his team provided an overview of a number of areas within the draft accounts, including the outturn against revised budget for each service area and showed an underspend of £941k against its revised 2015-16 budget of £42,456k. He confirmed that this was after underspends totalling £1.1m had been identified at the Authority's quarterly review. He explained that the underspends were mainly due to the lower than budgeted costs for On Call activity, savings on ICT software and hardware and savings on fuel and utility costs. He also informed Members that these underspends had been reported to the Performance and Overview Committee during the year. It was the intention to transfer the underspend into earmarked reserves to underpin the delivery of Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) and the Authority's capital programme.

Members enquired about the cost of Blue Light Collaboration and relocating CFRS Headquarters to Clemonds Hey. The Head of Finance confirmed that the current figures were subject to change due to proposals to retain the Fire Headquarters site and develop it into a Training Centre. He explained that further information would be given concerning the Training Centre options at the Members Planning Day on 8 July 2016.

The Finance Manager explained the overall position on the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CI&E). The Accountant referred Members to the impact of the revaluation of assets as shown in the CI&E. Members queried the figure for other comprehensive income and expenditure, totalling £68.7m. The Accountant confirmed that the majority of this was to safeguard against potential future liabilities

in the pension schemes.

The Head of Finance explained the Movement in Reserves Statement to Members. He highlighted usable and unusable reserves, and explained that the level of the earmarked revenue reserves was programmed to fall as it would fund the new station build, other capital activity, the revenue implications of delivering IRMPs and other activity, such as the purchase of uniforms and equipment.

The Finance Manager referred Members to the Balance Sheet which detailed the value, as at the Balance Sheet date, of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The Finance Manager also referred Members to short-term investments and short-term debtors and creditors. She further explained that the net assets of the Authority were matched by the reserves held by the Authority and expanded on the nature of the Usable and Unusable Reserves. It was confirmed that long-term borrowing was reducing as debt becomes due for repayment.

The Accountant referred Members to the Firefighter Pension Fund. He informed Members of the contributions receivable, benefits payable, and current assets and liabilities. The Accountant confirmed that there was an £11.7m deficit in 2015-16 but that a top-up grant from the government funded the deficit. This was confirmed as a significant increase in comparison to the deficit of the previous financial year (£8m). Members were informed that this was due to the volume of retirements that had occurred leading to an increase in the payment of lump sums.

The Head of Finance concluded by referring Members to further sections within the draft accounts, which included Officers' remuneration and remuneration bands, termination benefits, and Members' Allowances. He also referred Members to the note on NW Fire Control Limited (NWFC) and explained that it had been determined that the Group Accounts were not required for the financial year 2015-16 after considering both the qualitative and quantitative factors. The need for group accounts would be kept under review.

Members wished to thank the Head of Finance and his team for all their hard work in the preparation and production of the draft accounts. They stated that the Authority was performing well and were satisfied with the current position.

RESOLVED That:

[1] the 2015-16 draft final accounts and going concern document be noted.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE held on Tuesday, 28 June 2016 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors S Nelson, D Flude, E Johnson and S Parker

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received for this meeting.

B Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

C Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED: That

The minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 16th March 2016 be approved as a correct record.

2 REVIEW OF COLLABORATION ARRANGEMENTS WITH CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive (CFO) gave a verbal update to Members in respect of the collaboration arrangement with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service whereby he would act as their Chief on a part-time basis. This arrangement had been agreed at the Fire Authority meeting on 30th March 2016 when it was also agreed that regular monitoring and review of the arrangement would be facilitated by the Staffing Committee.

The CFO informed Members that the shared role between the two services had commenced on 5th April 2016 following the Fire Authority approval. He also informed Members that he would not be relinquishing his current duties as the President of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) until the CFOA annual meeting in September. However some of the CFOA duties had been passed over to other members of the CFOA presidential team in preparation for the official handover in September.

The CFO provided a brief summary of his role at Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service and the development of its service plans. Members sought reassurance from the CFO that the arrangement was working and that he was able to manage the two roles effectively. The CFO reassured Members that as the arrangements were becoming more established he was able to re-arrange his work load to spend two consecutive days in Cumbria whenever possible. This reduced the travelling times

as he could stay in Cumbria overnight on these occasions. It also assisted both Services with business planning arrangements. Further updates would be scheduled for the Staffing Committee in September and November to facilitate the regular monitoring and review of the arrangement.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the update be noted; and

[2] further updates be provided for Staffing Committee in September and November.

3 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Order 2006, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated.

Business to be discussed in private:

Item

Item 4: Loss of Protected pension Age

Item 5: Employment Tribunal Claim

Item 6: Re-Employment – Community Resource Coordinator – Fixed Term Contract

Paragraph

(1) Information relating to any individual

(2) Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

4 LOSS OF PROTECTED PENSION AGE

The Head of Finance introduced this report which provided Members with an update in relation to the loss of Protected Pension Age. He explained the latest position and what had taken place since Members received the previous report and also summarised the next steps to be taken by officers. He confirmed that a HMRC settlement had been agreed.

The Head of Finance concluded by summarising the financial and legal implications to the Authority. Members discussed the report and agreed that they were satisfied that the matter was reaching a resolution.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

5 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL CLAIM

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and provided Members with details of an employment tribunal claim against the Fire Authority. He explained the purpose of the report to Members and advised them of the recommendations that had been put forward to allow the Authority to determine the most appropriate action to take.

Members discussed the report and agreed that officers should pursue the matter to a conclusion.

RESOLVED: That Members

[1] Noted the content of the report; and

[2] Agreed that Officers should seek to conclude the matter on the terms outlined in the report.

6 RE-EMPLOYMENT - COMMUNITY RESOURCE COORDINATOR - FIXED TERM CONTRACT

The Head of People and Development introduced this report which sought approval to appoint an individual to a Community Resource Co-ordinator position following the individuals' retirement from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Head of People and Development provided Members with a summary of the recruitment and selection process that had taken place and the business case in support of the appointment.

Members discussed the appointment and asked officers for re-assurance as to the Authority's position in relation to re-employment of the retiring individual. Members were satisfied that officers had provided assurance that the requirements of the Re-Employment and Pension Abatement Policy in respect of re-engagement had been met and agreed that the appointment should be approved.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the appointment to the role of Community Resource Coordinator on a fixed term contract be approved.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 6 July 2016 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors S Wright, R Polhill, P Booher, A Dirir and E Johnson

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that this meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Chair and Membership of Committee 2016/17

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Governance and Constitution Committee for 2016/17, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 15 June 2016 and listed below:

Councillors:

S Wright – Chair

P Booher

A Dirir

E Johnson

D Marren

R Polhill – Deputy Chair

Substitute Members:

H Deynem

J Mercer

Members were also reminded that Mrs L Thomson and Mrs A Ruddy attend the Committee in a non-voting advisory capacity.

RESOLVED: That

[1] Membership of the Committee and appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair be noted.

C Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Marren.

D Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

E Minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 30th March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 DRAFT ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2015-16

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report to Members and explained that it gave them the opportunity to review the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16 prior to its presentation to the Fire Authority in September 2016. He provided Members with a summary of the background to this report and advised that one of the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012) was the publication of an Annual Statement of Assurance. He explained that the Framework specified that the Statement should provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.

He advised Members that the Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework already provided the Service with a simple structure for monitoring compliance and provided assurance under the six principles of the Code of Corporate Governance. It was decided by this Committee in November 2013 that the same process would be adopted for monitoring compliance with the National Framework requirements by adding a principle 7. He highlighted to Members Appendix 2 of the report which included a full review of evidence for the National Framework, detailed within principle 7 and the Local Code of Corporate Governance framework detailed within principles 1 – 6. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services concluded by confirming that the Service's internal auditors, Merseyside Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), had confirmed that it considered that the format of the Statement of Assurance remained fit for purpose.

A Member referred the Committee to the draft Statement of Assurance 2015-16 which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. He commented that Warrington BC Members had recently received training on the Treasury Management Strategy and queried whether this training could be provided for Fire Authority Members. It was agreed that a training session would be beneficial for members and the Democratic Services Manager advised that this could take place as part of the Members Induction session on Finance and Budget Setting.

A Member queried the meaning of the term 'partner' in the context of the document. She asked if there could be further clarification on how the Authority ensured that the roles and responsibilities of partners were defined. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that there were agreements between the Authority and partners to protect the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service brand. He drew Members' attention to key improvement areas that had been identified. One of these referred to the development of a partnership toolkit which would provide descriptions of and resources related to partnerships and

collaborations. This would be submitted to the Governance and Constitution Committee for review.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services also referred Members to the section on the Blue Light Collaboration Programme within the draft Statement of Assurance 2015-16. He explained that this programme was not a partnership and that the Authority would be entering into a number of contracts due to the significant obligations and liabilities that the collaboration entailed.

A member queried the presentation of figures in respect of the carbon reduction target and suggested that it would be useful to have progress on carbon reduction by tonnes measured as a percentage against the 40% reduction target. She also suggested that it would be helpful to have a timescale for elements of the environmental strategy included in the report.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16 be approved for submission to the Fire Authority in September 2016.

3 REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which provided an update on the current position in relation to Whistleblowing. The Authority's policy and procedure on Whistleblowing was attached as Appendix 1 in the report and it was noted that the Government had issued further guidance for employees since the policy was adopted. He explained that the current Policy would be updated and presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that the Authority had not received any complaints under the Whistleblowing Procedure since the last report to the committee in 2014.

Members discussed their experiences of Whistleblowing policy and procedures within their own unitary areas and the role that Members played in the process.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted; and

[2] a further report be presented to the next meeting of this Committee when the current Whistleblowing Policy has been further reviewed and updated.

4 ANNUAL REPORT - CORPORATE COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced this report and advised Members that it provided information regarding compliments and complaints

received about the Service during the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. He explained that this report was presented annually to this Committee in this format.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services described the Service's two-tier approach to complaints, which aimed for all complaints to be resolved at initial contact allowing them to be classed as informal. He referred Members to a table in the report which contained performance comparison figures from the past five reporting periods. He highlighted that there had been a reduction of informal complaints and that no formal complaints were received throughout 2015-16.

A Member referred the Committee to a complaint regarding a school visit and queried how the Service ensured that pupils were happy to participate. An independent member informed the Committee that schools now asked for written consent from parents for children to participate in these events.

Members wished to thank those involved with handling complaints and compliments and felt that the report helped affirm the view that the Service was performing well.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the information regarding Compliments and Complaints made during the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 be noted.

5 SUMMARY OF MEMBERS ATTENDANCE JUNE 2015 TO MAY 2016

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that this report provided Members with information in relation to Members' attendance for the Committee's consideration. He referred Members to Appendix 1 attached to the report, which summarised Member attendance at the Fire Authority and three main committees for June 2014 to May 2015.

Members were asked to consider whether they wished to further discuss the principles previously adopted in respect of the monitoring of attendance. Members were in agreement that there were no concerns arising from the findings of this report.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the summary of Member attendance at meetings of the Authority and its three main Committees for 2015-16 be noted.



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 24 August 2016 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters,
Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillors P Harris, J Mercer, D Bailey, H Deynem, L Morgan and M Simon
Independent member: A Ruddy

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Chair and Membership of Committee

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Performance and Overview Committee for 2016/2017, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 15 June 2016 and listed below:

Councillors:

P Harris – Chair

J Mercer – Deputy Chair

D Bailey

H Deynem

L Morgan

J Saunders

M Simon

Substitutes:

D Marren

R Polhill

Independent (non-elected) member: A Ruddy

RESOLVED: That

[1] Membership of the Committee and appointment of the Chair and Deputy Chair be noted.

C Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor J Saunders.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

E Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 13 April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

F Minutes of Policy Committee

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 22 June 2016 were received, for information.

2 QUARTER 1 - FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2016-17

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive introduced the report which provided Members with a summary of the Service's financial performance (for the first quarter of 2016/17) and progress against the 2016-17 Service plans.

The Head of Finance summarised the financial performance and drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report which contained information on the anticipated outturn for each department compared to the original budget. He expanded on additional costs pressures that had arisen in Operational Policy and Assurance (OPA) due to the provision of additional swift water rescue training and the employment of an additional technical support officer. He highlighted the pay budget underspend in Protection, which would be offset by some anticipated costs relating to training for the Primary Authority Scheme. He also referred Members to the savings from the SMT restructure and the income received from Cumbria (£60k) as reimbursement for the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive acting as Chief Fire Officer for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CuFRS).

The Head of Finance informed Members of items which would be funded from reserves, including the apprenticeship scheme, Blue Light Collaboration (BLC), and the Prince's Trust Programme. He advised Members that whilst Appendix 1 showed an overall underspend of £119k it was likely that this situation would change as the financial year progressed.

The Head of Finance referred Members to the Authority's capital programme, detailed in Appendix 2 of the report. He explained that there was a projected overspend on the Emergency Response Programme of around £270k and expanded on the reasons for this overspend. He informed Members that the overall overspend remained well within the contingency agreed when the Authority approved the final capital expenditure. He also gave further information and updates on other approved schemes detailed in Appendix 2.

Finally, the Head of Finance drew Members' attention to the total amount of debt due to the Authority at the end of Quarter 1, which was £189k as of June 2016. He explained to Members that the debtor's position was manageable and that the

majority of outstanding debts would be paid as debtors were mainly public service bodies.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive provided further information on progress against plans and drew Members' attention to the update on the firefighter apprenticeship scheme. He informed Members that 13 candidates have been appointed; 38% of these were female which he stated was positive news for the Service. He also expanded on other areas referred to in the report, which indicated good performance progress overall for most of the Service's schemes and programmes.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive concluded by providing an overview of the corporate performance scorecard (Appendix 3) and explained that the information reflected the Quarter 1 position against targets set at the start of the year for the organisation's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). He expanded on the work that had been undertaken by the Service in response to targets that were not met.

A Member queried a decrease in public satisfaction levels for response times to incidents. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive informed Members that the fluctuation in public satisfaction levels was normal throughout each quarter and that figures still remained high. A Member also queried whether the Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) Programme had impacted on sickness levels within the organisation. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive explained to Members that sickness levels had not increased as a result of the (BLC) Programme and that any concerns from employees were addressed through several communication/ engagement channels set up by the Service and by individual one to one sessions with the appointed BLC HR Adviser.

Members requested a further breakdown of working days lost to injury. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive confirmed that the figure in Appendix 3 included workplace and non-workplace injuries. A Member also queried whether the Service recorded the waiting times for smoke detectors to be replaced following a request from the public. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a record was kept of waiting times and informed the Committee of historic problems with certain makes of smoke detectors and also the procedures the Service followed concerning eligibility for free smoke detectors.

A Member also queried whether more information could be provided on the number of work-related incidents for future reports. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive confirmed that reports submitted to the Service Health, Safety and Welfare Committee contained more detailed figures and that this could be provided for Members.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Quarter 1 Financial and Performance Review 2015-16 be noted.

3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - Q4 (2015/16) & Q1 (2016/17) PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive introduced Kevin Lloyd, the Authority's appointed Internal Auditor from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), who was in attendance at the meeting and would be presenting this report to the Committee.

The Auditor advised Members that this report, prepared by the MIAA, provided an update on the progress made in respect of Quarter 4 of the 2015-16 internal audit plan and Quarter 1 of the 2016-17 internal audit plan.

The report included key areas identified, actions to be delivered by managers and an update on assurance levels, which indicated that overall the findings from the report were very positive, with all areas receiving significant assurance.

A Member queried when the next health and safety audit review would take place. The Auditor informed the Committee that the last review of health and safety had taken place in 2014-15 and that risk assessments were ongoing. He also suggested that a future review could be considered in the plan for next year.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Quarterly Internal Audit Plan Progress Report be noted.

4 ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT

The Policy and Inclusion Manager presented the report which provided an update to Members on the key issues identified from the Service's Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2015-16 (Appendix 1).

He explained that the Equality Task Group (ETG) had evolved into the Equality Steering Group (ESG) in March 2016 to enhance the performance of the group. He also informed Members that this was the second year that the monitoring report had been presented in the format received by the Committee and that additional information had been included in the report in relation to staff training, disciplinary procedures, volunteers and on-call recruitment.

The report detailed the key activities that the Service had delivered concerning community engagement, highlighting the impact of work undertaken with specific groups within Cheshire to address issues raised in the report. The Policy and Inclusion Manager also informed Members of the positive action campaigns that were underway to encourage individuals from groups which were currently under-represented within the Services to apply for operational roles.

A Member asked if the increased recruitment of females within the apprenticeship roles was a direct result of the positive recruitment campaigns undertaken by the Service. The Policy and Inclusion Manager explained that these campaigns had actively targeted female groups and could have played a role in the improvements made in encouraging females to apply. Members also queried how proactive the Services was when trying to engage with minority communities. The Policy and

Inclusion Manager informed Members that the Service was increasing the promotion of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) within minority communities and welcomed any proposals from Members that would assist in reaching these communities.

Members requested that contextual data be provided concerning the demographic target used by the Service so that a comparison could be drawn between that and the figures presented to Members within the report. The Policy and Inclusion Manager informed Members that the Service was in the process of drawing up a demographic picture of Cheshire that would provide this information.

A Member referred to the statistics within the report on disclosure of sexual orientation by (CFRS) employees and queried whether the Service could provide a breakdown between support staff and operational staff. The Policy and Inclusion Manager informed Members that 19% of employees had declined to state their sexual orientation, but that there was a continuing decrease in the number of individuals declining to state their sexual orientation. He also informed Members that a higher percentage of operational staff had declined to state their sexual orientation than support staff and that further work was being undertaken to reduce those figures.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Equality Monitoring Report 2015-16 be noted.

5 UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS PERFORMANCE REVIEW (2015/16)

The Head of Protection introduced the report to Members which provided a review of the Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS) performance in 2015/16. He brought Members' attention to the number of automatic fire alarms (AFAs) attended by the Service over the last 5 years and the main causes of AFAs in non-domestic premises throughout 2015-16. He also explained to Members the impact of responding to UwFS's on service delivery. It was noted that a proposal outlining the options available to reduce activity further would be submitted to Members for consideration at the Planning Day in September.

Members queried whether the Service could introduce a financial penalty for repeat neglect of fire alarms in commercial premises. The Head of Protection informed Members that if commercial premises hit a specific trigger point then a member of the Protection team would go out and inspect the premises. Any recurring issues would be addressed through the enforcement process. He added that, although other Services were looking into charging for UwFS, it was not currently being pursued by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Unwanted Fire Signals Performance Review (2015/16) be noted.

6 PRINCE'S TRUST FUNDING UPDATE

The Prince's Trust Project Coordinator introduced the report to Members, which highlighted the current funding issues within the Prince's Trust Team (PTT) Programme. She informed Members that the Government had commissioned a review of further education facilities with a view to merging colleges nationally which would potentially result in South Cheshire, West Cheshire, and Mid-Cheshire colleges merging with Warrington Collegiate.

The Prince's Trust Project Coordinator informed Members of the effect of Ofsted ratings on sub-contracting and the impact of changes to local college provisions on the Service's PTT Programme. She also expanded on the new opportunities for funding the PTT Programme that were being pursued with colleges and unitary performance areas within Cheshire.

A Member queried the variance across the seven teams within the county and why the Service had struggled to recruit enough attendees for all of the courses organised. The Prince's Trust Coordinator informed Members that the Prince's Trust (PT) team were finding it more difficult to recruit 16-18 year olds due to the legal requirement for that age group to stay within further education. She explained that there had also been an increase in the number of more complex cases in respect of the young people participating in the programme and this impacted on retention rates for the courses.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the funding regime was very complex and that contract restrictions also made the process more difficult. He explained that the internal audit report had highlighted the financial risk involved and that the Service was aware of these risks and would mitigate against them where possible.

RECOMMENDED: That

[1] the Prince's Trust funding update report be noted.

7 ANNUAL REPORT - ON THE STREETS YOUTH WORK

The Prince's Trust Project Coordinator introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the work undertaken by the 'On the Streets' (OTS) team over the last 12 months. She summarised the local engagement that had occurred with the OTS team in each of the unitary areas within Cheshire. She also informed Members of requests made by the young people the team were working with concerning issues within their community.

A Member queried why any performance measures or outcomes were not included in the report. The Prince's Trust Project Co-ordinator noted the request and would ensure that performance information was provided for future reports. It was also noted that the Unitary Performance Groups held more detailed discussions which included feedback on local initiatives and requests for local engagement.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the 'On the Streets' Youth Work annual report be noted.

8 BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION UPDATE

A verbal update was delivered by Area Manager Keith Brooks which provided Members with the latest information on the Blue Light Collaboration Programme. He advised Members that a consultant had been brought in to advise the Service on the next steps to take concerning the Service's training facilities. He informed Members of the three options, and variations within these options, that had been recommended by the consultant. He also highlighted the impact of the options on the Service and the overall BLC programme.

Members would receive a more detailed presentation on the proposals to discuss at the planning day in September and a formal report would be submitted to the Authority meeting on 21st September 2016.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The forward work programme for 2016-17 was considered by Members and there were no further agenda items identified to add to the programme.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on Tuesday, 5 July 2016 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors D Flude, M Simon, M Tarr and independent (non-elected) member L Thomson

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor S Parker.

2 CHAIR AND MEMBERSHIP OF GROUP 2016-17

RESOLVED: That

The Chair and Membership of the Group for 2016-17 be noted.

3 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That

The notes of the meeting held on 25 April 2016 be approved as a correct record.

Actions Arising:

The Chair wished to place on record her thanks to Rob Garner for his input and commitment to Member Development during his time as an independent member of the group over the last 6-7 years.

4 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2014-16: QUARTERLY MONITORING

The Member Development Strategy was approved by the Fire Authority in September 2014 and it was agreed that the implementation and review of the Strategy would be monitored by the Member Training and Development Group (MTDG). The Democratic Services Manager (DSM) introduced the report and provided a summary of progress in respect of the delivery of key objectives. Members discussed the updates and were satisfied with the progress that had been made.

The Chair informed the group that a decision had been made, at the last MTDG meeting, to defer the work on Level 2 of the North West Charter until the Blue Light Collaboration programme had been implemented. Members felt that as capacity/resources would be impacted during this time Officers should concentrate on ensuring that scheduled Member Development activities were delivered.

Members also discussed the development of Member Champion roles. A Member suggested that it would be useful for Member champions to have two-three meetings per year with the relevant officers to assist them in understanding and developing their role.

The DSM explained that this was the final monitoring report for the strategy and that work would now commence on the development of the 2016 - 18. A draft copy of the strategy would be submitted to the MTDG for discussion at its next meeting in October.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted; and

[2] the draft Member Development Strategy for 2016-18 be presented to the Group at its meeting on 4th October.

5 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2016-17 : QUARTERLY MONITORING

The Member Development Programme 2016/17 was approved at CFA on 15th June 2016. Members of the MTDG were asked to review progress against the current programme and to identify any training needs that they felt were not currently being met. The DSM explained that the delivery of the programme had recently commenced and only a small number of events had taken place to date.

She informed the group that two Member induction sessions had been held and all new Members had attended. Feedback on the initial sessions had been positive and there would be an opportunity to provide feedback on the overall induction programme at the end of the year.

Members discussed the programme and a number of comments and suggestions were made as follows:

- BLC – PCC and CC to be invited to attend a Members Planning Day
- Induction – bring Operational Training Facilities and Incident Command Suite visit for new Members forward to August to assist new Members when reviewing training provision as part of the BLC proposal

The Leadership Development Advisor (LDA) was in attendance at the meeting to provide an update on the proposals for delivery of Members individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs). She explained that she had recently taken over the role and was in the process of reviewing the plans. A number of the development needs identified could be covered in the overarching Member Development Programme and there were several ways of delivering the remainder.

Members commented that it would be useful to have copies of their own individual development plans and the LDA would progress this. The use of electronic learning tools and the flexibility they gave was also discussed and the LDA would provide further details of what was available for Members.

The DSM added that as part of the PDR process this year there had been some feedback that the forms were not user-friendly. A review of the forms would be undertaken in consultation with the LDA and reported back to the group in October.

RESOLVED: THAT

- [1] progress on delivery of the 2016/17 Member Training and Development Programme be noted; and**
- [2] a review of the forms used in Personal Development Reviews to be carried out and reported back to the Member Training and Development Group on 4th October 2016.**

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : GRANT THORNTON
AUTHOR : GRANT THORNTON

SUBJECT : AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT 2015 - 16

Purpose of Report

1. To present the audit findings of the external auditor Grant Thornton.

Recommended:

- [1] That the content of the Audit Findings Report 2015-16 be noted.

Information

2. Grant Thornton, the external auditors to Cheshire Fire Authority, have produced their Audit Findings Report 2015-16 which is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
3. Representatives from Grant Thornton will attend the meeting to present the report and receive questions from Members.

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The Audit Findings for Cheshire Fire Authority

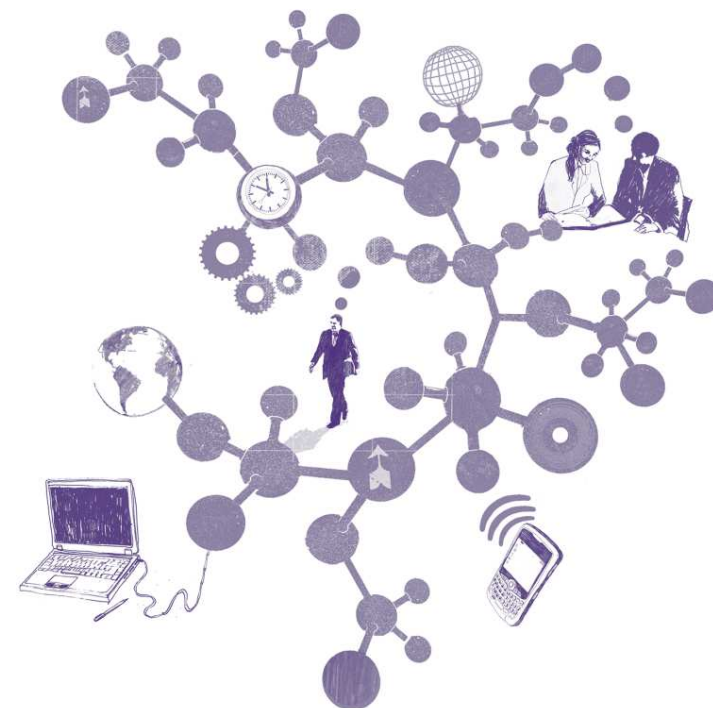
Year ended 31 March 2016

26 August 2016

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Councillor Rudd
Cheshire Fire Authority
Sadler Road
Winsford
Cheshire
CW7 2FQ

26 August 2016

Dear Councillor Rudd

Audit Findings for Cheshire Fire Authority for the year ending 31 March 2016

This Audit Findings report highlights the key findings arising from the audit for the benefit of those charged with governance (in the case of Cheshire Fire Authority, the Authority itself), as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. Its contents have been discussed with officers.

As auditors we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed primarily for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and giving a value for money conclusion. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the kind assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Yours sincerely

Robin Baker

Chartered Accountants

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Appendices

- A Action plan
- B Audit opinion

Section 1: Executive summary

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Purpose of this report

This report highlights the key issues affecting the results of Cheshire Fire Authority ('the Authority') and the preparation of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016. It is also used to report our audit findings to management and those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act').

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Authority's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and its income and expenditure for the year and whether they have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

We are also required consider other information published together with the audited financial statements, whether it is consistent with the financial statements and in line with required guidance.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves on whether the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources ('the value for money (VFM) conclusion'). We are required to provide a conclusion whether in all significant respects, the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The Act also details the following additional powers and duties for local government auditors, which we are required to report to you if applied:

- a public interest report if we identify any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit that in our opinion should be considered by the Authority or brought to the public's attention (section 24 of the Act);

- written recommendations which should be considered by the Authority and responded to publicly (section 24 of the Act);
- application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law (section 28 of the Act);
- issue of an advisory notice (section 29 of the Act); and
- application for judicial review (section 31 of the Act).

We are also required to give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the accounts and consider and decide upon objections received in relation to the accounts under sections 26 and 27 of the Act.

Introduction

In the conduct of our audit we have not had to alter or change our audit approach, which we communicated to you in our Audit Plan dated 26 February 2016.

Our audit is substantially complete although we are finalising our procedures in the following areas:

- obtaining requested external confirmations relating to investments and LG pensions liabilities,
- review of the final version of the financial statements,
- obtaining and reviewing the management letter of representation
- review of revised versions of the Annual Governance Statement and
- updating our post balance sheet events review, to the date of signing the opinion.

We received draft financial statements and accompanying working papers at the commencement of our work, and in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Key audit and financial reporting issues

Financial statements opinion

We have identified no adjustments affecting the Authority's reported financial position (details are recorded in section two of this report). The draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 recorded net expenditure of £62,599k. We have recommended a small number of adjustments to improve the presentation of the financial statements.

The key messages arising from our audit of the Authority's financial statements are:

- last year, the draft accounts were prepared to a good standard and were supported by comprehensive working papers;
- we were able to commence our audit as previously planned and agreed with the Authority; and
- going forward, the Authority should consider how it accounts for its share of the North West Fire Control Centre in its financial statements.

The Authority was notified of a late adjustment to the 2015/16 accounts of Cheshire East Council relating to the national non-domestic rates provision in mid August. The impact on the Authority's accounts is a reduction to the expected income recorded in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement of £36,000. Management consider this amount is not material to the Authority's 2015/16 financial statements and have not amended the accounts. Authority Members, as those charged with Governance should confirm the approach taken by management.

Other than the above, there are no other material errors or uncertainties and we anticipate providing a unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements (see Appendix B).

Other financial statement responsibilities

As well as an opinion on the financial statements, we are required to give an opinion on whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements. This includes if the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit. There are no issues arising from our work in this area which we wish to bring to your attention.

Controls

Roles and responsibilities

The Authority's management is responsible for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risk, and for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control.

Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these to the Authority.

Findings

Our work has not identified any control weaknesses which we wish to highlight for your attention.

Further details are provided within section two of this report.

Value for Money

Based on our review, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Authority continues to have effective arrangements in place to manage its financial position with a small surplus being delivered in 2015/16 of £941k. The Authority approved its 2016/17 budget with a 1.99% precept increase which also included a savings requirement of £900k which management has identified will be delivered mainly from the organisational review and non pay savings amounting to £792k. The Authority continues to develop its collaborative working with Cheshire Police and progress has been made with the planned investment in new facilities during the year.

Further detail of our work on Value for Money are set out in section three of this report.

Other statutory powers and duties

We have not identified any issues that have required us to apply our statutory powers and duties under the Act.

The way forward

Matters arising from the financial statements audit and our review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources have been discussed with the Head of Finance.

We have made a number of recommendations, which are set out in the action plan at Appendix A. Recommendations have been discussed and agreed with the Head of Finance and the finance team.

Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
26 August 2016

Section 2: Audit findings

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As we reported in our audit plan, we determined overall materiality to be £844k (being 2% of budgeted gross revenue expenditure). We have considered whether this level remained appropriate during the course of the audit and revised our overall materiality to £724k (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure), based on the draft financial statements.

We also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulated effect of such amounts would have a material impact on the financial statements. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £37k.

As we reported in our audit plan, we identified the following items where we decided that separate materiality levels were appropriate. These remain the same as reported in our audit plan.

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Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation	Materiality level
Disclosures of officers' remuneration, salary bandings and exit packages in notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£0
Disclosure of auditors' remuneration in notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	£0

Audit findings against significant risks

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty" (ISA (UK&I) 315).

In this section we detail our response to the significant risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. As we noted in our plan, there are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards.

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
Page 54	<p>1. The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Cheshire Fire Authority, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Cheshire Fire Authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of revenue recognition.</p>
	<p>2. Management over-ride of controls</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<p>We have performed the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review of entity controls • testing of journal entries • review of accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management • review of unusual significant transactions. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls. In particular the findings of our review of journal controls and testing of journal entries has not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>We set out later in this section of the report our work and findings on key accounting estimates and judgements.</p>

Audit findings against significant risks continued

	Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
Page 55	<p>3. The expenditure cycle includes fraudulent transactions</p> <p>Practice Note 10 suggests that the risk of material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting that may arise from the manipulation of expenditure recognition needs to be considered, especially where the body is required to meet targets.</p>	<p>Our existing audit procedures incorporate testing in all the main areas of the Authority's expenditure, as a result, we did not consider a need to perform any additional audit tests in respect of this risk. Our testing included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employee costs which is addressed by our procedures on employee remuneration (accounting for over 75% of expenditure) • supplies and services expenditure which is addressed by our procedures in response to this risk (accounting for some 10% of expenditure) • premises and transport costs which is addressed by our procedures in response to this identified risk (accounting for around 8% of expenditure) • other operating expenditure, which is made up of individually immaterial expenditure streams and so the risk of material error is deemed to be low. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of fraudulent transactions within the expenditure cycle</p>

Audit findings against other risks

In this section we detail our response to the other risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. Recommendations, together with management responses are attached at appendix A.

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
<p>Employee remuneration</p>	<p>Employee remuneration accruals understated (Remuneration expenses not correct).</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess the whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding sample tested remuneration transactions for the whole year undertaken a predictive analytical review of payroll expenditure. reconciled the payroll system to the general ledger and financial statements completed a trend analysis of the monthly payroll expenditure. tested year-end payroll accruals. reviewed and tested the remuneration report and exit package disclosures. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p> <p>Our substantive testing of a sample of 25 individuals paid throughout the year did not identify any issues with the accuracy of payments or the calculation of employer "on-costs".</p>
<p>Operating Expenses</p>	<p>Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period (Operating expenses understated).</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of the processes and key controls over the transaction cycle undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding Substantively tested expenditure transactions for the full year Reviewed and tested year-end accrued expenditure Sample tested payables at the year-end Completed 'cut-off' testing of expenditure recorded in the 2015-16 general ledger for understatement and unrecorded liabilities. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified. Our work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> testing of a sample of 20 expenditure items which did not identify any issues relating to the accuracy or classification of expenditure review and substantive testing of a sample of 20 year end accruals and creditor balances which confirmed the validity and accuracy of balances testing of a sample of 10 payments made in 2016/17 to determine whether the associated expenditure was recorded in the correct financial year with no issues arising.

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Audit findings against other risks continued

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Firefighters' pensions benefit payments	<p>Benefits improperly computed/ claims liability understated</p> <p>Payments to retiring officers are low in volume but high in value and the service is reliant on effective controls both within and outside the organisation to ensure that payments made are valid and accurate.</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of the processes and key controls over the transaction cycle undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding Sample tested lump sum and pensions payments for the whole year Undertaken a predictive analytical review of the pensions payroll Agreed the balances in the pension fund account to the underlying pension system. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p> <p>Our analytical review of the benefit payments paid and our substantive testing of a sample of 10 new pension benefit payments did not identify any issues with the accuracy of payments.</p>
Employee remuneration	<p>Valuation of pension fund net liability</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documentation of the key controls that were put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund liability was not materially misstated walkthrough of the key controls to assess whether they were implemented as expected and mitigate the risk of material misstatement in the financial statements review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Authority's pension fund valuation gaining an understanding of the basis on which the IAS 19 valuation was carried out, undertaking procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made reviewing the consistency of the pension fund asset and liability and disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p> <p>We received information from the Pension Fund auditors on 29 July 2016 confirming there were no significant issues arising from their work on the Pension Fund accounts which impact on Cheshire Fire Authority.</p> <p>The overall net pension liability of the Authority has decreased from £528.6m at 31 March 2015, to £474.0m at 31 March 2016.</p>

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Audit findings against other risks continued

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Firefighters' pensions contributions	Contributions revenue is fraudulently recognised	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented our understanding of processes and key controls over the transaction cycle substantively tested a sample of payroll deductions for the whole year to ensure the correct % rate has been applied completed a predictive analytical review of the contribution revenue. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p> <p>Our substantive testing of a sample of 25 pension deductions throughout the year did not identify any issues with the accuracy of the deductions.</p>

Significant matters discussed with management

	Significant matter	Commentary
Page 59	<p>1. Discussions or correspondence with management regarding accounting practices, the application of auditing standards, or fees for audit or other services.</p>	<p>We have discussed with management the arrangements and the related accounting treatment of Cheshire Fire Authority's share (25%) of North West Fire Control's (NWFC) balances. We are satisfied that management has demonstrated that it is appropriate to treat this arrangement as a joint operation and recognise the on-going discussions management continue to have with NWFC and the other joint operators as to the appropriateness of the accounting entries in the financial statements.</p> <p>For joint operations, IFRS 11 requires a reporting authority that is a joint operator to recognise in relation to its joint interest in a joint operation, all: its assets, including its share of any assets held jointly; its liabilities, including its share of any liabilities incurred jointly; its revenue from the sale of its share of the output arising from the joint operation; its share of the revenue from the sale of the output by the joint operations, and its expenses, including its share of any expenses incurred jointly.</p> <p>Management has determined that Cheshire Fire Authority's share of NWFC assets, liabilities and operating revenues and expenses are not material for 2015-16. The Authority has therefore not made any accounting adjustments for its share of NWFC's balances, above those processed as part of day-to-day transactions with NWFC through its income and expenditure account. We have reviewed the Authority's share of NWFC balances on a line by line basis and confirmed that after intra-group balances have been deducted, the Authority's share is not material.</p> <p>Whilst the amounts involved are not material, the Authority should consider including all its share of its assets and liabilities in its accounts going forward. We will work with the Authority to help in this transition during 2016/17.</p> <p>Management response</p> <p>Following discussions with the Head of Finance, management have agreed to consider incorporating all the Authority's share in North West Fire Control into the Authority's accounts from 2016/17 onwards. The Authority will also continue to liaise with the other three members of NWFC to ensure consistency of approach.</p>

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements

In this section we report on our consideration of accounting policies, in particular revenue recognition policies, and key estimates and judgements made and included with the Authority's financial statements.

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Revenue recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority's policy for recognising revenue is to recognise it when the economic benefits or service potential will flow to the Authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority's policy is appropriate and consistent with the CIPFA Code of Practice A significant amount of the Authority's revenue is predictable meaning that there is minimal judgement involved in identifying when to recognise income The accounting policy is adequately disclosed. 	●
Judgements and estimates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key estimates and judgements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful life of PPE PPE revaluations Valuation of pension fund net liability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority's policies are appropriate and consistent with the CIPFA Code of Practice The Authority has summarised its key judgements in note 5 of the financial statements PPE revaluation estimates are covered within other material balances and transactions (page 16) Valuation of the pension fund net liability is covered within other risks (page 15) The accounting policies have been adequately disclosed. 	●
Going concern	<p>The Head of Finance and S151 officer has a reasonable expectation that the services provided by the Authority will continue for the foreseeable future. Members concur with this view. For this reason, the Authority continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Authority's assessment and are satisfied with management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2015/16 financial statements.</p>	●

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Assessment

Other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Matters in relation to fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with leading members of the Authority. We have not been made aware of any incidents in the period and no other issues have been identified during the course of our audit procedures.
2.	Matters in relation to related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the work we carried out, we have not identified any related party transactions which have not been disclosed.
3.	Matters in relation to laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
4.	Written representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A standard letter of representation has been requested from the Authority.
5.	Confirmation requests from third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We requested from management permission to send a number of confirmation requests. This permission was granted and the requests were sent. We are currently waiting for a number of bank and investment confirmation letters.
6.	Disclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.
7.	Matters on which we report by exception	<p>We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas. We have not identified any issues we would be required to report by exception in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit The information in the Narrative Report is materially inconsistent with the information in the audited financial statements or our knowledge of the Authority acquired in the course of performing our audit, or otherwise misleading.

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Internal controls

The purpose of an audit is to express an opinion on the financial statements.

Our audit included consideration of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control. We considered and walked through the internal controls for Employee Remuneration, including firefighters' pensions, Property, Plant and Equipment and Operating Expenses.

The controls were found to be operating effectively and we have no matters to report to the Authority.

Adjusted misstatements

There have been no adjustments made to the draft accounts.

Unadjusted misstatements

The Authority was notified of a late adjustment to the 2015/16 accounts of Cheshire East Council relating to the national non-domestic rates provision in mid August. The impact on the Authority's accounts is a reduction to the expected income recorded in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement of £36,000. Management consider this amount is not material to the Authority's 2015/16 financial statements and have not amended the accounts. Authority Members, as those charged with Governance should confirm the approach taken by management. We have not identified any other misstatements which management have not amended.

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Detail	Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement £'000	Balance Sheet £'000	Reason for not adjusting
1 Collection Fund deficit (business rates) Collection Fund Adjustment Account Provision (business rates)	36*	36 (36)	The amount is not considered material to the Authority's financial statements.
Overall impact	£36	£0	

* This is reversed out in the Movement in Reserves Statement with no impact on General Fund.

Misclassifications and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Adjustment type	Value £'000	Account balance	Impact on the financial statements
1 Disclosure	Various	Capital	Additional disclosure table of capital expenditure added to the narrative report
2 Disclosure	N/A	N/A	A presentational change to clarify the name of the Authority on the front page of the financial statements

Section 3: Value for Money

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01.	Executive summary
02.	Audit findings
03.	Value for Money
04.	Other statutory powers and duties
05.	Fees, non-audit services and independence
06.	Communication of audit matters

Background

We are required by section 21 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act') and the NAO Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves that proper arrangements are in place at the Authority. The Act and NAO guidance state that for local government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Authority has put proper arrangements in place.

In carrying out this work, we are required to follow the NAO's Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03) issued in November 2015. AGN 03 identifies

the single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

AGN03 provides examples of proper arrangements against three sub-criteria but specifically states that these are not separate criteria for assessment purposes and that auditors are not required to reach a distinct judgement against each of these.

Risk assessment

We carried out an initial risk assessment in February 2016 and did not identify any significant risks. However, we noted that the Authority continues to face on-going financial challenges but continues to have effective arrangements in place to manage its finances. The actual 2015/16 outturn position was an underspend of £941k against a revised budget of £42.5m, increasing the Authority's general reserves to £7.4m at the year end.

During the year, the Authority also spent £6.1m on capital (non current assets), with over £5m of this spend relating to the build costs of three new fire stations as well as 'Safety Central', a dedicated safety centre.

The Service continues to work with Cheshire Police on Blue Light Collaboration with a view to integrating back-office and professional services. The arrangements for closer working are overseen by the Blue Light Collaboration Board. The Authority agreed during April 2016 to also co-locate its headquarters to the current Police headquarters, it is hoped this will foster closer working arrangements as well as generate financial efficiencies for both organisations. This transition to the Police headquarters has now commenced.

The Authority also continues to work with its partners and stakeholders and has agreed a number of new initiatives, including for example, acting as first responder for cardiac arrests, as well as, working with North West Ambulance Service to provide access to ambulance staff to patient homes.

From January 2016, the responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services moved from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Home Office. At this stage, the Authority is uncertain as to whether this change will have any financial impact on the Authority.

Our initial risk assessment in February 2016 did not identify any significant risks requiring further work. We have updated our assessment during the final accounts audit and by regular meetings with senior management, continuing to review relevant documents including minutes of meetings up to the date of giving our report, and have not identified any further significant risks where we need to perform further work.

Significant qualitative aspects

AGN 03 requires us to disclose our views on significant qualitative aspects of the Authority's arrangements for delivering economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In arriving at our conclusion, our main considerations were:

- as in previous years, the Authority delivered an underspend position for 2015/16 with a year end outturn underspend of £941k. This was in line with the Authority's expectation for 2015/16 and represents 2.2% of turnover
- for 2016/17, the Authority approved its budget on 30 March 2016. Expenditure is budgeted at £42.0m after a 1.99% precept increase, and requiring savings of £900k, which management consider achievable and to be delivered mainly from the organisational review and non pay savings amounting to £792k. The budget aims to deliver a year end break even position
- Considered the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 which incorporates the comprehensive spending review and the future financial challenges faced by the Authority
- The Authority's committee structures which enable a clear focus on the Authority's policies and monitoring of performance. The Authority has an effective strategic and financial planning process which includes rigorous review and challenge by members
- the progress being made by the Authority working with Cheshire Police on Blue Light Collaboration with a view to integrating back-office and professional services.

Overall conclusion

Based on the work we performed to address the significant risks, we concluded that Cheshire Fire Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources. The text of our report, which confirms this can be found at Appendix B.

Significant difficulties in undertaking our work

We did not identify any significant difficulties in undertaking our work on your arrangements which we wish to draw to your attention.

Significant matters discussed with management

There were no matters where no other evidence was available or matters of such significance to our conclusion or that we required written representation from management or those charged with governance.

Any other matters

There were no other matters from our work which were significant to our consideration of your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources.

Section 4: Other statutory powers and duties

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by the Act and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Public interest report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have not identified any matters that would require a public interest report to be issued.
2.	Written recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have not made any written recommendations that the Authority is required to respond to publicly.
3.	Application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have not made any application to the court.
4.	Issue of an advisory notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have not issued an advisory notice.
5.	Application for judicial review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No application for a judicial review has been made.

Section 5: Fees, non-audit services and independence

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Page
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We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and provision of non-audit services.

Fees

	Proposed fee £	Final fee £
Authority audit	29,860	29,860
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	29,860	29,860

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Non-audit services:	4,643
• 2020 Vision Workshop	
Total	4,643

The proposed fees for the year were in line with the scale fee set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA)

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Section 6: Communication of audit matters

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Communication to those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing ISA (UK&I) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

The Audit Plan outlined our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while this Audit Findings report presents the key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

Respective responsibilities

The Audit Findings Report has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.a.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment/>)

We have been appointed as the Authority's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Authority's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Authority to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Authority is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to auditor's report		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓

Appendices

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Appendix A: Action plan

Priority

High - Significant effect on control system

Medium - Effect on control system

Low - Best practice

Rec No.	Recommendation	Priority	Management response	Implementation date & responsibility
1 Page 75	The Authority should recognise fully its share in North West Fire Control, as a joint operation in accordance with IFRS 11.	M	We will consider incorporating all the Authority's share in North West Fire Control into the Authority's accounts from 2016/17 onwards. The Authority will also continue to liaise with the other three members of NWFC to ensure consistency of approach.	Head of Finance March 2017

Appendix B: Audit opinion - draft

We anticipate we will provide the Authority with an unmodified audit report

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

We have audited the financial statements of Cheshire Fire Authority (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2016 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes and include the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Head of Finance and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Head of Finance's Responsibilities, the Head of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Head of Finance; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion the financial statements:

- present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2016 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement is consistent with the audited financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if:

- in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework' published by CIPFA/SOLACE in June 2007; or
- we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Act; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act; or
- we exercise any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General as required by the Act (the "Code"), having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, as to whether the Authority had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through the economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2015, we are satisfied that in all significant respects *the Authority* has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts of the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code.

and effective use of its resources.]

[Signature] – to be inserted

Robin Baker
for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

Royal Liver Building
Liverpool
L3 1PS

[Date] – to be inserted



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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER
AUTHOR : HEAD OF FINANCE

SUBJECT : FINAL ACCOUNTS 2015-16

Purpose of Report

1. The Authority is required to approve its final accounts for publication before the end of September. This report provides an overview of the accounts, which should be considered in conjunction with the Grant Thornton Audit Findings Report presented prior to this item.
2. Copies of the accounts have not been attached to this report because of their considerable length. Hard copies of the accounts will be made available in group rooms prior to the meeting and are available on the internet for Members to access.

Recommended that:

- [1] the accounts are formally approved for publication;
- [2] the current balances of the Authority's reserves are noted;
- [3] the Authority's underspend in 2015-16 is transferred to the capital reserve; and
- [4] the Letter of Representation is approved and the Chair of the Authority is authorised to sign it (attached as Appendix 1).

Background

3. The draft final accounts were reported to the Closure of Accounts Committee on 22nd June 2016.
4. The End of Year Finance and Performance Report 2015-16, reported to the Fire Authority meeting in June, identified a forecast underspend against the Authority's revised budgets of £941k.

Final Accounts

5. The Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have now completed their audit and intend to issue an unqualified opinion. This means that they are satisfied that the accounts fairly reflect the financial position of the Authority. The Audit Findings Report also comments favourably on the systems of internal financial control and includes a positive value for money conclusion.

6. An issue which affects the accounts has emerged since the Closure of Accounts Committee. The Authority was notified in mid August of an adjustment to the business rates provision made by Cheshire East Council. This impacts on the Authority's accounts because it is required to include 1% of each of the four billing authorities' business rates provisions in its own accounts. This has the effect of reducing the income on the Authority's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES), and increasing the Authority's provisions which are shown on the Balance Sheet. These entries satisfy the appropriate International Financial Reporting Standards. However, the Authority is not permitted to allow these entries to affect the General Fund Balance, and so the amount of the provision is removed from the CIES and is charged to an unusable reserve, the Collection Fund Adjustment Account, in the Movement in Reserves Statement.
7. The effect of the change by Cheshire East has increased the level of its provision, leading to an increase in the Authority's provision of around £36k. The Authority discussed this issue with its external auditors and, because of the relatively small amount involved, and because of the fact that there is no impact on the General Fund, the accounts have not been changed to reflect this adjustment. It is therefore shown in the report of the external auditor at the previous item on the agenda as an unadjusted misstatement.
8. Following the Audit, the Authority has agreed to make some minor changes to the draft accounts as signed off by the Treasurer and presented to the Closure of Accounts Committee. These affect the notes but do not affect the position on the Authority's Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement or Balance Sheet. They include an additional table in the narrative report showing more detail on the capital expenditure.
9. The accounts show an underspend of £941k against the revised revenue budget of £42,456. Details of this may be seen in Note 2 on pages 37 and 38 of the accounts. The budget is revised after the quarterly performance reports to Performance and Overview (P&O) Committee and the Authority during the year. In total for 2015-16 these reports projected an underspend of £2,039k, including the £941k reported at year end. It is recommended that the underspend is transferred into the capital reserve to fund future capital expenditure.
10. The Authority has adopted a financial health target that requires the final outturn position on the revenue budget to be within 1% of the revised budget. The actual figure is 2.21%. As Members will be aware, the Authority has anticipated and prepared for reductions in expenditure necessary to balance future years' budgets and fund capital expenditure, and this is reflected in the level of underspend in 2015-16.
11. The Authority's Balance Sheet shows a significant liability of £474,002k in respect of pensions as a result of the need to account for liabilities under International Accounting Standard (IAS)19. This standard requires the Authority to estimate all its future pension liabilities, in respect of existing pensioners and current staff, and does not represent an immediate call on resources. It is a liability which is discharged over the lifetime of pensioners and staff.
12. The effect of IAS19 is that it makes the Balance Sheet look as though the Authority is significantly indebted. Whilst future pension liabilities cannot be

ignored, removing the liability under IAS19 would show that the Authority's net assets are worth £76,930k

Reserves

13. The Authority's overall reserve position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement on page 15 of the accounts. The Authority has significant usable reserves of £36,714k. Some of the most important are explained below, in particular those relating to IRMP, the capital element of the Emergency Response Programme (ERP) and other capital projects. At this particularly challenging time, it is considered prudent to ensure that the Authority retains the capability to quickly respond to changing circumstances and the ability to call on reserves forms a key part of the Authority's financial strategy as it makes changes to the delivery of its services.
14. The General Reserve has a balance of £7,409k which mitigates against the possibility of a significant financial consequence arising in the event of any of the Authority's corporate risks materialising. The next risk assessment of the level of this reserve will be conducted early in 2017 in order to inform the 2017-18 budget setting process.
15. The most significant earmarked reserves held by the Authority are the IRMP and Capital Reserves, which together amount to around £23m. However, the conclusion of the building of the new stations and safety centre to deliver the capital element of ERP in this financial year and early 2017-18 will utilise a significant part of these reserves. The remainder will be used to support the revenue and capital impact of future IRMP related projects, and other capital projects.
16. In addition the Authority has earmarked reserves to support the purchase of operational equipment and personal protective equipment, and to support the development of ICT systems.

Capital

17. The Authority invested £6,058k in non-current assets in 2015-16. This includes significant expenditure on the capital element of the ERP. The Authority has a financial health indicator which requires slippage to be no more than 25% of the capital programme. The budget report presented to Members in February 2015 recognised that this target would not be met in 2015-16, as a result of the timings of the approvals process for the delivery of the capital element of the ERP, and delays in acquiring vehicles. Overall slippage is around 68%, but this is as a result not only of ERP, but also in delaying the acquisition of new vehicles and the impact of Blue Light Collaboration. ERP has now moved on quickly, and the purchase of new vehicles is moving forward as specifications have been finalised and procurement processes improved. Slippage in capital projects will continue to be monitored but it is anticipated that there will be a significant improvement by the end of 2017-18.

Letter of representation

18. Each year, the Authority is required to sign a letter of representation to the Auditors. The letter explains the Authority's responsibilities in relation to the audit, and a copy is attached to this report as Appendix 1. It is recommended that the Authority approve the letter and authorise the Chair to sign it.

Financial Implications

19. This report deals with financial matters. There are no direct budgetary implications as a result of the report.

Legal Implications

20. The approval and publication of the accounts meets the Authority's legal obligations.

Equality & Diversity Implications

21. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

22. Copies of the accounts will be made available in electronic format, but the number of hard copies published will be kept to a minimum in recognition of the environmental impact.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Letter of Representation

Grant Thornton UK LLP
Royal Liver Building
Liverpool
L3 1PS

21 September 2016

Dear Sirs

Cheshire Fire Authority
Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016

This representation letter is provided in connection with the audit of the financial statements of Cheshire Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2016 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 and applicable law.

We confirm that to the best of our knowledge and belief having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

Financial Statements

- i We have fulfilled our responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16 ("the Code"); which give a true and fair view in accordance therewith.
- ii We have complied with the requirements of all statutory directions affecting the Authority and these matters have been appropriately reflected and disclosed in the financial statements.
- iii The Authority has complied with all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance. There has been no non-compliance with requirements of regulatory authorities that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance.
- iv We acknowledge our responsibility for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal control to prevent and detect fraud.
- v Significant assumptions used by us in making accounting estimates, including those measured at fair value, are reasonable.

- vi We are satisfied that the material judgements used in the preparation of the financial statements are soundly based, in accordance with the Code and adequately disclosed in the financial statements. There are no other material judgements that need to be disclosed.
- vii Except as disclosed in the financial statements:
 - a there are no unrecorded liabilities, actual or contingent
 - b none of the assets of the Authority have been assigned, pledged or mortgaged
 - c there are no material prior year charges or credits, nor exceptional or non-recurring items requiring separate disclosure.
- viii We confirm that we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the valuation of pension scheme assets and liabilities for IAS19 Employee Benefits disclosures are consistent with our knowledge. We confirm that all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for. We also confirm that all significant post-employment benefits have been identified and properly accounted for.
- ix Related party relationships and transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Code.
- x All events subsequent to the date of the financial statements and for which the Code requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.
- xi Actual or possible litigation and claims have been accounted for and disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the Code.
- xii We have considered the unadjusted misstatements schedule included in your Audit Findings Report. We have not adjusted the financial statements for these misstatements as they are immaterial to the results of the Authority and its financial position at the year-end.
- xiii The financial statements are free of material misstatements, including omissions.
- xiv We have no plans or intentions that may materially alter the carrying value or classification of assets and liabilities reflected in the financial statements.
- xv We believe that the Authority's financial statements should be prepared on a going concern basis on the grounds that current and future sources of funding or support will be more than adequate for the Authority's needs. We believe that no further disclosures relating to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern need to be made in the financial statements.

Information Provided

- xvi We have provided you with:
 - a access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - b additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of your audit; and
 - c unrestricted access to persons within the Authority from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.

- xvii We have communicated to you all deficiencies in internal control of which management is aware.
- xviii All transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and are reflected in the financial statements.
- xix We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
- xx We have disclosed to you all our knowledge of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the Authority involving:
 - a management;
 - b employees who have significant roles in internal control; or
 - c others where the fraud could have a material effect on the financial statements.
- xxi We have disclosed to you all our knowledge of any allegations of fraud, or suspected fraud, affecting the Authority's financial statements communicated by employees, former employees, regulators or others.
- xxii We have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.
- xxiii We have disclosed to you the identity of all the Authority's related parties and all the related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware.
- xxiv We have disclosed to you all known actual or possible litigation and claims whose effects should be considered when preparing the financial statements.

Annual Governance Statement

- xxv We are satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) fairly reflects the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.

Narrative Report

- xxvi The disclosures within the Narrative Report fairly reflect our understanding of the Authority's financial and operating performance over the period covered by the financial statements.

Approval

The approval of this letter of representation was minuted by the Authority at its meeting on 21 September 2016.

Yours faithfully

Name.....

Position.....

Date.....

Name.....

Position.....

Date.....

Signed on behalf of the Authority

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21 SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR : CHRIS ASTALL

SUBJECT: ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2015-16

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present Members of the Fire Authority with the Statement of Assurance 2015-16.

Recommended that:

- [1] Members approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16 for publication on the Service's website

Background

2. The Fire and Rescue National Framework (2012) requires fire and rescue authorities to publish an 'Annual Statement of Assurance'. The guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in July 2012 allows fire and rescue authorities considerable flexibility over the format of the statement. One of the aims of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an easily 'accessible' way in which communities, government, local authorities and partners may make a valid assessment of performance.
3. The Statement of Assurance outlines the significant financial and operational issues facing the Authority which need to be effectively managed and highlights areas where further improvements can be made to evidence compliance with the Authority's Local Code of Corporate Governance.
4. The Statement of Assurance is intended to act as a 'signpost' document directing the reader to more detailed information which is published on the Service's website or other related linked sites.
5. A draft version of the Statement of Assurance for 2015-16 was presented to the Governance and Constitution Committee in July 2016 for review and challenge prior to being presented to the Fire Authority.

Information

The Compliance Process

6. The Authority currently fulfils its financial and governance assurance requirements through the production and validation of the Annual Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) (which include associated controls, scrutiny, and audits). The AGS forms part of the Statement of Assurance. The Annual Report also summarises some of these issues as well as providing an account of delivery against each published IRMP.
7. The Corporate Programme Office developed a simple process to ensure all compliance and assurance evidence relating to the National Framework and the Local Code of Corporate Governance was consistently captured, owned, monitored and accessible from one place. The Local Code of Corporate Governance is monitored and reviewed regularly by Governance and Constitution Committee and published annually on the Service's website.
8. The Annual Statement of Assurance for 2015-16 is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**. In the interest of transparency all compliance and assurance documentation and other relevant links and signposts will be accessible directly from the Service's website.

Financial Implications

9. There are no significant financial implications other than staff time involved in research, evidence gathering and publication.

Legal Implications

10. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012) and the addendum published in 2014 sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities and introduces additional requirements concerned with governance in its broadest sense. The Framework requires the Authority to publish an annual Statement of Assurance.

Equality & Diversity Implications

11. There are no differential impacts on any particular section of the community arising from this report. Any issues relating to the publication and communication of the publication have been considered as part of the full equality impact assessment carried out on the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

Environmental Implications

12. There are no specific impacts on the environment arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 - Statement of Assurance 2015-16



Annual Statement of Assurance 2015 - 2016

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1. Introduction

Evidence Links

This is Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority's fourth annual Statement of Assurance in line with the Government's requirements set out in the *Fire and Rescue National Framework* for England.

Intended Purpose of Statement of Assurance

The aim of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an easy and accessible way in which communities, government, local authorities and partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.

Statements of Assurance are published annually by fire and rescue authorities to integrate where practicable with existing governance reporting arrangements.

Complying with the Statement of Assurance

The published Statement of Assurance guidance sets out compliance requirements under three broad headings :

Financial:

Cheshire Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority has a robust budget monitoring process that is subject to close scrutiny. The Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the right controls are in place to ensure that financial assets are properly managed, financial reporting is accurate and that the Annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

[Financial Regulations](#)

[Statement of Accounts](#)

Governance:

The Authority is required to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority is required by law to produce an "**Annual Governance Statement**" (AGS). The AGS and supporting compliance evidence can be located in section 3 of this document.

Operational:

The Authority is required to comply with a range of laws, regulations and guidance, the following is a list of some of the key legislation:

[Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)

[Localism Act 2011](#)

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#)

[Local Government Act 1999](#)

[Health & Safety & Work Act 1974](#)

To ensure that the Authority can demonstrate how it complies with these requirements, a number of detailed assessments are undertaken. These include:

- Health and Safety policy and framework with regular progress being presented to the Service Management Team (SMT).

- Operational capability against risk to ensure that the right resources, procedures and skills are available to professionally respond to communities within target response times and that resources are aligned to risk.
- An annual review of operational risk and performance supplemented by quarterly scrutiny Member and officer meetings.
- Risk Management Board monitoring and scrutiny of corporate risks.
- Compliance against National Framework requirements.

[Operational Assurance Guidance Principle 7](#)

Accountable to our Communities

This statement is underpinned by detailed documented evidence, most of which has been made available to the public on the Service website. Agendas, minutes and supporting reports relating to Cheshire Fire Authority's meetings are all published on the website. This includes incident and performance data, quarterly performance reports, policy decisions, audit and assurance reports.

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

The Authority measures and monitors performance using a range of key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are also used to compare performance against other fire and rescue authorities in England. The Authority publishes an Annual Report in September each year summarising progress against plans and a range of other performance measures which is sent to all homes in its area. All performance information available to the public can be accessed via the Service website and continues to be reviewed and refined.

[Annual Report](#)

In addition, the Authority has adopted the best practice guidance set out in the [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#) as far as is practical.

2. Financial Assurance

Evidence Links

The Cheshire Fire Authority provides financial assurance through the publication of an Annual Statement of Accounts. This is a statutory requirement under the [Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) and the accounts are prepared following the *CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting*. The financial statements are subject to review by independent auditors as directed by the [Audit Commission Act 1998](#).

[Statement of Accounts](#)

In addition to the statutory requirement to publish annual financial results, the Authority is committed to increasing transparency. One of the first steps in this process is for the publication of expenditure in excess of £500. This is compliant with Local Government Transparency Code.

[CFRS Website: What we spend](#)

External Audit:

Grant Thornton Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) is the appointed external auditor for Cheshire Fire Authority and is responsible for completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the 2015-16 financial statements
- Opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Value for Money conclusion

Internal Audit:

The Internal Audit function for 2015 - 16 was provided by Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) and their audit opinion for the year ending March 2016 can be located in Section 3 of this document.

3. Annual Governance Statement

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

An Annual Governance Statement (AGS) publicly explains how an organisation manages its governance and internal control measures. It is an open and honest account of how an organisation ensures its financial management system is adequate and effective, as well as ensuring it has a sound system of internal control, assuring utmost integrity in all its dealings.

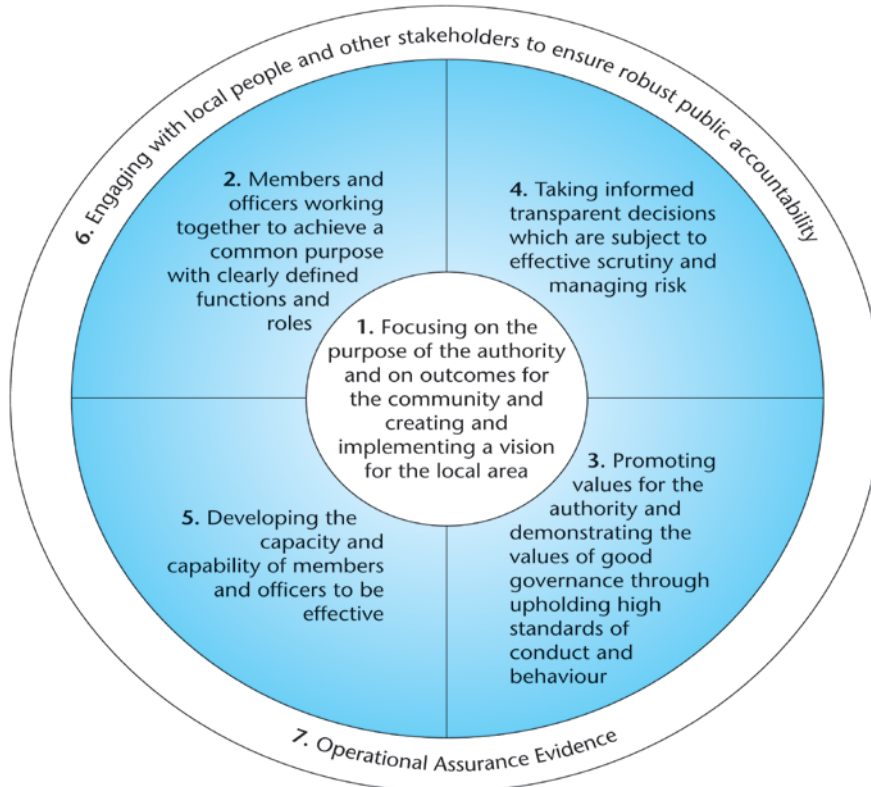
[Delivering Good Governance](#)

What is the governance framework?

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published the advisory framework ‘*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*’ (‘the framework’), in 2007 and an Addendum to the framework was published in December 2012.

The framework defines six core principles that underpin the governance of each local government body. These principles were used to inform the development of our Service Local Code of Corporate Governance which was refreshed and approved by the Authority in 2013. The seventh principle in the model requires evidence of operational assurance and compliance with the National Framework. The Authority’s Local Code of Corporate Governance and compliance evidence is published on the Authority’s website. An outline of the seven key areas is set out in the following model (access the links to compliance documentation for more detail):

[Local Code of Corporate Governance Principals 1-7](#)



Scope of Responsibility

Cheshire Fire Authority

The Authority has responsibility for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority has a duty under the [Local Government Act 1999](#) to show how it aims for continuous improvement and best value in delivering its services, taking into account a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Members and Officers

In discharging the statutory responsibilities of the Authority, Members and Senior Officers are responsible for ensuring that proper governance arrangements are in place. These need to demonstrate good management of the Authority's key risks in accordance with legislation and proper standards.

The Authority's Governance and Internal Control Framework

The Authority's local governance and internal control framework includes the systems, processes, procedures, culture and core values by which it is directed and controlled, and through which it accounts to and engages with the communities and other stakeholders. It includes arrangements to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and value for money services.

This framework centres on the Authority's strategic aims and objectives and include:

- The organisation's vision and purpose which drive the service planning, delivery, risk, project and performance management frameworks
- The annual Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Consultation and Communications Strategies
- A published set of core values
- The Authority Constitution
- Responsible Financial and Monitoring Officers
- Established structure of Authority and Committee meetings, each with formal Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Scrutiny by Members e.g. Performance and Overview Committee responsible for thematic agendas such as Finance, Risk, Equality and Diversity, Performance Management, Health and Safety
- Integrated Corporate and Financial planning processes with regular reporting
- Treasury Management Strategy
- A refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance Action Plan reviewed by the Governance and Constitution Committee.
- Policies which govern the activities of the Authority, overseen by the internal Policy Approval Group (PAG)
- Risk Management Board responsible for maintaining and championing an effective Risk Management Policy, framework and Corporate Risk Register
- Published Anti-Fraud, Corruption, Whistle-blowing and Complaints policies and procedures
- Medium term financial planning and budget management processes.

[CFRS Vision, Mission, Core values](#)

[IRMP](#)

[Treasury Management Strategy](#)

[Whistle-blowing Policy](#)

- Performance Management Group which is responsible for monitoring and reviewing organisational performance including the Corporate Performance Scorecard setting out the Authority's key indicators
- A dynamic, intelligent training programme which is tailored to the development needs of the Authority's frontline staff
- Appraisal and personal development programmes
- IRMP Programme Board which monitors and challenges performance of key programmes and projects
- Established Health and Safety policies
- Partnership Steering Group
- ICT Steering Group which provides strategic direction for the Authority's ICT and Information Management and Security policies
- SMT which considers all financial issues
- Information Governance
- Code of Conduct
- Crisis Management Plan

Engaging with our Communities

Extensive efforts are made to engage with the communities and stakeholders of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. A comprehensive twelve week programme of community consultation and stakeholder engagement is carried out each year to seek feedback on the Authority's key priorities and proposals set out in its draft annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). IRMP 12 covered the period ending **31st March 2016**.

[IRMP](#)

The principles by which the Authority carries out consultation are set out in the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and on key issues the Authority works with the Consultation Institute to assess its performance against best practice.

Identifying and Communicating the Authority's vision

Following a period of public consultation the Fire Authority formally approved the publication of the new Five Year Strategy "Planning for a Safer Cheshire" at its meeting 17th June 2015. The Authority's vision remains "A Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies" and the Strategy sets out the approach to achieving that vision in the context of the challenges and risks faced by the organisation.

[Five Year Strategy](#)

Risk Management:

The Risk Management Framework and Policy is reviewed by Risk Management Board (RMB) annually. In 2015 there was a full refresh of the framework resulting in the policy and the practitioner's guidance being produced as two separate documents. The Corporate Programme Office (CPO) worked closely with RW Training who agreed to be our 'critical friend' and reviewed both documents for compliance/best practice. The following feedback was received from RW Training:

'A full review of both the policy/strategy and practitioner documents has been completed and a few areas for improvement have been identified, both documents are really well written, very understandable and comprehensive'

Risk Management Board accepted the new Framework at the October meeting and the policy and framework was approved by the Policy Committee December 2015. The framework ensures all strategic, service plans, programme and project risks are

assessed against the achievement of objectives. RMB review the strategic risk register regularly.

Equality and Inclusion

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has been using the Fire and Rescue Equality Framework to assess its equality performance since its launch six years ago, it has proved to be an invaluable tool. The Authority achieved the highest level of the equality framework 'Excellent' in 2011 and is looking for reaccreditation in 2016/17. Evidence is currently being compiled and the Authority is working hard to secure an 'Excellent' rating.

[Equality and diversity](#)

Stonewall

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service has once again been praised by the leading LGBT charity Stonewall. The Authority has been a Diversity Champion since 2009 and has featured in the top 50 of Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index Top 100 for the last four years. In 2016 the Authority ranked 13th and was the highest placed of any of the emergency services in the UK.

[Stonewall Top Employers 2016](#)

The Environment

The Authority has an ambitious carbon reduction target of 40% by 2020. Significant progress has been made over the last year and to date the Authority has achieved a carbon reduction of 1071 tonnes. A major HQ boiler replacement programme has proved particularly successful in reducing carbon emissions and generating income through the Government's incentive programmes. Successful grant applications have enabled the leasing of a fleet of electric vehicles and the installation of charging points at key fire stations. The pilot project will continue during 2016-17 to assess the viability of a longer term commitment by the Authority to the use of electric vehicles in its fleet.

[Environmental Strategy 2014 - 2020](#)

Working in Partnership



In 2013 the Authority was appointed the lead agency for a sub-regional Community Safety Transformation Programme "Transforming Community Safety (TCS). This Programme involved a collaboration of **Cheshire Probation Trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS)** and the **four Local Authorities** in Cheshire, Warrington and Halton. The programme which ended in March 2016 achieved its objective of implementing a 'Do it Once' approach to community safety resulting in consistency of practice across a number of areas.

The TCS programme's work to join up residents most likely to be affected by community safety issues with those characterised as 'troubled families' resulted in a bid for a programme to tackle Complex Dependencies (CD). This secured a £5 million Transformation Challenge Award from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Programme began in April 2015 and has a core team based at North West Fire Control in Warrington, including dedicated staff from CFRS. The Authority has agreed to part fund three fire service posts to work in each of the integrated front door teams, which are to be located in each local authority area, building on the model already in place in Cheshire West and Chester.

A number of the priority work streams which featured within the TCS Programme will continue to progress during 2016-17 as part of the Complex Dependency (CD) programme and this will enable work on Domestic Abuse and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) to progress in a way that will go beyond original ambitions of the TCS programme.

National Campaigns

Smoke Alarm Campaign

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) played a leading role in a three year campaign to achieve Government commitment to bring in new safety legislation making it compulsory for all landlords to fit smoke alarms on every floor of a rented property. In 2015 the Authority saw the successful culmination of the campaign when Parliament approved the new legislation and it played a leading role in marketing and promoting the new requirements to both private landlords and their tenants.

North West Fire Control (NWFC)

The North West Fire Control Project facilitates a unique collaboration between four partner fire and rescue services Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. Over the past year the Authority has continued to work closely with NWFC and the partners to resolve issues and, where possible, devise collaborative solutions. Quarterly statistical performance data is sent from NWFC to each FRS for scrutiny by the Authority and by Members of the Performance & Overview Committee.

Blue Light Collaboration Programme (BLC)

The aim of this programme is to ensure that the three emergency services responsible for protecting the communities of Cheshire have a shared commitment to improving the safety of our residents. Cheshire is currently safer than it has ever been but maintaining those improvements while also making major savings to cope with cuts in central funding is a significant challenge. The programme sets out to ensure that through working together more closely and sharing some resources and premises real efficiencies can be achieved as well as delivering a more joined-up service to local communities.

During 2015-16 a specific programme team was established and a detailed work plan developed with the ultimate aim of the Authority moving from its current Headquarters to share accommodation and facilities at the Constabulary's nearby Headquarters in Winsford by April 2018. The move is designed to make efficiencies by combining common systems and processes and the majority of support service areas.

At its meeting on 9th December the Fire Authority approved more detailed preparation work on the Blue Light Collaboration Programme to go ahead. Work will continue in 2016-17 on ensuring the correct governance is in place to deliver both the programme vision and the effective future management of the services required by the organisation.

Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited (FRIC)

The Authority works in partnership with eight other Authorities to provide protection against claims made against the Authority and to ensure that the Authority fulfils its requirements to have the appropriate insurance cover in place. The partnership also informs the Authority's risk management activities.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Cheshire Fire Authority has a responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control, at least annually. This is informed by the assurances of senior officers within the Authority, who have responsibility for the development, maintenance and management of the governance and internal control arrangements.

Cheshire Fire Authority is made up of twenty-three elected Members appointed by the constituent Authorities. There are also non-elected independent members who act in an advisory role and do not vote.

The Authority operates with the following main Committee structure:

- Policy Committee
- Performance and Overview Committee
- Governance and Constitution Committee
- Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee
- Staffing Committee

Terms of Reference for each Committee are subject to regular review.

The Authority has a Health Safety & Welfare Committee which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

[Health Safety and Welfare](#)

Member Champions

Member Champions are assigned to a number of thematic areas to provide additional scrutiny and challenge as highlighted previously, these include risk, equality, ICT, young people, older people and the environment.

The Service Management Structure

The operations of the Authority are directed through a clear management structure with defined roles and responsibilities. The Policy Approval Group (PAG) comprises of the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Head of Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) and Head of Finance, Section (151 Officer). For the majority of 2015-16 the Authority also had an Assistant Chief Fire Office role which was removed in February 2016 as part of a senior management restructure.

The full Service Management Team (SMT) is made up of PAG and Heads of Department. SMT is responsible for delivering the aims and objectives that focus on the achievement of the Cheshire Fire Authority's vision. This includes the key priorities which reflect community, regional and national issues.

Monitoring Officer:

During the 2015 – 2016 financial year the Head of Legal and Democratic Services fulfilled the statutory role of Monitoring Officer for the Authority, ensuring all actions taken were lawful.

Chief Finance Officer:

For the financial year 2015 – 2016 the Head of Finance had responsibility for day to day financial management in accordance with CIPFA guidance and responsibilities set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

How we performed during 2015 – 2016 - Performance Management:

As part of the corporate planning process the Authority sets out the key corporate performance indicators which measure the delivery of its strategic objectives and provide key business intelligence to help target prevention and protection activities. Targets are set where appropriate to ensure continuous improvement and evaluation. Achievements against these indicators are scrutinised quarterly by the Performance and Overview Committee and Performance Management Group and annually by the Fire Authority.

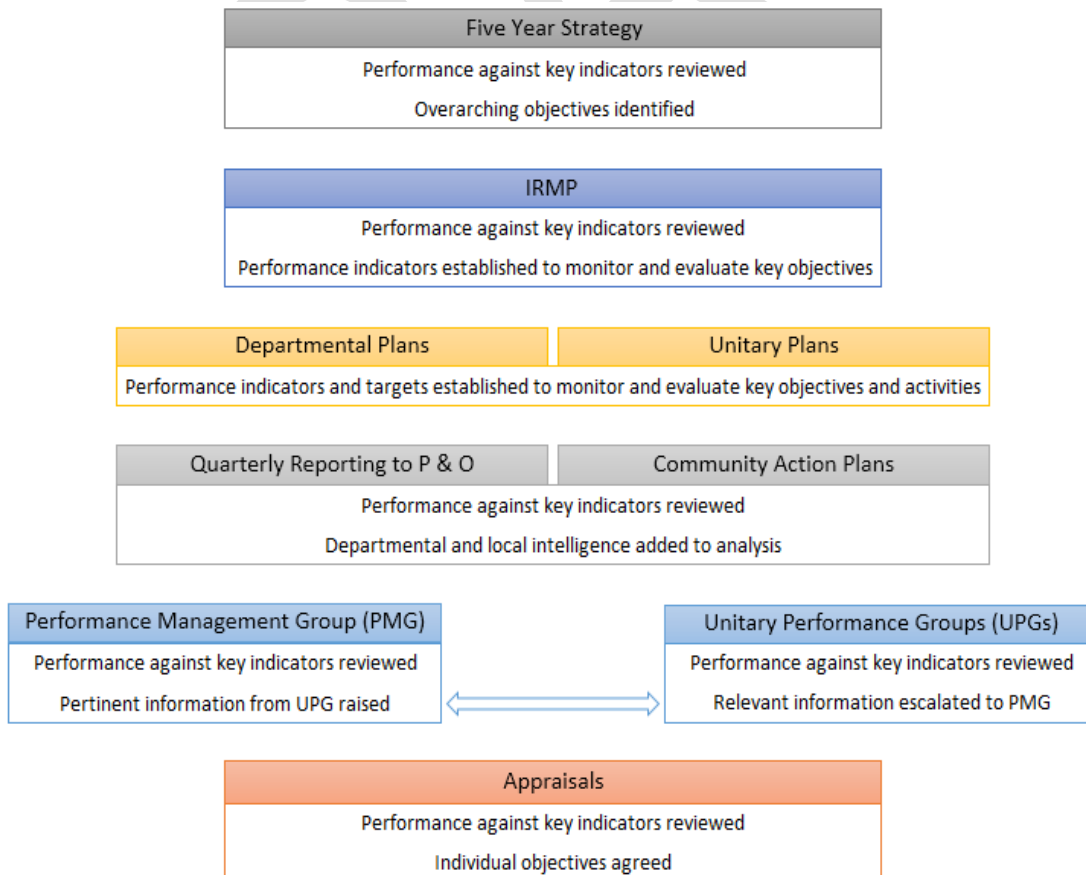
[Corporate Scorecard 15-16](#)

Performance relating to the handling of calls by North West Fire Control is also monitored quarterly, in line with agreed standards.

The Annual Report sets out how the Authority has performed over the last 12 months.

[Annual Report](#)

The diagram below presents the CFRS performance reporting model in place for 2015-16:



Monitoring and Reporting:

The Authority has an approved process of quarterly performance and financial monitoring and reporting highlighting progress against projects and activities, budget and performance indicators identified within Departmental, Unitary and Community Action Plans. These reports are presented to Members of the Authority in line with a corporate reporting cycle.

Value for Money Reviews:

The Authority's previous four year strategy committed to carrying out departmental reviews across the organisation; 2013-14 was the last year of the three year cycle and focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided. The underpinning principle of the reviews was the Authority's duty to make best use of its resources in improving the quality of life for its communities. A full evaluation of the programme was undertaken in 2015 with the key findings reported to Performance & Overview Committee. The report confirmed expected savings in the region of £1.3m by the end of 2015-16.

During 2015-16 the first phase of the new organisational review programme was launched with an initial target of delivering a further £1 million in savings. That initial phase produced savings of £700,000 approximately which were removed for the 2016-17 budget.

Key Governance Improvements made during 2015-16:

In last year's AGS the Authority set out a number of improvements it intended to implement during the year. Progress against implementation of these actions is presented to the Governance and Constitution Committee.

The table below summaries progress made to date:

Key Improvement Area	Update Position
There are a number of key policies scheduled for review during 2015-16	Continue during 2016-17
Full review of the Risk Management Policy & Framework will be undertaken in 2015	Complete
Re map of partnerships to clearly determine what is a partnership and what is an arrangement	Work ongoing during 2016-17 with the introduction of a Partnership toolkit which is currently in development and will provide descriptions of partnerships/ collaborations.
Obtain Annual Statement of Assurance of NWFC Governance arrangements for 2014-15	Complete

The following table summarises the improvements identified during the process for 2015-16 by the relevant Governance Principal Owners:

Improvements Identified for 15-16	Lead Department
Policy Management - continue to facilitate comprehensive review of all corporate policies due for review	Legal & Democratic Service/Planning Performance & Communications
Review of Performance Management Framework	Planning Performance & Communications

Internal Audit:

The Authority’s Internal Audit function for 2015-16 was outsourced to Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), and established protocols were put in place for working with External Audit. A risk-based internal audit plan and three year strategy was agreed with senior management and approved by the Authority in 2015. A number of audits were commissioned in line with our risk profile which provided an independent assurance level on the Authority’s control frameworks.

The internal audit team completed a number of compliance and assurance audits during 2015-16 aligned to the approved internal audit plan, which have generally resulted in positive opinions with a small number of recommendations made as a result of their findings. Action Plans have been put in place to resolve the issues and deliver solutions.

Internal Audit Opinion 2015-16:

In accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Director of Internal Audit (HoIA) is required to provide an annual opinion, based upon and limited to the work performed, on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s system of internal control.

The purpose of this Director of Internal Audit Opinion is to contribute to the assurances available to the Accountable Officer and the Authority which underpin their own assessment of the effectiveness of the organisation’s system of internal control. This Opinion will assist the Authority in the completion of its Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

Director of Internal Audit Opinion:

Significant Assurance, can be given that that there is a generally sound system of internal control designed to meet the organisation’s objectives, and that controls are being applied consistently. However, some weaknesses in the design or inconsistent application of controls may put the achievement of particular objectives at risk

[Director of Audit's Opinion and Annual Report \(2015/16\)](#)

All recommendations for improvements identified by Internal Audit are populated on the Authority’s Cheshire Planning System for monitoring and tracking delivery of actions.

External Audit Opinion:

External Audit Opinion will be provided September 2016.

DRAFT

4. Operational Assurance

Evidence Links

Statutory Responsibilities

Fire and Rescue Authorities function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. Links to some of the key legislation/guidance can be accessed below:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Health & Safety At Work Act 1974](#)

Corporate Planning - Integrated Risk Management Planning for Safer Communities

During 2015/16 Cheshire Fire Authority published a new five year strategy, titled 'Planning For A Safer Cheshire 2015-2020'. The strategy clarifies some of the stark choices facing the Authority and outlines the approach and principles adopted to ensure the Authority does not compromise on its commitment to protecting local communities, reducing risk and maintaining firefighters' safety.

[Five Year Strategy](#)

[IRMP](#)

Community Risk Management

Through its Community Risk Management Policy the Service provides risk, intelligence and performance analysis in order to ensure that strategic, tactical and operational activities are evidence-led and fully evaluated. This is achieved by using specialist systems, software, data and skills delivered by the Service's Business Intelligence team.

[CRM Policy](#)

Unitary Area Plans

In addition to and complementing the IRMP, Unitary Area plans are developed for each council area. Each plan is unique to that area and contains the actions the Unitary teams will take in order to reduce risk and improve community safety. These plans are informed by the Community Risk Model which brings together historic incident data, demographic, commercial and external risk factors.

[CE Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[CWAC Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[Halton Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[Warrington Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)

Stakeholder Engagement

The Authority is committed to the involvement of stakeholders in the development of the plans and it encourages this by carrying out a structured consultation programme on its draft IRMP each year. Local communities, partners, staff, representative bodies and other stakeholders are invited to comment to ensure that before any decision is taken all perspectives are taken into account. To enable active and informed participation, data and information relevant to the plan is made available to the public on the Service's website, in consultation packs that are distributed at community roadshow events across Cheshire, and also at key local stakeholder meetings.

Prevention and Protection Assurance

Prevention and Protection managers have an Audit and Assurance function for the Prevention and Protection aspects of the Service. Specific areas of activity aligned to providing assurance against these elements of service delivery include:

- Compliance with the Prevention team's Quality Assurance Framework.
- Compliance with BS EN ISO 9001 - the provision of the Service's Prevention & Protection services (including fire safety enforcement, fire investigation, business safety, unwanted fire signal and arson reduction initiatives, home fire safety, road safety, youth and community cohesion activities) has been assessed and accredited to BS EN ISO 9001:2008
- Compliance with the Matrix standard – the Service's provision of the Prince's Trust Team Programme has been assessed and is accredited to the Matrix international quality standard for organisations that deliver information advice and/or guidance.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – further detail on how we discharge our responsibilities under fire safety legislation can be accessed via our website.
- Customer surveys are undertaken as part of the Audit and Home Safety Assessment processes.

[Fire Safety advice for Businesses](#)

Performance Management – How we performed during 2015-16

A suite of corporate indicators and targets are used to support the Authority and enable Stakeholders to scrutinise delivery of the IRMP.

[Corporate Scorecard 15-16](#)

The Authority publishes all performance and incident data on its website along with the Annual Performance Report to both drive improvement and ensure transparency of its performance. Performance Management is driven through three-tiers of quarterly meetings, Performance & Overview Committee (P&O) chaired by a Member of the Fire Authority, Performance Management Group (PMG) chaired by the DCFO and Unitary Performance Groups in each of the four unitary areas chaired by the Service Delivery Managers.

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

[Annual Report](#)

External Assurance - Operational Peer Assessment

The Authority welcomed the Operational Peer Challenge team to Cheshire in July 2012. The team carried out a general health check and review of leadership, capacity and governance, as well as an assessment of a number of key organisational areas. The Fire & Rescue Service formally moved from DCLG to the Home Office in early 2016. The Home Office are looking at options for Fire & Rescue Services undertaking more formal assessments and inspections and the Authority is keen to take part in any pilot inspection exercises in 2016-17.

[Operational Peer Challenge](#)

Operational debriefs

Operational debriefs are used at both incidents and the Authority's exercises and form part of the quality control system ensuring effectiveness of core activities. These debriefs provide valuable lessons learned which contribute to improving the service provided.

They are undertaken following every incident and at a level which recognises the scale of the incident and also the involvement of other partner agencies. Debriefs will therefore fall into Level 1 Hot debriefs or more in-depth Level II Structured debriefs.

Multi agency incidents will also prompt a multi agency debrief which will be facilitated and reported through the Cheshire Resilience Forum with learning outcomes reviewed and managed through the affiliated Cheshire Emergency Response Collaboration (CERC) group.

Regulation 28 Coroners Report – formerly known as Rule 43 Notices

In accordance with its commitment to ensure a safe and competent workforce, the Authority has conducted a thorough review of policies, procedures and training programmes in response to tragic events nationally. The learning has come from the services directly affected, information notices (**Coroners “Regulation 28” Report**) issued as a result of inquests and recommendations to all FRSs. Regulation 28 reports are used to inform policy and procedural review and to advise on the procurement/upgrade of operational equipment where necessary/appropriate.

Business Continuity – Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Business Continuity is an important part of the Authority’s strategy and a robust programme is well established to ensure responsibilities align to best practice standards, e.g. BS25999-2. Departmental plans which support the Authority’s Crisis Management Plan are maintained and tested regularly. The Crisis Management Plan is owned by the Risk Management Board and reviewed and approved annually.

During 2014-15 there were a number of national strikes by the Fire Brigades Union, therefore the plan has undergone ‘live testing’. Crisis Management Team meetings have been carried out prior to, and after the strikes to plan, prepare and capture any lessons learned. These then inform the Crisis Management Plan.

Business Continuity planning and operational resilience were also tested and proved to be fit for purpose during the recent major incident at Bosley which required a sustained local and regional operational presence over an extended period of time.

Interoperability, Resilience and Safety

A comprehensive range of risk intelligence data and information is taken into account as part of the risk identification and analysis process underpinning the IRMP. This includes Community Risk Registers, with the Authority having a leading role in the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum (CRF) which focuses on interoperability and joint planning with other emergency services using the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability (JESIP) principles.

CRF structures, policies and practices were reviewed and amended in 2013 to better reflect the changing make up of partner agencies. Governance is managed through a monthly meeting cycle of the Management Group which reports twice yearly to the CRF Executive Group.

Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow mutual assistance arrangements to be agreed with neighbouring Services to improve resilience and capacity in border areas. Cheshire Fire Authority has in place contractual agreements with the following bordering Fire Authorities for response to life risk incidents:

- Merseyside
- Staffordshire
- Shropshire

- Derbyshire
- Greater Manchester
- North Wales

The creation of the North West Fire Control has also led to agreement between Lead Principal Officers (POs) from the four FRSs (Greater Manchester, Cumbria, Lancashire & Cheshire) on an additional set of mobilising and charging rules which allow for mobilisation and support to a wider range of Over the Border (OTB) incident types.

Health and safety

The Authority seeks to comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 in managing its health and safety (H&S) duties.

The Authority has a H&S management system based on Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidance. As part of this we have clearly defined management responsibilities; as far as reasonably practicable we assess and manage the risks arising from our activities, we consult our employees on matters affecting H&S, we provide training and information to our employees, we report and investigate all accidents with the intention of preventing a recurrence and have in place arrangements to respond to any emergency that occurs at work.

As part of the H&S Management System there are annual audits of the health and safety arrangements. An audit and inspection policy is in place which includes:

- Quarterly workplace inspections
- Three themed audits scheduled annually and undertaken by the Health and Safety team
- Three year external Peer Review of the H&S management system and themed performance indicators based on Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents Quality Safety Audit (ROSPA) (QSA)

These audits and inspections inform our annual review of H&S Policy and performance. They also contribute towards an annual H&S report submitted to the Authority Performance and Overview Committee.

[Annual Health and Safety Report 2015](#)

Firefighter Fitness

The Authority has had a policy to ensure fitness of its operational staff for some time; in December 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) approved an addendum to the National Framework for England in relation to firefighter fitness. Also in 2014 the Chief Fire Officers Firefit Steering Group published the results of research it had commissioned into an appropriate national fitness standard for Firefighters.

[Firefighter Fitness Addendum](#)

In early 2015 the Authority proposed amendments to its then current fitness policy to align it to the National Framework requirements and those of CFOA national guidance on firefighter fitness. This amended document was approved in March 2015 and adopted in June 2015 following consultation with the Health and Safety Committee.

[Firefighter Fitness Policy](#)

The Authority has recruited a fulltime Fitness Advisor to lead on supporting firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing for all operational staff takes place annually.

As part of an assurance audit the Authority asked the auditors to look at the compliance with the National Framework requirements on management of firefighter fitness. The report concluded that the Authority complied with requirements.

Operational Training

The operational training strategy was formally launched in 2012. This strategy is underpinned by a number of specialist training policies and together these deliver a competence training framework covering a three year training cycle.

[Operational Training Strategy](#)

All new firefighters attend basic training which is broken down into modules and each module is assessed. As the newly appointed firefighter enters their development phase of their career they are enrolled and registered with the awarding body Edexcel on to a level three National Vocational Qualification Diploma, Operations in the Community. Assessed by competent qualified vocational assessors the firefighters meet the assessment criteria of National Occupational Standards and achieve competence within three years.

All front line operational staff, inclusive of new starters also attend refresher training. Breathing apparatus refresher training, which takes place in dedicated 'hot fire' conditions is scheduled annually and the Authority ensures that 100% of all eligible staff attend.

Compartment fire behaviour training capability is refreshed every two years and a joint venture with Manchester Airport Fire Service and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service commenced in June 2013 whereby all three services use training facilities at the airport to train and assess gas cooling and backdraft awareness skills, knowledge and understanding. This collaboration is proving to be successful and effective and has underpinned the Authority's operational capability to deal safely and competently with severe compartment scenarios. Once again the Authority ensures 100% of all eligible staff attend.

Road traffic extrication techniques, trauma care, hazardous materials, swift water rescue and working safely at height skills are refreshed over a three year period. The Authority ensures that a third attend each year with a target set to achieve 100% of all eligible staff attendance after three years.

To enhance the teaching and training capability of the instructional staff, all have now achieved or are in the process of achieving the level three award in education and training.

The Operational Training Group (OTG) also manages the Authority's Accredited Centre; currently Edexcel and Skills for Justice are the awarding bodies. Visits by external standards verifiers annually assess and confirm that the Authority operates to and maintains the awarding standards and this assists OTG in quality assuring its planning, delivery and review of training.

As well as external verification OTG also review all operational training delivery against its policies and annual training plan to assess its effectiveness and to ensure that the requisite number of operational personnel have attended these continuous professional development programmes.

Managers are all trained and assessed for their skills, knowledge and understanding in Incident Command. A dedicated Command Training Group (CTG) of vocationally qualified Officers plan, deliver and assess these training programmes. The quality of the Incident Command Training within the Service has attracted business from

several other Fire & Rescue Services including Cumbria, Shropshire and Nottinghamshire as well as several high risk industries.

DRAFT

5. Assurance Conclusion

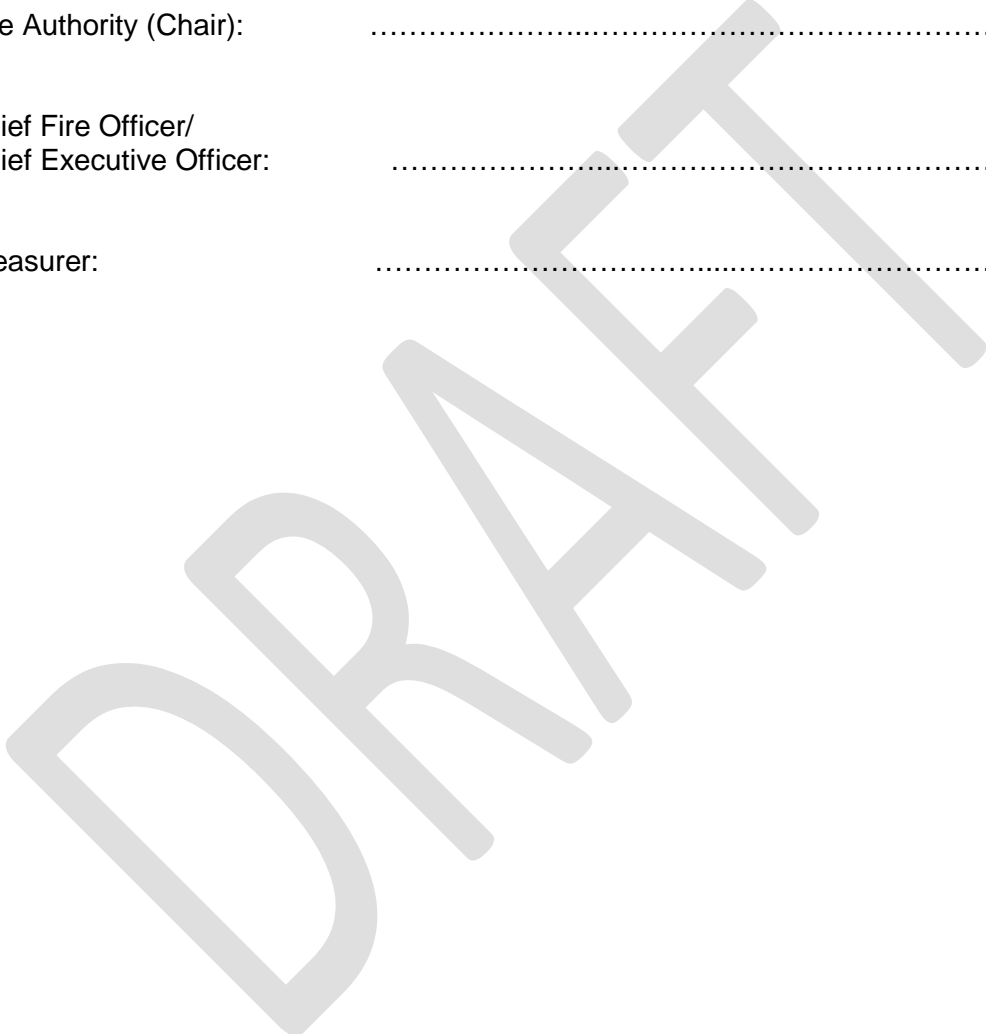
This Statement of Assurance provides an accurate account of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority's Financial (and associated documentation), Governance and Operational Assurance arrangements to 31st March 2016. In addition we are satisfied that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority conducted its business practices within the appropriate legal framework and standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Signatures:

Fire Authority (Chair):

Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive Officer:

Treasurer:



CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AUTHOR : HEAD OF FINANCE

SUBJECT : Efficiency Plan and Four Year Funding Settlement

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Members' approval to apply to the Government in relation to the offer of a four year funding settlement.

Recommended: That

- [1] Members approve the draft Efficiency Plan for 2015-16 to 2019-20; and
- [2] the Authority applies to the Government in relation to the offer of a four year funding settlement.

Background

2. When the Government announced the settlement of funding for local authorities for 2016-17 in December 2016, it included a four year funding settlement up to 2019-20. It announced at the time that authorities would be able to agree with the Government to fix this level of funding. This was subsequently confirmed by a letter to the Authority from the Minister for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims. A copy of this letter is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
3. As can be seen in the letter, in order to access the offer of a four year settlement, the Authority must publish an Efficiency Plan by October 2016. The Annex to the letter explains the issues which the Minister expects the Efficiency Plan to address. At the same time, the Government is considering the continued participation of fire authorities in the Business Rates Retention scheme and this may have an impact on future funding arrangements.

Information

4. The four year settlement for the Authority is shown below in Table 1. The amount due under the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) in the four years 2016-17 to 2019-20 drops by around £2.7m, or 17%.

Table 1: Four year settlement

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Settlement Funding Assessment				
Baseline Funding - Business Rates / Top Up	8,666	8,836	9,097	9,388
RSG	7,370	5,496	4,513	3,927
Settlement Funding Assessment Total	16,036	14,333	13,610	13,315

5. In the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the reduction in SFA is, in part, offset by assumed growth in Council Tax, based on an annual increase in precept of 1.99% and an annual increase in tax base of 1%. The latest MTFP shows Council Tax estimated to increase in the same four year period by about £2.6m. Allowing for other adjustments, the total amount of funding reduction over the four years is estimated to be about £850k, or about 2%.
6. There are two elements to SFA, Revenue Support Grant and Baseline Funding Level. Revenue Support Grant is entirely controlled by Government and can therefore be fixed. Baseline Funding Level is further split into Business Rates Baseline, paid by local authorities, and Top Up Grant paid by the Government. Business Rates can be volatile and may be subject to change in any year, so the final position on Business Rates may mean that the final overall funding position differs from that shown in the four year settlement agreement. However, the four year settlement does offer some certainty for planning, and in the event of an economic downturn does offer some protection to the Authority's core funding. As can be seen in the Minister's letter, if the Authority chooses not to accept the offer, then it would be subject to an annual settlement, which would be affected by the economic position each year at the point the settlement was determined. This could lead to a risk of reduced settlements.
7. From a planning perspective, to not accept the four year settlement would mean that the Authority's MTFP would be based on estimates derived from economic forecasts and policy statements by Government, as has happened in the past, which can lead to a higher risk of uncertainties associated with the MTFP. It is therefore recommended that the Authority accepts the Government's offer of a four year settlement to reduce risk to the Authority and introduce as much certainty into the financial planning process as possible.

8. The Government is currently consulting on business rates retention in local authorities. If, after the consultation closes the government removes fire authorities from the business rates retention scheme, it is unclear what impact this might have on the four year settlement agreement.
9. Attached to this report as Appendix 2 is a draft copy of the Efficiency Plan the Authority would need to submit to the Home Office and publish on its website with a view to securing the four year settlement. It is based on the most recent MTFP and explains how the Authority has calculated the level of savings it needs to make to balance its budget to 2019-20, and then describes how it intends to make those savings. In particular it explains that considerable proportions of previous and future savings are derived from the introduction of more flexible working arrangements and greater use of on call firefighters. In addition it describes the estimated capital programme and how that programme is intended to be funded.
10. The Plan goes on to address other issues in the Minister's letter by explaining how the Authority intends to collaborate with partners; how it publishes its performance information; how it plans to use its reserves; and it also commits to monitoring the Plan itself.

Financial Implications

11. This report is financial in nature.

Legal Implications

12. There are no specific legal implications to consider.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. There are no equality and diversity implications to consider.

Environmental Implications

14. There are no environmental implications to consider.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Letter from the Minister for Policing, Fire, Criminal Justice and Victims

Appendix 2 – Cheshire Fire Authority Efficiency Plan

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Home Office

Rt Hon Mike Penning MP
Minister for Policing, Fire,
Criminal Justice and Victims

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/home-office

24 May, 2016

Dear Fire Authority Chair,

Fire and Rescue Authorities' Efficiency Plans

As announced last year, the Government is offering single purpose Fire and Rescue Authorities firm four-year funding allocations to 2019-20 in return for robust and transparent efficiency plans. This will provide funding certainty and stability to enable more proactive planning of service delivery and to support strategic collaboration with local partners.

I am offering flexibility to Fire and Rescue Authorities on the format of your efficiency plans, but it is important that they should be locally-owned and published in a way which allows for transparency and progress to be scrutinised by local people.

I have set out some requirements for applying to accept this offer in the attached annex. It remains open to any Fire and Rescue Authority not to apply, and to continue to work on the basis of year-by-year funding allocations.

If you wish to take up the offer of a firm four-year funding allocation to 2019-20 please email Firefunding@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk by **5pm on Friday 14 October 2016** and include a link to your published efficiency plan. Please be aware that we reserve the right to publish such plans to enable greater transparency if needed. We will of course inform you if we intend to do so.

To assist us with the easy identification of key information on forecast income and savings, a simple template will be provided shortly which should be completed and returned to my officials. For further enquiries please contact harsha.thaker1@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk in the Fire Strategy and Reform Unit.

I look forward to hearing from you if you would like to take up the offer.

Rt Hon Mike Penning MP

Annex

Conditions of the multi-year settlement

The Home Office will offer any Fire and Rescue Authority a four-year funding settlement to 2019-20, in return for a robust, transparent and locally owned efficiency plan.

Each efficiency plan should:-

- be published and easily accessible to the public on the fire and rescue authority's website, clearly stating what it contains;
- include the full 4 year period to 2019-20, and be open and transparent about the benefits the plan will bring to both the fire and rescue authority and the local community;
- demonstrate the level of cashable and non-cashable savings you expect to achieve through the Spending Review period, the timetable for delivery, and key risks and mitigation strategies;
- include the approach to increasing collaboration, including with the police and local public sector partners and in relation to procurement;
- demonstrate how more flexible working practices will be achieved, including more effective utilisation of retained firefighters;
- include a commitment to the publication of transparent performance information;
- include a clear strategy for the use of reserves; and
- include a commitment to publishing annual reports on the progress of the efficiency plan alongside the fire and rescue authority's statutory assurance statement, enabling local people to scrutinise progress.

Efficiency plans do not need to be a separate document. They can be combined with Medium Term Financial Strategies or the strategy set out in the guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-flexible-use-of-capital-receipts>) on how you intend to make the most of capital receipt flexibilities if appropriate.

The Government is making a clear commitment to provide minimum allocations for each year of the Spending Review period, should authorities choose to accept this offer.

We reserve the right to publish efficiency plans.

Process for applying for the offer

Interest in accepting this offer will only be considered if a link to a published efficiency plan is received by 5pm Friday 14th October. We will provide confirmation of the offer shortly after the deadline.

Process for those who do not take up the offer

Those Fire and Rescue Authorities that choose not to accept the offer will be subject to the existing yearly process for determining the local government finance settlement. Allocations could be subject to additional reductions dependant on the fiscal climate and the need to make further savings to reduce the deficit.

DRAFT EFFICIENCY PLAN 2015-16 to 2019-20

Introduction

Cheshire Fire Authority (the Authority) has been successful in recent years in maintaining a high quality service whilst the level of financial support from central government has fallen significantly. This Efficiency Plan shows how the Authority is planning to meet the continuing challenge of maintaining service levels and ensuring quality, whilst reducing costs.

The Efficiency Plan explains how the Authority has estimated the likely scale of the efficiency challenge over the years up to 2019-20, and then explains and quantifies the savings programme in place to meet the challenge. It also identifies risks associated with the savings programme and the way in which the Authority intends to mitigate them.

There are a number of other documents which support the Efficiency Plan and these may be found on the Authority's website. In particular, the Authority has in place an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), and a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), both approved by the Authority at its meeting in February 2016. *(Insert links)*. The MTFP has since been revised and the current version is here *(insert link)*.

The Authority has been successful in delivering savings over a number of years. In the five years ending in March 2016 the Authority delivered savings of around £8.7m. Key to this has been the delivery of its Emergency Response Programme (ERP1), which has reshaped the way in which operational services are delivered, including building four new fire stations and a safety centre, and delivered almost £4m in savings. The other key drivers in delivering savings have been other reviews of Service Delivery, for instance a move to riding fours on all appliances, Value for Money Reviews of support services and reviews of the delivery of prevention and protection services.

The scale of the efficiency challenge

The MTFP sets the IRMP in its financial context, looking forward to 2019-20, and so it includes assumptions about future funding and spending. It also determines the level of the efficiency challenge the Authority faces up to 2019-20.

Funding

Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)

In the settlement for 2016-17, the Government provided estimated levels of Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) for each year up to 2019-20. SFA includes Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Baseline Funding (Business Rates paid over to the Authority by local authorities, and a Top Up grant from Government). The Government has asked local authorities to agree this level of funding, with the intention of adding more certainty to financial planning. However, there is likely to be some volatility in the level of Business Rates available as part of Baseline Funding. The level of SFA used in the MTFP is based on the Government's estimates.

Council Tax

In order to set Council Tax, the Authority balances the delivery of services necessary to meet the IRMP with the cost of providing them. In recent years the Authority has raised Council Tax by 1.99% and it is assumed that this will continue for the life of the plan. The Government is now building assumptions about Council Tax increases into its own estimates of local authority funding. No deficit or surplus on Council Tax or Business Rates collection funds is assumed. It is assumed that the tax base on which Council Tax is calculated will grow by 1% in each year

Appendix 1 shows the estimated levels of funding available to the Authority up to 2019-20 from both SFA and Council Tax. As can be seen, whilst the estimated RSG for the Authority reduces significantly over the life of the plan, this is partly offset by estimated increases in Council Tax and Business Rates.

The MTFP and cost pressures

The Authority faces some unavoidable cost pressures which are factored in to the estimates which underpin the MTFP.

Each year there is an assumption of a 1% increase in pay. Other cost pressures relating to pay are increases to National Insurance and pension contributions.

The Authority will complete ERP1 in 2017-18. One key factor which has enabled the delivery of ERP 1 has been the increase of new on call cohorts across the service. This is reflected in increased cost pressures in 2017-18. However, this must be seen in the context of the savings which ERP1 has delivered in reduced wholetime firefighter costs of just under £4m.

The Authority is now considering a second programme of Service Delivery review, Emergency Response Programme (ERP2). This is discussed more fully in the section on savings below. There will be cost pressures in 2018-19 and 2019-20, as a result of changes in duty systems, but overall ERP2 will deliver around £670k net savings, if approved by the Authority.

Other cost pressures include the introduction of an apprentice scheme, estimated at £190k. The cost pressures combine with reductions in funding to produce an efficiency challenge which the Authority needs to make savings to meet.

The Authority has a relatively low level of income which remains fairly stable year on year.

Appendix 2 shows the budget for the Authority for each year up to 2019-20 as estimated in the MTFP, and the financial efficiency challenge which the Authority faces. Appendix 3 shows the cost pressures which the Authority has estimated will arise.

The savings programme

Table 1 shows how the Authority intends to meet its renewed efficiency challenge.

Table 1: Savings programme

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
ERP 1	950		1,700		
ERP 2			506	432	128
VFM/organisational reviews	684	790			304
Management restructure	211		94		
Property related	35				
Supplies and services	77				
ICT efficiencies		110			
Total savings	1,957	900	2,300	432	432

The savings shown in 2017-18 are largely the final elements of the savings to be made as result of ERP1, and represent a reduction in firefighter numbers at wholtime stations, which will lead to the saving of £1.7m. These reductions are made possible by an increased use of on call firefighters and the reconfiguration of firefighting capability as a result of the development of the new fire stations and safety centre.

ERP2 builds on the success of ERP1. It does this by re-assessing the demands which the service faces in the light of the latest business intelligence, and carefully judging how best to deploy resources across the service to ensure that the community is kept safe and incidents are quickly and efficiently dealt with. It recognises the need for flexibility in service delivery, reviewing the numbers and positioning of wholtime firefighters on stations and on specialist activity. It will review and alter duty systems to allow the most productive use of resources. This will ensure that critical risk is successfully managed and the delivery of services to the community is maintained to the necessary standards, whilst costs reduce.

ERP2 will also review the management structure in place to support the delivery of operational activity. In doing so it will ensure that a responsive and sufficient management capability is maintained across the service. The specific proposals which contribute to ERP 2 remain to be agreed by the Authority and will be consulted on in autumn 2016. The proposals and the level of savings they will achieve if agreed are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: ERP2 proposals

Item	£000
Changes to Flexible Duty Rota	268
Revision to Nucleus Duty System	240
Review of special appliances	188
Review of duty system at Penketh Fire Station	370
Total potential savings	1,066

ERP2 will focus on the Service Delivery team whose primary role is to respond to incidents. Other areas of the Authority's business will be subject to Value for Money Reviews. Those relating to ICT systems and support services will be viewed in the context of the Authority's collaboration with the Police (please see the paragraph on collaboration for more details). By undertaking these reviews, and identifying optimum resource levels, the Authority will deliver the savings required to meet the efficiency challenge whilst maintaining a safe service to the community.

Risks in delivering the savings

The Authority recognises that there are risks to the delivery of its savings programme. Some of the key risks relating to the savings programme and the way in which they are mitigated are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Assessment of risk related to savings.

Saving	Risk	Mitigation
ERP1/2	Reductions in numbers of Firefighters leads to unacceptable risk levels Delays in programme delivery	Use of Business Intelligence to model risk. Development of new crewing arrangements offering greater flexibility. Maintaining focus on prevention and working collaboratively to target risk in the community. Effective programme management. Robust level of reserves to manage programmes not aligned with budget savings targets, and delays to programmes
VFM/organisational reviews	Reduction of staffing to unacceptably low levels	Effective VFM technique. BLC programme leading to more resilience
Management restructure	Reductions in management support leads to unacceptable risk levels	Use of Business Intelligence to model risk. Effective incident related training. Clear definition of management responsibilities.
ICT efficiencies	Failure of ICT systems to support the service	Effective ICT strategy BLC programme leading to more resilience

Capital Expenditure

Table 4 shows the estimated capital expenditure of the Authority up to 2019-20, along with the funding plan.

Table 4: Capital expenditure

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Capital Expenditure	6,059	12,921	3,935	2,056	2,065
Capital Expenditure Funding					
Capital Receipts	61	55	55	55	55
Reserves	3,078	10,291	3,880	2,001	2,010
Government grants & other contributions	2,920	2,576			
Total funding	6,059	12,922	3,935	2,056	2,065

In 2016-17 the capital element of ERP1 will be completed, which accounts for the significant spike in spending in that year. The remainder of the capital programme consists mainly of the purchase of vehicles and equipment. The Authority is not intending to borrow to fund its capital expenditure programme, but rather use a combination of government grant, reserves and capital receipts. The revenue implications of the capital programme are contained within the revenue element of the MTFP.

The Authority is also investigating the potential development of an improved training facility, as it seeks to enhance its training capability. This has not yet been agreed, so no costs relating to it are included in this plan, but if approved it will add significantly to the capital programme in future years. It is the intention to fund any capital costs relating to the Training Centre from reserves.

Collaboration

The Authority has agreed an ambitious programme of collaboration with Cheshire Police, and delivery of the programme is well under way. As a result the two organisations will share a Headquarters and support services. It is not anticipated that this will lead to substantial cashable savings for the Authority. However, the close proximity of the management teams will lead to a more cohesive approach in delivering services. In addition, support teams in both organisations have previously reduced in size to meet the need for savings, and the collaboration will deliver a significant increase in resilience. It is anticipated that future collaborative opportunities for the two organisations will emerge as joint working becomes the norm.

The Authority, the Police and the North West Ambulance Service have also commissioned a joint review of their estates with a view to a further rationalisation. Services are already successfully delivered from shared sites, for example all three blue light services operate out of the Authority's on call fire stations at Poynton, and the Authority and North West Ambulance Service (NWS) share sites at Winsford, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Ellesmere Port and Sandbach, and

share facilities at Poynton, Nantwich and Birchwood. It is likely that there will be further opportunities for working out of shared sites identified by the review, particularly following the model of the successful tripartite arrangements at Poynton.

In addition, the extent of potential collaboration in training between the Authority and Cheshire Police is being investigated as part of the consideration of improved training facilities mentioned in the previous section.

Broader collaboration with partners across the public sector but particularly in the health sector will help the Authority to develop new and improved preventative activity in the community. In particular the Authority is introducing more comprehensive home visits and is working on an initiative to be first responder to cardiac arrests. The Authority also works in partnership with NWAS to gain entry to properties which they are unable to access. These initiatives will not deliver any cashable savings to the Authority but it is anticipated that they will lead to wider savings and more efficient working across the public sector

In partnership with Greater Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria FRS, the Authority has developed the North West Fire Control which mobilises all four service to incidents.

Performance Information

The Authority produces quarterly performance information which is reported to Performance and Overview Committee and is available on the Authority's website. This includes a "corporate scorecard" which is a simple presentation of the Authority's performance, and comprehensive management accounts information. In addition to this, the Authority produces the following documents:

- An annual Statement of Assurance
- An annual Governance Statement
- An annual Statement of Accounts
- Information on payments, salaries and contracts as required by the Transparency Code
- A Treasury Management Report
- Quarterly Internal Audit reports, showing progress on the Internal Audit programme and highlighting recommendations

Reserves Strategy

Reserves are essential to ensure the financial stability of the Authority. The Authority has in place a reserves strategy, and a summary of the estimated use of reserves up to 2019-20 is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Use of reserves

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
General Fund Balance	6,467	6467	5,267	5,267	5,267
Earmarked General Fund Reserves	29,290	30,242	16,808	12,797	10,828
Expected Use of Earmarked Reserves	(952)	14,634	4,011	1,970	3,398

It is the Authority's policy to use reserves to fund its capital programme. As can be seen there is a significant reduction in the level of reserves estimated by the end of 2016-17. Of the estimated use of reserves of around £15m in this year, an estimated £13m will be used to fund the capital element of ERP1 and other capital expenditure. Similarly in 2017-18 the estimated use of reserves to fund capital expenditure is around £4m. The Authority will continue to fund its capital programme and one off costs in relation to its IRMP, and other revenue items, by judicious management of its reserves.

Reserves will also be used where necessary to ensure that any part of the savings programme where the achievement of the savings is delayed will not cause immediate budgetary issues. Reserves will also be used where necessary to fund invest to save initiatives, and to fund key prevention activities such as the fitting of smoke alarms.

Monitoring of the Efficiency Plan

The Efficiency Plan will be regularly monitored and updated on an annual basis. An annual report will be produced detailing progress against the plan.

Appendix 1: Estimated Funding 2015-16 to 2019-20

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Settlement Funding Assessment					
Baseline Funding - Business Rates / Top Up	8,594	8,666	8,836	9,097	9,388
RSG	8,843	7,370	5,496	4,513	3,927
Settlement Funding Assessment Total	17,437	16,036	14,333	13,610	13,315
Adjustment for Local Business Rate share (NNDR1) to DCLG Figure	105	149	0	0	0
Council Tax Forecast					
Band D Council Tax	23,655	24,513	25,541	26,314	27,111
Actual / Assumed Council Tax base increase on previous year	388	530	260	268	276
Yearly Council Tax Precept Increase	470	498	513	528	544
Collection Fund (council tax & business rates)	328	304	0	0	0
Estimated Total Council Tax Income	24,841	25,845	26,314	27,111	27,931
Total Funding	42,383	42,030	40,647	40,721	41,246
	%	%	%	%	%
Council Tax Band D Precept Increase	1.99	1.99	1.99	1.99	1.99
Growth in Council Tax Base Yield to Previous Year	1.61	2.16	1.00	1.00	1.00

Appendix 2: MTFP and financial challenge

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Total Employee Costs	30,303	29,635	30,909	29,096	29,149
Total Non Pay Bill Costs	15,759	15,210	13,862	13,804	14,276
Total Costs	46,062	44,845	44,772	42,900	43,425
Total income	1,722	1,915	1,825	1,746	1,746
Net cost of the service	44340	42,930	42,947	41,154	41,679
Total Funding (from Appendix 1)	42,383	42,030	40,647	40,721	41,246
Financial Challenge Before Efficiencies	1,957	900	2,300	433	433

Appendix 3: Cost pressures

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employee cost pressures					
Pay Award	310	298	305	286	285
Apprentice levy			152		
Changes to National Insurance/Pensions	186	149	60		500
ERP1 on call cohorts	300	100	50		
ERP 2 duty system changes				200	200
Non Employee cost pressures					
Inflation	215	230	203	225	235
New stations revenue impact	203	179	280		
Apprentice scheme			190		
Premises	81				
Other cost pressures	129	14	320	300	300
Total cost pressures	1,424	970	1,560	1,011	1,520

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
AUTHOR : SIAN CORRIGAN

SUBJECT: PUBLICATION OF ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Purpose of Report

1. The Fire Authority is committed to keeping residents, businesses and partners informed and involved in the development of its services and policies. Part of that commitment involves ensuring that the communities it serves can easily access details about the organisation's costs, performance and progress.
2. This report seeks approval to publish the Annual Report for 2015-16 which incorporates:
 - statutory information about the annual Statement of Accounts
 - summary information about key areas of performance over the last financial year
 - details and opportunities to comment on future plans and proposals
 - key safety messages and advice.
3. Proofs of the newspaper-style Report have been circulated to Members with the agenda.

Recommended: That

- [1] subject to Members' comments, the Annual Report 2015–16 be approved for publication.

Background

4. There remains both a statutory duty and an expectation on the Fire Authority to publish and widely distribute information about its performance and finances. In fact, a continuing Government drive to increase openness and transparency means there is now an even greater onus on public bodies to provide local communities with information and data to help them scrutinise and challenge effectively.
5. To help satisfy these requirements and at the same time to promote key safety campaign messages, the Authority has again agreed to produce a newspaper-style Annual Report and distribute copies to all 490,000 homes and businesses in the Authority's area.

6. The content includes details about key areas of service performance compared over time, together with a summary of the Statement of Accounts which are on the agenda for approval at today's meeting. Also included are updates on the Authority's key safety campaigns and progress on the emergency response programme to build four new fire stations and a dedicated safety centre.
7. The publication has again been designed to have slightly different editions for each of the four unitary council areas. The first seven pages of the publication stay the same, but the back pages contain articles and performance information specific to that area. Members should have received a printed draft of their relevant local edition as well as electronic copies of the other editions.
8. Once approved, an electronic copy of the publication will be published on the Service's website by September 30 - the statutory deadline for publication of the Statement of Accounts. Delivery of printed copies to all 490,000 residential / mixed business addresses in Cheshire will start on October 12 and should be completed within a week.

Financial implications

9. The cost for printing and distribution of the Annual Report can be met from within existing corporate communications budgets and equates to just under 5p per head of population.

Legal implications

10. Publication of the Annual Report 2015-16 by 30th September 2016 will help the Authority fulfil its statutory responsibility in relation to the Statement of Accounts.

Equality and Diversity implications

11. In addition to printed and electronic copies of the Annual Report, copies in other languages and formats will be made available on request.

Environmental implications

12. In recognition of the Authority's environmental commitments, the contract with the printing company has specified the use of paper which satisfies the requirements of the Forestry Stewardship Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

CFA Annual Report 2015-16.

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21 SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AUTHOR : MATTHEW MAGUIRE

**SUBJECT: DRAFT INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT
PLAN 2017-18 (IRMP 14)**

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out the key proposals contained within the 2017-18 draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), including projects that will be implemented over the next four years, as part of the Authority's second Emergency Response Review. The report also gives details about the 12 week consultation, to allow the public, staff and stakeholders the opportunity to comment on and shape the proposals.

Recommended: That

- [1] Subject to Members' comments, the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2017-18 (IRMP14) be approved for formal internal and external consultation.

Background

2. The Fire Authority has a legal duty to prepare and publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), setting out the key risks and issues faced by the community and outlining the plans that the Authority intends to pursue and implement in the coming year.
3. In 2015, the Fire Authority approved a five year strategy, 'Planning for a Safer Cheshire', which set out an overarching vision to realise financial savings, while continuing to develop the organisation, expand prevention activities and make changes to emergency response services. The Authority also committed to publishing an annual action plan, or IRMP, each year to ensure proposals and projects remained fit for purpose and relevant. The draft plan that has been circulated covers the financial period 2017-18.
4. Four years ago a comprehensive review of emergency services was carried out and following a major consultation, work began on implementing the programme. This included building new fire stations at Alsager, Penketh, Powey Lane and at Lymm and making changes to crewing systems at a number of other stations.

5. Once the new stations are open, the majority of this first programme will have been implemented and generated just under £4m in savings. Other significant savings include around £2m from Value for Money reserves and the organisational review.
6. In the Five Year Strategy, the Authority committed to undertaking a second emergency response review, to consider all aspects of the Service's frontline emergency response resources. The review has been completed and this new Plan includes a number of proposals which, if approved, will be implemented over the next few years.
7. The Plan also outlines a range of new and ongoing projects, as well as the detailed risk analysis and planning processes which have been carried out to ensure current and future projects continue to meet the Authority's objectives and future financial challenges.

Key issues

8. There are a number of issues and proposals outlined in the Plan which are summarised under the following key headings:
 - Developing the organisation
 - Protecting local communities, and
 - Responding to emergencies

Developing the organisation

- **Blue light collaboration** - completing preparations for phase one of the programme with Cheshire Constabulary, undertaking co-location and transfer of staff in affected departments moving to Clemonds Hey and confirming arrangements to maintain the Service's identity and governance
- **Diversity and Inclusion** - implementing any resultant action plans to respond to the findings of the reaccreditation process for the national Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework
- **Independent assessments** - piloting any new approach to support the re-launched national Fire Service Inspectorate, including thematic inspections of bespoke areas
- **Fire reform programme** – putting in place necessary processes and frameworks to respond to and support the Government's Fire Reform Programme, including supporting a national research and development hub and a procurement hub
- **Increasing transparency** – redevelop the Service's website to ensure up-to-date performance and other information is available and more easily accessible
- **Apprenticeships** – continue to deliver the initial two-year firefighter apprentice scheme and recruit a second cohort in 2017/18
- **Supporting staff** - Implement the actions arising from the 2015/16 Staff Satisfaction Survey Action Plan

Protecting local communities

- **Safe and Well** – roll out the Authority’s programme of 40,000 Safe and Well, visits, delivered in partnership with health agencies, to those aged over 65
- **Targeting and referrals** – continue to refine the Service’s targeting methodology and work with partners to ensure those most at risk are prioritised for Safe and Well visits and home safety assessments
- **Safety Central** – Continue to develop community safety programmes at the Authority’s flagship community safety facility at Lymm, focussed on children and young people and those with caring responsibilities
- **Cadets** – build a second school in Nepal through the partnership with Cheshire Fire Cadets and Classrooms in the Clouds
- **False alarms** – launch a new policy for responding to automatic and false alarms
- **Sprinklers** – work with local partners and the Government to ensure that requirements for the installation of sprinklers in schools remain in place and are actively promoted
- **Primary Authority Scheme** – continue to engage with relevant sectors to explore opportunities to partner under the Primary Authority Scheme for fire safety inspections

Responding to emergencies

- **Emergency Response Programme** – over the next four years, implement the outcomes of the Emergency Response Review according to the timeline, reviewing progress each year through subsequent IRMPs
- **Cardiac Response Scheme** – look to expand and roll out the programme of pilots undertaken with the North West Ambulance Service at four fire stations, where firefighters are mobilised to cardiac arrest incidents
- **Training facilities and stations** – consider options to redevelop the operational training facilities at the Authority’s training centre in Winsford and explore opportunities to redevelop the existing fire station at Chester
- **Emergency services communications** – continue to support and participate in the national programme to renew communications technology for the three emergency services

Consultation

9. Given that the proposals in the Plan are far-reaching and will cover a number of years, it is proposed to continue the Authority’s tried and tested approach of undertaking comprehensive consultation to ensure that the community, staff and stakeholders are able to contribute their views and shape plans. This approach also enables the organisation to

promote key safety messages and raise general awareness of the Service.

10. The formal 12-week consultation will run from 3 October 2016 until Tuesday 3 January 2017. As in previous years, a series of consultation roadshows will take place across all unitary council areas during the 12-week period. Details and locations will be published on the Service's website as soon as arrangements are confirmed.
11. There will also be extensive use made of the website and the Service's social media channels, to encourage online feedback. Key external partners will be contacted directly and encouraged to give their views, while staff consultation will include briefings, roadshows and extensive use of the Service's intranet.
12. Due to the scope of the proposals in the Plan, the Authority will once again be using the Consultation Institute to accredit the consultation approach and process. The Institute worked with the Authority to develop the major consultation undertaken in 2012 as part of the first Emergency Response Review.
13. Emerging issues from the consultation will be presented to Members at their Planning Day in November and again in January. A formal report on the outcomes of the consultation will be presented to the Authority in February 2017.

Financial Implications

14. The consultation and communication costs associated with the development of the action plan for 2016-17 will be met from existing departmental budgets. The assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan, around annual increases in the Authority's Council Tax precept of 1.99%, will feature as part of the consultation.

Legal Implications

15. Publication of the IRMP 2017/18 by 31st March 2017 will fulfil the Authority's statutory responsibility.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. The consultation plan has been developed to maximise opportunities for the Authority to involve and engage with all of Cheshire's communities – particularly those from vulnerable minority and hard to reach communities.
17. The consultation plan incorporates issues highlighted by the full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken to support the communications and community engagement strategies.

Environmental Implications

18. No environmental implications have been identified.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
AUTHOR: GUS O'ROURKE

SUBJECT: PROVISION OF TRAINING FACILITIES -
FUTURE OPTIONS

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents a number of options for the future provision of operational training facilities for the Service.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] consider the options presented;
- [2] endorse option 2A as the preferred option (recognising that this will require the retention of the Authority's Sadler Road site); and
- [3] authorise expenditure up to a maximum of £500,000 to develop Option 2A to the next stage of a detailed business case.

Background

2. The Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) Programme was approved by Cheshire Fire Authority and the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner in December 2015.
3. The original business case for the BLC Programme included a requirement for the development of a new training facility at the Clemonds Hey site (and sale of the Sadler Road site).

Information

4. The Service undertook a detailed review of its operational training requirements and facilities that would need to be relocated to and developed at Clemonds Hey. In order to do so the Service brought together a project team of experienced officers and an external consultant (who is currently supporting the Authority with its new fire station build programme).
5. As a result of the review it became apparent that planning considerations, risks and capital costs associated with certain options meant that they were not viable and therefore these cannot be recommended by officers.

6. Of particular note, it was identified that although achievable to fit some aspects of the Service's existing operational training facilities on the Clemonds Hey site they could not be completely replicated. In addition, a number of cost and ecological issues meant that the re-creation of the Service's training facilities in accordance with the initial scope of the BLC Programme was not a viable option. Details of this option are still included in the Options Appraisal below.
7. The options for the future provision of training facilities for the Service have been presented to Members at their Planning Days.

Options Appraisal

8. Officers identified five possible options for the Service's new training facilities. These are detailed below.
 1. A new training venue at Clemonds Hey which replicates some of the existing facilities at Sadler Road.
 - 1A. A new training venue at Clemonds Hey which replicates all existing training facilities and has some additional facilities which would meet future needs.
 2. Refurbishment of the Service's training facility at the Sadler Road site.
 - 2A. A new training facility at the Sadler Road site, developed and improved to meet future needs.
 3. A joint training facility located at the Sadler Road site for use by both Cheshire Police and the Service.
9. A number of factors were used to help determine a recommendation for Members. A suitable assessment was developed using the criteria listed below:
 - i. Available whole life of facilities.
 - ii. Meeting future training needs.
 - iii. Land ownership.
 - iv. Parking.
 - v. Site Layout.
 - vi. Impact on the environment.
 - vii. Highway access/egress.
 - viii. Speed of delivery.
 - ix. Joint working.
 - x. Temporary accommodation.
10. In addition to the above suitability assessment criteria the initial capital cost and whole life costs were assessed.

11. The review undertaken into all options is contained within a report produced by the Service's planning consultant. The report is comprehensive and takes into account the extensive review work that has been undertaken by the project team (in excess of 100 pages) and can be provided to Members on request. Hard copies will be made available in Member group rooms prior to the meeting.

Option 1 and 1A

12. Option 1 and 1A would involve the development of new training facilities at the Clemonds Hey site. Option 1 would seek to replicate the existing facilities at the Sadler Road site on the land to the rear of the Clemonds Hey building. Option 1A would seek to achieve the same as option 1, but with additional training assets that would enhance the facility.
13. Options 1 and 1A would both include practical training 'outdoor' assets and it was proposed that the incident command training suite would be relocated into the upper floor of the Police's tactical training building.
14. A number of collaboration benefits were identified when this option was researched. However, these were significantly outweighed by cost and a number of risks. These included.
 - Water supply and drainage constraints.
 - Space above the tactical training building (for new ICTS) restricted by structure and requiring fire safety upgrades that made it potentially more costly than erecting a separate building.
 - Carbonaceous discharge/noise/HGV's potentially affecting neighbours.
 - Command training area restrictive and not providing any opportunity for future-proofing or development.
 - A line of established trees that may prove difficult to remove from a planning perspective.
 - Costs being prohibitive. Option 1 cost is estimated at £11.7M and option 1A cost is estimated at £12.6M.
 - A risk that not all required facilities could be built on the site requiring additional training facilities to be constructed and delivered elsewhere at further cost.
15. Consequently, Options 1 and 1A were not deemed suitable by the review team and therefore, cannot be recommended.

Option 2 and 2A

16. Option 2 and 2A would involve the retention of the Sadler Road site. Under option 2 the site would be refurbished. Option 2A includes the retention of the Sadler Road site with site development to significantly improve current facilities and with the capacity to expand the facilities to meet future needs of the Service and specific elements of the Fire Reform Programme.

17. The refurbishment cost of the existing facilities in Option 2 is estimated at £4.33m. It is projected that the subsequent total revenue costs of the site over a 20-year period would be £3.86m. Therefore, the whole life 20-year costs are estimated to be £8.19m. However, it is anticipated that the existing facilities in option 2 would need major refurbishment or replacement in 10 years. This would add at least an additional £1.6m in costs making a comparative whole life cost of £9.79m
18. The capital cost of building new training facilities in, Option 2A, is estimated to be £7.45m with revenue costs over 20 years being £3.86m giving a whole life 20 year cost of £11.3m. However, whilst option 2A may require some refurbishment after 20 years its anticipated minimum lifespan is 20-25 years.
19. Option 2A provides modern and enhanced realistic training facilities.
20. The review team believes that option 2A will provide better long-term value and importantly, significantly greater benefits to firefighter safety and is, therefore, the recommended option.

Option 3

21. Option 3 was discussed with the Police and it is not possible or achievable at this present time. However, approval of option 2 or 2A would mean that it would still be possible to explore joint training in the future.

Next Steps

22. Subject to Members approval, the next steps will involve the production of a detailed business case which will allow the Service to procure a suitable contractor.
23. The procurement methodology and process, previously used to develop the current new fire stations and Safety Centre is likely to be utilised. It will be critical to the programme's success that the facilities are correctly designed, meet the user requirements and provide a suitable solution to manage the construction risks.
24. During this stage the following will be undertaken:
 - Appoint consultants required for the project (quantity surveyor and services engineer)
 - Undertake surveys, such as ground investigation, contamination, topographical, ecological etc.
 - Develop the design brief in conjunction with users
 - Produce draft plans
 - Produce a second stage cost estimate (to a greater detail than the sums currently prepared)
 - Liaise with statutory bodies such as services suppliers (water in particular) and the Environment Agency to ensure the design proposal meets modern regulations.
 - Discuss the programme with the local planning authority
 - Appoint a contractor and its design team

25. This should ensure that the delivery period, following the completion of the business case and approval to proceed, is reduced to a minimum and all the reports necessary to support the planning application are in place.
26. Members will receive further reports at various stages of the project and be asked to make key decisions. e.g. Approval of programme budget and appointment of contractors.
27. It is anticipated that costs up to £500k may be incurred for the production of the detailed business case.

Cheshire FRS Incident Command Training Suite (ICTS)

28. It should be noted that this report and the financial implications do not include any upgrade/refurbishments of the ICTS software or hardware. This facility will in the future need to have its software and hardware upgraded to take advantage of technological developments and to improve the learning experience in the suite. The costs quoted do include building alterations that will benefit the suite, but it is inevitable that new future software and technology will also be required to enhance the suite.

Financial Implications

29. It should be noted that the costings have been identified using figures associated with other fire & rescue service training centre developments. Whilst the costs outlined below are estimates, they are the most accurate costs which can be identified prior to the development of a detailed business case and the conclusion of procurement.
30. Estimated Costs:

Option	Property Revenue Costs over 20 years (at current cost)	Capital Costs	Total Whole Life Costs
Option 2 Sadler Road Refurbishment	£5,464,200 (includes refurbishment after 10 years)	£4,327,050	£9,791,250
Option 2A Sadler Road Enhanced	£3,864,200	£7,457,050	£11,321,250

31. The costs of the approved option will be included in the Authority's Capital Programme. The revenue cost of up to £500k for the production of a detailed business case will be included in the revenue budget and funded from reserves.
32. At present the Service spends approximately £100K sending firefighters and officers to the Fire Service College to undertake realistic training required to develop their skills and to provide the Service with an opportunity to assess them in realistic conditions. It is anticipated that if option 2A is approved this could be carried out 'in-house' within the new training facility, providing a revenue saving.
33. There are risks to VAT recovery on the project build. The Authority is taking advice on these with a view to mitigating them.

Legal Implications

34. Any programme of this nature will require a variety of bought-in skills to support the in-house team. It will be important to secure the right support and ensure that all parties are clear about their roles.
35. The contract associated with the delivery of the new training facilities will be relatively complex due to the nature of the work that will be involved and will be for a significant sum. External legal support may be engaged to help with the procurement and preparation of the contract.

Equality and Diversity Implications

36. The proposed programme will be underpinned by a comprehensive Equality Impact assessment and the development of the programme will be supported by a working group which will include representatives from all operational roles within the Service.

Environmental Implications

37. There will be a requirement to undertake a number of ecology surveys to determine the effect of the proposed development on the wildlife within the site and the surrounding area. Any planning application will need to demonstrate the impact on protected species and the measures to be put in place to protect and develop the habitats required.
38. Due to natural life cycles, most ecological studies of this nature can take several months to complete and have specific seasonal windows in which surveys can be carried out. The investigations made to date suggest that developing the Sadler Road site (Options 2 and 2A) would have a limited ecological impact on protected species, with only bats and nesting birds requiring investigation.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Blue Light Collaboration Business Case
Blue Light Collaboration CFA Paper December 2015
Report of the JESIP Review

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR : ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT : BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides further information about the Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) Programme involving Cheshire Constabulary (CC) and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).
2. It also seeks Member approval to:

Changes to the BLC Programme that was approved by the Fire Authority in December 2015;

Enter into the Programme Collaboration Agreement and the Multi-Force Shared Service documentation.

Note:

This report has been written on the basis that Members will decide to retain the Sadler Road site for the CFRS training requirements as this seems to be inevitable.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Agree the revised scope of the BLC Programme;
- [2] Note the current implementation budget for the BLC Programme;
- [3] Agree the requirement to fund the BLC Programme;
- [4] Note the situation regarding savings from the BLC Programme;
- [5] Note the position concerning the BLC Programme documentation; and
- [6] Authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into the Programme Collaboration Agreement and Multi-Force Shared Service documentation when he is satisfied with the terms.

Background

3. The aspiration for the BLC Programme was summarised in the following paragraph:

By April 2018 Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service will have shared back office support functions delivered from a single shared headquarters site.

4. The Fire Authority decided to proceed with BLC at its meeting in December 2015. It resolved to:
 - Agree the scope of the BLC Programme
 - Note the implementation budget for the BLC Programme
 - Agree the approach to the funding of the BLC Programme
 - Agree the approach to the apportionment of costs and resultant savings from the BLC Programme
 - Confirm the decision-making arrangements associated with the BLC Programme (including decisions that were reserved)
5. Since the Fire Authority decided to proceed a number of changes have occurred which have impacted upon the BLC Programme and require further consideration by Members. There has also been considerable progress with the BLC Programme.

Information

Introduction

6. The sections of this report which appear below follow key elements of the structure of the report to the Fire Authority in December 2015 (the December report).

Rationale for BLC

7. The December report contained a list of reasons why it was believed that the Service needed to change: funding reductions; staff reductions causing concerns about resilience; and the protection of front-line services.
8. The December report also set out a number of reasons why collaboration with CC was appropriate: the same operational area allowing the Authority to maintain the 'Cheshire footprint'; location making amalgamation of teams and headquarters relatively simple; the availability of funding through the Police Innovation Fund; access to the CC shared service arrangement which had capacity to handle the Service's needs; the impending duty to collaborate across the emergency services; and the benefits outlined in the Business Case.

What has changed?

9. Funding from the Police Innovation Fund has not been forthcoming and not all of the benefits outlined in the Business Case will be achieved, e.g. a reduction in the carbon footprint will be a greater challenge with the retention of the Sadler Road site. An application has recently been submitted for Police Transformation Funding. However, this report assumes that no funding will be forthcoming.

Scope of BLC Programme

10. The December report confirmed that the BLC Programme would include the following areas within its first tranche of work:

- Relocation of CFRS headquarters functions to Clemonds Hey;
- Creation of a joint vehicle workshop and associated parking;
- CFRS joining the Multi-Force Shared Service
- The creation of joint back office departments delivering functions to both organisations;
- The identification and agreement of opportunities for co-location across the operational estate;
- Decommissioning of appropriate organisation systems;
- The re-provision of all remaining business areas currently provided at CFRS HQ.

What has changed?

11. The retention of the Sadler Road site. This has a significant impact upon the BLC Programme. As far as the Scope is concerned the first and last bullet points set out above will not be achieved: training and other operational departments and staff will remain at Sadler Road. The matters covered in the other bullet points will continue to be pursued as part of the BLC Programme.

12. The following areas remain outside the scope of the BLC Programme:

- A single command team;
- The development of proposals for joint community safety activities and functions – this is being developed through a separate programme of work;
- Front line services;
- Delivery of operational training;
- Wholesale outsourcing/merger;
- CFRS Democratic Services;
- Section 151 and Monitoring Officers;
- Cheshire Constabulary Professional Standards Department;
- Single organisational governance under the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Relationship and the BLC Programme Documentation

13. The December report included the following paragraph:

Given the investment that needs to be made in order to deliver the BLC Programme and maintain the relationship it is essential that the following matters are properly documented prior to legal commitment:

- (i) The way that the BLC Programme will be delivered and the parties' obligations and responsibilities;*
- (ii) The interest that CFRS will have in the MFSS;*
- (iii) The way that non-MFSS collaborative arrangements will be created, operate and be managed;*
- (iv) The parties' obligations and responsibilities in relation to the joint use of any assets, e.g. the Clemonds Hey HQ; and*
- (v) The ongoing financial arrangements.*

14. The December report envisaged the documentation associated with the BLC Programme being completed by the 31st March 2016.

What has changed?

15. The matters listed above have not all been captured in legal documentation at this point as it has not been possible to finalise all aspects of the BLC. This means that there will be significant financial commitment at a time when there are a number of outstanding issues.

16. There is a near-final Programme Collaboration Agreement which goes a considerable way towards covering the requirements in point (i) in paragraph 13. It describes the key objectives, principles, scope and governance structures associated with the BLC Programme as well as defining the roles and responsibilities of the parties. This is the only legal document that will be in place when commitment is made to secure changes to the Clemonds Hey site. The document envisages a Further Collaboration Agreement which will deal with how the future relationship operates and is managed. The Programme Collaboration Agreement allows the parties to terminate the BLC Programme if agreement cannot be reached on the terms of the Further Collaboration Agreement (with the parties normally expected to share any abortive costs in the following proportions – CC 75% : 25% CFRS).

17. The structure of the documentation governing the Authority's relationship with the other parties to the Multi-Force Shared Service (MFSS) already exists (point ii. in paragraph 13) and appears to provide a sound basis for an ongoing relationship. However, at this stage it is not clear what the cost of the service will be as there are ongoing discussions about the method of delivering the arrangement and the solution that will best serve all of the parties to the MFSS. This is causing a delay to the delivery of this aspect of the BLC Programme.

18. Work to create the non-MFSS joint support services is progressing and will shortly help inform the relevant documentation to describe how the relationship will operate and be managed. This is focusing on the creation of appropriate joint structures and adequate descriptions of service levels. This will ultimately lead to a comprehensive set of documents covering point (iii) in paragraph 13.
19. One of the main assets to be 'shared' was the Clemonds Hey site. However, the retention of Sadler Road means that the proposed 'equity share' offered by the previous Police and Crime Commissioner no longer appears to be necessary or justified. CFRS will retain its asset and will simply have a sub-lease of any fire-specific parts of the Clemonds Hey site (which will in fact be a very small area). The terms of the sub-lease should not be controversial. (point (iv) in paragraph 13).
20. Officers are still working on the financial arrangements that will underpin the BLC. These will be contained in the Further Collaboration Agreement mentioned above (point (v) in paragraph 13).

Financial Aspects of BLC Collaboration

Implementation Costs

21. The December report stated that the total implementation costs were anticipated to be just over £6.6m. They were reported in a table that is replicated below:

Programme Activities	Breakdown of Activities	£m
HQ Move	Extension of Vehicle Maintenance Facilities	3.90
	Extension of Stores	
	Reconfiguration of Office Space	
	Re-provision of Fire Operational Training	
ICT Move	Phase 1 – Staff Convergence at Clemonds Hey	0.40
	Phase 2 – Staff Convergence at Clemonds Hey	
MFSS Implementation	System Integration	1.45
	Licences	
Service Integration	Redundancy Costs	0.18
Project Management	Provisional Sum	0.69
	Contingency	
Total	£6.6m	

What has changed?

22. The decision to retain Sadler Road effectively 'removes' the £2m earmarked for the 'Re-provision of Fire Operational Training' from the original implementation costs. However, rather than the implementation costs now standing at £4.6m, they are currently being reported at circa £5.5m as other elements have increased since the December report e.g.

the 'ICT Move' is now £0.75m. It is fair to say that there remain a number of uncertainties surrounding the implementation costs. However, the figure of £5.5m does now contain elements that have firm figures associated with them.

Contributions Towards Implementation Costs

23. Responsibility for the proportions of the implementation costs has not changed:

CC	CFRS
75%	25%

Funding of Implementation Costs

24. The December report envisaged income from the sale of Sadler Road and an adjacent piece of land owned by CC. It also anticipated Police Innovation Funding. Overall it was hoped that the vast majority of the then reported £6.6m of implementation costs would be funded without using CFRS or CC reserves.

What has changed?

25. As Sadler Road will not be sold, this may well impact on CC's ability to sell its adjacent land. As mentioned above Police Innovation Funding was not forthcoming. At this point it would appear prudent not to account for any funding. Therefore, the BLC Programme is expected to be funded from reserves.

Resultant Annual Savings

26. The December report included the table below showing the range of anticipated resultant annual savings:

Element	4%	Potential
Phase 1	£1.058m	£1.058m
No 'client' functions	£0.127m	£0.127m
Phase 2	£0.280m	£0.560m
Total	£1.465m	£1.745m

27. The benefit of the resultant annual savings is still to be allocated on the basis of a 75%:25% split (CC:CFRS). This was shown in the December report as leading to the following anticipated resultant annual savings for CFRS (between £367k and £436k):

Resultant Annual Savings	Total	CC 75%	CFRS 25%
4%	£1.465m	£1.098m	£0.367m
Potential	£1.745m	£1.309m	£0.436m

28. These figures were indicative, but considered to be achievable. However, it was acknowledged that some decisions could have an impact on the resultant annual savings, e.g. how the relationship would be managed, what level of service was required etc.

What has changed?

29. The decision to retain Sadler Road will mean that there are no savings for CFRS as the site will cost more to run than CFRS's share of the resultant annual savings.

Progress

30. There has been a great deal of progress on the BLC Programme. CC and CFRS have worked together to challenge and refine aspects of the BLC Programme and this has led to changes to it.
31. The next quarter will see detailed work to create structures and define service levels come to fruition. This should ensure that CC and CFRS have confidence in the new joint corporate services.
32. The decision to retain the Sadler Road site has a significant impact, but will deliver a better outcome for CFRS.

Legal Implications

33. The December report confirmed the legal basis for the BLC Programme. It will be necessary to review the position in relation to the BLC Programme as it progresses to ensure that all legal issues are suitably covered. It is anticipated that the implementation costs will now need to be funded from reserves on the agreed basis i.e. 25% payable by CFRS.

Financial Implications

34. The financial aspects of the BLC Programme are covered in the body of this report.

Equality & Diversity Implications

35. Equality and diversity implications are being managed as the BLC Programme develops.

Environmental Implications

36. The BLC Programme includes an objective concerned with the environment, i.e. reducing waste and reducing the carbon footprint.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st September 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF PROTECTION
AUTHOR : JAMES WILLMOTT

SUBJECT : PROPOSAL FOR PARTNERSHIP UNDER PRIMARY
AUTHORITY SCHEME WITH CERTAS ENERGY UK
LIMITED

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members about a proposal to enter into a partnership under the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS).
2. To seek approval to apply to the Secretary of State to become a Primary Authority (PA) in relation to Certas Energy UK Limited.

Recommended that Members authorise officers to:

- [1] seek nomination from the Secretary of State as required by the Primary Authority Scheme; and
- [2] enter into a partnership with Certas Energy UK Limited subject to the agreement of satisfactory terms and conditions.

Background

3. The PAS allows a business to partner with a single authority from which it can seek assured advice and guidance on compliance with legislation.
4. The PAS is described under Section 25 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008. The Act allows the Secretary of State to nominate partnerships under the PAS between a business and a local authority, provided that the business carries out its activity within two or more local authority areas and the local authorities have responsibility for enforcement of the same relevant function, e.g. fire safety. The local authority and the business must agree the terms of the partnership.
5. The PAS is designed to promote a single approach to compliance for businesses as well as enforcing authorities. It is also the intention of the PAS to reduce the regulatory burdens on businesses. It does not prevent enforcement action or prosecution under relevant legislation, but can provide a business with assurance that the approach it has taken to comply with its obligations should be compliant.

6. The Fire Authority considered a report about PAS in February 2014. Members noted the information about PAS and the implications for the Service. Members authorised officers to pursue partnerships 'in circumstances where a satisfactory assessment of the impact upon the other work of the Service had been completed'.
7. A PAS partnership was entered into by the Authority with Hydes' Brewery Limited in 2015. It has been successfully operating since then.

Discussions with Certas Energy UK Limited

8. The Service was first approached by Certas Energy in January 2016 with a view to setting up a partnership under the scheme. The company is one of the biggest independent fuel and lubricant distributors in the UK with approximately 150 depots across England and Wales, and was keen to partner with the Service as its head office is located in Cheshire. Certas Energy has already established successful partnerships under the PAS with Warrington Borough Council relating to trading standards, petroleum licensing and environmental health.
9. An initial meeting took place on 14th April 2016 between senior health and safety managers from Certas Energy and managers from the Service's Protection team. A further meeting took place in June during which the terms and requirements of a potential partnership were discussed.
10. Certas Energy requires specific technical expertise in relation to its storage and handling of dangerous substances which the Service is not in a position to provide. The Service, as a combined Fire Authority does not undertake petroleum licensing inspections and thus inspecting officers are not familiar with the associated technical standards for these types of premises.
11. Nationally there is and has been considerable debate about enforcing the Fire Safety Order in certain types of premises where both the Fire Authority and the Health and Safety Executive both have jurisdiction. This has led to uncertainty in relation to the enforcement of the Order insofar as dangerous substances are concerned. Accordingly, close liaison with the HSE will be required if the Service enters into this partnership. Further specific training will also be required for officers involved in managing the partnership-related work in relation to the dangerous substances present at Certas Energy premises.
12. The option of stipulating that dangerous substances would not form part of the partnership in the Primary Authority memorandum of understanding and summary arrangements was discussed with the Regulatory Delivery Office and is not an option.
13. Additionally, as with all PAS arrangements the Service will be required to liaise with all other enforcing authorities. It is impossible to quantify the time commitment that this might involve, because this will be entirely dependent on enforcing authorities' involvement with the business which cannot be predicted. It should however be noted that, to date, interactions

between Certas Energy and enforcement authorities in relation to compliance with the Fire Safety Order have not resulted in enforcement action. Therefore, provided the legislative provision and regulatory requirements do not alter it seems reasonable to assume that the Service will be able to cope with the demands of the partnership.

Next Steps

14. Ordinarily, the next step in the process to establish the partnership would be for the Authority to submit an application for its nomination to the Secretary of State as required by the PAS.
15. If the Service wishes to pursue nomination then a short embedding period will ensue with the Protection team working closely with Certas Energy representatives to gain a good understanding of the business and the way in which it operates. This will involve a review of its systems and practices in relation to compliance with fire safety legislation.
16. Once a scheme has been nominated by the Secretary of State it becomes bound by the Primary Authority terms and conditions and only the Secretary of State can dissolve the partnership. The Service must be satisfied that it can devote appropriate resources and technical expertise to the partnership for its lifetime; failure to do so could provide sufficient grounds to dissolve the partnership and would cause reputational damage to the Service.
17. Certas Energy has requested that the Service commit to two hundred hours of work in the first year of the partnership. Following discussions with Certas Energy, the Service has provisionally assigned two protection officers (including a qualified fire engineer) to the partnership should Members approve the nomination. Resources and the time required to manage the partnership will be reviewed after the first year. Additionally, officers assigned to the partnership will undertake further training in dangerous substances regulations to address any gaps in knowledge and any further training needs will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Financial implications

18. One of the key fundamentals of the scheme is that the local authority may recover costs associated with running the partnership. Full costs recovery has been agreed at a starting rate of £60 per hour. This will be subject to and detailed in the formal PAS agreement. Further negotiations as to chargeable activity have yet to take place but it is anticipated that these would include:
 - establishing partnership arrangements.
 - familiarising Service staff with the business and its policies and procedures.
 - developing, providing and reviewing advice in terms of general fire safety and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
 - developing, managing and evaluating an inspection plan for enforcing authorities to follow during inspections.

- responding to queries from enforcing authorities.
- collating and analysing data.
- training staff.
- conducting audits and compliance checks.

19. Close monitoring and review of the arrangements will be undertaken to safeguard against the misuse of the scheme by a business to dilute or avoid compliance. The Service will evaluate the effectiveness and value of the arrangement on a regular basis.

Legal implications

20. The terms as set out in the statutory guidance for PAS dictates that the Authority, if proved negligent in any way, will only be liable for the maximum amount of money it has been paid by the partner in cost recovery in any one year. Liability could arise from the provision of incorrect advice which when followed by the business resulted in a breach of the legislation resulting in enforcement action by an enforcing authority.

Equality and Diversity implications

21. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this paper

Environmental implications

22. There are no environmental implications arising from this paper.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF: HEAD OF COMMUNICATION (INTERIM)
AUTHOR: SIAN CORRIGAN

SUBJECT: UPDATED CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND
CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGIES

Purpose of Report

1. This report highlights the key changes to both the Corporate Communications Strategy and the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and seeks approval to publish the updated documents.

Recommended: That

- [1] The Corporate Communications Strategy and Consultation and Engagement Strategy are approved.

Background

2. The Service's commitment to accessible communication and community engagement is set out in one of its key corporate objectives: "Inform and involve our communities and our staff in developing services and policies which are open, transparent and accountable."
3. The Authority must remain committed to evolving how it communicates messages to ensure that we continue to adapt to the way in which our public and stakeholders expect to be communicated with.
4. The Corporate Communication Strategy (Appendix 1) sets out how the Service intends to rise to the challenges set by the current communication landscape over the next two years. It will focus on the principles that the organisation will adopt to achieve meaningful two-way conversations with its internal and external audiences.
5. The Consultation and Engagement Strategy (Appendix 2), which sits behind the Corporate Communication Strategy, provides a more in-depth look at how the Service will ensure it effectively engages and consults with the public and stakeholders.

6. The two strategies have been updated at the same time to ensure consistency and clarity in advance of the Service's upcoming consultation about its next Integrated Risk Management Plan and Public Satisfaction Survey.
7. The change of responsibility from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office in early 2016, along with the forthcoming fire reform programme, will place increasing emphasis on providing an accountable and transparent service to the community. The two strategies have been updated to reflect these changes and to provide principles and guidelines which will allow the Service to respond appropriately and in line with best practice.

Key changes

8. This section looks at each of the updated strategies in turn and briefly summarises the key changes and the specific points to note.

Corporate Communications Strategy

9. Huge technological and digital advancements continue to affect the way people and organisations communicate with each other. We are in an age where the demand for immediate interaction between service providers and their publics and stakeholders, including staff, has never been higher.
10. The new updated Strategy has some clear SMART Objectives that will enable more effective evaluation.
11. The Strategy lists details of the key communication mechanisms that the Service will use to communicate and the insight work that has determined why these channels have been chosen.
12. People's viewing habits have evolved – more people now use multiple platforms (such as TV plus an iPad) to view different things at the same time.
13. Smartphone ownership is at an all time high (66% of UK adults) and more people are now turning to their phone to access the internet rather than use a computer or laptop.
14. The fragmented nature of communications now requires a more integrated approach to communication using multiple channels.

15. Social media continues to grow. However, in Cheshire more traditional forms of communication (print press and face to face) continue to be important tools.
16. Video is a huge area of growth and something the Service needs to harness.
17. Case studies need to play an integral part of safety campaigns.

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

18. The devolution of power to local communities has been a central policy of both the current and previous administrations as a means of ensuring greater local control of services with a view to driving efficiency. This has also meant that there is an increasing expectation on local authorities and bodies to engage and consult with service users and local stakeholders to shape the delivery of services in a transparent and accountable manner, according to local needs.
19. The updated Strategy clarifies these expectations on the Service, specifically those set out in the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework around the accessibility and development of Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs).
20. To ensure the Service's future consultation and engagement continues to be robust, the strategy includes revised guidance aligned to the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles and highlights the expanding role of online technologies, such as social media, in facilitating consultation and engagement. It also commits to working with other organisations where necessary to provide assurance and maintenance of competence.

Finance

21. Existing communication and consultation budgets will be sufficient to meet initial proposals in the strategies. Any future proposals which require additional resources would be subject to the Service's existing business case processes.

Legal

22. Complying with the strategies will help the Service meet its requirement to communicate as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act. It will also help meet the increased demand for transparency and accountability as well as protecting the Service from a potential Judicial Review.

Equality Impact Assessment

23. The strategies have previously been subject to initial and subsequently full equality impact assessments (EIAs) as they identified the potential for both communications and consultation to have a differential impact on a number of the protected characteristics, particularly around disability and access to information.
24. The adoption of accessibility standards for the website, updates to sections of the corporate identity manual and changes to consultation protocols and procedures addressed the majority of the issues previously identified, however, adoption of the new Strategies will be supported by a new full EIA.

Environmental

25. Increasing use of online channels for both communications and consultation offers opportunities to reduce the Service's use of paper and options to expand the use of information packaged in different ways. Any changes in this area will, however, have to be balanced against the potential to discriminate against those who have problems in accessing services and information online.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

Appendix 1 – Draft Corporate Communications Strategy 2016-18

Appendix 2 – Draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2016-18



Corporate Communications Strategy

2016-18

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**Appendix One:
Examples of the communication channels we will use.**

Page 12

1. Introduction.

Huge technological and digital advancements continue to affect the way people and organisations communicate with each other. We are in an age where the demand for immediate interaction between service providers and their publics and stakeholders, including staff, has never been higher. This coupled with the fact that we remain in a period of austerity means that in order to communicate effectively it is more important than ever that we adopt a flexible and creative approach to crafting our messages.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service must remain committed to evolving how it communicates messages to ensure that we continue to adapt to the way in which our public and stakeholders expect to be communicated with.

This Corporate Communications Strategy sets out how the Service intends to rise to the challenges set by the current communication landscape over the next two years. It will focus on the principles that the organisation will adopt to achieve meaningful two-way conversations with its internal and external audiences.

In addition to a study of national best practices the development of this strategy has also been informed by the findings of the following studies:

- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's Staff Satisfaction Survey
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's Public Satisfaction Surveys
- The Government Communication Service '7 trends in leading-edge communications'.

It is also supported by two further strategies. These are the Digital Engagement Strategy and the Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

Any comments or queries about the strategy should be addressed to: Corporate Communications, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford CW7 2FQ. Tel: 01606 868657. Alternatively email corporatecommunications@cheshirefire.gov.uk

2. Context.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service first developed a Communication Strategy back in 2005. This was subsequently updated in 2008 and 2012. This updated strategy is being written at a time of significant change for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and indeed the whole sector.

2.1 Political changes.

In 2015 fire and rescue services in England and Wales transferred from the control of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to that of the Home Office. This has brought with it calls for the sector to be more accountable and transparent about its work and performance. This is likely to have significant impact on the need for our Service to communicate openly with its stakeholders.

2.2 Internal factors.

A period of industrial action taken by members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) between 2011 and 2015 has also taken its toll on internal relations. The latest Staff Satisfaction Survey reported a drop in staff's overall satisfaction levels with working for the Service. This was especially evident among operational staff.

The Service is also currently embarking on a collaboration programme that will see all the back office staff transferred to Cheshire Constabulary. This move will mark a significant period of change both for staff and the organisation.

The above internal issues mean that this communication strategy will seek to develop internal communications further than previous strategies to ensure that the organisation once again achieves a more engaged and cohesive workforce.

2.3 The communication landscape.

Thanks to the digital and technological revolution of the past decade the media channels people use to access information has never been more fragmented. According to Ofcom's 2015 Communications Market Report 66% of UK adults now own a smartphone. This is up from 39% back in 2012. Interestingly the same report highlights that more people are now turning to their phone to access the internet rather than use a computer or laptop. This will be something this strategy will seek to harness and use to ensure effective reach of our messages.

Traditional media, while significantly reduced, has not disappeared and still plays an important role in both the Service's day to day communication and reputation management.

The fragmented nature of current media channels calls for an integrated communication response from us that harnesses different mediums to drive home single messages. This will provide the focus for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's communication strategy over the next three years. Details of some of the mechanisms we will adopt to deliver this will be detailed later in the strategy.

3. **Vision, aims and objectives.**

3.1 Vision.

This communication strategy will seek to support the Service's vision of:

"A Cheshire where there are no deaths from fires or other emergencies."

3.2 Aims.

This strategy will aim to:

- To ensure mechanisms are put in place to create meaningful, two-way dialogue between the organisation and its stakeholders.
- To ensure that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service communicates in an open and transparent way with its stakeholders.
- To protect and enhance the reputation of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- To ensure that the Service communicates safety messages with the public.
- To ensure that the Service's stakeholders are kept informed about the work of the Service.
- To enhance levels of staff engagement and satisfaction.
- To ensure that the Service communicates effectively during an emergency.

3.3 Communication objectives.

Objective One	To ensure that 65% of the public state that they value Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service as a service provider over the next three years.
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Objective Two	To ensure that the Service engages at least 100,000 people about safety campaigns over the coming three years.
Objective Three	To ensure that the organisation's staff engagement score achieves 76% by 2018.
Objective Four	To ensure that 60% of staff are satisfied with communication and provision of information in Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service by 2018.
Objective Five	To ensure that 70% of people know what to do in the event of a major emergency by 2018.
Objective Six	To ensure that 85% of key stakeholders are satisfied with communication from the Service.

4. Insight

The development of this strategy has required an in depth look into current and emerging trends in communication. This section will highlight a number of issues that have been considered when deciding on the mechanisms and approach the Service will adopt when communicating.

4.1 A fragmented communication landscape.

Gone are the days when whole families sat down together to watch one TV screen. We now all communicate on numerous platforms – sometimes at the same time. People are able to demand the ability to consume information when and where they want it. 99% of adults multi-task or dual screen, using two media at some point during an average week (Source: Ofcom Report 2014). This provides us with a challenge to ensure that our messages are suitable to be seen by a mobile audience but also an opportunity to reach people in more innovative ways.

It is also worth noting the fact that the Cheshire communication landscape is particularly fragmented. We are one of the only counties in the UK not to have a dedicated BBC radio station, instead we are covered in part by three stations. There is also no one commercial station that is dedicated to news across the whole of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. We also have no print publication that covers the whole area. This does increase the resource needed both in terms of people time and potential advertising budget when the Service is attempting to drive a campaign across its entire service area.

4.2 The rise of the smartphone.

Two thirds of people now own a smartphone, using it for nearly two hours every day to browse the internet, access social media, bank and shop online (Source: Ofcom Report 2015). Ofcom's 2015 Communications Market Report also found that a third (33%) of internet users see their smartphone as the most important device for going online, compared to 30% who are still sticking with their laptop. The rise in

smartphone surfing marks a clear shift since 2014, when just 22% turned to their phone first, and 40% preferred their laptop (Source: Ofcom Report 2015). Ofcom has also reported in 2016 that the figure of people who only use their smartphone to access the internet has risen from 6% (2014) to 16% (2016).

This makes it essential that the Service ensures it adopts communication techniques and mechanisms that are able to be viewed on mobile platforms.

4.3 Shareable and 'snackable' content.

People like to share news and stories with each other. This has not changed. What has changed however, is the way in which these stories are exchanged. Thanks in no small part to the growth in social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube there is a growing trend of viral communication that allows people to share messages with a much wider audience than ever before. However, online conversations have not replaced face-to-face communication. A study by the US Superbowl (one of the biggest advertising events in the world) revealed that for every one online share there were at least two offline conversations.

The science behind creating communication that people want to share in such that it goes 'viral' has not yet been proved. As a Service we will ensure we aim to create shareable and 'snackable' content by making it interesting, simple, timely and creative with a great story behind it.

4.4 Video is king.

This is a huge growth area for communication. Once upon a time you may have visited a web page to read some text – now more often than not it is to view a video. A good video that attracts a viewer's attention can increase the reach of your message. A great example of where video helped power a campaign was the 'Ice Bucket Challenge' that raised more than £88million for charity.

4.5 Layered messaging.

The fragmented nature of the communication landscape also means that there is a growing need to ensure that messages are crafted across multiple channels. There is also evidence (Source: Ipsos MORI) that by layering a message across multiple channels over a period of time results in people having a higher recall of information. The important fact is that these messages are consistent throughout the campaign.

4.6 Traditional media.

The Service's previous Communication Strategy detailed the plight of what could be considered the traditional media – most notably newspapers.

Times continue to be difficult for the print business. However, local and national newspapers have invested heavily in their websites to adapt to the needs of their readership. The impact on the Service is that this is fuelling the need for the Service to rise to the challenge presented by 24 hours news. This is especially necessary when communicating during a major emergency.

The traditional media still has an important part to play in Cheshire. In 2014 the Service conducted a Public Satisfaction Survey. This revealed that in the event of a major emergency 41% would turn to their local newspaper for information compared with 33% who said they would use social media. It is also worth noting however, that other than family and friends most people (68%) would turn to their TV to stay updated.

The table in *Appendix One* shows examples of how these communication channels will be used to communicate with stakeholder groups.

5. Strategic options

Based on the insight gathered when developing this strategy the Service will use the methods and mechanisms set out in this section to communicate with both its internal and external stakeholders. As discussed previously the Service will strive to achieve effective communication by using multiple channels to enhance the impact of single messages, campaigns or consultation activity. Therefore, although the following methods are listed separately they will be used in an integrated way.

5.1 Media relations: Local and regional.

The media on a local and regional level remains an important factor in the delivery of both the Service's campaign delivery and reputation management. This includes both print and broadcast. Therefore, the Service will aim to use a proactive approach to build and maintain links with the press. We will also aim to respond to all press queries and questions to avoid a 'no comment'.

The Service's Corporate Communications team will take the lead in handling the media. Although operational staff will need to provide interviews as requested and there will be a need for station staff to deal with some media calls as these cannot be avoided. Training will be provided to help them with this.

5.2 Media relations: National press.

The Service will on occasions seek to engage the national media to raise the profile of a particular piece of work or campaign that is particularly unique or ground breaking.

It will also be important to work with the national media during major incidents.

5.3 Media relations: Trade Press.

There are a number of trade publications that relate specifically to the emergency services and several that are fire and rescue specific. The Service will aim to secure articles in such publications in order to raise its profile and reputation within the sector.

5.4 Video

Google recently announced that according to their data 82% of the internet is going to be video by 2017. This makes the medium of video a valuable campaign tool both for staff and the public. The Service will aim to create suitable video content for use on its social media channels and website.

5.5 Case studies.

Evidence suggests that a successful campaign must resonate emotionally with its target audience. It is also more likely to result in a change in people's behaviour. Therefore, over the next three years the Service will seek to highlight case studies to support both internal and external campaigns. This could involve either members of the public or staff dependant on the campaign.

5.6 Publications

The Service will produce a number of publications. In the main these will be produced in-house. However, the Service may also use the outside design agencies when demand is high or for particular products.

Publications produced will include:

- The Service's IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan)
- An Annual Report
- The Alert staff magazine.

There will also be the need for other publications. These will be produced as part of specific campaigns.

5.7 Advertising

The Service will on occasion pay for advertising. This will include paying for articles to appear in publications produced by our partners such as *Inside Halton* and Cheshire West and Chester's *Talking Together*.

Insight has also proved that paying for advertising on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could also be beneficial to campaigns. Radio advertising can also prove useful.

Whether or not a campaign or consultation is backed by paid for advertising will be decided on a case by case basis.

5.8 Website

This is an important element of our communication as it will be the first point that many people turn to for information about the Service. The website will also provide us the main route to ensure that the service remains transparent and open about its performance data. We will always seek to link people to the website from other communication channels such as Twitter and Facebook posts.

Insight data into the numbers of people accessing the intranet on their smartphone or other mobile devices mean that it is essential that our website is able to be viewed on multiple platforms.

5.9 Face- to-face.

We may be living in a technological era but this does not remove the fact that the most powerful form of communication comes through face-to-face contact. This will be something that the Service will use to communicate both internal and external messages. It will include staff and political briefing sessions, corporate events and other engagement activity such as school visits.

Programmes such as the Safe and Well Visits also use face-to-face communication to deliver key Service messages.

5.10 Facebook and Twitter.

These two social media platforms will be primarily used for external communication and consultation activity. They are a useful tool to engage in two-way conversations with the public. Facebook and Twitter are also useful to keep people updated during fast moving emergency incidents.

We will also use the platforms to show public support for partner campaigns through 'retweeting'. The two platforms will also enable us to monitor conversations and

emerging issues that may impact on the Service and require further communication action.

5.11 You Tube

Obviously there is a key link here to the use of video however, it is important to list the two separately. We will continue to enhance our You Tube channel to ensure that it contains a range of videos that educate and celebrate people about the work of the Service. Unlike the videos that we use on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook we are able to use longer videos on You Tube, making it more suitable for more in-depth content.

5.12 Posters and leaflets.

These will be produced to support campaign activity when appropriate and when they enhance a multi-channel campaign.

5.13 Other social media sites

In addition to Facebook, Twitter and You Tube the Service will also aim to use and have a presence on a range of social media platforms including Instagram and Flickr. It will also remain flexible to emerging sites in order to react and capitalise on new ways of reaching people.

6 Proposition and top-line messaging.

The following key messages can be described as the Service's top-line messages - the most important points we wish to get across to our audiences:

- We are working to make Cheshire safer.
- Our staff are trained to the highest possible standards.
- People are proud to work for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service cares about its staff and communities.

7 Stakeholders

This section highlights who the Service's key stakeholders are both in terms of people we wish to inform, those we wish to influence and those who can help us achieve our communication goals.

Fire Authority	Cheshire MPs	Our Staff	Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Councils	Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Chief Execs and Leaders
Business Community	Wider community of Cheshire	People aged over 65	People aged under 25	School aged children
Cheshire Constabulary and the PCC	NWAS	Other Partner organisations (such as NHS, Age UK and the Environment Agency).	Cheshire Elected Members	Minister of State for Crime, Policing and fire and rescue services.
Home Secretary	Other Fire and Rescue Services	Local Press	Regional Press	National Media

Please note this is a comprehensive list but not an exclusive one. Other groups and organisations may become key stakeholders from time to time as issues or campaigns arise.

8 Resources.

This section highlights some of the resources require to implement this strategy.

8.1 Strategy lead.

This strategy will be led and overseen by the Corporate Communications team that sits within the Policy, Planning and Communications department. Although, delivery of communication elements and reputation management will be considered a Service wide objective.

8.2 Use of agency support.

The vast majority of communication activity will be delivered by the Service's in-house team. However, on occasions the decision may be made to use additional external resource. This will be done on a case by case basis but must involve Corporate Communications in the procurement process.

8.3 Budget.

The Service will have a central budget for communication fund. However, additional funding will be brought in from other departments to support specific activity. All campaign and communication projects must be subject to an evaluation to ensure continued value for money is achieved.

8.4 Training.

A programme of media training and awareness sessions will run on an annual basis to ensure that relevant operational staff are trained in reputation management, working with the media (including social media). Some of these sessions will be delivered by external trainers and some by members of the Corporate Communications team.

9 **Interdependencies.**

This strategy is closely linked and supported by the following two strategies:

- Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
- Digital Media Strategy.

It is also supported by the Corporate Identity Guidelines and Photography Policy.

10 **Risks**

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Staff leaving the department.	A loss of staff would result in a loss of knowledge within the department. This would have an impact on communication delivery especially in specialist areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process maps developed for all key tasks. • Staff trained so that there is task resilience within the teams.
Blue Light Collaboration.	<p>This a major programme that could take up a considerable amount of time for the department.</p> <p>The results of a merged department could also impact on the delivery of fire objectives as the team begins to deliver two organisations communication activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning is underway to ensure Service Level Agreements are developed to prepare for a merged communication function.
Loss of systems.	A loss in our ICT Systems could impact the department's ability to deliver core functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience put in place to ensure most key applications are web based. • A number of lap tops are available to the team so that they can be used off site.

11 Monitoring and evaluation.

To ensure that the Communication Strategy remains on track to deliver its objectives all internal and external communication activity will be monitored throughout implementation.

All Service communication campaigns will be accompanied by a specific plan and set of SMART Objectives. This plan will also need to detail how the success of each objective can be evaluated.

Appendix One: Examples of the communication channels we will use.

The following table gives an overview of the tools that may be used to communicate with different stakeholders. Although, it must be stressed that it may be necessary to adapt and enhance the mechanisms from time to time. All Service campaigns will be subject to individual Communication Plans that will set out in detail which particular channels will be used to ensure messages reach our target audiences effectively.

Stakeholder	Communication Aim	Example Comms Channels
Fire Authority Members	<p>To keep members informed about what is happening within the Service. Also to make them aware of any external factors that could impact on the Service's performance.</p> <p>Members need to be provided with the right level of information required to help them make decisions as an Authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Meetings • 'Buddy system' • Telephone • Reports and publications.
Staff	<p>Further develop two-way internal communications to ensure effective staff engagement.</p> <p>To promote corporate aims and objectives and understanding of policy initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Bulletin • Alert newsletter • Intranet • One-ones with managers • Staff briefings • Breakfast with the Chief • Video content • Email
Home Secretary and the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire and Rescue Services	<p>To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.</p> <p>To raise the profile of the work that the Service and its staff are undertaking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link newsletter • Personal briefings • Specialist media • Professional groups – CFOA • Email

Cheshire MPs	<p>To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.</p> <p>Also to keep them informed about incidents or emerging issues in their areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link newsletter • Personal briefings • Specialist media • Professional groups – CFOA • Email
Other Cheshire Elected Members	<p>To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.</p> <p>Also to keep them informed about incidents or emerging issues in their areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire Alert System • Social media • Website • Briefings at relevant committees and meetings.
Local Council Leaders and Chief Execs	<p>To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.</p> <p>To encourage a two-way conversation about how we can work together to make Cheshire Safer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link newsletter • Annual Report • Personal briefings • Events • Email • Telephone
Business Community	<p>To enhancing two-way communication with the business community to both promote the work of the Service and ensure that they understand their requirements to keep their staff and customers safe.</p> <p>To keep people informed about what to do in the event of a major emergency and encourage participation in Service Consultation activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire Alert System • Twitter/Facebook • Video output • Website • Press coverage • You Tube • Link Newsletter • Events • Inspection visits.
People aged over 65	<p>To ensure that they have the necessary information to stay safe and well.</p> <p>To keep people informed about what to do in the event of a major emergency and encourage participation in Service Consultation activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and Well Visits • Local Press • Letters • Facebook/Twitter • Website
People aged under 25	To ensure a two-way dialogue about the Service's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter/Facebook • Instagram

	<p>Youth Programme and how they can stay safe at home and on the road.</p> <p>Also to encourage them to take an active role in Service consultations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You Tube • Local press • Events • College visits • Cadet Units • Prince's Trust Programme
School aged children	To ensure that children are aware of the Service and understand how they can stay safe from fire and other emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School visits • 'Sparkton' section of the website • Events • Station Open Days
Wider Cheshire Community	<p>To ensure that we develop a two-way dialogue with the community about how they can keep themselves safe from fire and other emergencies.</p> <p>To keep people informed about what to do in the event of a major emergency and encourage participation in Service Consultation activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire Alert System • Annual Report • Consultation Roadshows • Events • Social media (all) • Video output • Email • Letters.
Partner organisations (Cheshire Constabulary, NWAS etc.)	<p>To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.</p> <p>To encourage a two-way conversation about how we can work together to make Cheshire Safer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal briefings • Email • Meetings • Partner Newsletter • Telephone • Incident debriefs
Other Fire and Rescue Services	To increase awareness of the Service's corporate policies, aims and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal briefings • Email • Meetings • Partner Newsletter • Telephone • Trade Press • Events
The press	<p>To promote awareness of key messages and encourage them to highlight them to their readership.</p> <p>To work with them to protect and enhance the Service's reputation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Twitter/Facebook • Website • Press calls • Video output • Interviews



Consultation and Engagement Strategy

2016 - 2019

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1. Overview

Working closely with local communities has been an increasingly important issue for Cheshire Fire Authority in recent years and the Authority's commitment to accessible communication and community engagement is set out in one of its key corporate objectives: "Inform and involve our communities and our staff in developing services and policies which are open, transparent and accountable."

The move from a strong emphasis on emergency response to putting equal resources into prevention and protection work has ensured greater involvement with local communities on a daily basis. This involvement will continue to increase as the Authority works collaboratively with partners to deliver an expanding range of services.

The current Government and previous administrations have been clear in demanding that public services be transparent and accountable to the communities in which they serve. This has seen new legislation introduced such as the establishment of directly-elected Police and Crime Commissioners as well as the development of increased transparency and accountability of public services.

The key tenets of increasing transparency and accountability are to provide increased choice for local people over the services provided for them, devolving power to the lowest possible level, giving everyone fair access to public services and making those services accountable to users and taxpayers.

Through the use of consultation and engagement, local people are able to access and exercise their influence over service providers as well as communicating how they would like the services to be delivered.

Fire and Rescue Authorities also have to meet requirements set out within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework. The Framework states that fire and rescue services must be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions, and provide help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement.

The Framework also requires Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) to be easily accessible to the public and reflect effective consultation with the community, staff representative bodies and partners throughout their development (and at all review stages). Additionally, services must set out the principles and approach it will take on consultation activity.

Effective consultation and engagement will also provide communities and decision makers such as elected Members, with the opportunity to scrutinise the services provided to them, via various methods of feeding back views and comment and opinions on the organisation. Through ensuring that there are effective methods of reporting back the outputs and outcomes of consultation and engagement to the relevant parts of the organisation, the Authority can be more accountable to those it serves and reflect the diverse areas of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

This strategy will set out how the Authority will approach engagement with local people and also outline standards to meet when undertaking formal consultation. Recognising and applying these principles and standards will ensure that the Authority engages effectively with local residents and consults in a sound manner compliant with recognised best practice.

Together this will ensure that local people can exert influence over how local services are provided and have fair access to voicing their views and comments. This will help to embed the organisation within the community it serves, protecting its reputation and minimising the risk of potential legal challenges. It will also help to ensure that the Authority is accountable as the programme for reform of the Fire and Rescue Service develops

2. Engagement

Engagement is an on-going process whereby the Authority will develop and maintain relationships that involve local people and stakeholders so that they are empowered to share their views and opinion on the organisation or changes and developments that are, or may be, considered.

While engagement is a more informal process than that of consultation, it is helpful to outline a small number of key principles that will assist in facilitating effective engagement and securing useful feedback and the best outcomes for the Authority.

Community engagement by the Authority should be:

- Relevant – the Authority should identify and involve those in the community relevant to the issue at hand.
- Inclusive – the Authority should ensure that those who wish to be involved can be and that support is given to seldom-heard groups to enable their voice to be heard.
- Accessible – the Authority should identify and overcome any barriers that may prevent people engaging. It should also present issues in an understandable manner.
- Collaborative – the Authority should work with other partners where appropriate.
- Honest – the Authority should be clear how and as to what extent those it engages with can shape the delivery of services. It should also communicate feedback to those engaged with and other parts of the Authority and partners who may have an interest.

3. Types of engagement

Engagement is a fairly fluid term and therefore there are many aspects of the organisation's work and activities that can be termed as engagement. Engagement covers visits by staff into the community to residents and businesses businesses, as well as activities such as station open days or events in areas across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

Engagement activity such as home visits, open days or visits to station or local schools etc are carried out by service delivery and prevention staff as a routine and core part of the business, as are visits and audits of non-residential premises by protection staff. There are other occasions where it may be necessary or beneficial to engage with local communities in order to find out views of the service or other information not specifically covered in the activities listed above; the Planning, Performance and Communications department can assist in providing guidance or facilitation for activity such as this.

It is important that our engagement covers all sections of the community so that those who may not regularly access or have difficulty accessing our services can find out about the Authority and how they can access services if needed.

The Authority, through the Equality and Inclusion team, will be able to co-ordinate engagement with seldom heard groups such as those of different faiths, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation or those with a disability. It will also continue to work with external organisations such as the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC) and other interested parties.

4. Stakeholder engagement

Engagement with key local stakeholders is a crucial part of maintaining and enhancing the Authority's brand and reputation. Often consultation with key stakeholders will require more considered management; the Service has a range of tools available, such as Public Affairs Plans, to ensure that the organisation consults effectively and is alert to particular issues that may be encountered.

Engagement with key stakeholders, particularly elected officials such as councillors and Members of Parliament, should be co-ordinated with the Policy and Inclusion Manager who will develop Public Affairs Plans where necessary.

The Planning, Performance and Communications department maintains a list of key stakeholders that are contacted for major (often statutory) consultations. This list contains contact details for a range of individuals and organisations including elected members, local statutory agencies and partners, local community groups and faith networks and businesses and representative organisations. The department will coordinate formal consultation with these stakeholders, though it will also be beneficial to liaise with the department when conducting other engagement with key stakeholders.

5. Consultation

Consultation differs from engagement in that, strictly, consultation is a specific process that lasts for a set period of time and should be followed in accordance with certain rules. In some cases, organisations may be required by law to consult when proposing changes to the provision of services, whereas there are no set regulations concerning engagement. The two concepts are not mutually exclusive, as effective engagement can complement the facilitation of good consultation.

The six standards outlined below will help to ensure that the Authority continues to undertake consultation programmes in line with recognised best practice. Conducting a consultation exercise in line with these standards will serve to provide a clear and robust process, protect the reputation of the organisation and reduce the risk of possible legal challenge to a consultation.

6. Consultation principles

The following principles outline what the Authority aims to achieve through its consultation processes. These principles have been influenced by the Cabinet Office's Consultation Principles as well as through emerging legal precedent and recognised best practice.

Following these principles will ensure that consultation activity is carried out to a high standard that is meaningful for both the Authority and those it consults and reduces the risk of a legal challenge to the consultation.

6.1 Our consultations will enable people to have an influence over our final plans and policies.

This means:

When we consult, we consult on plans and options at a formative stage i.e. before it has decided which proposals to adopt or enact. We will - where feasible and practical - outline a range of options for consultation. Sometimes we may have already developed and disregarded certain options before the start of the process and would therefore not consult on these. We may also have a certain proposal that we would prefer to enact; where this is the case we will make this clear.

6.2 Our consultations will enable people to understand the issues being consulted upon.

This means:

We will explain why a consultation is taking place and provide enough information to enable people to understand the proposals or plans being consulted on. Information will be made available in a range of formats and in 'plain English' so that people can provide considered responses to a consultation. We will make use of developing online technologies to assist us in providing this information, including our website, intranet and social media platforms.

To this end, all corporate consultation and engagement will be coordinated by the Planning, Performance and Communications Department to ensure consistency and make use of the existing skills of staff within the department to undertake communications, consultation and engagement.

6.3 Our consultations will be inclusive.

This means:

We will value equality and diversity and seek to ensure that no individual or group is precluded from taking part in a consultation because of their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation or domestic circumstances. We will work with organisations and representative groups to help us gather views and comment from seldom-heard groups.

This also means where necessary we will proactively go out into the community to consult and may also liaise with local partner agencies, such as Cheshire Constabulary and the Police and Crime Commissioner, where beneficial.

We will keep records of our key stakeholders and actively seek to engage with them both before and during a consultation process.

When consulting externally on major proposals and initiatives across the Service area – such as IRMP and other strategic consultation – it is important to ensure that the feedback received is as representative of the local population as possible and therefore we will aim to have a representative sample size and secure enough responses to provide a margin of error of at most +/- 5%.

6.4 Our consultations will allow people enough time to respond.

This means:

We will hold our consultations for long enough to enable as many who wish to submit a response to do so; for statutory consultations such as those on Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) this will be for 12 weeks. We will also endeavour to make allowances for certain times of the year such as major holiday periods, where people may be unable to respond.

6.5 Responses to our consultations will be taken into account.

This means:

The results from a consultation will be considered by the appropriate decision makers within the organisation and taken into account when a decision is being reached. It is important to note, however, that while the results of a consultation will be considered, they are not binding upon those making the decision.

Where decision makers require summaries and reports outlining the process or results of a consultation, these will be provided in a clear and transparent manner and will contain an accurate reflection of the consultation.

6.6 We will let people know what happened as a result of our consultation.

This means:

We will provide feedback on the results of the consultation, the decisions that were made and what has happened or will happen as a result. We will do this through a range of existing communications channels and in several formats.

7. How we will consult

The Authority uses a range of methods to consult with stakeholders and interested parties. The matrix below outlines the main reasons for engaging and the methods that can be used. The matrix should be used as a general guide, as methods and techniques will vary according to whether the organisation is seeking to inform, engage or consult and depending on factors specific to the activity in question.

	Statutory and strategic consultation	Measuring customer satisfaction	Engaging with the local community	Engaging with staff	Engaging with key stakeholders
Informing					
Media relations	X		X		
Advertising			X		
Annual Report	X		X		
Website/intranet	X	X	X	X	X
Social media	X	X	X	X	X
Direct correspondence	X			X	X
Email	X			X	X
Engaging					
Briefings	X			X	X
Community events	X		X		
Focus groups	X	X			
Direct correspondence					
Stakeholder meetings			X	X	X
Consulting					
Postal survey	X	X	X		
Online survey	X	X	X	X	X
Use of response panel	X	X	X		
Public meetings	X		X		

8. Online technology

Social media and online technologies will form part of consultation activity and the organisation will keep pace with diversifying online technologies. The Authority already has an established social media presence and using these channels will enable the Authority to both raise awareness and reach a diverse range of interested parties.

Social media and online technology will play an active part of the organisation's consultation and engagement programmes. The Authority will monitor and manage its own platforms to moderate and also to correct any factual inaccuracies that are presented.

Where surveys and questionnaires are used as part of a consultation, then these will also be distributed online via the organisation's social media channels and through online tools like email. The Authority already subscribes to a SurveyMonkey account which can be used by the Planning, Performance and Communications Department to create and distribute online surveys.

Where comments have been provided on social media platforms, then this will be included within any feedback reports. Reports will also be made available online so that those who have engaged through social media or the internet can view feedback.

9. Feedback and evaluation

Feedback is a key component of the consultation and engagement cycle as it enables those who have taken part in the process to learn of the outputs and outcomes that they have contributed towards. It also facilitates accountability and transparency as it allows those involved in the consultation or engagement process to see how their views have led to changes in the organisation.

Feedback on the output of a consultation process (i.e. the results) should be presented to the appropriate decision making body and should be in a clear and understandable format which accurately reflects the results of the consultation.

Feedback on the outcome of a consultation process or engagement event (i.e. the decisions taken after the consultation or engagement event) should be produced in a format and style that is easy to understand, particularly for the lay reader. It also needs to be distributed in a timely manner following any decision(s) being made.

Particularly when providing feedback to members of the public it will be necessary to publish the relevant documents online and ensure that arrangements are available to provide feedback in a range of formats, such as easy-read or in an alternative language.

Evaluation helps to ensure the consultation activity undertaken is appropriate and effective. It is also a useful tool to help refine and improve aspects of consultation in

line with recognised best practice and to ensure that the service engages with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties.

Following each major consultation programme such as an IRMP consultation or public satisfaction consultation, it is appropriate to evaluate aspects of the consultation to identify particular strengths and weakness and to improve the approach for future events. For smaller-scale or one-off events it may be appropriate to gather evaluation through feedback forms or online surveys/emails.

10. Assurance and guidance

At times it may be necessary to acquire external, independent accreditation and assurance for the Authority's consultation process. Assurance ensures that the Authority and external stakeholders can be confident that the consultation processes used are robust, fair and effective. The Consultation Institute is a nationally recognised body which promotes the development and enhancement of best practice within the consultation sector and can be utilised to accredit both staff and processes.

In addition, committing staff to continuing professional development in the subject area – through making use of training and development offered by recognised independent providers – will ensure that those conducting consultation (and engagement) on behalf of the Authority are aware of emerging requirements and best practice.

Some staff within the Planning, Performance and Communications Department – such as the Consultation and Engagement Officer – have sought professional development with independent providers and are well placed to provide internal assurance and guidance on best practice for other areas of the Service for a range of consultation and engagement activity.

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF: HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: RECTIFICATION OF TITLE FOR
MACCLESFIELD FIRE STATION

Purpose of Report

1. To secure Member approval to the rectification of the registered titles associated with Macclesfield Fire Station (MFS) and Macclesfield Ambulance Station (MAS).

Recommended: That

- [1] Members approve the rectification of registered titles associated with Macclesfield Fire Station and Macclesfield Ambulance Station.

Background

2. MFS was opened in April 1970. MFS and MAS are situated on adjoining sites, although there is no sharing of facilities with both sites having clear boundaries.

Information

3. An inspection of the Authority's deeds quickly led to the conclusion that there was a problem with the Authority's registered title for MFS. Further investigation established that there was a similar problem with the registered title for MAS.
4. The plan attached to this report as Appendix 1 shows the current sites:

Blue edged land – Ambulance Station
Red edged land – Fire Station
5. For reasons that are not clear the current registered title for MFS includes a title plan that actually shows the site of MAS, even though it describes the site as MFS. Therefore, the Authority has the legal title for MAS. The current registered title for MAS includes a title plan that actually shows the site of MFS even though it describes the site as MAS. Therefore, North West Ambulance Services NHS Trust (NWAS) has the legal title for MFS.

6. An initial approach to the Land Registry was unsuccessful in rectifying the situation. Since then officers have talked to NWAS about the simplest way to resolve the matter. As a result, separate legal transfers have been prepared whereby the Authority will transfer the legal title for MAS to NWAS and, in return, NWAS will transfer the legal title for MFS to the Authority. There will only be a nominal consideration in each of the transfers. The fees associated with the registration of the transfers are very small.

Financial Implications

7. Any costs associated with the transfer will be met from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

8. By effecting the transfers of legal title it will be possible to put the Authority and NWAS into the positions that they should have been when the original transactions were registered.

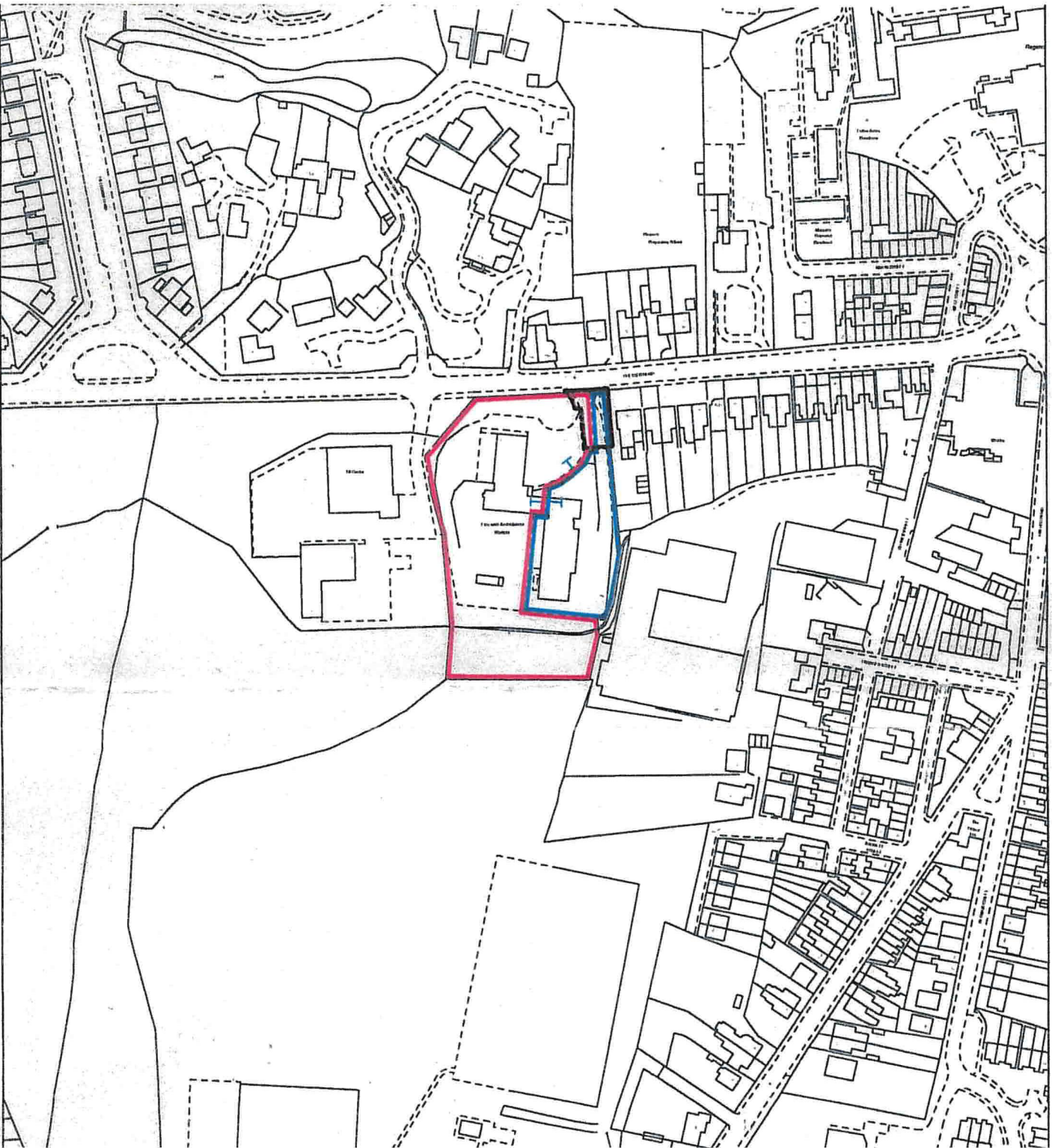
Equality and Diversity Implications

9. There are no known equality and diversity implications.

Environmental Implications

10. There are no known environmental implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None



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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR : ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: LEASE OF PART OF MACCLESFIELD FIRE STATION TO THE NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Member approval to the grant of a five year lease of part of Macclesfield Fire Station to the National Probation Service (NPS).

Recommended That Members:

- [1] Agree to the grant of a five year lease of part of Macclesfield Fire Station to the National Probation Service.

Background

2. The NPS approached the Service with a proposal that would enable it to operate part of its service from Macclesfield Fire Station. After initial discussions it was decided that a trial period was necessary in order to allow the Service to assess the suitability of the activities proposed by the NPS.
3. The trial was successful and the NPS has requested a more permanent arrangement. This would involve some minor changes to the Fire Station.

Information

4. The NPS has the following requirements at Macclesfield Fire Station:

Sole use of an office, store, toilet facilities, outside store room and two parking spaces.

The plan attached to this report as Appendix 1 shows the arrangement with the NPS area shaded blue. The red shading is the access corridor the NPS will utilise.

5. The NPS requires offenders under its management to attend at the Fire Station at the start of the day. The offenders are supervised and spend most of the day working in the community. They return to the Fire Station at the end of the day.

6. Whilst there are obviously some shared areas, e.g. access to and from the Fire Station, there are safeguards in place that manage the risk associated with the offenders use of the Fire Station, e.g. they are supervised at all times and are unlikely to be on site at the same time as Fire Cadets. Upon signature of a lease the Fire Station will be altered slightly to strengthen the separation of the offenders and other users.
7. A rental has been agreed with the NPS: £7895 per annum and the NPS will pay a proportion of relevant outgoings. The NPS has asked for a five year lease.
8. It is hoped that the Service staff will have opportunities to engage with the offenders and where appropriate encourage them to take part in activities such as Prince's Trust.

Legal Implications

9. The lease will contain appropriate provisions to protect the Authority's position. The arrangement will be monitored effectively by Fire Station staff.

Financial Implications

10. Any costs relating to the proposal will be met out of existing budgets. As identified in paragraph 7 the proposal will lead to additional income of £7,895 per annum.

Equality & Diversity Implications

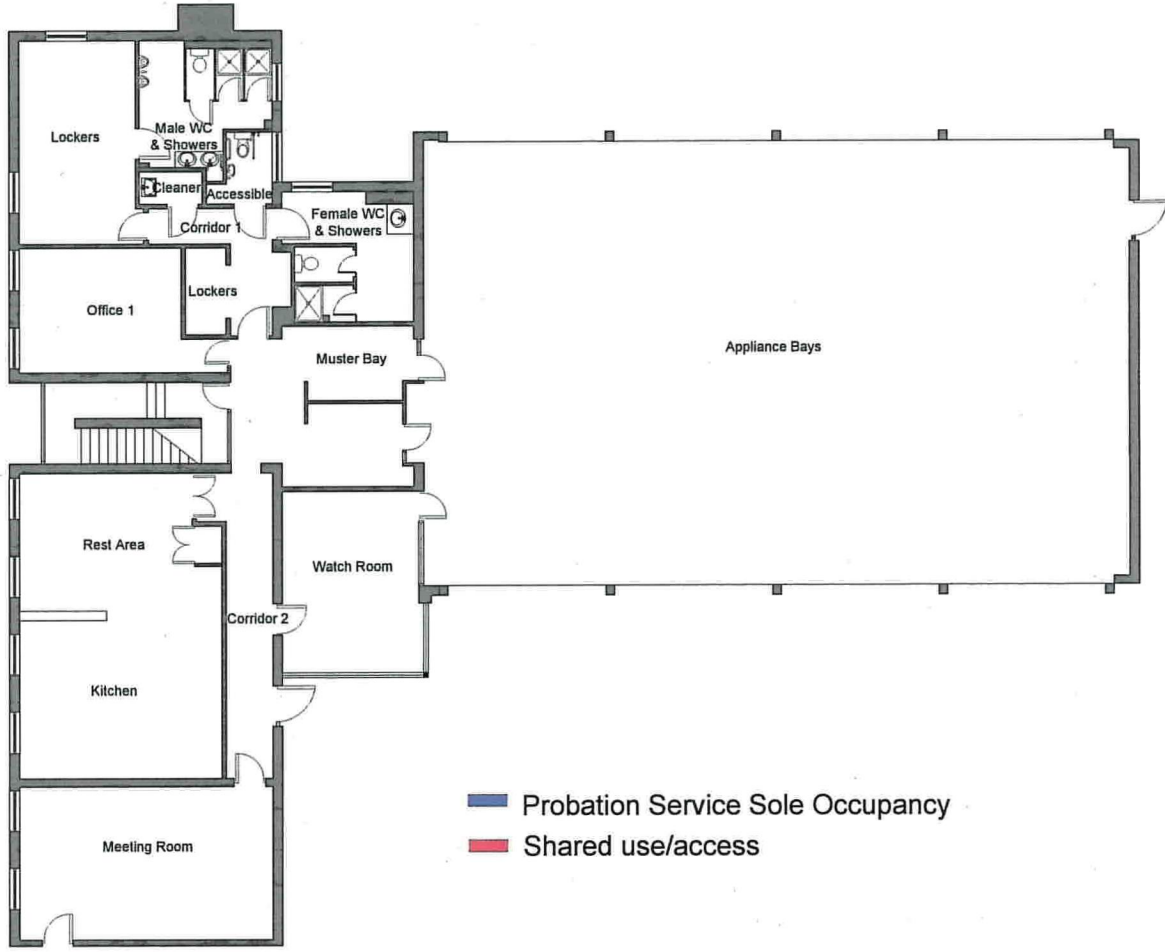
11. There are no equality and diversity implications.

Environmental Implications

12. Any environmental implications associated with the option land will be handled appropriately on behalf of the Authority.

**CONTACT: JOANNE SMITH, FIRE SERVICE HQ, WINSFORD
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None



■ Probation Service Sole Occupancy
■ Shared use/access

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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF: HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: SURPLUS LAND OFF HALLWOOD LINK ROAD, RUNCORN

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to dispose of a surplus piece of land off Hallwood Link Road, Runcorn (the land).

Recommended: That

- [1] Members authorise officers to arrange for the disposal of land off Hallwood Link Road, Runcorn.

Background

2. The land (which is shown edged red on the plan attached to this report as Appendix 1) was purchased in 1986 by Cheshire County Council and became the Fire Authority's land. There was an intention to build a fire station on the land at some future date.

Information

3. Following two reviews which have considered, amongst other things, the number and situations of the Authority's fire stations, it is clear that the land is surplus to requirements and that there is little prospect that this position will change.
4. There has been interest in the land in the past, but this has not led to a firm offer to purchase. The interested party produced a scheme to build residential units.
5. The planning status of the land would suggest that it should be possible to pursue planning permission for residential units.
6. Halton Borough Council owns some adjoining land which is also undeveloped. The land may be of greater value if it can be sold in conjunction with Halton's land. Therefore, it may worth approaching Halton to establish its intentions.

Financial Implications

7. Any capital receipt generated from the sale of the land will be used to fund future capital projects.

Legal Implications

8. Whilst it is not entirely clear whether Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies to the Authority (which is essentially aimed at ensuring that land sales by local authorities achieve the best value that can reasonably be obtained) Members have a fiduciary duty. Accordingly, it is appropriate to seek to maximise the sum which can be secured by any sale of the land.

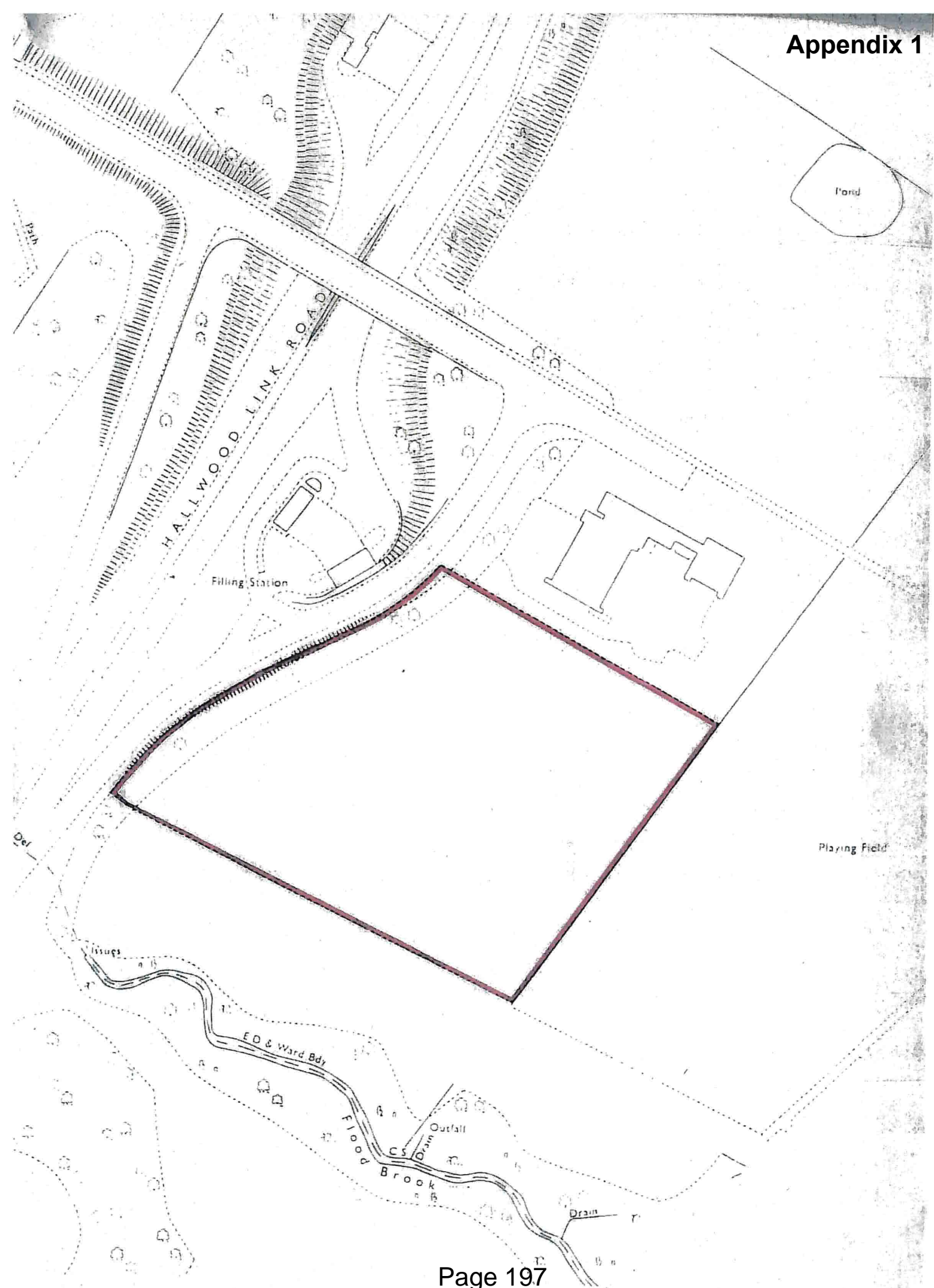
Equality and Diversity Implications

9. There are no known equality and diversity implications.

Environmental Implications

10. There are no known environmental implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None



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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF : FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE : 21st SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF : HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
AUTHOR : ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: OPTION TO PURCHASE LAND ADJACENT TO
STOCKTON HEATH FIRE STATION

Purpose of Report

1. This report informs Members about an option to purchase a piece of land adjacent to Stockton Heath Fire Station which is available to the Fire Authority.

Recommended: That

- [1] Members determine whether they wish to exercise the option to purchase land adjacent to Stockton Heath Fire Station (authorising the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to complete such documentation as is necessary to effect the purchase).

Background

2. In 1996 Cheshire County Council (CCC) bought land from Warrington Borough Council (WBC) to enable it to construct Stockton Heath Fire Station. The land is shown edged red on the plan attached to this report as Appendix 1. The land (and fire station) now belongs to the Fire Authority.
3. There were a number of provisions in the Conveyance to CCC concerned with users of adjoining land (the option land) coloured blue on the plan attached to this report as Appendix 1. In particular the Conveyance granted an option in favour of CCC in respect of the option land the benefit of which passed to the Fire Authority. The option is expressed to be exercisable in the event that the option land ceases to be used for the purpose of a community centre (which definition was expanded to include a Royal British Legion Club).

Information

4. The option land is no longer used for the purposes mentioned above. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been approached by WBC to establish whether the Fire Authority wishes to exercise the option to purchase the option land.

5. Officers have obtained a joint valuation (with WBC) from the Valuation Office Agency and the option land has been valued at £130,000. The option land contains a derelict building (a former community centre) which is in poor condition and, due to its age, probably contains some asbestos products.
6. If the Authority were to purchase the option land it would need to demolish the derelict building and effect some landscaping in order to incorporate the option land within the extended boundary of the fire station. The demolition costs would be greater if asbestos was found and there would be ongoing maintenance costs associated with the extended fire station site.
7. There is no operational requirement to extend the fire station site. Accordingly, the purchases of the option land would be purely speculative in nature. The option land would be likely to enhance the options and value associated with the extended fire station site should the Authority decide to sell the fire station site in the future.

Legal Implications

8. The report contains an explanation of the legal basis for the Authority's purchase of the option land.

Financial Implications

9. Should Members agree to purchase the land, then £130k will be included in the Authority's Capital Programme. It is unlikely that demolition and landscaping costs could be treated as capital so these costs would be included in the revenue budgets and, if necessary, funded from reserves.

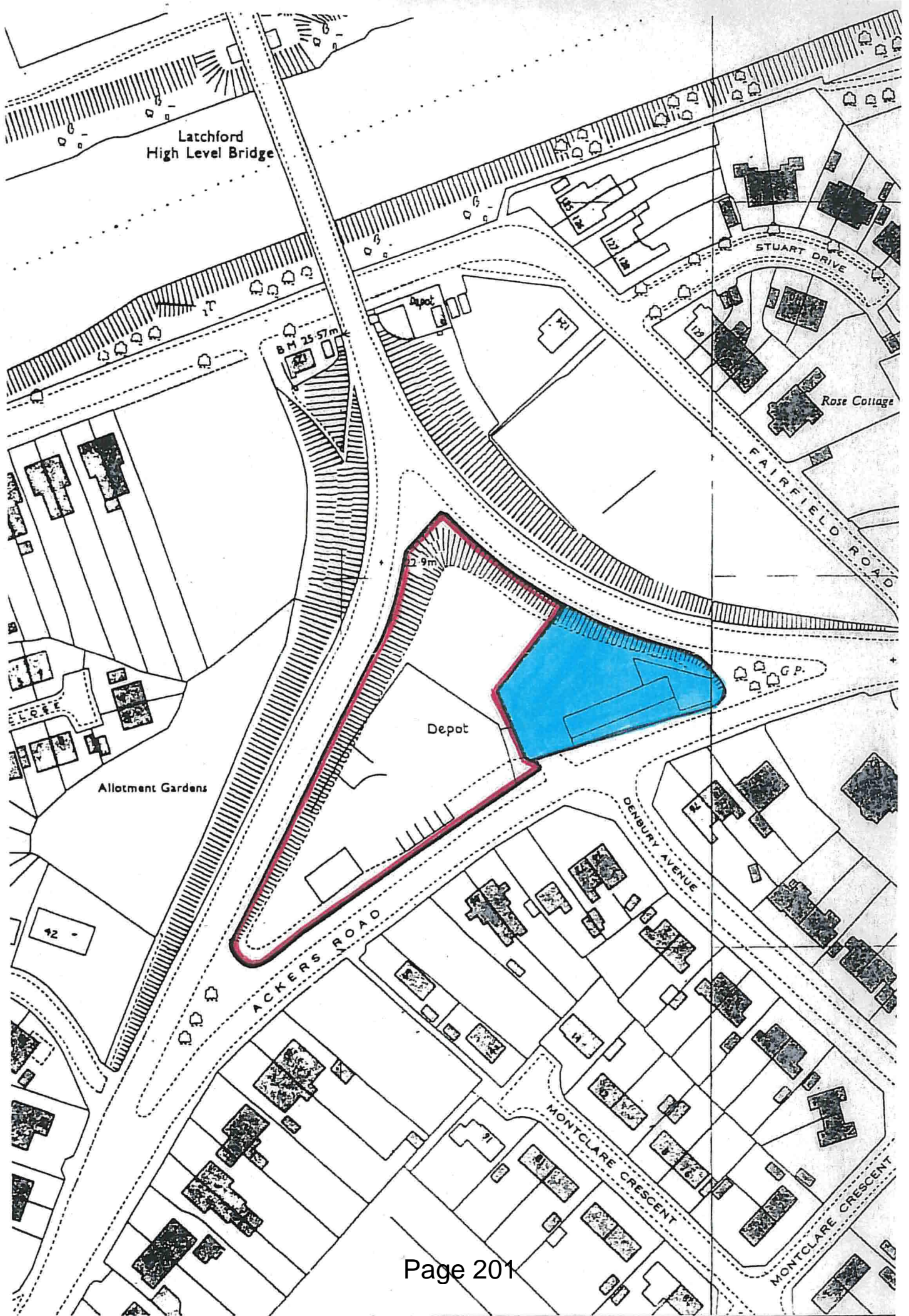
Equality & Diversity Implications

10. There are no equality and diversity implications.

Environmental Implications

11. Any environmental implications associated with the option land will be handled appropriately on behalf of the Authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None



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CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 21 SEPTEMBER 2016
REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
AUTHOR: JOANNE SMITH

SUBJECT: EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Recommended:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Order 2006, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12 A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item 17

Proposals Relating to Chester Fire Station

Paragraph

(3) Information relating to the financial or the business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

CONTACT OFFICER: JOANNE SMITH, FIRE SERVICE HQ, WINSFORD
TEL: [01606] 868804

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: NONE

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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