

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