

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.