

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE: 12TH JUNE 2017
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: CHRIS ASTALL

SUBJECT: DRAFT STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016-17

Purpose of Report

1. To give Members an opportunity to review an early draft of the Statement of Assurance 2016-17.

Recommended that Members:

- [1] Review the draft Statement of Assurance 2016-17.

Background

2. The 'Fire and rescue national framework for England', 2012 (the National Framework) includes a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to, "...provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework." In order to do so authorities are required to publish a statement of assurance annually.
3. Guidance on statements of assurance was published by the Government in 2013. This provided some context:
 - "7. One of the principal aims of the statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.
 8. Where fire and rescue authorities have already set out relevant information that is clear, accessible, and user-friendly within existing documents, they may wish to include extracts, or links to these documents within their statement of assurance."
4. The Guidance also contained sections dealing with 'Financial', 'Governance' and 'Operational' aspects of the statement of assurance. The approach to Financial matters was already governed by substantial legislative requirements. Similarly Governance matters were already captured in the Annual Governance Statement, another legal requirement.

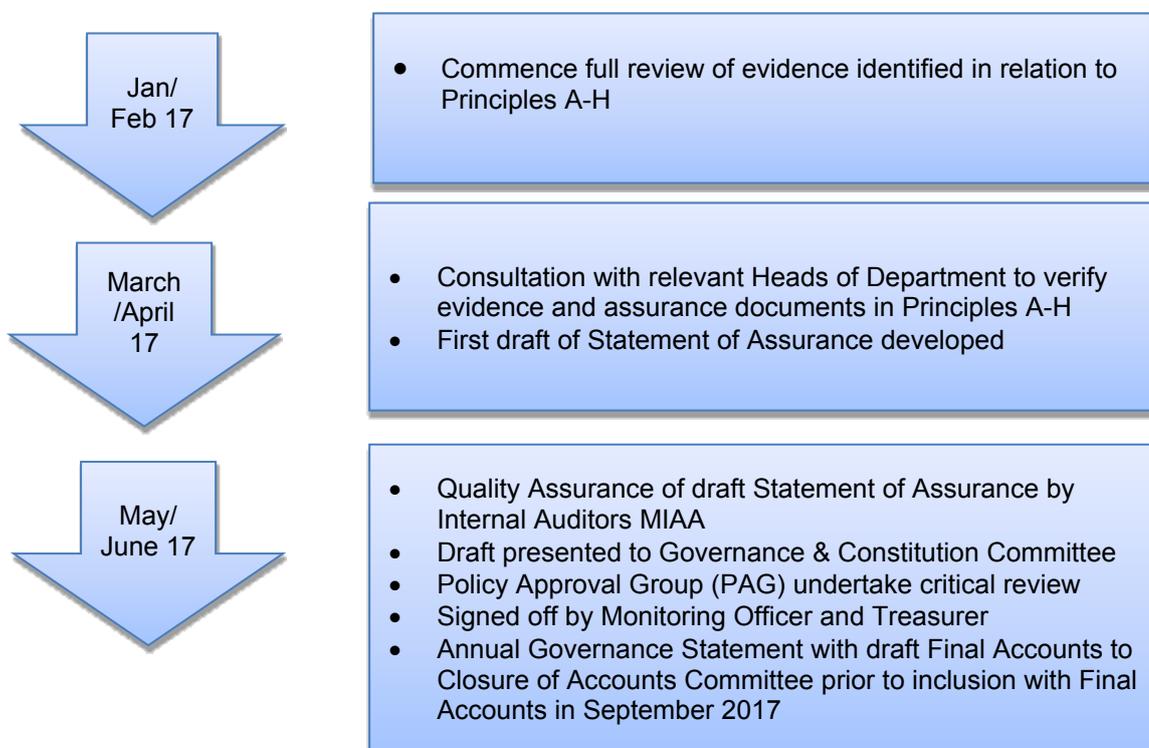
5. The Authority has, for some time, also used the CIPFA/Solace framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' to assist it in gathering and presenting evidence in relation to Financial and Governance matters. This was supplemented by the Authority with an additional 'local' principle concerned with compliance with the National Framework (which encompasses operational matters as well as the broader requirements of the National Framework). The CIPFA/Solace framework was refreshed last year and reframed various elements.

Information

Process to Support Preparation of Statement of Assurance

6. The process to support the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Assurance is unchanged. This has commenced with an evaluation and review of the evidence relating to the principles in the CIPFA/Solace framework (as supplemented locally). Where areas of improvement are identified, action plans will be put in place. A summary of the CIPFA/Solace principles is attached to this report as Appendix 1. In addition, the current version of the supplementary local principle (H) relating to compliance with the National Framework is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

The process map below highlights the key steps and timelines for development and production of the Authority's Statement of Assurance 2016-17.



Draft Statement of Assurance

7. The draft Statement of Assurance is attached to this report as Appendix 3. In accordance with the Guidance mentioned earlier, Members will see that the document includes various links to other documents and evidence which will be published on the Authority's website (or be available elsewhere). Officers are continuing to review these links to ensure that they refer to up-to-date documents and are working properly.

Financial Implications

8. There are no significant financial implications other than staff time involved in research, evidence gathering and publication of the Statement of Assurance.

Legal Implications

9. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, it is important that the Authority publishes the Statement of Assurance. Parts of it must be published by law, e.g. the Annual Governance Statement.

Equality & Diversity Implications

10. There are no differential impacts on any particular section of the community arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

11. There are no specific impacts on the environment arising from this report. However, it is worth noting that the Statement of Assurance is not published in hard copy: it is an electronic document that signposts various other pieces of information/evidence.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: