

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

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MEETING OF : GOVERNANCE & CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE : 6 JULY 2015
REPORT OF : HEAD OF PERFORMANCE, PLANNING AND
COMMUNICATIONS
AUTHOR : CHRIS ASTALL

SUBJECT: DRAFT ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE
2015-16

Purpose of Report

1. For Members of the Governance and Constitution Committee to review the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16 prior to presentation to the Fire Authority in September 2016. [**Appendix 1 – Statement of Assurance**].

Recommended that:

- [1] Members review and approve the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-16 for presentation to the Fire Authority in September 2016.

Background

2. Members may be aware that one of the requirements of the *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012)* is the publication of an Annual Statement of Assurance that:

'must 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 [Fire and Rescue National] Framework.'

3. In May 2013 the Government produced 'light touch' guidance detailing what could be included in the Statement of Assurance. While the guidance acknowledged the contents for the Statement of Assurance may already exist within other published documents, the purpose was to bring the information together into a single annual assurance document which would be easily understood and accessible.
4. In November 2013 the Governance and Constitution Committee were presented with, and approved an improved 'Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework'. This framework provides a simple structure for

monitoring compliance and providing assurance under the six principles of the Code of Corporate Governance and the same process was adopted for monitoring compliance with National Framework requirements. This is presented in the local framework as principle 7.

5. Action plans are in place covering any identified areas of improvement and progress against actions is reported to Governance and Constitution Committee twice yearly. A full review of the evidence and assurance statements highlighted in the Local Code of Corporate Governance framework has been recently undertaken with the principle owners.
[Appendix 2 – Summary of Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework Principles 1-7].
6. 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.

Information

The Compliance Process

7. The Authority currently fulfils its financial and governance assurance requirements through the process to produce and validate the Annual Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which include associated controls, scrutiny, and audits. The Authority also produces an Annual Report which summarises some of these issues, includes progress against its plans and is distributed to all homes in its area.
8. The Service's Corporate Programme Office oversees the frameworks and ensures evidence is consistently captured, owned, monitored and is readily accessible from one place, avoiding duplication.
9. The format of the Statement of Assurance document has been considered by our internal auditors Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) who have confirmed that it remains fit for purpose.
10. The preparation and timelines for drafting the Statement of Assurance 2015-16 were presented to Constitution and Governance Committee in March 2016.
11. In the interests of transparency, the Statement and all compliance and assurance documentation and other relevant links and signposts will be accessible directly from the Service's website as part of the Statement of Accounts process in September.

Financial Implications

12. There are no significant financial implications other than staff time involved in research, evidence gathering and publication. The AGS section of the Statement was presented to Closure of Accounts Committee in June prior to its inclusion in the Annual Statement of Accounts.

Legal Implications

13. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012) sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities and introduces additional requirements concerned with governance in its broadest sense. This includes a requirement to publish an annual Statement of Assurance.

Equality & Diversity Implications

14. 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

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

**CONTACT: JOANNE SMITH, FIRE SERVICE HQ, WINSFORD
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – draft Statement of Assurance 15-16
Appendix 2 – summary of Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework
Principles 1-7