

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 7TH OCTOBER 2020
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019-20

Purpose of Report

1. To present Members with the Statement of Assurance 2019-20 for approval.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Approve the Statement of Assurance 2019-20, with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive authorised to make any updates/final changes to the document.

Background

2. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 (the Framework) requires fire and rescue authorities to publish a Statement of Assurance (the Statement).
3. The Framework says that the Statement should:

"...outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard... to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan ... prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters."
4. The guidance on the preparation of statements of assurance indicates that existing assessment processes might feed into the statements in order to avoid duplication and this draft Statement contains a summary of, and a link to, the various other documents including the Annual Governance Statement.
5. This draft Statement was presented to the Governance and Constitution Committee on the 29th July 2020 and Members agreed that it should be presented to the Fire Authority for approval prior to being published.

Information

6. The Statement for 2019-20 is attached to this report as Appendix 1. A few minor inconsequential amendments and anticipated updates have been made since the statement was considered by Governance and Constitution Committee.

7. The Statement has been prepared in accordance with national guidance. It includes sections on financial assurance, governance and operational assurance. It also outlines the way in which the Authority has had regard to the Framework. A new version of the Framework was published in May 2018 and the Statement provides evidence to show that the Authority complies with its requirements. The final section of the Statement provides information about the outcomes from the first HMICFRS inspection. This was added last year to provide further evidence of the Authority's performance.
8. The guidance about the preparation of statements of assurance suggests that where 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. The Statement includes extracts or links to many of the existing key documents and policies such as the Integrated Risk Management Plan, the Annual Governance Statement, the Statement of Accounts and the HMICFRS report.
9. The Corporate Scorecard for 2019/20 has been included together with the opinion of the internal auditor. The opinion of the external auditor will be added once it is available.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

11. Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 the Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. Paragraph 4.6 of the current Framework requires each fire and rescue authority to produce an annual Statement of Assurance.
12. The Statement will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State's biennial report under section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
13. The Statement should be signed off by an elected member of the Fire Authority who is able to take responsibility for its contents. The Chair of the Authority will be asked to sign the Statement, together with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive. They formally declare that they are satisfied that the arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements of the Framework.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. There are none.

Environmental Implications

15. There are none.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019-20