



Annual Statement of Assurance 2014-15

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1. Introduction

Evidence
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This is Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority's third annual Statement of Assurance in line with the Government's requirements set out in the *Fire and Rescue National Framework* for England.

Intended Purpose of Statement of Assurance

The aim of the Statement of Assurance is to provide an easy and accessible way in which communities, government, local authorities and partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.

Statements of Assurance are published annually by fire and rescue authorities to integrate where practicable with existing governance reporting arrangements.

Complying with the Statement of Assurance

The published Statement of Assurance guidance sets out compliance requirements under three broad headings :

Financial:

Cheshire Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority has a robust budget monitoring process that is subject to close scrutiny. The Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring that the right controls are in place to ensure that financial assets are properly managed, financial reporting is accurate and that the Annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

[Financial Regulations](#)

[Statement of Accounts](#)

Governance:

The Authority is required to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority is required by law to produce an "**Annual Governance Statement**" (AGS). The AGS and supporting compliance evidence can be located in section 3 of this document.

Operational:

The Authority is required to comply with a range of laws; regulations and guidance, the following is a list of some of the key legislation:

[Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)

[Localism Act 2011](#)

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

[Local Government Act 1999](#)

[Health & Safety & Work Act 1974](#)

To ensure that the Authority can demonstrate how it complies with these requirements, a number of detailed assessments are undertaken. These include:

- Health and Safety policy and framework with regular progress being presented to the Service Management Team (SMT).
- Operational capability against risk to ensure that the right resources, procedures and skills are available to professionally respond to communities within target response times.
- An annual review of operational risk and performance supplemented by quarterly scrutiny Member and officer meetings.
- Risk Management Board monitoring and scrutiny of corporate risks.
- Compliance against National Framework requirements.

[Operational Assurance Guidance Principle 7](#)

Accountable to our Communities

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

This statement is underpinned by detailed documented evidence, most of which has been made available to the public on the Service website. Agendas, minutes and supporting reports relating to Cheshire Fire Authority's meetings are all published on the website. This includes incident and performance data, quarterly performance reports, policy decisions, audit and assurance reports.

[Annual Report](#)

The Authority measures and monitors performance using a range of key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are also used to compare performance against other fire and rescue authorities in England. The Authority publishes an Annual Report in September each year summarising progress against plans and a range of other performance measures which is sent to all homes in its area. All performance information available to the public can be accessed via the Service website and continues to be reviewed and refined.

In addition, the Authority is committed to adopting the best practice guidance set out in *the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*, as far as is practical.

2. Financial Assurance

Evidence Links

The Cheshire Fire Authority provides financial assurance through the publication of an Annual Statement of Accounts. This is a statutory requirement under the *Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011*, and the accounts are prepared following the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting*. The financial statements are subject to review by independent auditors as directed by the [Audit Commission Act 1998](#).

[Statement of Accounts](#)

External Audit:

Grant Thornton Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) is the appointed external auditor for Cheshire Fire Authority and is responsible for completion of the following assurance activities:

- Audit of the 2014-15 Annual Statement of Accounts
- Opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Value for Money conclusion

Internal Audit:

The Internal Audit function for 2014-15 was provided by Merseyside Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) and their audit opinion for the year ending March 2015 can be located in Section 3 of this document.

3. Annual Governance Statement

Evidence Links

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

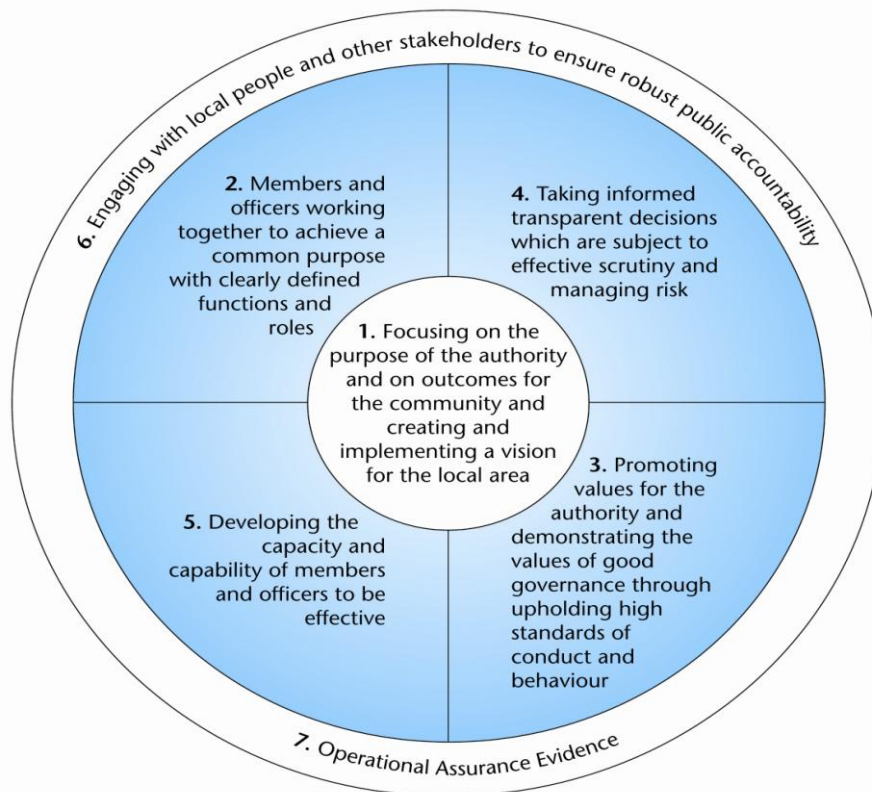
An Annual Governance Statement (AGS) publicly explains how an organisation manages its governance and internal control measures. It is an open and honest account of how an organisation ensures its financial management system is adequate and effective, as well as ensuring it has a sound system of internal control, assuring utmost integrity in all its dealings.

What is the governance framework?

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published the advisory framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' ('the framework'), in 2007 and an Addendum to the framework was published in December 2012.

[Delivering Good Governance](#)

The 'framework' defines six core principles that underpin the governance of each local government body. These principles were used to inform the development of our Service Local Code of Corporate Governance which was refreshed and approved by the Authority in 2013, The seventh principle in the model requires evidence of operational assurance and compliance with the National Framework. The Service's Local Code of Corporate Governance and compliance evidence is published on the Authority's website. An outline of the seven key areas is set out in the following model (*access the links to compliance documentation for more detail*):



[The Service Local Code of Corporate Governance 1-6.](#)

[Operational Assurance Evidence Principle 7](#)

Scope of Responsibility

Cheshire Fire Authority

The Authority has responsibility for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to show how it aims for continuous improvement and best value in delivering its services, taking into account a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Members and Officers

In discharging the statutory responsibilities of the Authority, Members and Senior Officers are responsible for ensuring that proper governance arrangements are in place. These need to demonstrate good management of the Authority's key risks in accordance with legislation and proper standards.

The Authority's Governance and Internal Control Framework

The Authority's local governance and internal control framework includes the systems, processes, procedures, culture and core values by which it is directed and controlled, and through which it accounts to and engages with the communities and other stakeholders. It includes arrangements to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and value for money services.

This framework centres on the Authority's strategic aims and objectives and include:

- The organisation's vision and purpose which drive the service planning, delivery, risk project and performance management frameworks
- The annual Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Consultation and Communications Strategies
- A published set of core values
- The Authority Constitution
- Responsible Financial and Monitoring Officers
- Established structure of Authority and Committee meetings, each with formal Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Scrutiny by Members e.g. Performance & Overview Committee responsible for thematic agendas such as Finance, Risk, Equality and Diversity, Performance Management, Health and Safety
- Integrated Corporate and Financial planning processes with regular reporting
- A refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance Action Plan reviewed by the Governance & Constitution Committee.
- Policies which govern the activities of the Service, overseen by the internal Policy Approval Group (PAG)
- Risk Management Board responsible for maintaining and championing an effective Risk Management Policy, framework and Corporate Risk Register
- Published Anti-Fraud, Corruption, Whistle blowing and Complaints policies and procedures
- Medium term financial forecasting and budget management processes.
- Performance Management Group which is responsible for monitoring and

[IRMP](#)

[Core Values](#)

reviewing organisational performance including the Corporate Performance Scorecard setting out the Authority's key indicators

- A dynamic, intelligent training programme which is tailored to the development needs of the Authority's frontline staff
- Appraisal and personal development programmes
- IRMP Programme Board which monitors and challenges performance of key programmes and projects
- Established Health and Safety policies
- ICT Steering Group which provides strategic direction for the Authority's ICT and Information Management and Security policies
- Budget Management Board (BMB) considering all financial issues

Engaging with our Communities

Extensive efforts are made to engage with the communities and stakeholders of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. A comprehensive 12 week programme of community consultation and stakeholder engagement is carried out each year to seek feedback on the Authority's key priorities and proposals set out in its draft annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). IRMP 11 covered the period ending **31st March 2015**.

The principles by which the Service carries out consultation are set out in the consultation and engagement strategy and on key issues the Authority works with the Consultation Institute to assess its performance against best practice. This was done for IRMP 11 resulting in a successful compliance assessment.

Identifying and Communicating the Authority's vision

The Authority had an existing four year strategy *Planning for a Safer Cheshire* supported by annual IRMP action plans. The Authority's vision is stated clearly as '*A Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies*'. Full details of all these plans are published on the website.

During 2014-15 the Authority commenced development of a new draft five year strategy, titled '*Planning For A Safer Cheshire 2015-2020*' which has been consulted upon with formal approval given by the Fire Authority June 2015. The strategy clarifies some of the stark choices facing the Authority and outlines the approach and principles adopted to ensure the Authority does not compromise on its commitment to protecting local communities, reducing risk and maintaining firefighters' safety.

[IRMP](#)

Risk Management:

[Five Year Strategy](#)

In November 2014 Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service won the Chartered Institute of Risk Management Enterprise Risk Management Award, against significant other high profile organisations.

The risk management framework and policy is reviewed by Risk Management Board annually and a full refresh of the framework is scheduled for later in 2015.

Equality and Inclusion

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has been using the fire and rescue equality framework to assess its equality performance since its launch five years ago. It has proved to be an invaluable tool. The Service achieved the highest level of the equality framework 'Excellent' in 2011 and is looking for reaccreditation in 2015-16. In 2014 a revised version of the Corporate Equalities and Inclusion strategy was published.

[Corporate Equalities and Inclusion Strategy](#)

Stonewall

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has been praised by leading gay charity Stonewall as the North West's best performing public sector organisation on LGBT equality. The Service has been a Diversity Champion since 2009 and has featured in the top 50 of Stonewalls Workplace Equality index Top100 for the last three years. In 2015 the Service ranked 31st and was the highest placed of any of the emergency services in the UK.

[Stonewall Top Employers 2015](#)

Working in Partnership



In 2013 the Service was appointed the lead agency for a sub-regional Community Safety Transformation Programme "Transforming Community Safety (TCS). This Programme involves a collaboration of **Cheshire Probation Trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service** and the **four Local Authorities** in Cheshire, Warrington and Halton who have been working across the sub-region to move towards a 'new model' of Community Safety radically transforming current delivery, improving outcomes for our communities while delivering potential savings.

In addition, in November 2014 a further sub-regional bid was successful in securing a £5,000,000 Transformation Challenge Award from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Service is putting in dedicated resources to support the programme which has a core team based at the North West Fire Control in Warrington. The Authority is currently exploring new collaboration opportunities with other Cheshire emergency services, particularly Cheshire Police.

National Campaigns

Smoke Alarm Campaign

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) played a leading role in getting government commitment to bringing in new safety legislation to make it compulsory for all landlords to fit smoke alarms on every floor of a rented property.

CFRS led on a two year campaign to get this legislation introduced providing key evidence and research to the Government. The new regulations are scheduled to come into force in October 2015 subject to parliamentary approval.

Sprinklers

The Service is a member of the National Fire Sprinkler Network and continues to support the campaign to make the fitting of sprinkler systems a requirement in all new buildings in England.

The Authority earmarked £160,000 to work with local housing associations on retrofitting systems into at least one block of flats in each of the four constituent authorities, with work underway on a number of projects.

North West Fire Control (NWFC)

The North West Fire Control Project facilitated a unique collaboration between four partner fire and rescue services Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. The project successfully went live on 14 May 2014 and since then the Service has been working closely with NWFC to ensure a smooth transition and proactively resolving any CFRS system and data issues. In addition, staff have been developing revised policies and procedures along with audit and assurance reports which will be taken to future meetings of the Performance and Overview Committee.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Cheshire Fire Authority has a responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control, at least annually. This is informed by the assurances of senior officers within the Authority, who have responsibility for the development, maintenance and management of the governance and internal control arrangements.

Cheshire Fire Authority is made up of twenty-three elected Members appointed by the constituent Authorities. There are also non-elected independent members who act in an advisory role and do not vote.

The Authority operates with the following main Committee structure:

- Policy Committee
- Performance and Overview Committee
- Governance and Constitution Committee
- Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee

Terms of Reference for each Committee are subject to regular review.

The Service has a Health Safety & Welfare Committee which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Member Champions

Member Champions are assigned to a number of thematic areas to provide additional scrutiny and challenge as highlighted previously, these include risk, equality, ICT, young people, older people and the environment.

[Health Safety and Welfare](#)

The Service Management Structure

The operations of the Service are directed through a clear management structure with defined roles and responsibilities. The Policy Approval Group (PAG) comprises of the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Head of Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) and Head of Finance, (Section 151 Officer). The full Service Management Team (SMT) is made up of PAG and Heads of Department, all of who report to CFO, DCFO or ACFO. SMT is responsible for delivering the aims and objectives that focus on the achievement of the Cheshire Fire Authority's vision. This includes the key priorities which reflect community, regional and national issues.

Monitoring Officer:

During the 2014-15 financial year, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services fulfilled the statutory role of Monitoring Officer for the Authority, ensuring all actions taken were lawful.

Chief Finance Officer:

For the financial year 2014-15 the Head of Finance had responsibility for day to day financial management in accordance with CIPFA guidance and responsibilities set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

How we performed during 2014-15 - Performance Management:

As part of the corporate planning process, the Authority sets out the key corporate performance indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, which measure the delivery of its strategic objectives and provides key business intelligence to help target prevention and protection activities. Achievements against these corporate performance indicators are scrutinised quarterly by the Performance and Overview Committee, and annually by the Fire Authority.

The Annual Report sets out how the Service has performed over the last 12 months.

[Corporate Scorecard 14-15](#)

Monitoring and Reporting:

The Service has an approved process of quarterly performance and financial monitoring and reporting highlighting progress against projects and activities, budget and performance indicators identified within Departmental, Unitary and Community Action Plans. These reports are presented to Members of the Authority in line with a corporate reporting cycle.

[Annual Report](#)

Value for Money Reviews:

The Authority's previous four year strategy committed to carrying out departmental reviews across the organisation; 2013-14 was the last year of the three year cycle. The reviews focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided. The

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underpinning principle of the reviews was the Service's duty to make best use of its resources in improving the quality of life for its communities. A full evaluation of the programme was undertaken in 2015 with the key findings reported to Performance & Overview Committee. The report confirmed expected savings in the region of £1.3m by the end of 2015-16.

Key Governance Improvements made during 2014-15:

In last year's AGS the Authority set out a number of improvements it intended to implement during the year. Progress against implementation of these actions is presented to the Governance and Constitution and Governance Committee.

The table below summaries progress made to date:

Key Improvement Area	Update Position
Consider commissioning Operational Assurance Audit as part of the Annual Audit Plan 14-15	Commissioned and delivered in early 2015. Awaiting final report
Publication of the refreshed Scheme of Delegation – <i>carried forward from 12-13</i>	Revised Scheme of delegation approved by the Fire Authority in April 2014 and forms a section of the Authority's Constitution published on the website. The Constitution is refreshed annually.
Undertake full review of business processes to ensure activities, policies and reports are accompanied by Environmental Impact Assessment	Updates to current processes have been agreed to ensure Environmental impacts are considered when developing policies etc. and the Environment Energy and Engineering Officer has included the revised processes in the Environment Strategy which was launched in October 2014.
Review of Operational Training and Recording Systems	A new integrated replacement training/recording system PDRPRO is due to be launched in early 2015-16
Combine existing Prevention and Protection strategies	The P&P department is now formally merged and all posts, structures and accommodation changes have been implemented. The 2015-16 departmental plan includes the integration of the separate road safety, prevention and protection strategies with a view to the inclusion of new ways of working once the Safety Centre has opened.

The following table summaries the Improvements Identified during the process for 2014-15 by the relevant Governance Principle Owners:

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Improvements Identified for 14-15	Lead Department
There are a number of key policies scheduled for review during 2015-16	All Departments
Full review of the Risk Management Policy & Framework will be undertaken in 2015	Planning Performance & Communications
Re map of partnerships to clearly determine what is a partnership and what is an arrangement	Prevention
Obtain Annual Statement of Assurance of NWFC Governance arrangements for 2014-15	TBC

Internal Audit:

The Authority's Internal Audit function for 2014-15 was outsourced to Merseyside Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), and established protocols were put in place for working with External Audit. A risk-based internal audit plan and three year strategy was agreed with senior management and approved by the Authority in April 2014. A number of audits were commissioned in line with our risk profile which provided an independent assurance level on the Authority's control frameworks.

The internal audit team completed or has started a number of compliance and assurance audits during 2014-15 aligned to the approved internal audit plan, which have resulted in fairly positive opinions with a small number of recommendations made as a result of their findings. Action Plans have been put in place to resolve the issues and deliver solutions.

In December 2014 MIAA were commissioned to undertake a compliance audit in relation to Principle 7 of our Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework – Compliance with the National Framework arrangements. This audit specifically looked at the evidence and assurance mechanisms in place and concluded that sufficient evidence was available to demonstrate compliance with the Framework.

Internal Audit Opinion 14-15:

In accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Director of Internal Audit (HoIA) is required to provide an annual opinion, based upon and limited to the work performed, on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's system of internal control).

The purpose of this Director of Internal Audit Opinion is to contribute to the assurances available to the Accountable Officer and the Authority which underpin their own assessment of the effectiveness of the organisation's system of internal control. This Opinion will assist the Authority in the completion of its Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

Overall Internal Audit Opinion:

Significant Assurance can be given that there is a generally sound system of internal control designed to meet the organisation's objectives, and that controls are

[Director of Audit
Opinion 14/15](#)

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generally being applied consistently. However, some weaknesses in the design or inconsistent application of controls put the achievement of particular objectives at risk and for which recommendations for improvement have been made.

All recommendations for improvements identified by Internal Audit are populated on the Service's Cheshire Planning System for monitoring and tracking delivery of actions.

External Audit Opinion:

Grant Thornton, the Authority's External Auditors, expect to give an unqualified opinion on the 2014-15 accounts. In their Audit findings report to the Authority they state that "our work has not identified any control weaknesses which we wish to highlight for your attention". They also propose to give an unqualified VFM opinion. This gives assurance in relation to the Authority's financial reporting processes and the Authority's commitment to meeting its financial challenges.

4. Operational Assurance

Evidence Links

Statutory Responsibilities

Fire and Rescue Authorities function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. Links to some of the key legislation/guidance can be accessed below:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

Corporate Planning - Integrated Risk Management Planning for Safer Communities

During 2014/15 Cheshire Fire Authority developed a new five year strategy, titled 'Planning For A Safer Cheshire 2015-2020'. The strategy clarifies some of the stark choices facing the Authority and outlines the approach and principles adopted to ensure the Authority does not compromise on its commitment to protecting local communities, reducing risk and maintaining firefighters' safety.

[Five Year Strategy](#)

[IRMP](#)

Community Risk Management

Through its Community Risk Management Policy the Service provides risk, intelligence and performance analysis in order to ensure that strategic, tactical and operational activities are evidence-led and fully evaluated. This is achieved by using specialist systems, software, data and skills delivered by the Service's Business Intelligence team.

[CRM Policy](#)

Unitary Area Plans

In addition to and complementing the IRMP, Unitary Area plans are developed for each council area. Each plan is unique to that area and contains the actions the Unitary teams will take in order to reduce risk and improve community safety. These plans are informed by the Community Risk Model which brings together historic incident data, demographic, commercial and external risk factors.

[CE Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[CWAC Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[Halton Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)
[Warrington Unitary Area Plan 14 15](#)

Stakeholder Engagement

The Authority is committed to the involvement of stakeholders in the development of the plans and it encourages this by carrying out a structured consultation programme on its draft IRMP each year. Local communities, partners, staff, representative bodies and other stakeholders are invited to comment to ensure that before any decision is taken all perspectives are taken into account. To enable active and informed participation, data and information relevant to the plan is made available to the public on the Service's website, in consultation packs that are distributed at community roadshow events across Cheshire, and also at key local stakeholder meetings.

Prevention and Protection Assurance

Prevention and Protection managers have an Audit and Assurance function for the Prevention and Protection aspects of the Service. Specific areas of activity aligned to providing assurance against these elements of service delivery include:

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- Compliance with Quality Assurance Framework
- Compliance with ISO 9001 Standard – The Service achieved accreditation in January 2014; accreditation is now being broadened to encompass the Prevention functions.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – further detail on how we discharge our responsibilities under fire safety legislation can be accessed via our website.
- Customer surveys are undertaken as part of the Audit process.

[Fire Safety advice for Businesses](#)

Performance Management – How we performed during 2014-15

A suite of corporate indicators and targets are used to support the Service and enable Stakeholders to scrutinise delivery of the IRMP. The Service publishes all performance and incident data on its website along with the Annual Performance Report to both drive improvement and ensure transparency of its performance. Performance Management is driven through three-tiers of quarterly meetings; Performance & Overview Committee (chaired by Member of the Fire Authority; Performance Management Group (PMG) (chaired by DCFO) and Unitary Performance Groups in each of the four unitary areas (chaired by the Service Delivery Manager).

[Corporate Scorecard 14-15](#)

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

[Annual Report](#)

External Assurance - Operational Peer Assessment

The Authority welcomed the Operational Peer Challenge team to Cheshire in July 2012. The team carried out a general health check and review of leadership, capacity and governance, as well as an assessment of a number of key organisational areas. The next Operational Peer Assessment is anticipated to take place in early 2016.

[Operational Peer Challenge](#)

Operational debriefs

Operational debriefs are used at both incidents and the Service's exercises and form part of the quality control system ensuring effectiveness of core activities. These debriefs provide valuable lessons which contribute to improving service provided.

Section 28 reform – formerly known as Rule 43 Notices

In accordance with its commitment to ensure a safe and competent workforce, the Service has conducted a thorough review of policies, procedures and training programs in response to tragic events nationally. The learning has come from the Services directly affected, information notices (**Coroner "Rule 43" Notices**) issued as a result of inquests and recommendations to all FRSs by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Business Continuity – Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Business Continuity is an important part of the Authority's strategy and a robust programme is well established to ensure responsibilities align to best practice standards, e.g. BS25999-2. Departmental plans which support the Authority's Crisis Management Plan are maintained and tested regularly. The Crisis Management Plan is owned by the Risk Management Board and reviewed and approved annually.

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During 2014-15 there were a number of national strikes by the Fire Brigades Union, therefore the plan has undergone 'live testing'. Crisis Management Team meetings have been carried out prior to, and after the strikes to plan, prepare and capture any lessons learned. These then inform the Crisis Management Plan.

Interoperability, Resilience and Safety

A comprehensive range of risk intelligence data and information is taken into account as part of the risk identification and analysis process underpinning the IRMP. This includes Community Risk Registers, with the Service having a leading role in the Local Resilience Forum which focuses on interoperability and joint planning with other emergency services using the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability (JESIP) principles.

Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow mutual assistance arrangements to be agreed with neighbouring Services to improve resilience and capacity in border areas. Cheshire Fire Authority has in place contractual agreements with the following bordering Fire Authorities for response to life risk incidents:

- Merseyside
- Staffordshire
- Shropshire
- Derbyshire
- Greater Manchester
- North Wales

Health and Safety

The Authority follows the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on health and safety management and carries out annual audits of health and safety arrangements. An audit and inspection policy is in place which includes:

- Quarterly workplace inspections
- Three themed audits scheduled each year and undertaken by the Health and Safety team
- Three yearly Peer Review of themed performance indicators based on Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents Quality Safety Audit (ROSPA) (QSA).

The audit and inspection policy was reviewed by Internal Audit in 2014 and recommendations considered.

Firefighter Fitness

In December 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) approved an Addendum to the National Framework for England in relation to firefighter fitness.

[Firefighter Fitness Addendum](#)

In early 2015 the Service proposed amendments to its current policy to align it to the National Framework requirements. The amended document was approved in March 2015 and adopted in June 2015 following consultation with Health and Safety

Committee.

The Authority has recruited a Fitness Advisor to lead on supporting firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing for all operational staff will take place annually.

Training

The new operational training strategy was formally launched in 2012. This strategy is underpinned by a number of specialist training policies and together these deliver a competence training framework covering a three year training cycle. Breathing apparatus training is scheduled annually with other important skills such as extrication techniques; trauma care; hazardous materials; swift water rescue and working safely at height are refreshed over a three year period by competent instructors who are all vocationally qualified assessors and teacher trainers. The Service's Driver Training School has qualified its instructors to the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) standards. Every year all operational training delivery is reviewed to assess its effectiveness to ensure that the requisite number of operational personnel have attended these continuous professional development programmes.

[Operational Training Strategy](#)

To enhance the Service's Compartment Fire behaviour training capability a joint venture with Manchester Airport Fire Service and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service commenced in June 2013. This collaboration is proving to be very successful and effective and has underpinned the Service's operational capability to deal safely and competently with severe compartment scenarios.

The quality of the Incident Command Training within the Service has attracted business from several other Fire & Rescue Services including Cumbria, Shropshire and Nottinghamshire as well as several high risk industries.

5. Assurance Conclusion

This Statement of Assurance provides an accurate account of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority's Financial (and associated documentation), Governance and Operational Assurance arrangements to 31st March 2015. In addition we are satisfied that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority conducted its business practices within the appropriate legal framework and standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Signatures:

Fire Authority (Chair):



Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive Officer:



Treasurer:

