

# Making Cheshire Safer

**Annual Statement of Assurance  
2017-18**



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## Executive Summary

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive and Chair of the Fire Authority recognise the importance of having good management, effective processes and appropriate controls in place to deliver services to the communities of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

Each year the Authority is required to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance including the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which describes how its Corporate Governance, Financial and Operational arrangements are working. To support this annual review a refresh of the Authorities Local Code of Corporate Governance Framework is undertaken with each Head of Department, the Governance & Constitution Committee oversee the development of the Statement of Assurance.

This document has been prepared taking into account the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 which applied throughout the period covered.

## Governance Issues

Overall we can confirm that the Authority has the appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure good governance and operational arrangements are in place. Whilst we are satisfied that these arrangements work well our annual review has identified a small number of areas for improvement/development:

Key Improvement Area	Lead Department	To be delivered by
Continue to develop the arrangements and relationships for the delivery of support services by the Joint Corporate Teams.	Senior Responsible Officer BLC	March 2019
Continue to embed the Partnership Governance Model and relaunch the revised policy.	Head of Prevention	December 2018
Continue to develop and streamline the budget preparation and management processes.	Treasurer	March 2019

Progress made with governance issues identified in the 2016-17 Annual Governance Statement can be located on page 12.

We propose over the coming year to address the areas identified for improvement in the plan above and implementation progress will be monitored and reported regularly to the Governance and Constitution Committee.

**Signatures:**

**Cllr Bob Rudd**  
Fire Authority Chair.....



**Mark Cashin**  
Chief Fire Officer/  
Chief Executive .....



**Allan Rainford**  
Treasurer .....

## 1. Introduction

### Intended Purpose of Statement of Assurance

The Statement of Assurance is published annually to provide an easy and accessible way in which communities; government, local authorities and partners may make a valid assessment of the Authority's performance and governance 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 Treasurer 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.

#### *Governance:*

The Authority is required to ensure that its business is conducted lawfully. The Authority is required to produce an “**Annual Governance Statement**” (AGS). The AGS and supporting assurances 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 2012](#)

[Local Government Act 1999](#)

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

[Policing and Crime Act 2017](#)

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

- Progress against the Authority's Health and Safety policy/framework is regularly presented to the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee.
- The Authority regularly assesses operational capability against risks in the area covered by the Authority to ensure that the right resources, procedures and skills are available to respond to incidents within target response times.
- An annual review of operational risk and performance, supplemented by quarterly scrutiny Member and officer meetings.
- Risk Management Board monitors and scrutinises strategic risks.
- Compliance with National Framework requirements.

### Accountable to our Communities

This statement is underpinned by detailed documented evidence, most of which has been made available to the public on the Service website. This includes incident and performance data, quarterly performance reports, policy decisions, audit and assurance reports.

The Authority measures and monitors performance using a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 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. 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 has adopted the best practice guidance set out in the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 as far as is practical.

#### Key evidence links

[Financial Regulations](#)

[Statement of Accounts](#)

[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)

[Annual Report](#)

[Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)

## 2. Financial Assurance

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 2015](#) and the accounts are prepared following the *CIPFA 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](#).

In addition to the statutory requirement to publish annual financial results, the Authority is committed to increasing transparency. One of the first steps in this process is for the publication of expenditure in excess of £500. This is compliant with the Local Government Transparency Code.

### 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 2017-18 financial statements
- Opinion on the Authority's accounts
- Value for Money conclusion

### Internal Audit:

The Internal Audit function for 2017-18 was provided by Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) and their audit opinion for the year ending **March 2018** can be located in Section 3 of this document.

#### Key evidence links

[Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)  
[Audit Commission Act 1998](#)  
[Statement of Accounts](#)  
[CFRS Website: What we spend](#)



### 3. Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

#### What is the Annual Governance Statement?

An Annual Governance Statement explains how an organisation manages its governance and internal control arrangements and measures the effectiveness of those arrangements.

#### What is Corporate Governance?

Good Governance can mean different things – in the public sector it means “Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times”.

Corporate Governance generally refers to the processes by which an organisation is directed, controlled, led and held to account.

The Authority’s governance arrangements and framework aims to ensure that in conducting its business it:

- Operates in a lawful, open, inclusive and honest manner.
- Makes sure public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and spent wisely.
- Has effective arrangements in place to manage risk.
- Meets the needs of the communities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.
- Secures continuous improvements in the way it operates.

#### Local Code of Corporate Governance

CIPFA published a new version of the framework ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government’ in 2016 (the Framework).

The Framework lists a range of requirements. The overarching requirements appear below with a short summary setting out the organisation’s view

An acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control) and reference to the authority’s code of governance

Reference to and assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the governance framework and the role of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, such as the authority, the executive, the audit committee, internal audit and others as appropriate

*Ultimately, Cheshire Fire Authority has responsibility. However, a range of individuals and bodies are also engaged in creating and monitoring the policies, procedures, controls etc. that secure appropriate governance arrangements.*

An opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework



*Working with internal and external auditors Cheshire Fire Authority and its officers are able to satisfy themselves that the arrangements are fit for purpose and satisfy the requirements of the framework.*

An agreed action plan showing actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues

*Cheshire Fire Authority does not believe that there are significant governance issues. However, the Statement does highlight some areas which the Authority intends to concentrate upon during 2018/19.*

Reference to how issues raised in the previous year's annual governance statement have been resolved

*Last year's statement did not include any significant governance issues. However, it did highlight some areas which the Authority intended to progress. The Statement includes a brief narrative about progress.*

A conclusion – a commitment to monitoring implementation as part of the next annual review

*The Authority remains committed to ensuring that the requirements of the Statement are monitored and met.*

*A new National Framework document was issued by the Government in May 2018 and this refers to the Annual Statement of Assurance. This in turn may have an impact on the way the Authority produces the Annual Governance Statement. The Authority has already begun a process whereby it will satisfy itself as to compliance with the new National Framework.*

The framework defines seven core principles (A-G); these principles were used in the development of our **Local Code of Corporate Governance** (see link below to access the LCCG). Principle H in the LCCG requires evidence of operational assurance and compliance with the Fire National Framework and was included in our Local Code for consistency. The Authority's Local Code of Corporate Governance and compliance evidence is published on the Authority's website [Local Code of Corporate Governance Principals A-H](#). Some elements which were highlighted by the external auditor are summarised in the following paragraphs:

### **Principle A Behaving with Integrity**

The Authority has a set of Core Values which are promoted and used widely to encourage the behaviour that supports this aspect of this Principle.

The Authority has a Members' Code of Conduct which is reviewed regularly. It includes the seven principles of public life. Members are required to disclose their interests by virtue of the law and the Authority's constitution. Members are required to withdraw from meetings in certain circumstances. The Monitoring Officer ensures that Members obtain relevant advice when required.

The Service has an officers' Code of Conduct which is reviewed regularly. There are a wide range of policies and procedures that help govern the way that conduct issues are dealt with.

A whistleblowing police ensures that there is an outlet for individuals to raise concerns which they feel unable to do in a more traditional manner. There is an independent body that is able to take calls/references on behalf of the Service.

The Authority's Governance and Constitution Committee reviews a number of the policies and procedures that encourage the necessary behaviours, e.g. anti-fraud, anti-bribery, whistleblowing.

### **Principles C and D** **Defining Outcomes and Determining Interventions**

The Authority has a vision: a Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries, or damage from fire and other emergencies.

The Authority produces a longer term strategy (Five Year Strategy) supported by annual action plans (together referred to as an Integrated Risk Management Plan – hereafter IRMP).

It also has a risk management policy with risk being considered by the Risk Management Board comprised of officers and Members of the Fire Authority.

It has a set of key performance indicators which are regularly reported to officer and Member meetings. The KPIs are widely reported. There are local performance measures too.

The planning cycle for the IRMP involves a period of consultation with a wide range of interested parties – internal and external. The outcomes from the consultation are considered by the Fire Authority before it settles the IRMP. Performance concerned with deliver of projects in the IRMP is regularly reported to officers and Members.

In determining the IRMP the Fire Authority is appraised of the budget position and given options for service delivery (where appropriate). The Medium Term Financial Plan is the vehicle for defining the high level financial position and is regularly updated and reported to officers and Members.

The IRMP for 2017-18 includes a number of projects that have been completed:

- Co-location and transfer of staff under Blue Light Collaboration project;
- Carrying out a staff survey;
- Delivery of over 40,000 Safe and Well visits;
- Opening and operation of Safety Central;
- Introduction of new unwanted fire signals policy;
- Developed a plan for the future training provision at Sadler Road.

### **Principle E** **Developing the entity's capacity**

The Service's Director of Transformation is responsible for organising two senior manager away days per year for the Service Management Team.

Alongside colleagues from the joint human resources team a range of psychometric diagnostics such as MBTI Steps 1 and 2, 16F, Belbin are used to better understand the approaches and requirements of senior managers (in particular).

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Senior managers are provided with media training as early as possible after their appointment (this training takes places annually).

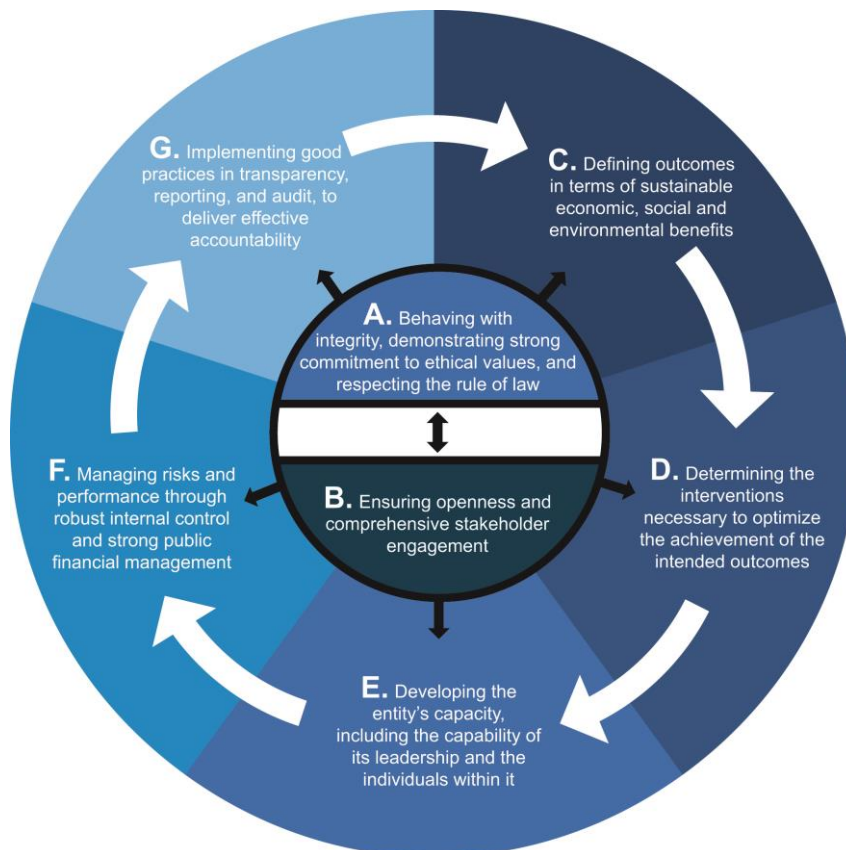
The Service arranges coaching and mentoring for senior managers wherever this is felt to be needed.

360 degree feedback is obtained for senior managers (on a 3 year rotation).

Bespoke development plans are prepared for senior managers.

Bi-annual succession planning meetings take place between the Director of Transformation and the Chief Fire Officer when skills, gaps, training requirements, potential career progression options, etc. are considered.

*Read on to see a summary of the core principles and what we do to comply:*



Summary of the Principles

Principle A	Principle B	Principle C	Principle D
Integrity & Values	Openness and Engagement	Working Together	Making a Difference
<b>What we do</b>			
<p>Stay true to our core values.</p> <p>Respect the law.</p> <p>Create a culture of openness and transparency.</p> <p>Ensure management processes are in place for dealing effectively with fraud.</p> <p>Provide a safe environment to raise concerns and learn from mistakes.</p>	<p>Engage, inform and consult with members of the public.</p> <p>Consultation feedback from the public supports IRMP and budget decisions.</p> <p>Effective scrutiny to constructively challenge what we do.</p>	<p>Clear vision and five year strategy – make the best use of resources providing value for money.</p> <p>Develop and maintain constructive partner and collaboration relationships.</p> <p>Good planning and performance management strategies in place.</p> <p>Proactively consult with staff and public.</p>	<p>Have a clear vision and strategy providing intended outcomes for public and service users.</p> <p>Delivery of Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)</p>

Principle E	Principle F	Principle G	Principle H *CFRS Only
Capability	Managing Risk and Performance	Transparency & Accountability Compliance	Compliance to Fire National Framework
<b>What we do</b>			
<p>Clear roles &amp; responsibilities for Senior Officers.</p> <p>Regular scrutiny of performance and oversight of compliments and complaints.</p> <p>Collaboration and partnership benefits.</p>	<p>Joint Corporate Services risk management arrangements are in place and effective.</p> <p>Effective performance management system integrated in departments</p> <p>Members and officers receive risk management training to perform their roles</p> <p>Effective Committee structure.</p>	<p>Transparent decision making processes in place.</p> <p>Effective scrutiny process.</p> <p>Effective internal and external audit function.</p> <p>Authority meetings recorded and transparent.</p> <p>Produce the Annual Report which is public focused and distributed to every household in the area.</p>	<p>Fully compliant with the National Framework.</p>

## **Scope of Responsibility**

### ***Cheshire Fire Authority***

The Authority has responsibility for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and that proper standards are in place.

### ***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 demonstrate good management of the Authority's key risks in accordance with legislation and appropriate standards.

## **Our Governance Framework**

The Authority's governance and internal control framework includes the systems, processes, procedures, culture and core values by which it is directed and controlled.

*The framework focuses on the Authority's strategic aims and objectives and includes:*



### Corporate

- The organisation's vision and purpose which drive the service planning, delivery, risk, project and performance management frameworks
- The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)
- Consultation Engagement and Communications Strategies
- A published set of core values

### Committee Structure and Member Scrutiny

- The Authority's Constitution
- Established structure of Authority and Committee meetings, each with formal Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Scrutiny by Members e.g. Performance and Overview Committee responsible for thematic areas such as Risk, E&D. Performance Management
- Local Code of Corporate Governance Action Plan reviewed by the Governance and Constitution Committee
- Published Anti-Fraud, Corruption, Whistle-blowing and Complaints policies and procedures
- Medium term financial forecasting and budget management processes
- Code of Conduct

### Scrutiny and Reporting

- Integrated Corporate and Financial planning processes with regular reporting
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Risk Management Board - responsible for championing an effective Risk Management Policy and Framework - regular review of the Strategic Risk Register
- Performance & Programme Board - responsible for monitoring and reviewing organisational performance including the Corporate Performance Scorecard setting out the Authority's key indicators and scrutiny of key projects and programmes
- Joint IT Steering Group (Fire/Police) - strategic direction for the Authority's IT delivery
- Information Governance arrangements

### People

- Dynamic, intelligent training programme which is tailored to the development needs of the Authority's frontline staff
- Appraisal system and personal development programmes
- Established Health, Safety & Wellbeing policies – compliance Health, Safety & Wellbeing Board
- Health, Safety & Wellbeing Board review of fitness performance
- Crisis Management Plan – Owned and Scrutinised by Risk Management Board

Key evidence links

- [Delivering Good Governance 2016](#)
- [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#)
- [Principals A-H](#)
- [CFRS Vision, Mission, Core values](#)
- [IRMP](#)
- [Treasury Management Strategy](#)
- [Whistle-blowing Policy](#)
- [Five Year Strategy](#)
- [Equality and diversity strategy 20-17-20](#)
- [Stonewall Top Employers 2018](#)
- [Environmental Strategy 2014 - 2020](#)
- [Information Management Policy](#)
- [Freedom Of Information Act 2000](#)

**Looking back 2016-17 - Action Plan**

The table below summaries progress made on the 2016-17 Action Plan, an update is provided twice yearly to the Governance and Constitution Committee:

Improvement Area	Lead Department	Update Position
Policy Management – Comprehensive review of all corporate policies	Governance and Commissioning	Review of all key policies has commenced. During 2017 80% of CFRS key policies were reviewed and refreshed following the normal review cycle. The small number outstanding will be undertaken during 2018-19.
Relaunch of partnership Policy and Governance Model	Prevention	Following an internal audit of Partnerships in 2017, work is currently ongoing to make improvements and amendments to the Partnership policy and governance model. The Partnership toolkit is being updated via the Cheshire Planning System. – <b>This will be rolled over to 2018-19</b>
Environmental Initiatives	Estates (Joint Corporate Services)	Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service is showing a reduction in carbon emissions from baseline levels as 808 Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e. This represents a 27% reduction from baseline, which is an average reduction of 135 Tonnes per annum. CFRS need to reduce carbon emissions by a further 381 Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e by 2020. At the current rate the prediction is that the carbon emission figure for 2019/20 will be 1,759 Tonnes 41% reduction.

**Our Key Partnerships**

**Blue Light Collaboration Programme (BLC) - Principles B & E**

The programme has made significant progress during 2017-18 with within scope in the Corporate Services departments (IT, Finance, Stores, Procurement, Planning & Performance, Strategic Change, Estates, Communications, Information Management, Legal and HR) all co-locating and subsequently TUPE transferring across to Cheshire Constabulary.



Senior Officers and the Democratic Services team from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service have moved into Clemonds Hey, assisting in the development of a closer working relationship to between the senior ranks from fire and police organisations. This close proximity has resulted in a renewed focus and energy to explore future potential collaborative opportunities, eg. procurement activities and deployment of technology.

Whilst the staff moves have been completed there is now a focus on how those departments can work jointly to deliver excellent services to both organisations in the most effective and efficient way.

Underpinning the entire programme is a robust governance structure put in place at the beginning of the programme with both parties sharing decision-making; enabling transparency and working together to overcome any challenges.

A key strength of the programme has been the People Strategy and People Transition process document. The Strategy set out the guiding principles to help staff understand how both organisations intended to work together with staff and trade unions/staff associations in a fair, transparent and consistent way.

The legal documentation continues to be progressed as do the financial arrangements that will underpin the collaboration. Following a 'bedding-in' period for the new structures and on-boarding to IT systems it is anticipated that the delivery stage of the programme will formally close in the autumn 2018. Thereafter, the parties will work together to further develop the arrangement to the satisfaction of both parties.

### **North West Fire Control (NWFC) – Principles B & E**

North West Fire Control is a unique collaboration between four partner fire and rescue services Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. NWFC is run by a company owned by the four services. Over the past year the Authority has continued to work closely with NWFC and the partners to ensure that the company delivers the call handling and mobilisation service to the requisite standards. Quarterly statistical performance data is sent from NWFC to each service for scrutiny. Members of the Performance and Overview Committee review this on behalf of the Authority.

### **Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Limited (FRIC) – Principle F**

The Authority works in partnership with eight other fire and rescue authorities to provide discretionary protection against claims made against the Authority and procures insurance cover on its behalf. The partnership also helps to inform the Authority's risk management activities. In addition to the arrangement through FRIC the Service has contracts in place with insurance companies to cover:

- Service employees when travelling on Service business
- The use of drones at operational incidents
- The statutory inspection of lifting equipment and pressure equipment

### **Safe and Well – Principle D**

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has a strong record of prevention work to help target and protect vulnerable people from the effects of fire in the home. The key delivery mechanism for fire safety advice and information to householders in Cheshire has been through Home safety Assessments (HSA). Nationally, HSA work has played a key role in helping to reduce preventable fire deaths in England. Accidental dwelling fire fatalities, which account for three fifths of all fire fatalities, have reduced by around 50% over the past decade. In line with the

national picture, fire deaths, injuries and incidents have reduced dramatically in Cheshire during the same period. This national success and proactive intervention work has received recognition and praise from the Cabinet office. NHS and Public Health England. NHS England and Public Health England, publicly called for the wider role of the fire and rescue service to be recognised and used to support the broader health agenda.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service supports the national programme of work to assist the health agenda. At the request of NHS England (Cheshire and Merseyside Sub-Region), Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service initially agreed to expand the traditional HSA to create a broader Safe and Well visit to help address the following health priorities:

- Prevention of slips, trips and falls
- Smoking cessation and alcohol reduction
- Bowel cancer screening

Outside of the initial partnership with health Halton Borough Council Public Health also asked Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to help identify people at risk from Atrial Fibrillation.

The following elements comprised Phase 1 in the Safe and Well visit, which commenced on **1 February 2017**:

- Prevention of slips, trips and falls
- Smoking cessation and alcohol reduction
- Bowel cancer screening
- (Atrial Fibrillation in Halton only)

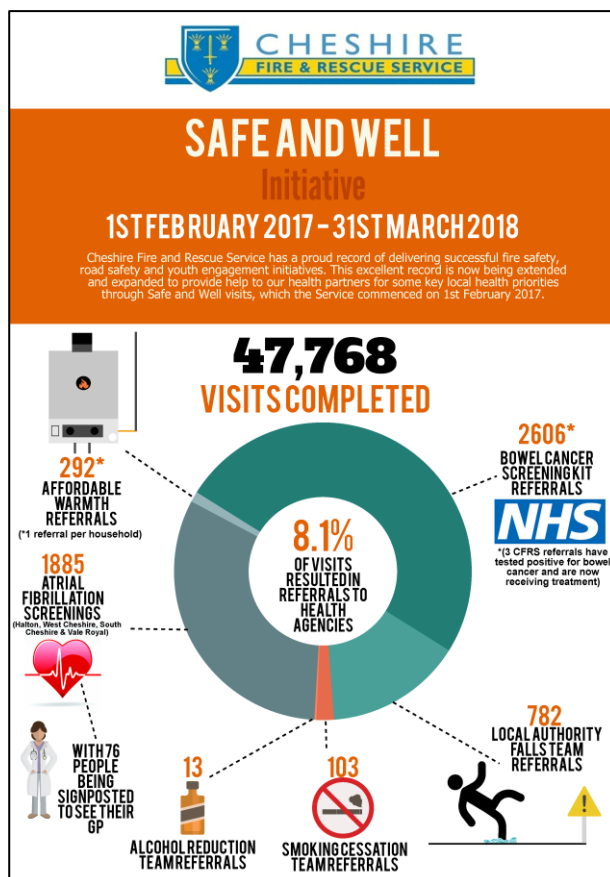
### *Delivering Partnership Outcomes -*

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was delivering 25,000 HSAs per year. In order to support the broader health agenda, CFRS has agreed to increase the current number of visits from 25,000 to 40,000. These will be Safe and Well visits from 1 April 2016. We utilise our advocates and operational firefighters to deliver this volume of visits.

During 2017-18, Cheshire FRS worked with health partners to expand the work to include screening for people at risk from fuel poverty/affordable warmth issues and to expand atrial fibrillation work to West Cheshire, South Cheshire and Vale Royal CCG areas.

From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service conducted **47,768** Safe and Well visits, resulting in:

- **2606** referrals to NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Hub;



- **782** referrals to Local Authority falls teams for help and support;
- **103** referrals to Local Authority smoking cessation teams for help and support;
- **13** referrals to Local Authority alcohol reduction teams for help and support; and,
- **188** Atrial Fibrillation screening tests resulting in 76 people being signposted to primary care;
- **292** referrals to Local Authority commissioned service for affordable warmth help and assistance.

### *2018-19 – Future Safe & Well Work Programme*

Reducing hypertension and blood pressure are key objectives for Directors of Public Health in Cheshire and Merseyside. They have therefore subsequently asked that hypertension and blood pressure checks be added to the Safe and Well programme. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is happy to take on this additional area of work as part of the Safe and Well visits.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is working to add the following to the Safe and Well programme:

- Screening for Hypertension and blood pressure;
- Expanding Atrial Fibrillation pan-Cheshire to include Warrington and Cheshire East;
- Loneliness and Isolation

## Safety Central

Located alongside Lymm Fire Station, Safety Central is Cheshire's first ever facility dedicated to public safety and life skills education. The centre houses a life-sized state-of-the-art indoor village designed to simulate a range of everyday hazards, encouraging visitors to explore ways to keep themselves and others safe in a fun and interactive way.

Learning programmes are aimed at those most at risk of avoidable harm and those who care for them, including primary school and secondary school pupils, parents and carers of infants, older people, people who need support to live independently and professional carers who visit people in their own homes.

Many of the activities are delivered by volunteer rangers, who come from all walks of life and undertake training in a dedicated Ranger Academy. The volunteer programme is sponsored by Cheshire and North Wales' electricity distribution company and several other public and private sector companies are supporting the work of Safety Central by providing resources, expertise and by co-delivering learning activities.



## 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 twelve 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 action plan (IRMP). IRMP 14 covered the period ending **31st March 2018**.

The principles by which the Authority 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.

### **Identifying and Communicating the Authority's vision**

Following a period of public consultation the Fire Authority formally approved the publication of the Five Year Strategy "Planning for a Safer Cheshire" at its meeting on 17th June 2015. The Authority's vision remains "A Cheshire where there are no deaths, injuries or damage from fires or other emergencies" and the Strategy sets out the approach to achieving that vision in the context of the challenges and risks faced by the organisation.

### **Risk Management Arrangements - Principle F**

The risk management function is now part of the new Joint Corporate Services located at Clemonds Hey it provides risk management support to both fire and police.

Good risk management is part of normal day to day activity. It is about taking the right risks when making decisions or where we need to encourage innovation in times of major change, balancing risk, quality, cost and affordability. This puts us in a stronger position to deliver on our promises and provide excellent services to our communities.

In 2018 the Risk Management Policy was refreshed to provide clarity on the risk management approach going forward as part of the Joint Corporate Services and risk management processes are well embedded. The Risk Management Board (RMB) reviews the policy every 2-3 years. Membership of RMB has representation from the Fire Authority Members; principal officers; the Section 151 Officer; the Monitoring Officer; internal and external audit and the new joint corporate services team responsible for facilitating the risk management function. The Strategic Risk Register is regularly reviewed at RMB to provide assurance that risks are being effectively managed.

RMB approved participation in the 2016 ALARM/CIPFA Risk Benchmarking Exercise to provide additional assurance by testing the Authority's risk management arrangements against other public sector organisations. The Authority achieved the highest risk management performance level of 'Driving'.

### **Quality Assurance – Principle G**

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service's Prevention and Protection activities are certified under the international quality standard ISO 9001:2015. This means that it consistently reviews and monitors the quality and standard of the services provided and its procedures.

The Quality Management System defines the key roles of our staff and their responsibilities. Cost savings can be made through improved efficiency and productivity as procedure or service deficiencies will be highlighted by ongoing reviews.

From this, improvements can be developed, resulting in less waste, reduced errors and fewer complaints.

We have a duty to talk and listen to members of the public, our staff and our partners to make sure our services meet the needs of the communities we serve. Customer satisfaction

surveys are undertaken as part of the fire safety inspection programme and during Safe and Well visits.

Through our Business Safety Team we engage with the business, industrial and commercial sectors in our area to understand the needs and expectations of all stakeholders to help make businesses safer from fire. During 2017-18 Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) undertook a fire safety audit review which did not identify any major concerns or control weaknesses in the process providing significant assurance.

*Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's provision of the Prince's Trust Team Programme has been assessed and is accredited to the Matrix international quality standard for organisations that deliver information advice and/or guidance.*

### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) – Principle G**

Following the move of fire and rescue services into the Home Office the Government has announced that HMICFRS will be the independent inspectorate for fire and rescue services, in support of the Fire Reform agenda. HMICFRS are utilising their experience of inspecting Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (in the public interest) across England to adapt this methodology as the blueprint for the Fire Sector. HMICFRS are developing their methodology and inspection programme with a commitment to inspect all fire and rescue services in England against the core areas of Efficiency, Effectiveness and People.

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has expanded its Protection department to incorporate the, newly created, Organisational Performance team who are charged with preparing the Service for the forthcoming inspection in July 2018. The team is responsible for preparing a programme of self-assessment and communication across the Service. The team will formulate, communicate and deliver actions plans following the Inspectorate's findings across the Service to improve performance.

### **Equality and Inclusion – Principles C & D**

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has in the past used the Fire and Rescue Framework to assess its equality performance and achieved the highest level of the equality framework, 'Excellent' in 2011. In preparation for being assessed according to a new national inspection regime for fire and rescue services in July 2018, the organisation uses a number of external accreditations to benchmark and affirm its commitment to equality – including the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and the Disability Confidence Scheme. It is also a Mind Blue Light Programme champion; The Authority launched a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy 2017-2020 in April 2017. Action plans linked to this Strategy are updated annually.

As part of the 2017-18 Annual Audit Plan a review was undertaken on E&D recruitment which received significant assurance.

#### *Stonewall – Principles C & D*

In 2018 Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service achieved fourth place in LGBT charity Stonewall's Equality Index Top 100 list of employers, the highest placed of any of the emergency services in the U.K. The Service has been a Stonewall Diversity Champion since 2008 and has featured in the top 50 of the top 100 for the last five years. In 2017 the Service ranked eighth, marking a jump of four places this year.



### *Positive action*

In 2017-18 the Service undertook a positive action campaign to support its recruitment of new wholetime fire fighters and apprentices. This included targeted communications, taster days, the assignment of buddies and mentors and canvassing for potential applicants at a number of local and regional events. As a result of the campaign, a diverse cohort of firefighters and apprentices joined the Service.

### **Information Security – Principle A**

The Authority maintains an information security policy which represents 'best practice' within the security industry. The policy exists to protect Authority information against any type of accidental loss, damage or abuse, by its staff, third parties and partners. In addition it maintains a safeguard to ICT systems that process, store, display and transmit information.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning is the Authority's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), and is responsible for the effective implementation of a consistent framework for management of information security across the Authority.

### *Information governance*

Information management is now one of the joint Corporate Services located at Clemonds Hey. This provides additional resilience and access to specialist staff, including dedicated Information Security and Data Protection officers.

A number of data flow audits have been completed which help Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service fulfil the requirements of the revised Data Protection legislation.

In future information security breaches will be reported to and managed by the Joint Team. An online reporting process has been developed in order to meet the new requirement to be able to report breaches to the Information Commissioner within 72 hours. Information management and security officers meet the SIRO each month.

### **How the Authority Works**

The Annual Governance Statement covers the period **1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018**.

### **The Service Management Team (SMT) Structure**

Due to the impact of the Blue Light Collaboration Programme a revised management structure was put in place in 2017 which introduced the roles of Director of Governance and Commissioning and Director of Transformation.

The operations of the Authority are directed through a clear leadership and management structure with defined roles and responsibilities. The Service Management Team comprises of:

- Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Director of Governance and Commissioning
- Director of Transformation
- Heads of Department

### CFRS Service Management Team Structure Chart



### Fire Authority

The Authority’s committee structures allow Members to consider key policies and to monitor performance. The Authority has an effective strategic and financial planning process which includes rigorous review and challenge by Members.

The Authority is made up of twenty three elected Members appointed by the constituent Authorities. There are also two non-elected independent members who act in an advisory role.

In 2017 the Authority enabled the Police and Crime Commissioner to attend and speak at its meetings. This is intended to help develop further integration between the Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Authority operates with the following main Committee structure:

- Performance and Overview Committee
- Governance and Constitution Committee
- Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee
- Staffing Committee
- Estates and Property Committee

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

### Member Champions

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

### Monitoring Officer:

During the 2017 – 2018 financial year the Director of Governance and Commissioning fulfilled the statutory role of Monitoring Officer for the Authority, ensuring all actions taken were lawful.

### Chief Finance Officer:

For the financial year 2017-18 the Joint Corporate Services Head of Finance had responsibility for day to day financial management in accordance with CIPFA guidance and



a new treasurer was appointed in December 2017 to become responsible for the matters set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

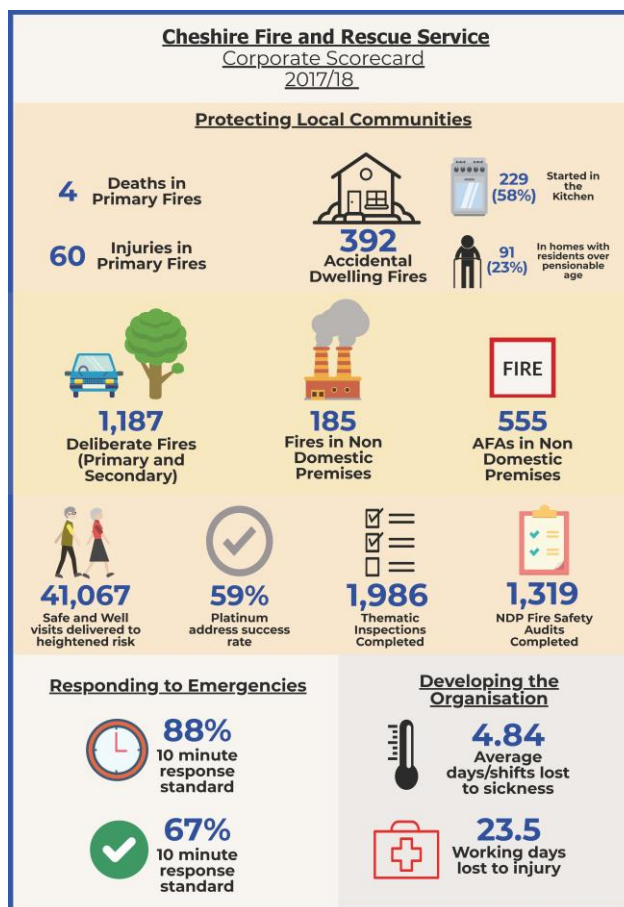
### How we performed during 2017 – 2018 - Performance Management:

As part of the corporate planning process the Authority sets out the key corporate performance indicators which measure the delivery of its objectives.

Achievements against these indicators are scrutinised quarterly by the Performance and Overview Committee and Performance and Programme Board and annually by the Fire Authority.

Performance relating to the handling of calls by North West Fire Control is also monitored quarterly, in line with agreed standards.

An Annual Report is produced setting out how the Authority has performed over the last 12 months.



### External Assurance

#### Internal Audit:

The Authority's Internal Audit function for 2017-18 was outsourced to Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), and established protocols are 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 2017. A number of audits were commissioned in line with our risk profile and appetite which provided an independent assurance level on the Authority's control frameworks.

The internal audit team completed a number of compliance and assurance audits during 2017-18 aligned to the approved internal audit plan, which have generally resulted in positive opinions with a small number of recommendations made as a result of their findings. Action Plans have been put in place to resolve any issues and deliver solutions.

## Internal Audit Opinion 2017-18:

### Director of 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 generally being applied consistently.

## External Audit Opinion 17-18:

Grant Thornton Opinion including Value For Money. This will be added once it is available.

### Key evidence links

[Blue Light Collaboration Programme](#)  
[People Strategy](#)  
[Safe and Well Visits](#)  
[Fire Authority](#)  
[Corporate Scorecard 16-17](#)  
[Annual Report](#)  
[Unitary Performance Area Profiles 16-17](#)  
[Director of Audit Opinion](#)  
[External Audit Opinion](#)

## 4. Operational Assurance

### 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:

### Corporate Planning

The Fire Authority published a 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. There is a robust corporate planning process in place which facilitates the development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

### Community Risk Management

Through its Community Risk Management Policy the Service undertakes risk, intelligence and performance analysis in order to ensure that strategic, tactical and operational activities are intelligence-led and evaluated. This is achieved by using specialist systems, software, data and skills delivered by the Joint Corporate Service Business Intelligence team located at Clemonds Hey.

### 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 mitigate 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.

### Stakeholder Engagement

The Authority is committed to involving all of its stakeholders in the development of its strategies and plans. It encourages this by carrying out a comprehensive annual consultation programme on its draft IRMP. Local communities, partners, staff, representative bodies and other stakeholder's are invited to comment to ensure that before any decision is taken a broad range of views 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 and via social media, in consultation packs, which are distributed at community roadshow events held across Cheshire, and also at key local stakeholder forums and meetings.

### Fire Protection Activities

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service operates a risk based intelligence-led inspection programme of non-domestic premises. If a business is audited, the audit will be carried out by a qualified fire-safety officer who will follow a set procedure which is designed to establish compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. We always aim to help businesses comply with fire safety legislation; however, at times we have to enforce the law by implementing a formal enforcement procedure and will on occasion

prosecute. This is always a last resort for us and we will endeavour to avoid this course of action by working with business owners/managers via a range of key interventions:

- A dedicated team of non-enforcing officers who proactively deliver interventions and offer advice tailored to the different sectors of the business community.
- Protection staff offer support to businesses to assist in complying with legislation and business continuity advice.
- Information provided digitally to support businesses.
- Proactively working with partners and key stakeholders to raise awareness of the fire safety and property benefits of sprinkler systems.

The government's Primary Authority Scheme is a means for business to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. This enables business to invest with confidence in products, practices and procedures, knowing that the resources they devote to compliance are well spent. The Service supports the Primary Authority Scheme and will consider entering into partnerships with a business or organisation to provide assured and tailored fire safety advice. The approach we adopt creates a more consistent and co-ordinated regulatory environment.

### *Fire Investigation*

Fire investigation is an integral part of the Service's Prevention and Protection activities. The main purpose of fire investigation is to determine the origin, cause and development of a fire and to contribute to organisational learning.

All fires attended will be investigated to establish the cause of fire. Where a fire has occurred, investigators have power of entry under Section 45 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 which allows an authorised employee to gain entry to premises in order to investigate the cause and progression of the fire that has occurred there.

Investigation outcomes will steer future prevention and protection activities and will assist in the prevention and detection of crime:

- Types of fires determined in our Fire Investigation Policy will be investigated and the most likely cause recorded.
- All fatal fires and fires involving significant injuries to persons, significant damage to property and suspected arson will be investigated by an Advanced Fire Investigator (usually in collaboration with Cheshire Police).
- Fire Investigation reports will be produced to support Criminal and Coroners' Courts to enable a verdict to be reached.

### **Operational debriefs**

Operational debriefs are used at both incidents and the Authority's exercises and form part of the quality control system concerned with its core activities. These debriefs provide valuable lessons learned which contribute to improving the service provided. They are undertaken following every incident and at a level which recognises the scale of the incident and also the involvement of other partner agencies. Debriefs will therefore fall into Level 1 Hot debriefs or more in-depth Level II Structured debriefs. Multi-agency incidents will also prompt a multi-agency debrief which will be facilitated and reported through the Cheshire Resilience Forum with learning outcomes reviewed and managed through the affiliated Cheshire Emergency Response Collaboration (CERC) group.

### **Section 28 reform – formerly known as Rule 43 Notices**

In accordance with its commitment to ensure a safe and competent workforce, the Authority has conducted a thorough review of policies, procedures and training programmes 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. Rule 43 Notices are used to inform policy and procedural reviews and to advise on the procurement/upgrade of operational equipment where necessary/appropriate.

### **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 Authorities Crisis Management Plan are maintained and tested regularly. The Crisis Management Plan is owned by the Risk Management Board and reviewed and approved annually.

A major Crisis Management Team exercise took place in May 2017. The purpose of the exercise was to test business continuity arrangements and manage reputational risk following the targeting of the Service by animal rights protesters. Key colleagues from Cheshire Constabulary also took part with joint service teams providing support. An action plan following the exercise was established with the headlines presented to Risk Management Board in October.

The Service’s Business Continuity arrangements were also reviewed by Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA). Following a comprehensive review the Service was awarded a “Significant Assurance” rating.

### **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 Authority having a leading role in the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum (CRF) which focuses on interoperability and joint planning with other emergency services using the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP).

CRF structures, policies and practices are regularly reviewed to better reflect the changing make up of partner agencies. Governance is managed through a monthly meeting cycle of the Management Group which reports twice yearly to the CRF Executive Group.

### **Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements**

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow mutual 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 seeks to comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and relevant legislation in managing its health and safety (H&S) duties.

The Authority has an H&S management system based on Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidance. As part of this we have clearly defined management responsibilities; as far as reasonably practicable we assess and manage the risks arising from our activities, we consult our employees on matters affecting H&S, we provide training and information to our employees.

The Service has an Occupational Health Unit to support the health and wellbeing of staff. We have a programme of health and wellbeing campaigns e.g. we have signed up to the MIND Blue Light campaign to support mental health and wellbeing in the Service and provided training to mental health champions and are looking to introduce more widely a Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) process.

We have introduced an electronic system to support the reporting and investigation of all accidents and near misses that occur within the Service and to track the investigations conducted with the intention of preventing a recurrence. The Service seeks to learn not only from events that happen within the Service but also from events that occur in other FRSS; we conduct review of our own policies and procedures in light of these and make improvements when necessary with completion of action plans tracked through the Cheshire Planning System. We have arrangements to respond to any emergency that occurs at work.

As part of the H&S Management System there is a program of audits and inspections; the audits are based on the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents Quality Safety Audit (ROSPA) (QSA) system and its performance indicators. These audits and inspections inform our annual review of H&S Policy and performance. They also contribute towards an annual H&S report submitted to the Authority's Performance and Overview Committee.

### Firefighter Fitness

The Authority has had a policy to ensure the fitness of its operational staff for some time; in December 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued an addendum to the National Framework for England in relation to firefighter fitness. In 2015 the Authority proposed amendments to its then current fitness policy to align it to the National Framework requirements and the national fitness standard proposed by CFOA.

The Authority recruited a full-time Fitness Advisor to lead on supporting the firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards required, and to undertake fitness testing. Fitness testing for all operational staff takes place annually. Performance is monitored at the Service Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee. The Service Fitness Policy has been amended to include the option to use the activities that must be completed within a set time. An audit of compliance with the National Framework requirements on management of firefighter fitness concluded that the Authority complied with the requirements of the framework.



### Operational Training

The 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. The Service is now commencing its seventh year of training planning, delivery and review against this strategy.

All new firefighters attend basic training which is broken down into modules and each module is assessed. Whilst attending the Training Centre on their initial training they are regarded as Trainee Firefighters. After training they are posted to their fire station where they are allowed to commence riding the station's fire appliance in a limited capacity and under the close watch of their supervisory managers and their competent co-workers. As the newly appointed firefighter enters their development phase of their career they are enrolled and registered with the awarding body Edexcel onto a level three National Vocational Qualification Diploma, Operations in the Community. During this phase they are assessed by competent qualified vocational assessors who ensure that the firefighters meet the assessment criteria of National Occupational Standards within their role map and go on to achieve competence within three years. This robust process of assessment is internally quality assured by vocationally qualified level 4 Internal Quality Assurers. It is later externally quality assured by an independent external Standards Verifier from Edexcel, the awarding body.

All front line operational staff, inclusive of new starters attend regular station planned training as detailed within their Station Training Forecast in order to maintain their operational abilities and competence. They also attend centrally planned refresher training in order to support this maintenance programme.

Breathing apparatus refresher training takes place in dedicated 'hot fire' conditions annually and the Authority aims to ensure that 100% of all eligible staff attend through an electronic course management and staffing system.

Compartment fire behaviour training capability is refreshed every two years and a joint venture with Manchester Airport Fire Service and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service commenced in June 2013 whereby all three services use training facilities at the airport to train and assess gas cooling and backdraft awareness skills, knowledge and understanding. This collaboration is currently being reviewed but as yet it still continues to be successful and effective and has underpinned the Authority's operational capability to deal safely and competently with severe compartment scenarios. Once again the Authority aims to ensure 100% of all eligible staff attend.

Road traffic extrication techniques, trauma care, hazardous materials, and working safely at height skills are refreshed over a three year period and each year the Service aims to refresh the skills, knowledge and understanding of one third of its operational workforce with an overall target set to achieve 100% of all eligible staff attendance after three years. The Swift water rescue capability of the Service's key water fire stations is validated by the staff attending two days of assessment every year.

The Service delivers in-house Large Goods Vehicle training on a one to one basis for its front line firefighters. Once they pass their test their driving skills are consolidated at station by driving fire appliances on routine non-emergency duties. After this consolidation they return to the driver training school and undertake a two week emergency response driver training course where they are taught to drive safely and efficiently at speed and under blue light conditions. Once they are designated as an appliance emergency response driver they



then go on to attend a one day emergency response driving refresher within a five year period.

To enhance the teaching and training capability of the training staff, all have now achieved or are in the process of achieving the level three award in education and training.

The Operational Training Group (OTG) also manages the Authority's Accredited Centre; currently Edexcel and Skills for Justice are the awarding bodies. Visits by external standards verifiers annually assess and confirm that the Authority operates to and maintains the awarding standards and this assists OTG in quality assuring its planning, delivery and review of training and assessment.

As well as external verification OTG also reviews all operational training delivery annually against its policies and annual training plan to assess its effectiveness and to ensure that the requisite number of operational personnel has attended these continuous professional development programmes.

Managers are all trained and assessed for their skills, knowledge and understanding in Incident Command. A dedicated Command Training Group (CTG) of vocationally qualified Officers plan, deliver and assess these training programmes. The quality of the Incident Command Training within the Service has attracted business from several other fire and rescue services and other emergency services as well as private and public organisations including several high risk industries.

### Key evidence links

[IRMP](#)  
[CRM Policy](#)  
[Unitary Performance Area Profiles](#)  
[Fire Safety advice for Businesses](#)  
[Corporate Scorecard](#)  
[www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk)  
[Annual Report](#)  
[Operational Peer Challenge](#)  
[Annual Health and Safety Report 2015](#)  
[Firefighter Fitness Addendum](#)  
[Firefighter Fitness Policy](#)  
[Operational Training Strategy](#)  
[JESIP Decision Model](#)