

## CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

### STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2014 - 2015

#### Foreword

The revised *Fire and Rescue National Framework Document* (known hereafter as the *Framework*) was published in July 2012. The *Framework* sets out the requirement for all English fire and rescue authorities to provide an annual assurance statement on financial, governance and operational matters and to demonstrate how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

#### Scope of responsibility

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, is the statutory fire and rescue service for the county of Cumbria, and is part of Cumbria County Council which is also the Fire and Rescue Authority. The purpose of this Statement of Assurance is to provide information in an accessible way so as to enable individuals, communities, partners and Government to make a valid, informed assessment of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority's (known as the Authority) performance for the year 2014/15. The Statement also demonstrates how the Authority has had due regard to the expectations set out in its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the requirements placed upon fire and rescue authorities by Government in the Framework.

#### Background

The *Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004* ("the Act") is the core legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales and details the statutory responsibilities of FRA's. Under the Act, FRA's have a statutory duty to provide a fire and rescue service that is equipped to extinguish fires, protect life and property from fires, rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Adequate provision must be made to receive and respond to calls for assistance, to ensure staff are properly trained and equipped and to gather information to facilitate delivery of an effective service. The Act also includes a statutory duty for FRA's to provide communities with fire safety education and advice with the aim of reducing deaths and injuries from fire.

Under the Act the Secretary of State produced a Framework that set out the Government's priorities and objectives for FRAs.

## Introduction

Cumbria Fire and Rescue service provides a 24 hour emergency response service for fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents. It also delivers a range of prevention and protection activities aimed at reducing fires and other incidents, including enforcement of Fire Safety legislation in order to help keep the people and businesses of Cumbria safe. A community profile of the county is provided in the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-2017.

## Financial

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service carries out its duties, as part of Cumbria County Council, under **section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999**, in respect of ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service adheres to Cumbria County Council financial procedures including annual strategic planning processes and budget setting and monthly budget monitoring and forecasting, resulting in the production of annual final statutory audited accounts.

The Council's S151 Officer, Assistant Director – Finance is responsible for the preparation of the Council's annual Statement of Accounts, including the Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. This is used to present the Council's financial performance in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) **Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom**. The draft Statement of Accounts are authorised for issue by the Assistant Director – Finance on or before 30<sup>th</sup> June each year and are then presented for audit.

The annual Statement of Accounts is also subject to robust examination by external auditors who provide an independent assessment and report as to whether or not Cumbria County Council's Statement of Accounts present a true and fair view and that they have appropriate accounting systems in place. This report also includes a review of and comment on arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The financial statements of Cumbria County Council for the year ended 31st March 2015 were audited externally by Grant Thornton UK LLP.

A review of the internal control environment in accordance with the CIPFA/Solace framework Delivering Good Governance (2012) and its 2012 Addendum is carried out annually.

The Head of Internal Audit is required under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to prepare an annual report containing the annual opinion on the Council's arrangements for risk, governance and internal control.

## Value for money

According to CIPFA statistics 2014/15, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had a net expenditure per head of population of £43.12 which places it 12<sup>th</sup> out of 13 county fire and rescue services with an average for county fire and rescue services of £40.74.

Compared to all fire and rescue services who provided data, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service was placed 38th out of 47 fire and rescue services in respect of net expenditure per head of population

This is in part accounted for by the sparse nature of the population in Cumbria which is not considered as part of this calculation. This is supported by the actual net expenditure figures and the net expenditure per hectare comparisons. Looking just at net expenditure, Cumbria had a net expenditure of £21,469,000 which placed it 4<sup>th</sup> out of 13 county fire and rescue services with an average net spend of £25,145,000 and a highest of £41,500,000. The net cost per hectare shows Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 14 County fire and rescue services with a figure of £31.73 compared to an average of £104.60.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service continuously seeks to identify cost effective models and structures for all aspects of its service delivery. During 2013/14, preparations were made to move the Control Room function from an outsourced service provided by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to the North West Control Room along with Cheshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. The move took place in May 2014. Savings achieved up to 2013/14 were £430,000 with a further £300,000 in 2014/15 and ongoing annual savings from 2015/16 projected to be £270,000.

## Governance

Cumbria County Council (the Fire Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively.

As a component part of Cumbria County Council, the Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority has a duty under the **Local Government Act 1999** to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Cumbria County Council adopted in 2014 a new local 'Code of Corporate Governance'. This Code has been developed in consideration of the governance principles set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) document: **"Delivering Good Governance in Local Government" (2012) and the 2012 Addendum**. The Code sets out the Council's commitment to good governance and describes the Council's Governance Framework and processes.

The Council produces an Annual Governance Statement which, following a corporate review, provides an assessment of the Council's compliance with the Code and includes any proposed measures to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance are maintained.

The Chief Fire Officer as an Assistant Director of the Council is required to review and report on his service area and the Directorate's position (comprising the reviews of each Assistant Director), including any governance issues identified, is signed off by the Corporate Director.

Members of the Service's Leadership Team supported the review of the compliance with and effectiveness of internal controls within the Service and contributed to the Council's review of ongoing arrangements.

Significant governance issues for the Council corporately are included within the Annual Governance Statement and those identified by an Assistant Director relating to one service only are included within Assistant Director's service plans.

The Chief Fire Officer is a member of the senior manager Corporate Governance group which has responsibility for overseeing corporate governance matters for the Council.

Cumbria County Council's Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance are available on the Council's website alongside the statement of accounts.

## **Operational**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority has carried out its functions in accordance with the defined statutory and policy framework in which it is required to operate. The key documents setting this out are:

***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***

***Health and Safety Act at Work Act 1974***

Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service has an Integrated Risk Management Plan in place which details locally agreed attendance standards to property fires (based on super output area risk) and road traffic collisions. The current Integrated Risk Management Plan covers the period 2014-2017, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. The contents of this document were consulted upon as part of the Council's strategic planning arrangements during 2013-14. As part of this consultation that communities were provided with relevant and appropriate information to enable active and informed participation in the decision making process.

A fire risk model is used to support the Integrated Risk Management Plan and draws information from the previous 5 years of dwelling and other building fires, along with fire casualty data and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to categorise each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) into either high, medium or low fire risk. To identify the wider risks within our communities, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has also paid cognisance to road traffic collision data, heritage, environment, site specific risks, flooding and rurality. The risk review update (2014/15) shows that risk across Cumbria has continued to fall since the baseline was established in 2008/09.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan can be viewed on the Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service website.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service undertakes benchmarking activity against other fire and rescue services and it has used this information to help set targets that will drive improvement activity and the continued targeting of resources towards those at highest risk across Cumbria's communities.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service ensured that prevention activities were targeted at those at greatest risk from fire within the communities it serves. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

used the relationships it has with other organisations to share data and work with the most vulnerable.

From education and home accident reduction activity through to multi-agency solutions aimed at very high risk individuals and families, innovative methods were used to promote the fire safety message which contributed to continuing year on year reductions in the number of house fires and other emergencies.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service continues to run and participate in a number of targeted initiatives designed to prevent fires, reduce anti-social behaviour and improve life chances. These included working with Young Firefighters, Fire Cadets, and Junior Citizens as well as working with the police and approved driving instructors to deliver road safety initiatives specifically targeted at young drivers.

Other examples of community safety work which demonstrate the holistic approach we take include, working with food banks, drug and alcohol service providers and Mencap to deliver tailored messages around fire safety, road safety and other health messages, for example smoking or obesity where appropriate.

### **Partnership working and interoperability**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is currently exploring collaborative opportunities with partners to improve the services it provides to communities across the county.

Managers at tactical and operational level have undertaken Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) training and are based across the county. The impact of JESIP will be to provide a consistent joint emergency services response to incidents wherever the incident may take place across Cumbria or across border. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, Cumbria Police and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) have been trained in the application of joint command decision and assessment models. They will better understand the roles and responsibilities of their peers in each service which will lead to a coherent and commonly understood way of working.

The Service also has an arrangement with Cumbria Constabulary where training facilities are shared. The facility is at the Penrith site and is used by Fire staff for fire behaviour training and police staff for civil disturbance training.

There is also an arrangement with Sellafield whereby a Station Manager and Watch Manager are seconded into that site to fulfil a liaison role between Sellafield's own Fire service and how it works with Cumbria's Fire and Rescue Service.

As a "responsible authority" within the context of the ***Crime and Disorder Act 1998***, Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service has worked with other responsible authorities i.e. local authorities; the police; primary care trusts and the probation service to reduce reoffending, tackle crime and disorder including anti-social behaviour and other behaviour damaging to the local environment as well as the misuse of substances in their area. In Cumbria we have four Community Safety Partnerships reporting into a county wide strategy group called Safer Cumbria.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is regularly represented at a local level as part of the four community safety partnerships within Cumbria. The Portfolio holder for Fire, Public Safety and Central Support Services is vice chair of the countywide strategic group known as Safer Cumbria and the Chief Fire Officer is vice chair of the Safer Cumbria action group, responsible for driving forward the strategic community safety priorities. As well as geographic representation, the service is represented on cross cutting thematic groups such

as domestic violence, hate crime and drugs and alcohol, fulfilling our statutory responsibilities under the aforementioned act.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service continued to work with the Government, other fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue professionals in order to ensure continued national resilience. To this end, Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service have signed up to the National Mutual Aid Protocol, this agreement establishes the terms under which an authority may expect to request assistance from, or provide assistance to, another authority in the event of a serious national incident. Additionally, in **sections 13 and 16 of the Fire Services Act 2004** there is a legal requirement for neighbouring FRAs to enter into formal reinforcement arrangements. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has formal mutual aid arrangements in place with its neighbouring fire and rescue authorities to provide mutual cross border support and assistance in the event of a fire or other emergency incident.

To ensure operational preparedness and to satisfy local and national assurance processes Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service takes a leading role in the design, delivery and participation of local, regional and national exercises to test all stages of command within Fire and Rescue Service operations.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is a key member within the County's Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a multi-agency partnership consisting of the emergency services and all other organisations and agencies involved with emergency response in communities. The LRF partnership develops civil resilience capacity and capability by preparing multi-agency, major incident response plans and organising training and exercises. The Service holds three national resilience assets: an Incident Response Unit, a High Volume Pump and an Enhanced Logistical Support Vehicle.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has an annual exercise plan in place, including multi-pump training with neighbouring Fire Authorities and on-going operational exercises within each of our 4 Localities. In addition to that, in order to support the operational development needs of our on-call firefighters, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service introduced a Maintenance of Core Skills Framework in 2013 to ensure all operational staff undertake relevant training to prepare them for the risks they face. Training and assessment is undertaken by a group of qualified assessors and quality assured by internal verifiers.

The Service has arrangements in place to secure realistic training for fire safety operations, including exercises at high risk premises, including the following:

- Fire Behaviour Training (Penrith), training in heat and smoke on annual basis
- The implementation of Risk Profiles for each station within the Locality areas
- National high risk exercises such as Northern Chain, COBRA etc.
- Local high risk sites identified within Risk profiles i.e. nuclear, marine etc.
- North West Regional exercises
- Enhanced Logistical Support Training
- Cross Border locality run exercises
- Local resilience forum/resilience exercises

### **Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service within the broader County Council**

As part of a County Council, the Chief Fire Officer is part of the Corporate Management Team and therefore works alongside colleagues in Children's Services, Health and Care Services, and Environment and Community Services; this approach supports and encourages joint working.

Finances are overseen by the Assistant Director – Finance (who is also the Council's S151 Officer) who reports directly to the Chief Executive. Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service have access to financial staff on a day to day basis and are able to draw on further support from across a central finance function as necessary, an example being from the Technical Finance Team.

We maintain excellent relations with colleagues across the Council to help to achieve efficiencies and draw on broader resources and capacity where appropriate. Fire and Rescue Service staff now carry out equipment checks on behalf of the Health and Care Services directorate which has delivered savings and we have recently moved the Youth Engagement Officer role to within Children's Services. Fire stations are now occupied by other council staff in order that premises previously occupied could be sold.

In Cumbria 1 in 3 people volunteer compared with 1 in 4 nationally, so this means that there is real opportunity for local government including fire and rescue services to work with volunteers and third sector organisations to deliver local services. This is at the heart of the government's localism and big society vision.

Volunteers within the Service undertake a wide range of duties including some initiatives which they deliver for their local districts. Our Volunteer Scheme aims to promote community cohesion and wellbeing by assisting in the development of important communication links between local fire stations, representative groups, other volunteer organisations and individuals with similar ideals in the community.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service volunteers help to deliver Home Accident Reduction Interventions and support their local Fire and Rescue Service crews with all types of community engagement, including those targeted at young people and positive action events. Some of our volunteers are trained to crew reception centres on behalf of Cumbria's Resilience department in the event of a major incident.

### **Review of effectiveness and commitment to continuous improvement**

In accordance with its commitment to ensure a safe and competent workforce, Cumbria Fire and Rescue 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).

In accordance with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to take responsibility for its own improvement the Service made arrangements to host a Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Peer Challenge in the financial year 2013-14. As a result, an Action Plan was produced which is being progressed and this is being monitored through the Council's Corporate Governance Group.

The Service holds three national resilience assets and during 2013/14, the Service prepared for a National Resilience (NR) Multi Capability Assurance visit which took place on 3 June 2014. The audit process has been developed as a long term procedure to ensure that the Fire and Rescue Services that have received National Resilience assets achieve and maintain an efficient, robust and effective operational capability to respond to national and major emergencies. The report shows Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service had 28 areas of 'conforming' and 13 areas where 'room for improvement' is noted. There were no areas of 'non-conforming'. An Action Plan will be produced to address the areas for improvement. The report from the NR Assurance Team concluded that Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service are satisfactorily discharging their statutory duties in relation to NR capabilities

as outlined in the Fire and Rescue Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007.

### **Framework Requirements**

The Authority is satisfied that systems and measures it has in place with respect to financial, governance and operational matters are robust, fit for purpose and effective. The Fire and Rescue Authority has considered the principals of transparency set out in the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency and when publishing data

- responds to public demand
- releases data in open formats available for re-use
- releases data in a timely way

### **Future Improvements**

Since the last Statement of Assurance 2013-14, the Service has planned in a number of savings proposals that save £150k in 2015/2016, £225k in 2016/2017 and £400k in 2017/2018 giving total savings across the three years of ££775k. This is through increasing income generation, reviewing night time crewing arrangements, checking before attending and reviewing the on call payment arrangements in the fire service. The Fire and Rescue Service use the Annual Service planning regime to ensure that these improvements are delivered.

**CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2014/15**

I confirm that this Statement of Assurance gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Fire and Rescue Service at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. It sets out the governance and operational arrangements that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.



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Signed by:

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Signed by:

Jim Onions  
**Chief Fire Officer**

Barry Doughty  
**Cabinet Member**

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Date: 2.11.15

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Date: 2.11.15

**APPENDIX 1 Glossary of terms**  
**Abbreviation Definition**

AFA Automatic Fire Alarm

CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL Cumbria County Council

CFO Fire Officer

CFOA Chief Fire Officers Association

CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service

CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

FRA Fire and Rescue Authority

FRS Fire and Rescue Service

HCS Health and Community Services

HSE Health and Safety Executive

IRMP Integrated Risk Management Plan

LGA Local Government Association

LRF Local Resilience Forum

UFS Unwanted Fire Signals

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Links to documents**

Fire and Rescue National Framework Document (the Framework)  
The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004  
Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999,  
Audit Commission Act 1998  
Regulation 11 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011  
The Civil Contingencies Act 2004  
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005  
The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007  
The Localism Act 2011  
The Health and Safety Act at Work Act 1974  
Cumbria County Council's Annual Statement of Accounts  
Cumbria County Council's Code of Corporate Governance  
Cumbria County Council's Governance Statement  
Peer Challenge Report  
Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2014-17  
CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE Annual Service Plan