

**Cumbria
Fire &
Rescue
Service**



Statement of Assurance 2013 - 2014



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 (FRAs) 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 (CFRS), is the statutory fire and rescue service for the county of Cumbria, and is part of Cumbria County Council (CCC) which is also the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA).

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 2013/14. 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 (FRAs) 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

CFRS 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 (IRMP) 2014-2017.

Financial

CFRS carries out its duties, as part of CCC, 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.

CFRS adheres to CCC 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 CFRS. 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 30th 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 CCC'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 CCC for the year ended 31 March 2014 have been audited externally by Grant Thornton UK LLP in line with guidance in the **Audit Commission Act 1998**, an unmodified opinion was issued.

The final accounts were then submitted by the Assistant Director – Finance, together with the external auditors Audit Findings Report, for approval by the Audit and Assurance Committee on 24 September 2014.

In accordance with **Regulations 8 and 11 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011** the Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 together with the external auditor's report have been published and can be found on Cumbria County Council's website. A review of the internal control environment in accordance with CIPFA guidance is carried out by the annual directorate assurance questionnaire that is completed by each directorate and feeds into the Annual Governance Statement.

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. This can be found in the papers for the Audit & Assurance Committee meeting on 10 June 2014. Note – the CIPFA Code of Practice 2006 has now been replaced by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013 which became the mandatory standards for internal audit from 1 April 2013.

Value for money

According to CIPFA statistics 2013/14 (provisional), Cumbria FRS had a net expenditure per head of population of £43.21 which places it 12th out of 13 county FRSs with an average for county FRSs of £36.51.

Compared to all FRSs but excluding London, Isles of Scilly and Isle of Wight, Cumbria FRS was placed 31st out of 35 FRSs in respect of net expenditure per head of population. It should be noted that in addition to the exclusions stated, financial information was also not available in respect of 8 other FRSs.

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 £21,522,000 which placed it 4th out of 13 county FRSs with an average net spend of £25,477,000 and a highest of £44,530,000. The net cost per hectare shows Cumbria FRS 2nd out of 14 County FRSs with a figure of £31.81 compared to an average of £99.47.

CFRS 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 FRS 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 expected in 2014/15 and ongoing annual savings from 2015/16 projected to be £270,000.

Following a Council restructure across all directorates, the post of CFO / Corporate Director was dis-established and replaced by a Chief Fire Officer. As part of this process, the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer was also dis-established.

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 CFRA 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 has adopted a '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**". The Code sets out the Council's commitment to good governance and describes the Council's Governance Framework and processes. The Code is being reviewed during 2014 and will be submitted to the Council's Audit and Assurance Committee for approval.

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

CFRS has an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in place which details locally agreed attendance standards to property fires (based on super output area risk) and road traffic collisions. The current IRMP covers the period 2014-2017, effective from 1st April 2014. The contents of this document were consulted upon as part of the Council's strategic planning arrangements during 2013-14. The public consult

A fire risk model is used for all IRMP documents produced that 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, CFRS has also paid cognisance to heritage, environment, site specific risks, flooding and rurality. The risk review update (2013/14) shows that risk across Cumbria has continued to fall since the baseline was established in 2008/09.

The IRMP can be viewed on the Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service website.

Cumbria County Council has a 3 year Council Plan which was consulted on in 2013/14. This process gave the public in Cumbria the opportunity to determine where the Council will prioritise over the coming years. Annually, the public are consulted on proposed potential efficiencies to take effect in the following financial year and performs the function of the IRMP Action Plan for that year.

Cumbria County Council will conduct an annual review of both the planned activities contained within the Council Plan and the effectiveness of the IRMP and in practice will operate a continuous process of review and improvement. Information in respect of CFRSs performance can be found in Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's Service Plan.

CFRS undertakes benchmarking activity against other fire and rescue services (FRSs) 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. Benchmark results continue to demonstrate that CFRS performs well across a range of performance indicators including the following where our performance is within the median or upper quartiles:

- Accidental dwelling fires
- Home Fire Risk Checks
- All Emergencies
- False alarms

Source: County FRS Comparison 2013-14

CFRS ensured that prevention activities were targeted at those at greatest risk from fire within the communities it serves. CFRS 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 compared to 2012/13.

CFRS 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 FRS now also has a joint principal officer rota with Lancashire FRS. A principal officer must be on duty all the time and this sharing arrangement with Lancashire allows greater flexibility and improved resilience for both Services.

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. CFRS, 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 is 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**, CFRS 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 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.

CFRS 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, CFRS 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. CFRS has formal mutual aid arrangements in place with its neighbouring FRAs 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 CFRS 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. CFRS 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.

CFRS 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, CFRS 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

CFRS entered into a collaborative partnership in 2012 with Cheshire FRS as an interim arrangement prior to a move to the North West Control project which happened in May 2014. The joint North West Fire Control delivers benefits to Cumbria over and above those that are financial which includes a mobilising system with improved functionality, improved response around borders and increased resilience.



FRS within the broader County Council

As part of a County Council, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is part of the corporate management team and therefore works alongside colleagues in Children's Services, Health and Care Services, Environment and Community Services and Resources directorates; 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 Corporate Director – Resources. Within CFRS, the finance function is represented on a day to day basis by a team of finance staff led by a Finance Manager who is 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.

CFRS 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, CFRS 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 FRs by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

In accordance with CFRS’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.

A number of internal audits were undertaken during 2013/14 as part of the council’s internal audit plan. They were in respect of on-call payroll, the PFI contract and budget management. There was one high priority recommendation made which related to the need for the PFI contractor to provide a programme of maintenance work to ensure standards are maintained in PFI buildings and that this programme is monitored to ensure all work is carried out. (High priority recommendations relate to a significant risk exposure arising from a fundamental weakness in the system of internal control). During 2014/15, there will be a shift in emphasis for the audits to be undertaken to include business continuity, management of firefighter safety and Active Incident Monitoring; the latter two focussing on the area of firefighter safety.

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 CFRS 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 CFRS 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. In order to enable Cumbria FRA to incorporate all of the requirements contained within the revised **Framework** and allow time for a full public consultation process, a new IRMP was developed during 2013/14 to cover the period 2014/17.

Future Improvements

Since the last Statement of Assurance 2012-13, the Service has implemented savings proposals totalling £540k. This has been achieved through changing the way we crew the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), closing Dalton Fire Station and moving one of the two regular fire engines from Barrow to Ulverston, ensuring cover across the Furness peninsula.

The Service has still to identify future savings going forward from 2015/16.



Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority

Statement of Assurance 2013/14

I confirm that this Statement of Assurance gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Fire and Rescue Service at 31st March 2014. It sets out the governance and operational arrangements that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

I am satisfied that, in all significant respects, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority ensured that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

On behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authority I propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters identified under "Future Improvements".

Signed by:

Ian Cartwright
Chief Fire Officer

Date

Signed by:

Barry Doughty
Cabinet Member

Date

Appendix 1 Glossary of terms

Abbreviation Definition

AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm
CCC	Cumbria County Council
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
CFOA	Chief Fire Officers Association
CFRS	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

CFRS Annual Service Plan