

# CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016 - 2017

### 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

CFRS 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 (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 2016/17. The Statement also demonstrates how the Authority has had due regard to the expectations set out in its 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 produces a Framework that sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for FRAs.

In 2017, the **Policing and Crime Act** came into force, which places a number of statutory requirements on Fire Authorities. These are predominantly around blue light collaboration, and the Statement of Assurance demonstrates how the Fire Authority is meeting these obligations.

## Introduction

CFRS provides a 24 hour emergency response service for fires, road traffic collisions and other emergency incidents, both within Cumbria and when required through mutual aid to support any national event. 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 2016-2020.

## Financial

CFRS 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.

CFRS 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 accounts for 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 30<sup>th</sup> June each year and are then presented for audit. The accounts for 2016/17 are available here:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/Finance/finance/statementofaccounts.asp>

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 report is available here:

<http://councilportal.cumbria.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=181&MIId=8965&Ver=4>

The financial statements of Cumbria County Council for the year ended 31st March 2016 were audited externally by Grant Thornton UK LLP and are available here:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/Finance/finance/statementofaccounts.asp>

A review of the internal control environment in accordance with the CIPFA/Solace framework Delivering Good Governance (2016) 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. This report is available here:

<http://councilportal.cumbria.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=181&MIId=8944&Ver=4>

## **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.

In 2012 Cumbria County Council adopted the local 'Code of Corporate Governance'. This Code was 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"**. This document was last updated in 2016. The Code sets out the Council's commitment to good governance and describes the Council's Governance Framework and processes. The code is available here :

<http://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/publications/d/delivering-good-governance-in-local-government-framework-2016-edition>

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. This statement is available here:

<https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/view.asp?id=92531>

The Chief Fire Officer is required to review and report on his service area. 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 are included within service plans.

The Area Manager – Risk Management is a member of the senior manager Corporate Governance group which has responsibility for overseeing corporate governance matters for the Council.

## **Operational**

CFRS 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 and other incidents. The current IRMP covers the period 2016-2020.

A fire risk model is used to support the IRMP 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, CFRS has also paid cognisance to road traffic collision data, heritage, environment, site specific risks, flooding and rurality. The risk review update (2015/16) shows that fire risk across Cumbria has continued to fall since the baseline was established in 2008/09.

The IRMP and supporting Station Risk profiles can be viewed on the CFRS website.

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. An example of this is the use of the 'Exeter' NHS data set which identifies people over 65 and is used to influence the delivery of Safe and Well assessments.

Driven by its Prevention Strategy, CFRS delivers 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.

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 cessation, alcohol reduction, social isolation and how to avoid slips, trips and falls in the home.

As well as preventing fires, the Service is committed to the protection of buildings, assets and the unique heritage within Cumbria. To achieve this it has developed a comprehensive Protection Strategy that seeks to reduce risk, work with, and support the business community, reduce the impact of fires in non-residential premises and also further reduce false alarm calls.

We have in place arrangements for working with the business community across Cumbria for delivering risk based protection activity and are developing the resilience and business continuity, crisis and disaster management arrangements for businesses across Cumbria

### **Partnership working and interoperability**

Managers at tactical and operational level have undertaken Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) training and are based across the county. The outcome of JESIP has been the provision of 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.

The Service has worked extensively with the Constabulary and NWS over the last twelve months, and established a Blue Light Working Group to actively explore opportunities for collaboration. This collaboration has extended to the development of a hub, for all three blue light services based at Ulverston, and the planned co-location of NWS at Penrith. In order to improve the interoperability of the Service, it has also created a cohort of middle managers as National Interagency Liaison Officers.

The Service 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 continues to be a seconded CFRS Manager working in Sellafield Fire and Rescue Service, continuing the liaison work between the two organisations.

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; Clinical Commissioning Groups 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 three Community Safety Partnerships reporting into a county wide strategy group called Safer Cumbria.

CFRS is regularly represented at a local level as part of the three Community Safety Partnerships within Cumbria. The Chief Fire Officer attends 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 Safeguarding, MAPPA and Hate Crime, fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under the aforementioned Act.

CFRS have also taken the lead in overseeing the delivery of the Government’s PREVENT agenda within the County Council, with a multi-agency Prevent Board established and chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

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 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 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 LRF is currently chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, and CFRS has seconded an officer to the council’s Resilience Unit.

The Service holds three national resilience assets: an Incident Response Unit, a High Volume Pump and an Enhanced Logistical Support Vehicle. The Service also has access to Mass Decontamination Capability, and a relationship with the Environment Agency for the provision of replacement equipment.

CFRS has an annual exercise plan in place, including multi-pump training with neighbouring Fire Authorities and on-going operational exercises within each of its three Command Areas. In addition to that, in order to support the operational development needs of our on-call firefighters, CFRS has a robust Maintenance of Core Skills Framework 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 internal quality assurers.

To ensure its firefighters are competent in role, CFRS train and assess operational crews against a range of technical skills, knowledge and understanding. This is delivered through an operational competence framework and is about ensuring operational firefighters and commanders have the right skills to deliver public safety by applying recognised operational procedures and complying with appropriate health and safety legislation.

### **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.

The Service maintains excellent relationships 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 efficiencies. 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.

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 Reports to Prevent Future Deaths, formally known as*

**'Rule 43' reports**) issued as a result of inquests, and recommendations to all FRSs by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

CFRS is committed to take responsibility for its own improvement; the Service has taken part in a number of "Peer Reviews" and is preparing for the introduction of the new Fire and Rescue Service Inspectorate. Furthermore, the Council's corporate Audit Team are commissioned to undertake a number of focused internal audits on priority areas, providing recommendations for the Service to take forward.

Through the council's governance mechanisms, a number of core performance objectives are tracked through quarterly reporting on key 'Council Plan Delivery Plan' objectives.

### **Business Continuity**

CFRS has robust business continuity plans in place. In addition the Council's Resilience Unit sits within the Fire and Rescue Service Directorate who work in close collaboration with fire officers. A business continuity assurance statement is available on our website at the following link

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/aboutcfrs/Publications/publications.asp>

### **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 principles 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 2015-16, the Service has planned in a number of savings proposals that save £300k in 2017/2018. This is through the creation of an innovative new duty system at Penrith Fire Station, using Headquarters based staff to crew the fire engine under a "rapid day crewing" concept. Furthermore, additional reshaping across the Fire and Rescue Service has contributed to achieving the required efficiencies. Other significant improvement projects are documented in our annual IRMP Action Plans and Service Plan accessible through the following link:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/aboutcfrs/Publications/publications.asp>

**CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016/17**

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 2017. It sets out the governance and operational arrangements that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

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Signed by:

Steve Healey  
**Chief Fire Officer**

Date

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Signed by:

Janet Willis  
**Cabinet Member**

Date

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