

## CUMBRIA FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2015 - 2016

**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 (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 2015/16. 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 FRAs. Under the Act, FRAs 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 FRAs 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 2016-2020.

## 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 2016 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 2015/16 estimates, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service had a net expenditure per head of population of £43.34 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 £35.21.

Compared to all fire and rescue services who provided data, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service was placed 37<sup>th</sup> out of 44 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 £21,580,000 which placed it 4<sup>th</sup> out of 13 county fire and rescue services with an average net spend of £25,464,000 and a highest of £42,312,000. The net cost per hectare shows Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service 1<sup>st</sup> out of 13 County fire and rescue services with a figure of £31.89 compared to an average of £72.41.

## 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 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.

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 Service 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 and other emergency incidents. The current Integrated Risk Management Plan covers the period 2016-2020..

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 (2015/16) 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 ensured that prevention activities were targeted at those at greatest risk from fire within the communities it serves. The 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 continue 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 or obesity advice and signposting, 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.

Interoperability between blue light agencies continues to be a key driver. The impending Police and Crime Bill places a statutory duty on the Fire and Rescue Service to collaborate with other blue light agencies. The JESIP doctrine is now enshrined in all CFRS policies and procedures, and was successfully tested during the storms of December 2015.

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 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***, Cumbria Fire And Rescue Service 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.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is regularly represented at a local level as part of the three 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 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 our statutory responsibilities under the aforementioned act.

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service have also taken the lead in overseeing the delivery of the Government’s Prevent Agenda within the County Council.

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.

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 three Command Areas. In addition to that, in order to support the operational development needs of our on-call firefighters, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service 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.

The Service has arrangements in place to secure realistic training for firefighters, including exercises at high risk premises, and 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
- 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 Corporate Director – Resources and Transformation. 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. 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.

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 '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).

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service is committed to take responsibility for its own improvement; the Service takes part in a number of 'Peer Reviews' each year in collaboration with other North West Fire and Rescue Services. 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.

Cumbria Fire Rescue Service holds three operational national resilience assets (High Volume Pump, Enhanced Logistical Support, and an Incident Response Unit) and during 2015/16, the Service undertook a National Resilience (NR) Multi Capability Assurance audit, the outcome of the audit was the National Resilience team being satisfied with the findings and level of preparedness of the assets within Cumbria. 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. Following the audit an Action Plan has been produced to address the areas for improvement and the Service is working through this Plan. 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.

### **Business Continuity**

Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service has robust business continuity plans in place and these are regularly tested. In addition, the Council's Resilience Unit sits within the Fire and Rescue Service Directorate and that team works in close collaboration with fire officers. A business continuity assurance statement is available on our website.

## **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 2014-15, the Service has planned in a number of savings proposals that save £150k in 2015/2016, £535k in 2016/2017 and £1,135k in 2017/2018. This is through increasing income generation, checking before attending, reviewing the on call payment arrangements in the fire service, reshaping the community safety team, and reshaping the strategic management team. 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 2015/16**

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 2016. It sets out the governance and operational arrangements that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Authority had in place for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

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Signed by:

Paul Hancock  
**Chief Fire Officer**

Date

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Signed by:

Barry Doughty  
**Cabinet Member**

Date

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