

Annual Governance Statement Assurances 2014/15 and Action Plan 2015/16 - Updated August 2015

Status of Compliance Key:



=action needed



=minor actions needed



=no action required

No change= →

Improvements made=↑

1. Core Principle: Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
1. Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the Authority's purpose, vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.	a. Develop and promote the Authority's purpose and vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Annual Report • Media & Communications Strategy • Our Strategy • Annual Assurance Statement • Social Media 	→		
	b. Review on a regular basis the Authority's vision for the local area and its implications for the Authority's governance arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual adoption of Authority Annual Report • CRMP Consultation • Fire Cover Review • Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer reviews governance arrangements • Annual Assurance Statement 	→		
	c. Ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Strategic Partnership agreement (Worcestershire) • Memos of Understanding e.g. Shropshire Fire Control Project • West Midlands Regional Collaborative Statement • Joint Operations and Command Centre Project Board • Hindlip Transformation Bid • Place Partnership Joint Board 	→		

	d. Publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the Authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Authority Annual Report • Statement of Accounts • Annual Performance Report considered by the Authority • Annual Assurance Statement 	→		
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Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
2. Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership or by commissioning.	a. Decide how the quality of service for users is to be measured and make sure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Citizen's Panel (Viewpoint) • CRMP Consultation • Complaints Procedure • Performance Management Framework • After the Incident Surveys and end of year reports 	→		
	b. Put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints process in place published on the website • Complaints are monitored and reported to SMB on an exception basis with an annual report to Audit & Standards Committee • Complaints statistics reported to Members in Members' Bulletin • Risk Registers 	→		

<p>3. Ensuring that the Authority makes the best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.</p>	<p>a. Decide how value for money is to be measured and make sure that the Authority or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Annual Audit Letter • Value for Money – Auditors' Conclusion • Performance Management Framework • Procurement Strategy • West Midlands Contractor Framework • Standing Orders for Regulation of Contracts • Fire Authority reports • Quarterly performance and quarterly budget monitoring reported to Policy & Resources Committee 	<p>➔</p>	<p>Review Standing Orders for Regulation of Contracts – ongoing</p>	<p>Continue review Standing Orders for Regulation of Contracts</p> <p>By June 2016</p>
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2. Core Principle: Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
<p>1. Ensuring effective leadership throughout the Authority and being clear about executive and non-executive functions of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.</p> <p>Note: the Fire Authority is not able to adopt an Executive Model</p>	<p><i>N/A as Executive Model not in place</i> [Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the executive and of the executive's members individually and the Authority's approach towards putting this into practice]</p> <p>a. Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other Authority Members, members generally, senior officers and of the leadership team and its members individually.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members' Role Description • Members' Induction Session and Pack • Senior Management Board Terms of Reference and Membership • Senior Management Job Descriptions • Terms of Reference for Group Leaders' Meetings included in Constitution for information • P&R Committee met in scrutiny mode for the first time November 2013 as part of the CRMP consultation • CRMP amended following Members' input 	→		
<p>2. Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between Elected Members and officers and that responsibilities of Authority Members and officers are carried out to a high standard.</p>	<p>a. Determine a scheme of delegation and reserve powers within the constitution, including a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for collective decision of the Authority taking account of relevant legislation and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of Delegations to Officers in place • Matters reserved for the Authority in Constitution • Committee Structure and Terms of Reference • Standing Orders • Protocol for Member/Officer Relations • In house Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer in place to ensure the Scheme of Delegation is monitored and to propose changes to the Authority where necessary • Publishing officer decisions 	→		

	b. Make a Chief Executive of equivalent responsible and accountable to the Authority for all aspects of operational management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of Delegations to Officers • Senior Management Board Terms of Reference and Membership 	→		
	c. Develop protocols to ensure that the leader and chief executive negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocol for Member / Officer Relations • Performance appraisal process for statutory officers • CFO meetings with Chairman and Group Leaders • Terms of Reference for Group Leaders' Meeting included in Constitution 	→	Performance Appraisal training undertaken with relevant Members. CFO appraisal undertaken by Authority Chairman and Committee Chairs	On-going annual appraisals for CFO
	d. Make the Chief Financial Officer responsible to the Authority for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Finance & Assets appointed as S151 Officer (Treasurer) • Annual Audit Letter • Value for Money Opinion • Budget Holders' Surgeries • Budget Monitoring Reports to Policy & Resources Committee 	→		
	e. Make a senior officer (usually the Monitoring Officer) responsible to the Authority for ensuring agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer Role Description • Monitoring Officer appointed by the Authority • Deputy Monitoring Officer in place 	→		

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
3. Ensuring relationships between the Authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each know what to expect of each other.	a. Develop protocols to ensure effective communication between Members and officers in their respective roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protocol for Member/Officer relations 	→		
	b. Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of Members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process including an effective remuneration panel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' Allowances Scheme considered annually by Authority and payments published Constituent Authorities' Independent Remuneration Panels in place Pay Policy Statement for Officers 	→		
	c. Ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Management Framework Senior Officer appraisals Quarterly performance reports to Policy & Resources Committee Complaints process Quality assurance audits 	→		
	d. Ensure that the organisation's vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders and that they are clearly articulated and disseminated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRMP Consultation Media & Communications Strategy Our Strategy Consultation with staff representatives on strategic matters such as CRMP 20/20 Vision Programme Board 	→		

	<p>e. When working in partnership ensure that Members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Board Terms of Reference • Project Arrow Joint Board 	→		
	<p>f. When working in partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership. • Ensure that representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential strategic partnerships considered by Authority e.g. Place Partnership Ltd • In house Head of Legal Services to advise on legal status 	→		

3. Core Principle: Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour					
Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
1. Ensuring Authority Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance	a. Ensure that the Authority's leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMB Sharepoint Site • Ask the Chief Facility • SMB Visits to Stations and Departments • Audit & Standards Committee • Authority Member Role Description • Governance sessions for Middle Managers • Ethical Framework in place and included in Members' Induction 	→		
	b. Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and staff, of work between Members and staff and between the Authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct in place and covered in Members' Induction • Member Training on Code of Conduct by Councils monitored • Ethical Framework in place – training rolled out to staff and Members • Member/Officer Protocol • Equality Scheme • Disciplinary Policy • Capability Policy • Bullying and Harassment Policy • Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy 	→		

	<p>c. Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members and employees of the Authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing Policy • National Fraud Initiative • Gifts and Hospitality Register for Members and Staff • Financial Regulations • Members Registers • Standing Orders for Regulation of Contracts • Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) – included in corporate considerations section of Authority reports. <p>Awareness of relationship between Public Sector Equality Duty and EIAs raised at Members' Induction</p>	→	<p>Review remaining Standing Orders – underway</p> <p>Financial Regulations to be reviewed.</p>	<p>Review remaining Standing Orders – underway</p> <p>Financial Regulations to be reviewed by June 2016.</p>
2. Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.	<p>a. Develop and maintain shared values including leadership values both for the organisation and staff reflecting public expectations and communicate these with members, staff, the community and partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Framework • Codes of Conduct • Authority Plan • Media & Communications Strategy • CRMP Consultation • Social Media • Service Bulletin • Members' Bulletin 	→		
	<p>b. Put in place arrangements to ensure that procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality & Diversity Scheme • Equality Impact Assessments • Ethical Framework • Employment Monitoring Information reported annually to Policy & Resources Committee • Whistleblowing Policy 	→		

	c. Develop and maintain an effective standards committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit & Standards Committee in place • Independent Persons in place • Monitoring Officer in place as lead officer for Standards issues 	→		
	d. Use the organisation's shared values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Authority Report • Our Strategy • Ethical Framework 	→		
	e. In pursuing the visions of a partnership, agree a set of values against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partners' behaviour both individually and collectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared values with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Community Safety strategies • Joint Operations and Communications Centre Project Board • Hindlip transformation Bid • Place Partnership Joint Board • Project Arrow Joint Project Board 	→		

4. Core Principle: Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
1. Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.	a. Develop and maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Authority's performance overall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit & Standards Committee Internal Audit reports considered by Audit & Standards Committee Policy & Resources Committee scrutinises performance 	→		New Pensions Board set up as required under Public Services Pensions Act 2013 – to report to Policy & Resources Committee annually
	b. Develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee structure Authority agenda papers, reports, minutes published Standard Fire Authority report template includes corporate governance considerations for Members Scheme of Delegation 	→	Publication of Officer Decisions to has been implemented as required under the Openness of Local Government Body Regulations 2014	
	c. Put in place arrangements to safeguard against conflicts of interest on behalf of members and employees and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer in place Code of Conduct Members' Registers of Interest – annual prompt for Members to review their DPI forms Gifts and Hospitality Registers Advice to staff via Service Bulletin Code of Conduct for Employees Related Party Disclosures for Principal Officers / department heads 	→		Commence development of a Register of Interests for Senior Officers Review Gifts & Hospitality Protocol By June 2016

Note: the Fire Authority is not able to adopt an Executive Model	d. Develop and maintain an effective Audit Committee which is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions or make appropriate arrangements for the discharge of the functions of such a committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit & Standards Committee • Authority Chairman, Outgoing Authority Chairman, Group Leaders and P&R Committee Chairman not eligible to sit on Audit & Standards Committee • Treasurer is a lead officer for Audit & Standards Committee • Audit & Standards Committee training for Members 	→		
	e. Put in place effective transparent and accessible arrangements for dealing with complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Process • Complaints Process for alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct 	→		

2. Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.	a. Ensure that those making decisions whether for the Authority or partnership are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear expectations of technical and financial issues and their implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of meetings • Members' Seminars e.g. budget process, budget announcement, CRMP • Authority standard report template – sets out corporate governance considerations • Members' Bulletin • Budget Monitoring Reports to SMB and P&R Committee • Budget Holders meetings 	→		
	b. Ensure that proper professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk and Treasurer comment on draft reports and attend Authority meetings to advise • Financial Regulations • Treasurer reports regularly to the Authority 	→		

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
3. Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.	a. Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the Authority, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Risk Register • Risk Management Strategy • Audit & Standards Committee Terms of Reference • Authority Standard Report Template requires any risk issues to be set out • Audit Commission – Annual Governance Audit • Internal Audit • Financial Regulations • Technology One Finance System 	→		
	b. Ensure that effective arrangements for whistleblowing are in place to which staff and all those contracting with the authority have access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing Policy 	→	Whistleblowing Policy under review	<p>Further awareness raising of Whistleblowing Policy once reviewed</p> <p>By February 2016</p>
4. Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area.	a. Actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on them by eg the ultra vires doctrine but also strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of their communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Orders • Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer • Statutory Provisions 	→		

	b. Recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on local authorities by public law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Orders • Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer • Statutory Provisions 	→		
	c. Observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon them, as well as the requirements of general law, and in particular to integrate the key principles of good administrative law – rationality, legality and natural justice into their procedures and decision making processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Orders • Head of Legal / Monitoring Officer • Statutory Provisions • Members Induction • Fire Authority and Committee reports require any legal issues to be set out 	→		

5. Core Principle: Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
1. Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.	a. Provide induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for Members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members' Induction • Fire specific Member Development Programme linked in with Our Strategy • Members' Seminars • Members' Bulletin • SMB Workshops • Conference attendance • Monitoring of Member attendance at Code of Conduct Training 	→	All new Members attended Induction session in June 2015	
	b. Ensure that the statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Paid Service, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer appointed by Authority 	→		
2. Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group.	a. Assess the skills required by Members, officers and managers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff appraisals • Audit & Standards Committee oversee Member Training • Member Training also provided by constituent authorities • SMB Leadership Review • Member Induction • Financial Seminars for Members • Governance Awareness for middle managers 	→		

	b. Develop skills on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMB Workshops • Member Workshops 	→		
	c. Ensure that arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the executive as a whole and of individual Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMB Leadership Review 	→		
3. Encouraging new talent for membership of the Authority so that best use can be made of resources in balancing continuity and renewal	a. Ensure that effective arrangements are in place designed to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Selection Training for Appointments Committee undertaken prior to any recruitment • Employment Monitoring Data • Equality Objectives - compliance • Equality Impact Assessments • Equality & Diversity Advisory Group • Positive Action Sub Group • Media & Communications Strategy 	→		
	b. Ensure that career structures are in place for Members and officers to encourage participation and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment centres and career structure for uniformed staff 	→		

6. Core Principle: Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

Supporting Principle	Requirement for Authority	Evidence of compliance	Status of compliance	Progress on 2014/15 Actions	2015/16 Actions
1. Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.	a. Make clear to themselves, all staff and the community, to whom they are accountable and for what.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Plan • CRMP Process • Publication Scheme • Media & Communications Strategy • Constitution • Committee Structure and Terms of Reference • Meetings Schedule • Scheme of Delegation 	→		
	b. Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom they are accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Plan • Local Strategic Partnership agreement (Worcestershire) • Memorandums of Understanding 	→		
Note: the Fire Authority is not able to adopt an Executive Model	c. Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes from Committees submitted to Fire Authority 	→		

2. Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the Authority or in partnership.	a. Ensure clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders including monitoring arrangements and ensure that they operate effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the Incident Surveys implemented and end of year report • Media & Communications Strategy • CRMP Consultation • Station Open Days and partner events 	→		
	b. Ensure that arrangements are in place to enable the Authority to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements should recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Objectives • Equality & Diversity Advisory Group • Positive Action Sub-Group • Equality Impact Assessments • Media & Communications Strategy 	→		
	c. Establish a clear policy on the types of issues they will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and Service users including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMP Consultation 	→		

	d. On an annual basis, publish a performance plan giving information on the Authority's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements as well as information about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of Service users in the previous period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority Plan • Our Strategy • Statement of Accounts • Medium Term Financial Plan • Annual Performance reported to Policy & Resources Committee • After the Incident Surveys and end of year report 	→		
	e. Ensure that the Authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, Service users and its staff and ensure that it has made a commitment to openness and transparency in all its dealings, including partnerships subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media & Communications Strategy • Service website – your right to know • Social Media • Publication Scheme • Freedom of Information requests process • Authority meetings held in public • Open Days and partner events • Complaints process • Service Bulletin – CFO updates and reports of Fire Authority decisions 	→		
3. Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.	a. Develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Consultative Committee – meetings reported to Policy & Resources Committee • SPI process -consultation with Unions • Authority standard reports – consultation with Unions must be considered 	→		