

Report of the Head of Corporate Services

12. Annual Statement of Assurance 2013-14

Purpose of report

1. To consider the draft Statement of Assurance 2013-14 prior to consideration by the Authority on 3 October 2014.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Authority adopts the draft Statement of Assurance 2013-14 and approves it for publication.

Introduction and Background

2. A new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was published in July 2012 by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Framework provides an overall strategic direction to Fire and Rescue Authorities and sets out the Government's expectations and requirements.
3. The key priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities in the new Framework are to:
 - identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their area faces, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;
 - work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their services; and
 - be accountable to communities for the services they provide.

Annual Statement of Assurance

4. Under the new Fire and Rescue National Framework, Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the requirements included in the National Framework. To provide these assurances to the public an Annual Statement of Assurance must be published.
5. The Statement of Assurance sits alongside existing documents such as the Fire and Rescue Authority Plan, the IRMP, the Statement of Accounts (elsewhere on this agenda) and the Annual Governance Statement (elsewhere on this agenda) and shows what measures are in place to provide assurance to the public and Government that the Authority's performance is effective, economic and efficient.

6. Each Fire and Rescue Authority is expected to sign off the Statement, ensuring that it has been subject to the Authority's scrutiny arrangements. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority does not operate executive arrangements and therefore does not have a dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This Authority operates a traditional committee structure, where the Authority's committees undertake the role of the 'critical friend'. The Audit and Standards Committee, therefore is responsible for considering the Statement of Assurance and provides an opportunity for Members to scrutinise the document prior to consideration by the Authority.
7. The draft Annual Statement of Assurance is attached at Appendix 1. It is suggested that prior to consideration of the Statement by the Authority in October that the Committee satisfies itself that the Statement provides assurance to the public on:
 - a) financial matters;
 - b) governance matters; and
 - c) operational matters.

Conclusion/Summary

8. Following the publication of the new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England in July 2012, Fire and Rescue Authorities now have a duty to publish an Annual Statement of Assurance to provide assurance to the public and others on financial, governance and operational matters. The Statement of Assurance sits alongside existing documents such as the Fire and Rescue Authority Plan, the IRMP, the Statement of Accounts (elsewhere on this agenda) and the Annual Governance Statement (elsewhere on this agenda).
9. The Committee is asked to consider and approve the Statement of Assurance prior to consideration by the Authority on 3 October 2014. Subject to Authority approval, the next step will be to publish a finalised version of the Statement of Assurance 2013-14 on the website.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Financial, property and human resource activities are highlighted in the Statement of Assurance.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The Statement of Assurance sits alongside existing documents such as the Fire and Rescue Authority Plan, Statement of Accounts, the Governance Statement and the IRMP.

Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	The Statement of Assurance highlights the work of the Authority around Risk Management / Health & Safety.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Senior Management Board consultation undertaken.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not completed as links to Equality & Diversity activities are highlighted in the Statement.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Draft Statement of Assurance 2013-14

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