

Report of the Assistant Director – Prevention

Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21

Purpose of Report

1. To consider and approve the Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21 for publication.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee adopts the Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21 and approves it for publication.

Introduction and Background

2. The Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish an Annual Statement of Assurance. The Statement is designed to provide members of the public with assurance on governance, financial and operational matters. It must also show that due regard is given to the expectations set out in the Community Risk Management Plan and other provisions in the National Framework.
3. The Statement of Assurance summarises key points and signposts the reader to relevant Fire Authority reports publicly available on the Service website. It sits alongside these reports and is not designed to reproduce them.
4. The last Statement of Assurance was also labelled 2020-21, although it provided information on the 2019-20 business year. From April 2021, a new reporting format has been adopted, which replaced the Fire Authority Annual Report with two smaller, focused reports; the Annual Service Review and the Annual Service Plan. To bring the Statement of Assurance into line, it has also been labelled 2020-21 as it covers the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. It is also labelled 'Update' to help readers to differentiate between the two.

Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21

5. The Statement is a short report designed to give staff, partners and members of the public assurance that the Authority continues to do everything it can to keep them safe as well as providing value for money.
6. The Statement covers three areas; governance, finance and operational (frontline response) matters. It provides information about how Authority funds are managed and how services are organised and carried out properly, efficiently and effectively. It reflects many other existing documents including the Annual Service Review 2020-21, the Community Risk Management Plan 2014-20 (as extended to 2021), the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of

Accounts. The Statement also provides links to other assurance documents to help readers assess performance and value for money.

7. The year was dominated by the ongoing Covid-19 crisis and, like all other organisations, the Service has had to adapt in many ways, from ensuring staff were supported and kept safe to assisting the Ambulance Service in delivering key supplies. Our work during the early months of the pandemic was subject to scrutiny by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, who found that the Service had responded effectively in all but two aspects of protection and staff communication, and both have been quickly addressed.
8. Despite the pandemic, fire and rescue work continued well throughout the year. We attended just over 7,000 incidents, down 11 per cent on the previous year. We also prepared the new Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25 and managed to carry out a successful public consultation.

Scrutiny of the Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21

9. Responsibility for scrutinising the Statement lies with the Audit and Standards Committee, and Members must satisfy themselves that the Statement, alongside other documents referenced in the report, provides appropriate levels of assurance to the public and Government in relation to governance, financial and operational matters.
10. Committee is asked to provide constructive scrutiny of the Statement and approve it for publication.
11. The Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21 is attached as Appendix 1. All previous Statements are available on the Service website.

Conclusion/Summary

12. The Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21 is designed to provide assurance on governance, financial and operational matters. Much of the information in the Statement is already publicly available elsewhere, and links are provided in the document as advised in the national guidance.
13. Subject to Committee approval, the finalised version of the Statement will be published on the Service website. Members should note that hyperlinks in the document will be updated to provide links to the final Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the External Audit Findings Report, which is reported elsewhere on your agenda.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>The Statement is designed to provide assurance on resource management among other things.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).</p>	<p>The Statement sits alongside other key documents, including the Annual Service Review, the Annual Service Plan, the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Community Risk Management Plan.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>The Statement references the requirements in relation to risk management and health & safety, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Senior Management Board consultation undertaken.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>Not required. The Statement is an overview document. Links to Equality & Diversity activities are highlighted where appropriate.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>Not required – no personal data is identified or processed in the Statement of Assurance</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Statement of Assurance Update 2020-21