

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 NOVEMBER 2019

1. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2018-2019

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, and the Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority approves the Statement of Assurance 2018-19.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to seek approval for the Statement of Assurance 2018-19 which the Authority are legally obliged to produce and review on an annual basis under the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England published in May 2018 sets out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to review and publish a 'Statement of Assurance' on an annual basis. The requirement is contained within Chapter 4 of the Framework which focuses on governance.
- 3.2 In line with this expectation, the Authority's Statement of Assurance (attached as Appendix 1) has been reviewed for the year 2018-19 and is submitted for approval.
- 3.3 The 'Guidance on statements of assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England' issued by the Government in May 2013 remains current. The guidance stipulates the content of a Statement of Assurance.

The following three key areas must form part of any Statement of Assurance:

- Financial
- Governance
- Operational

3.4 Additionally, the guidance states that Fire and Rescue Authorities may wish to include a section on any potential improvements they have identified across their accounting, governance or operational responsibilities to communities. Therefore, a section entitled 'Future Improvements' has been included in keeping with the guidance and as per previous iterations of the Authority's Statement of Assurance.

3.5 With regard to our arrangements the following are all part of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's (WMFRA) assurance process.

3.5.1 **Financial**

The Authority publishes its Statement of Accounts, pay policy, transparency data, internal and external audit information. Each year the auditors discharge pre-agreed audit plans and are invited to the Fire Authority and Audit and Risk Committee to give their findings. Additionally, the outcomes are published via Fire Authority meetings, the Internet and contained within the Annual Report.

3.5.2 **Governance**

Each year the Authority produces its Annual Governance Statement in support of its accounts. This statement expresses the measures undertaken to ensure propriety. In addition, the Fire Authority maintains a level of scrutiny of the Service through its governance framework, the reports of which are all publicly available.

3.5.3 **Operational**

The Fire Authority publishes and consults on its Community Safety Strategy (Integrated Risk Management Plan) on at least a three-yearly basis. This process of consultation is robust and is in line with the Fire Authority's own consultation strategy which is based on government guidance.

3.5.4 **Future Improvements**

Future improvements reflect on our work to continuously improve our Service Delivery Model through the Prevention, Protection and Response integration project in order to deliver our vision of 'Making West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier'.

- 3.6 It is reassuring to note that the overwhelming majority of the information required as part of the Statement of Assurance is established within the organisation and the vast majority of the documents are already within the public domain. We do acknowledge the benefits of bringing our key financial, governance and operational assurances together within a single document in terms of providing transparency and assurance to our staff, communities, partners and the Government. The Statement of Assurance also ensures compliance with our specific data transparency requirements, for example the Local Government Transparency Code.
- 3.7 The Authority is required to review this document annually to reflect the previous year's activity.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The preparation of the Statement of Assurance document is a legal requirement as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

There are no matters arising out of this report that are required to be brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Statement of Assurance will be a web based publication. No hard copies will be produced and as such there are no direct financial implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Home Office, 2018.

Guidance on statements of assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, DCLG, May 2013

Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities' progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (July 2018)

Firefighter fitness: addendum to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The contact name for this report is Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Gary Taylor, Strategic Enabler – Process, telephone number 0121 380 6914

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

KAREN GOWREESUNKER
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

SATINDER SAHOTA
MONITORING OFFICER