



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Authority

Statement of Assurance 2013/14

OFFICIAL

Ownership: Corporate Services

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Introduction

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (WYFRA) is required to produce an annual Statement of Assurance as part of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#). The purpose of the statement is to provide independent assurance to communities and the Government that the service is being delivered efficiently and effectively. Whilst the Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England, it does not prescribe operational matters as these are determined locally by fire and rescue authorities.

In April 2011, WYFRA published the [Service Plan 2011-2015](#) which provides details of what the service intends to do over the four years to meet the challenging needs and risks within the community and deliver an excellent fire and rescue service whilst achieving efficiencies and providing value for money services.

This Statement of Assurance provides assurance that WYFRA is providing an efficient, effective and value for money service to the community of West Yorkshire in its financial, governance and operational matters.

Financial

In accordance with the 2013/14 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for 2013/14 and the Accounting Codes of Practice published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), WYFRA has produced the [Statement of Accounts 2013-14](#). As the Authority is funded by public money, it has a responsibility to ensure this money is used lawfully, effectively, efficiently and economically.

The Annual Governance Statement, which is included within the Statement of Accounts, sets out the systems and procedures that are in place to ensure that the Authority's resources are used in accordance with the law and provide best value for the tax payer.

The Authority's governance framework comprises systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

Each year, the external auditors, currently KPMG, issue an Annual Audit Letter which reports on the audit of the Authority's financial statements and an assessment of the arrangements to achieve value for money in the use of resources. The [Annual Audit Letter 2013/14](#) provides an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2013/14 financial statements included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts and concluded that the Authority had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources and certified completion of the audit.

The draft 2015/2016 settlement already shows a further loss of grant of £4.2m and based on similar levels of grant cuts for the rest of the spending review period, the Authority is forecasting a budget deficit of around £18m by the end of 2018/2019.

The continuation of the policy of non-recruitment of full time firefighters will reduce the establishment by a further 300 wholetime posts delivering further salary savings of around £11m leaving a deficit of around £7m still to be identified.

Internal Audit

The Authority's Chief Finance and Procurement Officer has a statutory duty to provide a continuous and effective internal audit. This internal audit service is provided under a service level agreement with Kirklees Council, which provides approximately 160 days of audit time each year.

The adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management system and internal control environment is assessed by Internal Audit against an annual audit plan. The plan targets areas of highest risk as determined by the Authority through its risk management process and the resulting risk management matrix. Business risk based auditing accounts for approximately half of the available audit resource, with the other half involving the review of key financial systems and processes. The internal audit plan also considers audit areas where most value can be added.

Internal audit 'opinions' based on the level of assurance concerning each risk, system or process control is reported to the Authority's Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. The [Internal Audit Plan 2013/2014](#) resulted in the majority of audits concluding with a 'substantial assurance' which confirms a robust framework of all key controls exists that are likely to ensure that objectives will be achieved. Internal Audit provides recommendations where it is thought that risks can be reduced and the control environment improved.

The audit plan and subsequent audits ensure an independent review is conducted at least once in a year of the effectiveness of the Authority's systems of internal control, which assists with the formulation of the Annual Governance Statement.

Transparency

In accordance with the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency, WYFRA is committed to greater openness and financial transparency through the publication, on the website, of information regarding how public money is being spent. This includes payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £500, and details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members.

Governance

WYFRA has an approved [constitution](#) which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local citizens. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Authority to determine.

The Authority is composed of 22 members, all of whom are a Councillor elected to one of the five constituent district councils within West Yorkshire; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. The overriding duty of Members of the Authority is to the whole community of West Yorkshire.

Members have an approved [Code of Conduct](#) designed to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties and are required to comply with the [Principles of Public Life](#).

Codes of Conduct and Protocols included within the Constitution are:

- Code of Conduct for Members
- Officer Code of Conduct
- Member/Officer Relations and Procedural Protocol
- Officer Employment Procedure Rules
- Protocol regarding the use of Authority resources by Members
- [Compliments and Complaints Information and Policy](#)
- [Whistle Blowing Policy](#)

In accordance with the Code of Corporate Governance and pursuant to the corporate performance monitoring processes an annual [Corporate Health Report](#) is submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority to enable Members to scrutinise and challenge performance. A [Performance Management Report](#) is also presented to each Full Authority meeting to enable ongoing performance monitoring, scrutiny and challenge.

Information Governance

Management of information is key to effective corporate governance, service planning and performance management and to bring together the requirements, standards and best practice that apply to the handling of information, WYFRA has an [Information Governance Strategy and Policy](#) which fully supports the principles of corporate information governance and recognises public accountability.

Risk and Business Continuity

WYFRA has a [Business Continuity Management Strategy](#) and [Risk Management Strategy and Policy](#) which provide clear and defined strategies to be adopted to adhere to and develop specific plans to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Enable a response to events that threaten the delivery of services to the community of West Yorkshire
- Protect the organisation from service interruptions
- Facilitate a co-ordinated recovery of organisational services, in the event of service interruptions
- Facilitate a risk management culture to be embedded into the organisation to enable risks to be identified and managed effectively.

Operational (Service Delivery)

WYFRA operates within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework and the key documents setting this out are:

- the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- the Localism Act 2011
- the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Authority's [Statement of Purpose](#) reflects the key documents in highlighting WYFRAs commitments and expectations through its strategic priorities and objectives.

At strategic level, Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) is an integral part of business planning process in West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Service's strategic assessment of risk covers all reasonably foreseeable risk within the County and establishes baseline standards of service. In October 2014, the Authority published the [Community Risk Management Strategy 2011-2015](#). This provides the underpinning business case for delivering prevention, protection, response and resilience in a risk proportional manner. The strategy provides the means to deliver excellent but cost-effective fire and rescue services to communities across West Yorkshire.

Customer Service Excellence

Since 1998, WYFRA has consistently attained the Charter Mark standard; the Government's national standard of customer service excellence for organisations delivering public services. In August 2009 the Authority invited an assessment against the new Customer Service Excellence standard, which was being phased in and which has now fully replaced the Charter Mark standard. The Customer Service Excellence standard is derived from the core concepts of customer focus and the delivery of excellent customer service and assesses, in great detail, the following areas:

- Customer Insight
- The Culture of the Organisation
- Information and Access
- Delivery
- Timeliness and Quality of Service

WYFRA has an independent assessment against the standard annually and in 2013 was awarded full compliance against the 57 elements of the standard including eleven 'Compliance Plus' awards, which are awarded for behaviours or practices that exceed the requirements of the standard, and are viewed as exceptional or as an exemplar for others – either within the organisation or in the wider public service arena. The summary of the [Customer Service Excellence report](#) clearly demonstrates the continuous commitment of the Authority to provide an excellent service to customers.

Communication and Engagement

Extensive consultation is carried out with the community on the Community Risk Management Strategy and the Authority's [Communication and Engagement Strategy](#) determines how West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority engages, communicates, and consults regarding how the service will be delivered. The strategy follows the public body consultation principles published by the government in 2012 which support a proportionate approach to such activities.

Service Delivery Performance

Service delivery standards are established in the Service Plan and the Community Risk Management Strategy. The Service Plan 2011-2015 includes targets for reductions in fires, deaths and injuries and WYFRS is currently on track to achieve all the targets set. These are reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on a regular basis, with the latest annual [Performance Management Report](#) for 2013/14 submitted in July 2014.

The Community Risk Management Strategy includes reference to Risk Based Planning Assumptions (RBPA) for responding to emergencies. These are used to ensure resources are in the best place relative to risk and demand, with life risk incidents being the priority. The impact of any proposed changes can be measured and communicated by reference to the RBPA down to ward level. These were used in comprehensive consultation on changes to emergency cover in [2011](#) and [2012](#).

WYFRA discharges its statutory duties in relation to community safety, fire prevention and fire protection, including enforcement of relevant statutory regulations in accordance with the [Fire Safety Strategy](#), with firefighters and specialist staff being deployed across districts where most needed based on risk.

In 2012 WYFRS was subject to a peer review from the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) in line with the CFOA peer challenge and self-assessment toolkit. A Service Delivery Assurance process is now being developed based on the toolkit to cover the same areas and a brief overview of developments in these areas is provided below.

Community Risk Management

WYFRS' approach to community risk management is set out in the Community Risk Management Strategy which is currently being reviewed and will be re-published in 2015. Reductions in funding and changes in levels of risk and demand has led to changes in how services are delivered across the communities of West Yorkshire which are detailed in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). A report on progress of the IRMP presented to the Authority's [Community Safety Committee in September 2014](#) shows good progress on a package of inter-related initiatives representing major capital investment in local communities, whilst at the same time delivering annual recurring revenue savings which make a significant contribution to meeting the budget deficit.

Fire Prevention and Fire Protection

The [Fire Safety Strategy](#) provides information and clear direction of fire prevention and fire protection services and some specific examples of the implementation of the strategy are shown below:

Fire Prevention

The work of dedicated prevention staff and operational crews has seen a dramatic reduction in the number of incidents over the years, with the reduction for 2013/14 alone being almost ten per cent for the total number of incidents.

In relation to specific incident types, there has been a dramatic reduction over the last ten years in West Yorkshire. The number of primary fires has fallen by 61%, whilst the number of small fires and rubbish fires has fallen by 47% in total. The reduction in the number of deaths and injuries is also significant. In the late 1980s, the number of people dying in accidental fire deaths was in the mid-twenties every year, whilst today the average is a little under six. Furthermore, the number of fire related injuries has fallen by a fifth over the last five years. Over an eight year period, WYFRS visited 50% of the total number of homes in the county and fitted close to one million smoke detectors.

WYFRS intends to build upon this through a revised and more efficient and effective strategy using a more targeted approach. This points-based approach to Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) where more points are gained from visits to higher risk properties housing the most vulnerable people, has been introduced across WYFRS. It has proved most successful in terms of ensuring that resources are utilised in an intelligent way against the current levels of risk with annual targets being exceeded by over 27%.

There is now closer alignment with District Area Risk Reduction Plans and neighbourhood policing teams.

The strategy of Hot Strikes, whereby resources are allocated to an area following a serious fire, has been revised to allow crews to use an element of judgement in relation to matching the scale of the hot strike to the size of the incident. This is now supported by specific tools which provide greater information associated with addresses to improve targeting for hot strikes.

A training package for Watch Commanders and Crew Commanders has been developed and specific strategies have been put in place to increase the level of community safety campaigns in areas that are affected by fire cover changes as the IRMP is implemented.

WYFRS continues to engage with specific groups with a focus on youth engagement, dementia, hate crime, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and hoarding as these have been identified as presenting a higher risk following research into the factors relating to fire deaths and are also high priorities for our partners.

Fire Protection

Each and every year WYFRS' targets in excess of 6,000 premises across the county in order to enforce fire safety regulations using a targeted risk based approach. During inspections carried out by specialist officers over three-quarters of premises required further action indicating that targeting is effective.

The Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) Policy has recently been amended with the introduction of charging on a cost recovery basis for those sites where we receive repeat false alarm calls. This followed a four month consultation period and we are working closely with key partners for an extended period in order to minimise the effect of AFAs on WYFRS and owners/occupiers of the premises affected.

The Primary Authority Scheme, which is a national scheme intended to provide a consistent approach to regulation for business, was introduced into West Yorkshire this year and since April, WYFRS has progressed a number of such schemes. One scheme is in place with a major national retailer and two others are in development. A culture of business support is developing rapidly within the function.

A fire protection training programme for all Watch Commanders and Crew Commanders has been developed to ensure that operational crews are able to undertake enforcement activity and this is now well integrated within the Service, providing an efficient use of resources and complementing the role of operational firefighters who are now fully engaged in all aspects of integrated risk management across West Yorkshire.

A review has recently been carried out of the Fire Investigation Team and the outcomes of this review will ensure better integration with partner agencies and optimise the use of the team, providing greater efficiency and effectiveness. There is now much greater emphasis on influencing standards associated with a variety of fire safety matters with much closer working with Her Majesty's Coroner, local and national trading standards organisations and local authority partners. The aim is to use intelligence relating to the causes of fire and fire behaviour for the greatest benefit of the community.

Emergency Response

Response activities are an integral part of WYFRS' IRMP. This is delivered in line with clearly defined and approved standards contained in the Community Risk Management Strategy. Performance is regularly monitored through the Fire Cover Review group.

We have a risk based approach to emergency response which is dynamically adjusted as a result of changes in both risk and activity. We use a dynamic fire cover tool to support optimum emergency cover on a continual basis.

The IRMP is optimising the deployment of operational resources, with an ambitious construction programme of eight new fire stations. Whilst this represents a significant capital investment it is also delivering major annual and recurring efficiencies.

Further efficiencies have been achieved through the introduction of alternative crewing arrangements and the increased use of on call fire fighters and we are developing the Retained Duty System to ensure it remains effective and is sustainable.

Flexible and innovative approaches to responding to emergencies have been successfully introduced with new appliances such as Fire Response Units (smaller fire engines crewed with fewer firefighters to deal with small fires) and Combined Aerial Rescue Pumps (standard fire engines with a high reach firefighting and rescue capability) introduced to provide a risk proportionate response to certain incident types and delivering further efficiencies without affecting capability.

Collaboration with our partners is vital for a safe and effective response to emergencies and we already co-locate with West Yorkshire Police (WYP) and Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) at several fire stations, with further plans in place to increase these arrangements. WYFRS is a full and active member of the Local Resilience Forum. We have also embraced the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and have trained our Tactical and Operational Commanders on a multi-agency basis with West Yorkshire Police and Yorkshire Ambulance Service. We continue to look for opportunities to improve our intra and inter-operability with other services.

We have recently reviewed our operational command structure. The district structure is effective and provides clear responsibility for operational performance; however there is opportunity to improve managerial arrangements at supervisory and middle manager levels within districts. A number of pilots are now underway to establish the most effective structure at this level.

Firefighter safety is our key priority as we plan our response activities. Operational guidance is reviewed in line with both specific and generic risk assessments, as well as local and national risk registers. In support of the demanding and difficult decisions our firefighters may face at incidents, we have introduced a suite of risk principles, the concept of Operational Discretion to reduce the risk of indecision in emergency situations and key decision logging. All our commanders are trained and qualified to the new National Incident Command standards and we have invested in new breathing apparatus equipment and personal protective equipment to provide the best possible protection for our firefighters.

We have developed the process to gather operational risk information and now combine operational and fire protection visits. In the last financial year we have completed 6,444 visits to gather risk information. As part of our New Control Project we have invested in new command software to improve access to this information on all front line appliances.

Learning from our experiences and those of others is important to us; we have recently reviewed our operational assurance of emergency incidents to ensure it is fit for purpose and have made a number of adjustments to improve its understanding and effectiveness. We recognise that more work can be done in this area to coordinate our actions across all departments within the organisation.

Health and Safety

A comprehensive review of health and safety arrangements has recently been carried out and reported to the [Human Resources Committee](#). This ROSPA audit assessed health and safety management systems and included visits to a number of workplaces (stations and support departments) to observe the practical application of health and safety policy and procedures. Overall, the results were encouraging with a compliance score of 83%. An action plan is in place to develop those areas where scope to improve was identified.

We are also establishing a multidisciplinary group involving health and safety, training and operations to take a more coordinated approach to managing operational risks by monitoring near misses, accidents, and other information received via debrief outcome forms, brigade and district exercises etc.

Training and Development

Recruitment and Selection

WYFRS selects and recruits personnel for all operational duty systems utilising the New Firefighter Selection Tests. Successful candidates are then enrolled upon a training course in compliance with the Fire Service Manual Volume 4. Recruit firefighter training culminates in a National Vocational Qualification Level 3 Diploma in 'Emergency Fire Service Operations in the Community'. Currently WYFRS are not undertaking wholtime firefighter recruitment although retained firefighter recruitment is on-going.

Competency Based Training

Competency based training is provided both at our training centre and on fire stations. All instructors hold a Level 3 teaching qualification accredited by the Edexcel examination board. Competency and training is recorded in an individual's Maintenance of Competence (MOC) records aligned to National Occupational Standards (NOS). An electronic MOC system is currently being implemented to further assist the auditing and assurance process. This system will support both operational and support staff to ensure compliance against our Training and Development Framework. Further assurance of operational competence is achieved through Performance Management audits carried out by District Commanders and their teams.

Development Programmes

Development programmes, with accredited elements, are in place for all roles against NOS. Bespoke training for specialist departments and roles, and for non-uniformed managers is sourced including the Inspirational Leadership and Common Purpose Executive Leadership programmes. Underpinning knowledge is achieved during the promotion of uniformed operational personnel through the attainment of 'Institute of Fire Engineers' examinations.

Incident Command

During recent years WYFRA has made a significant investment in the training and development of all operational commanders. Our Command Training Strategy details how we will deliver this training and assessment programme and there is also a report associated with this assurance statement that details our progress against this strategy.

We have identified that the successes of our fire prevention work, and the subsequent decrease in the number of emergencies presents a significant risk to firefighters who no longer gain the same level of experience from incidents as they did a number of years ago. This practical experience must be replaced by additional training and other control measures such as improved command competence. We are one of the first fire and rescue services in the country to be an accredited centre for awarding command qualifications. We supplement this with continuous professional development sessions for more senior officers throughout the year to compensate for this reduction in exposure to incidents.

Emergency Response Driving (ERD)

Training and assessment is internally provided in accordance with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) guidelines. We re-validate all Emergency Response Driver's competence every three years and we have our own Department of Transport approved driving instructors. These trained instructors also provide assessments to other fire and rescue services in the region.

Multi-Agency Working

We regularly train with our partner agencies in specialist response areas. We encourage shared facilities on stations and work together to deliver plans for a multi-agency response for major events such as the Tour De France and English Defence League demonstrations. Work is on-going to share delivery and expertise with the other blue light services in driver training, E-learning and Leadership.

Peer Audits

WYFRS regularly invite peer audits. This has recently been undertaken against our driver training provision by Humberside Fire and Rescue Service and our Trauma/Road Traffic Collision department by Kirklees Council. This provides independent feedback against the quality assurance of our training programmes.

Call Management and Incident Support

We continue to improve the overall effectiveness of the Fire Control function by encouraging operators to take ownership of the call and use their own discretion to improve operational response to incidents. We have given more responsibility to control operators to challenge calls. Better intelligence gathered at the time of the call enables a more appropriate mobilisation of resources and a safer response. This has reduced our overall attendances to malicious calls, automatic fire alarms and road traffic accidents where there are no persons trapped. Our resources, therefore, have increased availability for life threatening emergencies. Dynamic decision making has been introduced to allow the control operator to adjust the deployment of resources where they feel it is required.

Continual improvement of call handling techniques has led to a trial where operators keep the caller on the line at certain life risk incidents until the fire appliance arrives. This is designed to improve information gathering as well as to keep the caller safe and prevent them from returning inside the property.

We continue to work and share information with other agencies and Fire Control remains the first point of contact for members of the public and other agencies requesting home fire safety checks via the hotline telephone number.

We are in the final stages of implementing a new command and control system for the management of emergency calls and incidents and the latest progress report was submitted to the Fire and Rescue Authority [Community Safety Committee in September 2014](#).

Agreements and Mutual Aid Arrangements

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provide clear instructions for fire and rescue services in regard to mutual assistance and the discharge of functions by others. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority have Section 13 and 16 agreements with:

- Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority

These agreements are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary and are supplemented by specific agreements on specialist services, for example line rescue, and WYFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters and terrorist attacks.

Future Improvements

The key focus for the future is to implement the ambitious change programme already approved by the fire and rescue authority. A major challenge continues to be the identification of further initiatives which can deliver significant savings, but the size of savings anticipated as being required mean that impact on service delivery is inevitable. However, the emphasis on continuing to make West Yorkshire safer will remain integral to our aims and objectives, with a new Service Plan being developed with challenging targets covering the period 2015 to 2020. All major initiatives associated with future improvements can be found in our [Service Action Plan 2014/15](#), including ambitious plans to redistribute resources in response to a reduction in demand and a diminishing budget.

Over the longer term, the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plans include further investments in infrastructure, with eight new fire stations being built in optimum locations to replace 16 stations thereby delivering major efficiencies with minimum impact on response times. Changes to the type of fire engine responding to emergencies will continue to be a key part of the long term modernisation process.

In order to comply with the additional requirements for publishing specific data sets, as mandated by the Local Government Transparency Code 2014, the Authority will strive to achieve the further recommendations identified in the Code and publish data in re-usable formats under the Open Government Licence.

The Fire and Rescue Authority will wish to continue to be provided with assurance in relation to its fire and rescue service including financial health, governance arrangements and service delivery performance. It will be necessary in 2015 to provide Members with a comprehensive Service Delivery Assurance report

following the introduction of the new assurance of service delivery process to be introduced in April 2015. This will, when combined with the established Statement of Accounts and Governance Statement, form the basis of the overall Annual Statement of Assurance in future years.

This Statement of Assurance is signed on 17 October 2014 on behalf of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hughes'.

Councillor Judith Hughes
Chair of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority