



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Authority

Statement of Assurance 2019/20

OFFICIAL

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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 2020, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) published [Your Fire & Rescue Service 2020-23](#) which outlines the key priorities and builds upon the delivery and achievements of our [Service Plan](#). A report on the programme of change is produced regularly to focus the work of WYFRS and to manage and monitor performance in order to achieve our ambition of 'Making West Yorkshire Safer'.

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 2019/20 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for 2019/20 and the Accounting Codes of Practice published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), WYFRA has produced the [Statement of Accounts 2019/20](#). 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, Deloitte LLP, issue an [audit opinion](#) on the Authority's financial statements and an assessment of the arrangements to achieve value for money in the use of resources.

For 2019/20 the Authority once again received an unqualified opinion on both the Statement of Accounts and the arrangements for securing value for money.

The Medium Term Financial Plan which was approved by Full Authority in February 2020 shows that the Authority has a balanced budget for 2020/21. This has been assisted by an improved budget monitoring reporting system coupled with the introduction of Command, Leadership and Management. Funding from Central Government from April 2021 is yet to be determined, as a result, a number of financial scenarios have been presented to the Authority, which shows the effect of a cut to funding ranging from 0% to 10%. This would equate to a balanced budget with

a 0% cut and if the worst-case scenario of a 10% cut was realised this would require ongoing revenue savings of £14.73m.

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.

Internal Audit assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management system and internal control environment 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. Auditing of these risks 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 2019/20](#) resulted in the majority of audits concluding with a 'substantial or adequate 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 Department of Communities and Local Government Transparency Code 2015, 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, details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members, transactions made via Government Procurement Cards, tender and procurement information, details of land and assets owned by WYFRA and details relating to Trade Unions.

The data is routinely published on either a quarterly or annual basis in accordance with the requirements of the Code. All published data can be viewed on the [Data Transparency](#) section of the website.

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 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 quarterly to the Full Authority meeting to enable ongoing performance monitoring, scrutiny and challenge.

Information Governance

The Authority continues to develop, implement and embed a robust information governance framework needed for the effective management and protection of information held by WYFRA.

Information governance describes the approach within which accountability, standards, policies and procedures are developed and implemented, to ensure that all information created, obtained or received by WYFRA is held and used appropriately.

The Authority has an [Information Governance Strategy and Policy](#) which describes its commitment to ensuring effective information governance as a means to enable the service, to ensure it can make the best use of its information and to provide a solid foundation to enable it to be open and transparent.

At the same time it takes account of, and supports WYFRA's operational objectives and ensures that a balance is struck between operational and compliance objectives.

The Authority has achieved excellent audit reports in respect of the handling and processing of information including the personal information relating to customers. This includes the achievement of the highest level of Compliance Plus within the annual [Customer Service Excellence report](#) for the strategic approach to Information Management particularly relating to our customers' privacy and confidentiality. This standard was first achieved in 2009 and has been maintained at this level over the last ten years.

Risk and Business Continuity

WYFRA has a [Risk Management Strategy and Policy](#) and [Business Continuity Management Strategy and Policy](#) which provide clear and defined strategies to be implemented, adhered to and developed to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Implement and maintain risk policy arrangements including a risk framework and processes, which will enable the organisation to identify, assess and manage strategic and corporate risks in an effective, systematic and consistent manner. This also assists in embedding a risk management culture.
- Implement and maintain a business continuity management system to ensure that key services can be maintained in the event of any disruption that threatens the delivery of services to the community of West Yorkshire.
- Protect the organisation from disruptive events and service interruptions and facilitate a co-ordinated recovery of organisational services and critical functions during and following such events.

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 WYFRA's commitments and expectations through its strategic priorities and objectives.

At strategic level, Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) is an integral part of the business planning process in West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS). The Service's strategic assessment of risk covers all reasonably foreseeable risk within the County and establishes baseline standards of service.

In 2019, the Community Risk Management Strategy 2017-2020 was replaced by [Your Fire & Rescue Service 2020-23](#) which explains who we are, what we do, how we identify, assess and manage risk in West Yorkshire and provides information on how the services are delivered. This document also provides the overarching 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 the communities across West Yorkshire. This latest strategy continues to underpin a flexible approach to managing risk and deliver future efficiency savings.

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 2019 was awarded full compliance against the 57 elements of the standard including twenty '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 and the Authority's [Communication and Engagement Strategy 2017-2020](#) 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 Your Fire & Rescue Service document. Performance against targets are reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on a regular basis, with the latest annual [Performance Management Report](#) for 2019/20 submitted in June 2020.

[Your Fire & Rescue Service 2020-23](#) 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 Lower Layer Super Output Area level data available through the Office of National Statistics. These were used in comprehensive consultation on changes to emergency cover in [2011](#); [2012](#); [2016](#); [2019](#) and [2020](#). These changes enable WYFRS to provide appropriate emergency cover and fire prevention activity whilst delivering significant financial savings.

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 [Safer Communities Strategy](#) and [Fire Safety Strategy](#), with firefighters and specialist staff being deployed across districts where most needed based on risk.

In July 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue service. This is a formal inspection process that assesses and reports on the efficiency, effectiveness and leadership of the 45 fire and rescue services in England. WYFRS received our first formal inspection in the summer of 2019; in which we were rated 'Good' in all areas. Following receipt of the inspection report WYFRS has created a 51-point action plan, that is currently being implemented. HMICFRS have carried out a recent COVID19 thematic inspection on all UKFRS; we are awaiting our outcome report following this inspection. Our second full inspection is

scheduled for 2021 and we are currently preparing for it. The WYFRA's Service Assurance Framework details the high-level expectations of the service relating to:

- Compliance with the National Framework 2018.
- The assessment of performance via Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- The annual completion of the Service Assurance process.
- A comprehensive approach to the assurance of service delivery.

This is summarised within the Service Improvement and Assurance Report and provides assurance that the organisation is performing effectively and efficiently.

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 aerial appliances, and WYFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters and terrorist attacks. We are the only service in the country to host every national resilience asset. In addition, we are one of the main providers of national resilience training under the national resilience distributed learning (NRDL) model.

Future Improvements

WYFRA's annual budget is £87.6 million and despite cuts of £26.2 million since 2010, we believe that we are providing a high-quality affordable service for our communities. During this time, we have redesigned our service, moving fire station locations, removing fire engines and ensuring resources remain allocated appropriate to risk and demand. Beyond 2020, we face financial uncertainty and we continue to plan our future with a reducing budget.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), Medium-Term Financial Plan and Workforce Plan are now aligned and a range of financial planning scenarios have been produced which ensures a joined-up approach to the analysis of risk and the deployment of resources.

All of our people are fundamental to WYFRS delivering our ambition. We will continue to develop the culture of the organisation and ensure the common values we hold are used to guide our behaviour and decisions. Our cultural development will be supported by our leadership and development programme, a clear focus on diversity and inclusion within our recruitment processes and improvements in how we all communicate with each other are key priorities.

We have embarked on a programme of change that will realise new, innovative and more effective ways of working over the forthcoming years. Some of these initiatives include:

Leadership Strategy

A new approach that will develop and enhance leadership and our service values at all levels, and allow for continuous improvement.

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme

Provision of a national radio scheme utilising mobile phone technology.

Command, Leadership and Management

Improved ways of working through changes to the management structure and realigning responsibilities.

Smarter Working Programme

Review ways of working and processes in various departments within the organisation to determine efficiencies.

Procurement Review

Implementation of the recommendations from the Local Government Procurement Review.

Fire Station replacement programme

The construction of new fire stations on existing sites to replace oversized and outdated fire stations.

Performance Management Framework

Design and implementation of a performance management and assurance framework which supports organisational improvement.

Voice Over Internet Protocol

Replace existing telephony systems with a single brigade wide Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) based system to provide improved functionality and mobility whilst reducing costs.

Implementation of Office 365

Migrate email and Office applications to the cloud to maximise the benefits of our Microsoft licencing agreement and improve flexible ways of working.

Digital and Data Strategy

Develop and implement a digital and data strategy to maximise the benefit of technology and enable smarter working.

Grenfell Programme

Review and implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 report.

Modification of Day Crewing Duty System at Castleford, Normanton and South Kirkby Fire Stations

Implementation of a new duty system at Castleford, Normanton and South Kirkby Fire Stations.

The new annual planning cycle encourages teams to plan and consider activities and initiatives a year in advance of implementation. This means that stakeholder engagement is carried out earlier, involving those who are impacted and enabling change within the organisation. This assists with capacity planning and benefits realisation from the programme of change.

In light of the recent major incidents highlighted below, a review of foreseeable risks has taken place and is captured within the IRMP. As the risk from fire has reduced, an increase in other types of emergencies is evident. Work is being carried out to assess these risks to plan for them accordingly. Lessons are learnt from incidents that have occurred, such as:

- The Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017 and the inquiry into fire safety, building regulations and emergency response arrangements to fires in high rise buildings.
- The terror attack at Manchester Arena in 2017 and the review of the fire and rescue service role at such incidents.
- The heatwave of 2018 and the ability of the fire and rescue service to respond to multiple large moorland fires.
- COVID 19 Pandemic 2020 which has a huge impact on our service and resulted in significant changes in how large numbers of our employees are working.

In recent years the dedication and commitment of WYFRS staff has saved many lives within West Yorkshire. Working with our communities as part of an intelligence led approach we aim to stop fires before they happen. This approach has reduced the number of incidents attended and we wish to continue this trend.

We have recently reviewed how we model the risk of fire across our communities, utilising the very strong correlation between the likelihood of fire and deprivation. Building on this, we will introduce new ways of identifying individuals who are at the greatest risk of fire and being injured by fire, wherever they live within West Yorkshire. This will allow us to target assistance to those at greatest risk to ensure our valuable resources are having the greatest impact on community safety.

Reducing the impact of climate related incidents such as flooding and wildfire continues to be a priority for the service. We have worked collaboratively with local partners to proactively challenge irresponsible behaviour, provide safety advice and where necessary responded quickly and effectively to mitigate the impacts on our communities.

Within the building safety environment, the Authority continues to respond to the needs of business and strives to ensure the safety of relevant persons is maintained. Where we have evidence that this is not the case we utilise our powers of enforcement to bring about a safe environment. This enforcement can also include prosecution and earlier this year the Authority successfully prosecuted a business for failing to safeguard residents in student accommodation, in this case the defendants received the highest fine for Fire Safety breaches in the UK since the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Since the tragic events of Grenfell, WYFRS has played a significant role in supporting the Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council in assessing and developing new ways of

working and bringing about much needed changes in legislation through work we have carried out with the Protection Board.

This work has led to the development of the Building Risk Review programme which will set the priorities of Fire and Rescue Service's inspection plans over the next 18 months and beyond. The Government funding we have been allocated to deliver this piece of work is being used effectively to not only utilise our fire protection team but also operational officers which will provide them with valuable experience and knowledge for their future.

As we see the landscape of Fire Protection changing, WYFRS are committed to ensuring that our team is ready, willing and able to pick up the challenges we face. Our commitment is demonstrated within our IRMP and in order to ensure we achieve this, we are currently mid-way through an evaluation of the team structure. This will ensure we have the right people and number in the team to continue to successfully deliver our statutory duties.

Working with other organisations brings value to the service WYFRS provides. This has been proven during the multi-agency response to COVID 19. There is an ongoing programme of collaboration to improve how we work with the police and ambulance service and evaluation is being carried out on a wide range of opportunities to make more efficient use of resources. This includes sharing buildings, training, and staff to provide community safety work, improve planning for emergencies and supporting emergency response. Working with local authorities, health teams, community groups and voluntary organisations to support the most vulnerable people in our communities continues.

At the time of producing this report the service continues to operate in the context provided by the COVID 19 Pandemic, and at a very restricted level in terms of what has previously been considered as 'normal'. Whilst measures have already been taken to learn and adapt, across all areas of the service, on an ongoing basis, there are inevitably further impacts yet to be felt and additional lessons yet to be learnt. The service has structures in place to learn from our own experience, and that of others, and will likely need to make further changes in all areas of work. The service has a firm intent to respond with agility and to deliver sustainable changes where required.

WYFRS are also working more closely than ever with fire and rescue service partners in the region on projects such as the joint procurement of fire kit, future provision of command units and welfare units as well as a regional approach to the provision of aerial appliances and equipment.

A review of technical and specialist response capabilities has been undertaken and the introduction of new ways of working are supporting local, regional and national resilience. Examples of this include the provision of resources and training to respond to flooding and wildfires following several major incidents over recent years.

Financial pressures will mean the need to continue to make significant changes to how services are delivered. It is vital that in the midst of this change the link between health and safety and IRMP remains strong and that the flow of safety critical information, both inside and outside of the Authority, is well managed. The importance of good health and wellbeing, as opposed to just safety can sometimes be overlooked, but plays a significant role in service delivery. The emphasis on improving mental health and wellbeing by improving our procedures and training, whilst developing a more robust framework of welfare support, continues to be a priority. This was a priority before COVID 19 and is evermore so now, given the impact this pandemic has had on our workforce.

As incident numbers have reduced so has experiential learning. The training priority continues to be to ensure that realistic training and shared learning continues to be developed to bridge this gap. The fire behaviour and breathing apparatus facilities at the Training Centre have been significantly improved, which has and will continue to provide excellent realistic breathing apparatus training for existing firefighters and trainees.

The Authority has a risk-based training strategy and continues to invest in a central training programme to make sure firefighter skills are kept at the highest level. In May 2017 the Firefighter Safety Team was formed and is believed to be the only dedicated Firefighter Safety Team in the UK. The team work to reduce the risk to firefighters and improve knowledge and understanding of tactical options and National Operational Guidance.

New developments in equipment and guidance present opportunities to work more effectively but they place ever more technical demands on personnel and training. WYFRS is keeping pace with these changes to the ways of working.

The Information and Communication Technology Strategy has delivered an ambitious programme of change. The Strategy maximises the use of electronic ways of working, simplifies systems and produces a consistent user experience reducing repetition and exploiting the value of the information held within a secure and resilient infrastructure. The aim is to make the most of technology to ensure things are simpler, smarter and engaging. We are now embarking on a new Digital and Data Strategy which will map out our future use of these systems

We will focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of our organisation. The Smarter working project, procurement review and performance management programme will deliver better outcomes and assist us in driving improvement, to achieve our ambition of 'Making West Yorkshire Safer'.

This Statement of Assurance is signed on 18 December 2020 on behalf of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.



Councillor Darren O'Donovan
Chair of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority