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# **Annual Statement of Assurance 2021/22**

November 2022

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# 1 Introduction

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The [National Framework for England 2018](#) sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for all English Fire Authorities and places a requirement on them to provide assurance to their communities and Government on financial, governance and operational matters. The Framework requires all English Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish Statements of Assurance. It states:

*Each fire and rescue authority is required to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance. The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard to the National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan prepared by the Authority..... The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.*

## **In line with the National Framework 2018, this is Cleveland Fire Authority's (CFA) Statement of Assurance for 2021/22.**

The statement follows the Department of Communities and Local Government's 'Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England'. Much of the information in the statement is already contained in other documents and where this is the case these documents are hyperlinked.

*The Authority's vision is to build a sustainable future that:*

- *makes a positive difference to the safety and quality of life of every local citizen; and the places where they live and work*
- *delivers services by people who are professional, proud and passionate*
- *is nationally recognised as being high performing and innovative; and internationally renowned for being able to reduce risk in business, industry and the home*

The Authority has published the following documents detailing its vision, strategic goals and aims and how these will be achieved, notably;

- [Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-2022](#)
- [Service Plan 2021/22](#)

An [Annual Performance and Efficiency Report 2021/22](#) is published and provides information on progression towards the achievement of the vision, the strategic goals and aims.

## Community Risk Management Plan 2022/26

During 2021 the Authority produced a revised Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) that covers the period April 2022 to March 2026.

To support the development of the Community Risk Management Plan a detailed staff and community consultation programme on the proposals within the document was undertaken between 29<sup>th</sup> October to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

The [outcomes](#) of which were analysed and reported to Elected Members of the Executive Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 with the final version of the Community Risk Management Plan 2022-26 was approved by Members of CFA on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The new [Community Risk Management Plan 2022/26](#) came into effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

## Covid 19

2021/22 saw the continued impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on all of society and provided unprecedented and rapidly evolving challenges for the Brigade and our Partner agencies to address to ensure that our communities were kept safe.

Throughout the pandemic we continued to be a key member of the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (CLRF), which brought organisations together to provide a collective response to the challenges faced locally and nationally.

Our longstanding focus on employee health, safety and wellbeing was seamlessly tailored to support our employees during this time and our people rallied to support our communities in their time of need by adapting the ways in which services were delivered and by working in different ways, from different locations.

This was positively acknowledged by Wendy Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, following our COVID-19 Inspection in 2020

***'the Brigade adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively by prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of both its own staff and the community'***

*HMICFRS Letter: Covid 19 Inspection: Cleveland Fire Brigade dated 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021*

## 2 Risk Profile

Cleveland is an area in the North-East of England and incorporates the unitary borough authorities of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

CFA provides fire and rescue services to an area of approximately 597km<sup>2</sup> across four borough council areas. The Authority's area, centred around the mouth of the River Tees, has a population of 569,141 living in 254,258 dwellings and contains 14,782 industrial and commercial premises.

The area has a distinctive, complex and changing risk profile which is detailed in our comprehensive [Community Risk Profile](#) document.



Our mature and robust understanding of our risks helps us to proactively and reactively shape our prevention, protection and emergency response interventions so that we keep the people of Teesside safe.

### Managing our Risks

In managing our risk profile we adopt a balanced approach of prevention, protection and emergency response. The Authority's Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018/22 (CIRMP) identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that might affect its, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.

The CIRMP provides the evidence base from which we configure and deploy our resources and services in a focused and targeted manner to address the fire related risks facing our local communities.

In 2021/22 frontline services using a balanced strategy of prevention, protection and emergency response were co-ordinated and delivered from Community Safety District Hubs and 14 strategically placed Community Fire Stations.

- **Prevention** work takes many forms, from Safer Homes Visits to education and advice to our communities.
- **Protection** activities involve advising and ensuring individuals and businesses comply with Fire Safety legislation and where necessary enforcement action is undertaken.
- Where and when emergency incidents still occur, they are responded to by professional staff using modern methods, appliances and equipment. The Brigade operates to a suite of **emergency response** standards and the [latest information](#) on how fast the Brigade attended fire incidents indicates that we have some of the fastest attendance times in the country.

## 3 Operational Assurance

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The National Framework outlines the requirement placed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide assurance on operational matters which are determined locally by them in partnership with their local communities, citizens, businesses and others.

### 3.1 Statutory Responsibilities

CFA has carried out its functions in accordance with the defined statutory and policy framework in which it is required to operate. The key legislative documents defining these responsibilities are:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- 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 Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Licencing Act 2003
- The Building Act 2004
- The Policing and Crime Act
- The Equality Act
- The Data Protection Act
- The Local Government Act
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- Human Rights Act

### 3.2 Community Safety Strategy

The CIRMP summarises how the identified community risks will be addressed and it is underpinned by a detailed Community Safety Strategy. This strategy sets out our operational priorities to keep people of the area safe and acts as the foundation to the operational service delivery arrangements from which we assure and evaluate the robustness, effectiveness and efficiency of the arrangements.

The Performance Management, Intelligence and Assurance Frameworks provides ongoing information on the effectiveness of our operational arrangements. This is substantiated by periodic independent assessments on our operational and national resilience arrangements which provide the necessary independent assurance on our operational service delivery arrangements both at a national and local level.

### **3.3 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

In 2017/18 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commenced inspections of England's Fire & Rescue services that assesses each FRS in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency, and how they treat their people.

The Brigades first inspection report was published in December 2019 and saw that the Brigade was assessed as **Good** in all 3 inspection pillars.

During 2021/22 the Brigade prepared for a further inspection by the HMICFRS, the fieldwork for the inspection took place between May and July 2022 with the results expected to be published December 2022.

### **3.4 National Resilience**

National Resilience is defined as the capacity and capability of Fire and Rescue Authorities to work together and with other Category 1 and 2 responders to deliver a sustained, effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges, such as (but not limited to) those identified in the National Security Risk Assessment. It refers to risks that need to be planned for on a strategic national basis because their impacts and consequences would be of such scale and/or complexity that local resources would be insufficient, even when considering mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action. Our arrangements for National Resilience are assured through regular inspections, audits and training.

### **3.5 NFCC National Resilience Team Review of CFB Flood Rescue Capability**

The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT), on behalf of Home Office, audited the CFB Water Rescue Capability. No areas of our arrangements were assessed as inadequate with 6 minor areas for improvement from the 43 assessment criteria, all of which were addressed.

### **3.6 Collaborative Working and Interoperability**

The Brigade works with a wide variety of local partners to deliver its balanced strategy of Prevention, Protection and Emergency response in a joined up and co-ordinated fashion.

### **3.7 Local Resilience Forum**

In 2021/22 we were an active member of the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (CLRF). This is a multi-agency partnership that provides a structure to help agencies plan and prepare for major incidents and emergencies which may have a significant impact on the community and assists partners to meet their statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) Regulations 2005 and accompanying statutory guidance

entitled “Preparing for Emergencies”. The CLRF is made up of Category 1, 2 and non-category responders.

As a category one responder we are a member of the Local Resilience Forum on the CLRF Strategic Board, Tactical Business Group, Tactical Business Continuity focus group, Training and Exercise Group, Risk Assessment group, Blue Lights Group, Flood and Adverse Weather Group and the Warn and Inform Group.

During 2021/22 the CLRF continued to play a significant role in addressing the Covid 19 Pandemic. To ensure a coordinated response to issues during the pandemic we were represented on the Local Resilience Forums Strategic Coordinating Group and chaired the Tactical Coordinating Group.

Our National Resilience Manager works in the Emergency Planning Unit alongside the Police Tactical Advisor Team working jointly on Police led operations and facilitating awareness on Counter Terrorism and the Critical National Infrastructure sites located within the area.

We are member of Independent Safety Advisory Groups (ISAG) which are run through the Emergency Planning Unit to ensure that the Brigade is included in the planning for major events.

### **3.8 Strategic Operational Response and Resilience Group (SORRG)**

We are a Member of the Strategic Operational Response and Resilience Group (SORRG) which forms a link into the National Operational Co-ordination Committee (OCC). This enables Strategic representatives from the four North East Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to consider opportunities such as the regional sharing of assets and to work collaboratively on operational matters related to National Resilience (NR).

### **3.9 Emergency Response Call Handling**

The Brigade has established a collaborative tri partite partnership arrangement with Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services to provide resilience and ensure emergency response calls are handled, using the Brigade’s mobilising system at times of high demand for emergency response call handling or when Business Continuity plans are activated.

### **3.10 Prevention, Protection & Response**

A framework for joint and integrated working exists in Teesside. We are members of Community Safety and other partnerships to enable organisations address local problems collectively.



Our Prevention services are based around home safety, road safety, water safety, arson reduction and youth engagement and use a risk-based approach to targeted resources and provide collaborative services to those identified as being most vulnerable.

We are a member of the Tees-wide Adult and Children Safeguarding Partnerships with regular assurance reviews on our arrangements undertaken.

Our protection services aim to educate and regulate the built environment that is governed by fire safety regulations to protect people, property and the environment from harm. To deliver this the Brigade has developed close working relationships with other public enforcement bodies and we inspect and audit buildings required to comply with fire safety legislation which have been identified through our risk-based inspection program.

We work with our local industries and participate in Site Health and Environment (SHE) Managers Meetings of the high hazard industries within our area. A Mutual Aid database of assets held at COMAH sites is maintained by the Brigade to enable an effective and coordinated response to any incidents that occur at these sites.

Our operational crews have access to Emergency Response Plans (ERP's), Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI's) and Site-Specific Pre Plans (SSPP's) at an incident ground to ensure that they have relevant risk information in an emergency. This is enhanced through a programme of information gathering and familiarisation visits by crews to key risk sites. We ensure that we share this information with other services and receive neighbouring Brigade's risk information should we be required to attend incidents in their areas.

### **3.11 Cross Border Risk Information Sharing**

We are a member of the 'Cross Border Risk Information Group' which consists of the four NE, Cumbria and North Yorkshire FRSs. Operational risk information relating to Very High and High risks is shared between organisations via a dedicated link on Resilience Direct and accessed through Mobile Data Terminals on every appliance.

### **3.12 Mutual Aid Agreements**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides clear instructions and powers for FRS to make agreements (reinforcement schemes) with other Authorities to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and emergencies within their area and in other areas. The Brigade is required to enter into such reinforcement schemes, as far as is practicable, for securing mutual assistance between authorities so statutory functions can be discharged at all times.

CFA holds and operates to formalised section 13/16 support arrangements with Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to support operational activities. To support these agreements the services have robust arrangements in place to ensure that critical risk information in their respective area is shared securely with neighbouring Brigade's using Resilience Direct.

### **3.13 TSAB Quality Assurance Framework**

The Brigade's Safeguarding arrangements are externally assured by the Tees-wide Safeguarding Adults Board every 2 years. The TSAB Assurance process consists of the completion of a self-assessment against specific criteria and the provision of evidence to substantiate the self-assessment both of which are scrutinised, assessed and validated by an independent group consisting of TSAB board members and specialists.

The review of arrangements took place between August to October 2021.

The overall assessment indicates that the audit criteria was fully achieved in our assessment with 2 further areas of best practice identified.

*Overall, the evaluation group were very impressed with the submission from Cleveland Fire Brigade. The organisation provided some excellent evidence to support the standards outlined within the document, however it was a shame some areas of best practice had not been identified as part of the submission. It was evident there was a clear understanding of what was required to take part and complete this process which helped to provide the necessary assurance back to the Board.*

TSAB Outcomes Assessment Report October 2021

### **3.14 NFCC Building Risk Review (BRR) Programme**

The Building Risk Review (BRR) Programme, launched by the Fire Protection Board as part of Fire and Rescue Services' on-going national work to understand and help reduce the fire risk in high-rise residential buildings.

Twenty-one high rise residential buildings were identified as fully meeting the MHCLG criteria and required inspection through the Building Risk Review Programme by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021. All relevant premises had been audited and fully comply with regulations.

### **3.15 Business Continuity**

Business Continuity Management is an integral part of the Authority's corporate risk management process. Fire and Rescue Authorities have a duty to ensure plans are in place that will satisfy the requirements of both the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004.

Having robust Business Continuity Plans is essential for the Service to minimise the impact of any disruption on its ability to deliver an effective service to the community whether the disruptions result from staff shortage, loss of premises, technology failure, loss of information or loss of a key supplier or partner.

Operational Business Continuity Plans have been developed over a number of years in conjunction with the Local Resilience Forum. To assure their effectiveness there are regular multi agency training and testing of the plans.

Each Department within the Brigade has its own Business Continuity Plan to ensure continuity. These are reviewed and refreshed annually.


Business Continuity Plans are being continually reviewed and tested to ensure they are fit for purpose when required to be enacted. Each Department head reviews their BCP on an annual basis and an audit and assurance plan is in place to ensure that plans can be tested against realistic scenarios.


Through mechanisms of horizon scanning, structured meetings, generic and bespoke plans, training of staff, exercises and audit processes, the Authority strives to ensure it has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure an appropriate level of service is always available to the communities. When plans are enacted a process of review is instigated to ensure any lessons learnt from the events are captured and included within the reviews of the business continuity arrangements.

During 2021/22 the pandemic required the Brigade to continue to enact its Business Continuity arrangements in all service areas. Putting our plans into practice has provided us with assurance that the plans were effective and robust. As a learning organisation we have taken the opportunity to learn from the pandemic and refine the business continuity plans and as a result we developed a bespoke plan for the Covid Pandemic.

### 3.16 Emergency Response

To meet the risk across Cleveland, the Authority's priority is to, when required, respond to and attend any incident as quickly as possible as we recognise the faster, we are able to respond to an incident the greater the chance there is of survivability.

 **Response Standards:** The CIRMP 2018-22 introduced a set of equitable transparent response standards to life risk incidents. Performance against these standards is monitored, reported on and analysed throughout the year.

 **Actual Attendance Times:** Annually the Home Office publish details of actual average attendance times to Fire Incidents by individual service. The [latest information](#) published indicates that the Brigade has one of the fastest actual response times to fire incidents in the country.

### 3.17 Training

Our training and assurance frameworks are used to provide assurance of the operational readiness and competency of all our operational staff to respond to emergency response incidents. All our operational staff undertake a training programme, covering core competencies, including use of Breathing Apparatus. A programme of themed practical exercises is also conducted to further ensure the competency of firefighters.

Our training framework includes Incident Command competency at all 4 levels, which is now assessed and validated through external bodies to provide assurance. All incident commanders undertake tri-service JESIP training.

The training framework covers the attainment, maintenance and validation of competence, and ensures that training is recorded to enable the scrutiny and oversight of achievement from individual to Brigade level.

A suite of key training measures, covering all staff, enables the monitoring of the competency of all staff especially in risk critical skills required for a firefighter's role.

We are an accredited training centre covering both our Learning and Development and Health and Safety functions. To retain our accredited status for training activities in these areas, validation of our arrangements is undertaken by external and independent agencies on a regular basis.

During 2021/22 our IOSH, NVQs, Breathing Apparatus Instructor, Incident Command Level 1 and Fire Investigation Level 1 qualifications were audited by the respective Awarding Bodies with positive outcomes being received from these audits.

### **3.18 Operational Exercise Programme**

A programme of Operational Exercises were undertaken internally and with other partners including neighbouring fire and rescue services during 2021/22. The testing and exercise regime covers six defined levels ranging from station level exercises to National resilience exercises.

During 2021/22 the Brigade and partners planned to conduct 108 exercises of which 84 were successfully completed, the remainder were either deferred or cancelled due to Covid restrictions.

### **3.19 Fire Standards**

The Fire Standards identify, develop and maintain professional standards for fire and rescue services to achieve. The first Fire Standard was issued and approved for implementation by the National Fire Standards Board in the latter stages of 2020/21.

As each standard is published a detailed gap analysis is undertaken to ascertain whether the Brigade complies with the standard. Over the course of 2021/22 10 fire standards have been published.

### **3.20 National Operational Guidance (NOG)**

National Operational Guidance (NOG) is the foundation for developing operational policies, procedures, good practice and training for firefighters to deal with incidents effectively and safely and ensure consistency of approach across the country. The Brigade is implementing the 21 NOGS in a phased process ensuring that all requirements of the NOG are fully embedded.

### **3.21 Health & Safety**

The Brigade ensures that the health and safety of the workforce is a priority and aims to conduct its activities in a safe and healthy working environment whilst promoting a positive health and safety culture.

The Brigade incurred thirty-five accidents during 2021/22, three of which were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have not been required to instigate any of these accidents.

A programme of audits of stations and teams health and safety arrangements were undertaken during 2021/22. No significant issues have been identified as a result of these audits.

### **3.22 Impact of Covid**

Due to our established and embedded business continuity arrangements, including our plans for a Flu Pandemic, the Service was highly prepared and continued to cope well in the second year of the Covid pandemic. The service continued to support the response to the pandemic through the provision of a wide range of services to the community including delivery of supplies to the community, delivery of PPE and supporting the delivery of the vaccination programme.

The Service continued with the measures to ensure that all workplaces were 'Covid Secure' and arrangements were introduced to enable Operational staff to maintain social distancing wherever possible whilst on duty. Staff absence levels relating to Covid remained manageable.

These arrangements started to be relaxed by the Brigade in the latter stages of 2021 as the Covid Pandemic subsided.

New ways of working that used technology continued to be available for use for prevention and protection activities which ensured that risk critical areas of these services continued during lockdown and Covid restriction periods.

Agile working arrangements for enabling services were maintained enabling staff to work from home, all of which mitigated the impact that the Covid pandemic throughout the organisation.

## 4 Financial Assurance

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Fire and Rescue Authorities are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. CFA conducts its duties under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 in respect of ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

### 4.1 2021/22 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The CFA meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021 approved the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, which included the budget and council tax for 2021/22.

CFA delivers value for money services considering the complex and high hazard environment it operates in. During 2021/22 the Council Tax for a Band D property was the equivalent of £80.33 per annum.

The equivalent comparator Council Tax rates of neighbouring Brigades are Tyne and Wear Fire Authority (£85.64), North Yorkshire Fire Authority (£74.14), and Durham and Darlington Fire Authority (£107.55).

### 4.2 2021/22 Financial Performance

It is a statutory requirement for Authorities to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. This information is contained in the statement of accounts within '[The Financial Report](#)'.

The Authority's total net revenue budget for 2021/22 was £26.255m (which equates to £46.13 per person in the Authority's area) with a total spend of £26.212m after contributions to reserves.

Our External Auditors, Mazars LLP, who are an independent body to the Authority, are commissioned to audit the Authority's financial statements and provide an opinion whether value for money is being achieved.

The draft 2021/22 Financial Statements were published on the Authority's website on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2022. The Treasurer advised the Committee that he expects the external auditors, Mazars, will issue an unqualified opinion of the Financial Statement and Value for Money conclusion as no material issues to bring to your attention.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September Mazars wrote to the Members of the Audit and Governance Committee indicating;

*'As a result of an extension to the accounts and audit timetable for 2021/22, our Auditor's Annual Report will not be issued by 30 September 2022. We anticipate issuing this no more than three months after the date of the opinion on the financial statements.'*

This letter is [published](#) on the Brigade's website.

The current [pay policy statement](#) brings the information on remuneration into a single document for public information and meets the obligations of the Localism Act 2011. It was approved by Executive Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Within the Financial Statements details of the salary and remuneration of all senior officers who have a salary of more than £50,000 is published.

In 2010 the Government placed an obligation on public bodies to publish details of all expenditure over £500. Cleveland Fire Authority published such [information](#) on its website on a monthly basis.

#### **4.4 Fire Pension Scheme HMRC Review**

During 2021 the HMRC approached the Brigade to request that the Brigade undertakes and internal assurance review of our Events and AFT returns in relation to the firefighter's pension schemes as they had identified differences between the Brigades pension data records to the submissions that had been made on the HMRC Pensions Online Portal.

The initial outcome of the review was reported to the HMRC in December 2021 and we are awaiting their final position

The responsibility for reporting to HMRC has now transferred to XPS as part of the Pension contract arrangements and since the responsibility transferred there have been no issues.

#### **4.5 Insurance Review**

A wholesale review of our insurance arrangements in advance of a contract renewal was undertaken by Marsh Insurance Brokerage. The outcome has resulted in Brigade establishing a newly tendered Insurance Contract with greater coverage including Cyber, Computer, Terrorism, reduced deductibles for a relatively small increase in premiums.

#### **4.6 Impact of Covid: Financial**

During 2021/22 the Service incurred increased costs due to Covid-19 on additional personal protective equipment (PPE), staff resilience measures, additional equipment to support agile working and ensuring premises remained Covid secure which were mitigated to an extent by government funding. The Brigade spent a total of £653,222 on Covid activities and supplies of which £251,193 was deemed as additional cost.

The future and the medium-term financial plan will not be clear until we fully understand the financial impact of the pandemic on council tax and business rates receipts and the longer-term expenditure commitments in supporting the pandemic and beyond.

## 5 Corporate Governance

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Cleveland Fire Authority (CFA) has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to conduct business in accordance with the law. CFA is committed to the highest standards of conduct and have robust controls over the use of resources, based on open decision making, accountability and transparency.

The Brigade takes decisions every day that impacts businesses, residents and visitors to our area. Our Constitution details how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

The most significant decisions relating to our plans and strategies, such as setting and agreeing the CRMP, the budget and Council Tax levels, are taken by CFA. Other decisions are delegated to the Executive Committee and operational management decisions including decisions in respect of functions which require professional officer skills are delegated to Officers in accordance with our approved Scheme of Delegation.

In 2020/21 Cleveland Fire Authority was made up of 16 Elected Members from the four councils in the Authority's area, namely Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton. The CFA membership from each of the four Councils is based on their population size and is politically balanced to reflect the make-up of the Council.

In 2021/22 the membership of CFA was;

- |                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| ▪ Hartlepool:           | 3 Members |
| ▪ Middlesbrough:        | 4 Members |
| ▪ Redcar and Cleveland: | 4 Members |
| ▪ Stockton:             | 5 Members |

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law, proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. To support this, the following committees and Forums are in place;

- Cleveland Fire Authority
- Executive Committee
- Audit and Governance Committee
- Local Pension Board
- Independent Remuneration Panel (Meetings on a As Demand Basis)

### 5.1 Governance Framework

CFA has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.



Our governance framework comprises systems, processes, culture and values by which the Authority directs and controls its activities through which it is accountable for and engages with the community. The Framework enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic priorities and to consider whether those priorities have resulted in the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.

## **5.2 Code of Corporate Governance**

The Authority has approved and adopted a [code of corporate governance](#) which encompasses the guidance and best practice outlined in the “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework’ (2016 edition) which is published by CIPFA and SOLACE.

Corporate governance services are provided to the Fire Authority through a combination of a SLA with Hartlepool Borough Council who provide the role of Treasurer and Internal Audit function. In addition, a dedicated Legal Advisor/Monitoring officer is employed by the Brigade.

An annual Member Development Programme is in place and Corporate and Ethical Governance development is given to officers and managers.

## **5.3 Annual Governance Statement**

The preparation of the Annual Governance Statement to support the Financial Report is a statutory requirement for public services. Its purpose is to demonstrate and evidence that there is a continuous review of the effectiveness of the Authority’s internal controls, performance and risk management systems. This provides assurance on their effectiveness so users of the accounts can be satisfied that proper arrangements are in place to govern spending, safeguard assets and maximise operational effectiveness. The process enables the production of a corporate action plan to address any identified gaps or weaknesses but also enhance the current arrangements.

No issues were identified within our Annual Governance Statement by our Internal Auditors or External Auditors. The [Annual Governance Statement](#) contained within the Financial Report 2021/22.

## **5.4 Systems of Internal Management Control**

Cleveland Fire Authority has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, thereby implementing the principles and responsibilities of effective corporate governance arrangements.

In discharging these responsibilities, the Authority is responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control. These systems of internal control form a significant part of

the Governance Framework and are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level as they cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. Internal Audit, commissioned from Hartlepool Council, is one methodology adopted to provide the necessary assurance on the effectiveness of the systems of management control.

The Internal Audit function provides challenge and assurance over the effectiveness of our risk management, internal control and governance arrangements and supports, provides advice and challenge management to assist the development of robust systems of control.

A risk based internal audit plan is developed in conjunction with the Authority's Treasurer with the purpose of providing assurance that the system of internal management controls are operating effectively within the Brigade. In February 2021 an Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 consisting of 15 internal audits was adopted by Elected Members.

The outcome from these audits indicates all have been completed and all with a satisfactory assurance rating.

The outcome from this work enables an assessment of the effectiveness of the system of management controls to be made by the Internal Audit function. The [outcome](#) of the latest review of the system of internal controls was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee and stated;

*"From the work undertaken during the year 2021/22, Internal Audit has reached the opinion that key systems are operating soundly and that there is no fundamental breakdown in controls resulting in material discrepancy. Satisfactory arrangements were implemented to ensure the effective, efficient and economic operation of Cleveland Fire Authority's financial affairs.*

*No system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance; this statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance. These risks are reflected in the audit plan and are the subject of separate reports issued during the course of 2021/22."*

#### **Audit and Governance 24th June 2022 'Internal Audit Outturn Report'**

### **5.5 Local Pension Board**

As prescribed in the Public Service Pensions Act, 2013 and associated regulations, the Fire Authority is the "responsible authority" for the effective and efficient management and administration of the Fire-fighter Pension Schemes. The Authority has delegated the management and administration of the schemes to the Chief Fire Officer as Scheme Manager.

The Local Pension Board was established in accordance with Section 5 of the Act and regulation 4 of the Fire-fighters Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 as amended by the Fire-fighters Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015. The Board comprises of 3 Employer and 3 Employee representatives and a substitute Employer and Employee representative and meets on a quarterly basis.

To assist in the governance and assurance arrangements, a representative from XPS Pensions Ltd attend all Board meetings to present their quarterly performance reports in addition to reporting on current/impending issues and any associated risks.

## **5.6 Cyber Attack Resilience**

In recognition of the increased threat of Cyber-attacks on the Brigades ICT and communications network, in May 2021 Northumbria Police undertook an assessment of the Brigades Business Continuity arrangements and associated resilience of its ICT infrastructure against cyber-attacks.

Overall the assessment indicated *'very strong position of security against cyber-attack'*

## **5.7 Compliance with the National Framework Requirements**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act requires the Home Secretary to report every two years on the Authority's compliance with the National Framework.

On 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 the Brigade provided the Home Secretary with the necessary evidence of the Brigades compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework in relation to the publication of an Annual Statement of Assurance.

## **5.8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. EDI is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

The Public Sector Equality Duty, of the Equality Act 2010, places a legal obligation for the organisation to comply with the general equality duty. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. It requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their staff.

Cleveland Fire Authority is committed to considering equality and diversity in the way we provide our services. When exercising our functions, we aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to the general duty, as a public sector body we are required to meet specific duties incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires us to:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the general duty;
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

On our website we have published a range of documents supporting this commitment including an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy, A workforce and Community Profile Analysis Report, a Gender Pay Gap Report, Public Sector Equality Duty Report an Disability , Mental Health and Wellbeing Report.

## **5.9 Data Protection**

We process information securely and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. All staff have been required and have completed an electronic training module for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations.

We use secure methods of transferring and storing data and apply appropriate retention periods to data. When data is no longer required we ensure that it is disposed of securely.

## **5.10 External Complaints**

The Brigade strives to operate to a high standard in all aspects of its work. Gathering information from customers, especially where we fall short of this aim is a high priority. To obtain feedback from the public the Brigade operates an External Customer Complaints Framework where complaints are investigated and responded to in as short a timescale as possible. A suite of internal service standards has been introduced so individuals know when they can expect a response to their complaint.

From the 17 complaints received during 2021/22, 16 (94%) received a response within the prescribed timescales. Three of the complaints were requested to be investigated at the next stage of the complaints process, all of which received a response within the required timescales.

## **5.11 Freedom of Information Requests**

The Freedom of Information Act came into force in January 2005. By granting a general right of access to records held by Public Authorities it encourages an attitude of openness and will enable the public to scrutinise decisions and working practises. The Act gives anyone the right to make a written request to see information held by the Authority which should be provided within 20 working days of the request. During 2021/22, 71 FOI requests or information were received, of which 57 (80%) were responded to within the nationally prescribed timescales.

During 2021/22 the Information Commissioners Office recognised that due to the ongoing Covid Pandemic it was possible that it would take more than 20 working days to supply

information under Freedom of Information regulations as CFB staff were having to prioritise other work to keep services running.

### **5.12 NFCC Information Returns**

During 2021/22 the Brigade ensured it complied with the NFCC requirements for regular information reporting so that the Home Office could monitor the Fire Sectors response to a number of major issues, including

Covid Pandemic – Information provided on staffing availability and the additional activities being undertaken to support the response to the Covid Pandemic.

Smoke alarm usage. Due to national shortages in the supply of smoke alarms, information on the Brigades stock and usage of smoke alarms was provided to ensure adequate supplies of alarms could be maintained.

### **5.13 Compliance with Statutory & Transparency Requirements**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published Transparency Code, which specifies the data and information that public bodies must publish. Compliance with the Code is mandated under section 2 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Our evaluation against the requirements indicates that no areas of non compliance have been identified.

### **5.14 Risk Management Arrangements**

The Authority's risk management arrangements are designed to effectively support service delivery via a balanced strategy of protection, prevention and emergency response.

Through the established Risk Management Framework, the Service annually undertakes detailed horizon scanning, risk assessments and produces a suite of intelligence and performance analysis reports to ensure that strategic, tactical and operational decision making and activities are risk based, intelligence-led, impact assessed and evaluated.

Employees with specialist skills work in conjunction with operational colleagues and use specialist systems, research intelligence, information and data from a multitude of sources, internal and external to the Brigade to ensure a comprehensive and robust profile of the risks facing the Brigade and the Community is established.

The risks facing the Brigade and its communities are refreshed on an annual basis and summarised in our [Community Risk Profile](#), underpinned by a suite of detailed risk assessments so that we have an excellent understanding of who and what is at risk, when and where they are at risk from a variety of hazardous events. This allows us to then utilise this information for both strategic and tactical purposes in the delivery of services.

A detailed profile of our communities in line with the EDI protective characteristics has been developed to ensure that our prevention, protection and emergency response services can identify those hard to reach and seldom heard groups within our society

As detailed in the 2019 outcome report from the HMICFRS inspection it assessed the Brigade has a good understanding of local and community risk, which it explains well to the public in its community integrated risk management plan (CIRMP). A review of these arrangements was undertaken during the HMICFRS inspection in 2022, the outcome of which will be received in December 2022.

Our Corporate Risks are identified and addressed through our [Corporate Risk Register](#) that articulates and quantifies each individual risk. Risks are scored in the context of the likelihood and impact of the risks. Control measures are identified to address the risks and the CRR is reviewed at regular points during the year.

## 6 Performance

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Cleveland Fire Brigade has an integrated performance assessment framework which is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly and annual basis, for analysis and scrutiny. A suite of corporate indicators are used by the Authority and enable stakeholders to scrutinise delivery of the CIRMP 2018/22.

The performance reports are made publically available and are supplemented with summary performance leaflets for the Brigade and each district. The Brigade's website has a [portal](#) to provide users with up-to-date information on performance of key indicators at a Brigade wide, District and Ward level.

An [Annual Performance and Efficiency Report](#) is produced and presented to Members of the Audit and Governance Committee and the CFA. This report is publically available on the Brigade's website and shared with our key stakeholders.

Details regarding our arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on the Brigade's website.

The Brigade aims to make it as easy as possible for the people we serve to let us know their views. Through listening and learning we improve the quality of the services we provide and encourage and recognise good practice by staff.

The Brigade wants to [hear](#) from people if they:

- Have a suggestion on how we might improve services.
- Would like to compliment us on a job well done.
- Feel we have fallen short of their expectations.
- Feel we have fallen short of the standards we set ourselves in dealing with complaints.

## 6 Assurance Summary

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As Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Cleveland Fire Brigade, we are satisfied that, during 2021/22 our business has been conducted effectively in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

We are satisfied that the Authority has done everything within its power to comply with the requirements of the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

In line with the requirements of the National Framework, we can provide assurance to the people of the Authority's area on the operational, financial and governance arrangements for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.



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Ian Hayton  
Chief Fire Officer



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Cllr Paul Kirton  
Chair of Cleveland Fire Authority

Date:.....



## **Bibliography and Quick Links to Key Documents**

This section provides the list of the key documents and associates links to the documents that have been used in the production of the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2017/18.

[National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services for England](#)

[Guidance on Annual Statement of Assurance](#)

[Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018/22](#)

[Community Risk Management Plan](#)

[Service Plan](#)

[Annual Performance and Efficiency Report](#)

[Community Risk Profile](#)

## **Glossary**

ASA: Annual Statement of Assurance

CFA: Cleveland Fire Authority

CIPFA: Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy

CIRMP: Community Integrated Risk Management Plan

CRMP: Community Risk Management Plan

CLRF: Cleveland Local Resilience Forum

FRS: Fire and Rescue Service

HMICFRS: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

HO: Home Office

JESIP: Joint Services Interoperability Principles

LRF: Local Resilience Forum

NFCC: National Fire Chiefs Council

NR: National Resilience

NRAT: National Resilience Audit Team

NF: National Framework

**Cleveland Fire Authority  
recognises the diverse make-  
up of the area it serves and is  
committed to equality,  
diversity and inclusion.**

If you require this document in an  
alternative language, large print or  
Braille, please do not hesitate to  
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আপনার যদি এই নথিটি একটি বকিং  
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ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਕਿਸੇ ਬਦਲਵੀਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ, ਵੱਡੇ  
ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ  
ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲਵੋ।

உங்களாக்கா இந்த ஆவணம் ஒரு  
மாற்று மொழியில், பெரிய அச்சு  
அல்லது பிரெயிலில் தவேபப்பட்டால்,  
எங்களதைத் தொடர்பு கொள்ள  
தயக்க வேண்டாம்.

প্রয়োজন হয়, আমাদের সাথে  
যোগাযোগ করতে দ্বিধা করবেন না।

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Braillově písmu, neváhejte  
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اگر این نوشتار را به زبانی دیگر، یا چاپ  
درشت یا خطبریل لازم دارید، لطفاً با ما تماس  
بگیرید.

Kung nangangailangan ka ng  
dokumentong ito sa isang  
alternatibong wika, malaking

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان، بڑے  
حروف کی چھپائی یا بریل میں درکار ہو تو  
برائے مہربانی بلا جھجک ہم سے رابطہ کریں

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