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# **Annual Statement of Assurance 2020/21**

November 2021

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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 Statement of Assurance for 2020/21.**

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 2020/21](#)

An [Annual Performance and Efficiency Report 2020/21](#) is published and provides information on progression towards the achievement of the vision, the strategic goals and aims.

## Covid 19

2020/21 saw the emergence of the COVID-19 global pandemic that impacted all of society and provided unprecedented and rapidly evolving challenges for us and our Partner agencies to ensure that our communities were kept safe.

Throughout the pandemic we have been a key member of the Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF), 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 have rallied to support our communities in their time of need by adapting the ways in which they delivered our services and 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'***

## 2 Risk Profile

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Cleveland is an area in the Northeast 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 the four borough council areas. The Authority's area is centered around the mouth of the River Tees, has a population of 569,141 living in 254,258 dwellings and includes 14,782 industrial and commercial premises and 29 'top tier' Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites.



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. In managing our risks, we adopt a balanced approach of prevention, protection and emergency response.

The Authority's Community Integrated Risk Management Plan (CIRMP) identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.

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

In 2020/21 our wide range of prevention, protection and emergency response services 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 carrying out enforcement actions.
- When emergency incidents still occur our professional and trained staff respond using modern methods, appliances and equipment. The Brigade operates to a suite of **emergency response** standards and the [latest information](#) indicates that we have some of the fastest attendance times to fire incidents 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 2020 the HMICFRS suspended its core inspection activity as a result of Covid-19 and the HMICFRS was subsequently commissioned by the Home Secretary to assess the sectors response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Cleveland Fire Authority's inspection took place during November 2020 with the [outcome](#) of the inspection received in January 2021. Unlike the full inspection reports the Covid review was not graded but was in the form of a narrative assessment. Key findings from the inspection include;

- *The Brigade adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively by prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of both its own staff and the community.*
- *To maintain its ability to respond to fires and other emergencies, the Brigade put in place robust measures to protect staff from infection at fire stations and in its control room. In addition, the Brigade developed ways to engage with vulnerable members of the community and businesses alike.*
- *The Brigade worked directly with local partners and through the LRF to offer support and assistance where requested.*
- *The Brigade's resources were well managed, and its immediate financial position was mostly unaffected as additional costs were covered by a government grant.*

### 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. In 2020/21 the following activities have occurred.

### 3.5 National Resilience Audit Team: Detection Identification Monitoring (DIM)

As part of the National Resilience Audit Team DIM capability assessment framework, the Brigade self-assessed itself over the 4 assessment areas prescribed by the NFCC. The self-assessment was validated by the NFCC and the outcomes indicated that 3 assessment areas have been assessed as 'Compliant' and the remaining area as 'Broadly Compliant'.

### **3.6 Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNe)**

In November 2019 the National Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRN(e)) Centre published details of the outcomes of the CBRN(e) Capability Assurance Programme. The report was based on findings from representatives of the National CBRN Centre on behalf of the three strategic CBRN leads, the National Police Chiefs Council, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives. The report provided information on the following.

*“Are the UK emergency services, as a joined-up capability, ‘match fit’ to respond to CBRN attacks based on current threat and risk?”*

Twenty criteria for Emergency Services to consider in improving their arrangements relating to responding to a CBRN Incident were detailed in the report. Our self-assessment against the national criteria identified that 3 areas are areas for enhancement, notably the review of the Major Incident Plan and the continuing strengthening of links with Cleveland Police CBRN Tac Advisors. Work has been ongoing with the relevant agencies to ensure that our arrangements fully comply with the national criteria.

### **3.7 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.

### **3.8 Local Resilience Forum**

In 2020/21 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 2020/21 the CLRF played 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. We were also members of the PPE Coordination Group (including Track and Trace), Cleveland Shielding Hub, Death Management Cell, Compliance and Regulation Cell and Communications Cell to ensure appropriate plans were in place should they need to be enacted during the pandemic.



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.

### **3.9 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).

### **3.10 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.

### **3.11 Prevention and Protection**

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. The last review was conducted in December 2019 using the Tees-wide Safeguarding Adults Board quality assurance framework which indicated strong areas of assurance and identified exceptional practice in several areas.

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.

### **3.12 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 21 premises had been audited and fully comply with regulations.

### **3.13 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 always discharged.

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 ensure that critical risk information in their respective area is shared securely with neighbouring Brigade's using Resilience Direct.

### **3.14 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 several 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 2020/21 the pandemic required the Brigade 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.

### 3.15 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.

### **3.16 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.

CFB has a proactive culture of reporting near misses and cause for concerns as part of our commitment towards improving health, safety and continuous improvement. A suite of health and safety monitoring indicators are established to enable us to closely monitor performance at all levels and this forms an integral element of our Performance Management Framework at all levels within the organisation.

Our Operational Assurance Framework illustrates how the learning outcomes from internal and external events identified through accident investigations, debriefs, active monitoring reports and stakeholder engagement are implemented and monitored via forums such as the Operational Assurance Group. Information is shared with staff via Fire Alert Organisation Learning Posts.

The Brigade incurred twenty-eight accidents during 2020/21, six of which were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). One accident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Brigade is cooperating fully with the HSE in relation to this incident.

The HSE conducted Covid 'spot inspections' at the Brigade's Community Fire Stations to verify compliance with Government Guidance in relation to the pandemic. Seven of our Community Fire Stations were inspected during 2020/21, in all cases the HSE confirmed that there were robust arrangements in place to ensure the safety of staff during Covid whilst on duty at station.

### **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.

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

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. Our District Management teams are responsible for quality

assuring the competency levels of their staff and ensuring that the competency recording system is kept up to date the outcomes of which are reported to the Head of Emergency Response.

We are an accredited training centre covering both our Learning and Development and Health and Safety functions;

- NVQs / BTEC
- Skills For Justice
- NEBOSH
- IOSH

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.

A National Operational Learning (NOL), Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) and JESIP single point of contacts are in place to ensure that National, regional and local learning is communicated throughout the organisation. Procedures are also in place via the CLRF to ensure that our partners are also kept informed.

### **3.18 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 coped well throughout the Covid pandemic

The Service implemented 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 and normal sickness absences levels reduced.

A reduction in numbers of emergency response incidents to deal with was experienced whilst appliance availability increased, therefore there was a minimal impact on our emergency response activities.

New ways of working that used technology was introduced for prevention and protection activities which ensured that risk critical areas of these services continued during lockdown periods.

Agile working arrangements for enabling services were introduced 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 2020/21 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

The CFA meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020 approved the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, which included the budget and council tax for 2020/21.

CFA delivers value for money services considering the complex and high hazard environment it operates in. During 2020/21 the Council Tax for a Band D property was the equivalent of £78.83 per annum compared to the national average of £79.65 for combined Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The equivalent comparator Council Tax rates of neighbouring Brigades are Tyne and Wear Fire Authority (£83.97), North Yorkshire Fire Authority (£72.69), and Durham and Darlington Fire Authority (£105.48).

### 4.2 2020/21 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 2020/21 was £26.977m (which equates to £47.40 per person in the Authority's area) with a total spend of £26.552m before 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 2020/21 Financial Statements were published on the Authority's website on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021. 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.

*'We have audited the financial statements of Cleveland Fire Authority and its subsidiary (the Group) for the year ended 31 March 2021, which comprise the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Firefighter Pension Fund Account Statements, the Group Movement in Reserves Statement, the Group Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Group Balance Sheet, the Group Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is*

*applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.*

*In our opinion, the financial statements:*

- *give a true and fair view of the financial position of Cleveland Fire Authority and the Group as at 31st March 2021 and of the Authority's and the Group's expenditure and income for the year ended; and*
- *have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.'*

*'Mazars Audit Completion Report'.*

#### **4.3 Audit Judgement on Efficiency and Value for Money (VFM)**

The External Auditors are required to conclude whether the Authority has in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

External Audit form this opinion by considering the evidence and arrangements in place against two criteria specified by the Audit Commission, notably;

- Financial resilience, that considers evidence across three main areas:
  - financial governance;
  - financial planning;
  - financial control.
- Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness, that considers evidence across two main areas:
  - prioritising resources;
  - improving efficiency and productivity.

Information from previous audits and discussions with Mazars throughout the year have indicated that there are strong financial governance arrangements in place. The Treasurer expects the external auditors, Mazars, will issue an unqualified Value for Money conclusion for 2020/21;

*'On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criterion issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in April 2020, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, Cleveland Fire Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.'*

*'Mazars Audit Completion Report'.*

Details of outcome of Mazars audit will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee and the full Authority in November 2021 as part of their Audit Completion Report.

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

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 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

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 Impact of Covid: Financial**

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 additional cleaning and ICT support which were mitigated to an extent by government funding. During 2020/21 the Brigade received £717,839 Covid funding from Government. The Brigade spent a total of £1,057,035 on Covid activities and supplies of which £642,344 was deemed as additional cost.

The position going forward in relation to 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 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 CIRMP, 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 2020/21 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 2020/21.

## **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. During 2020/21 an Internal Audit Plan 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 2020/21, 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 2020/21."*

***Audit and Governance 25th June 2021 '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 and meets on a regular basis. The Board currently comprises of 2 Employer and 2 Employee representatives.

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 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 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 the Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities' compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was presented to parliament and published. The key findings from this report are;

*'Having assessed this information, the Secretary of State is satisfied that every fire and rescue authority in England has acted in accordance with the requirements of the National Framework, and no formal steps have been taken by the Secretary of State since the last assurance statement in 2018 to secure compliance.'*

## 5.7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must 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.

Cleveland Fire Authority is committed to considering equality and diversity in the way we provide our services.

In addition to the general duty, all public sector bodies are required to meet specific duties which are 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.

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.

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.

Our EDI action plan runs alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and members of our EDI Board and groups are responsible for developing and implementing the action plan.

## **5.8 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.

## **5.9 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 15 complaints received during 2020/21, 9(60%) received a response within the prescribed timescales, the remaining 6(40%) exceeded the service standard. In all cases the complainant received regular updates on progress of their complaint in line with approved procedure.

## **5.10 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 2020/21, 79 FOI requests for information were received, of which 38(48%) were responded to within the nationally prescribed timescales.

The Information Commissioners Office recognised that due to the 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.

### **5.11 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.

### **5.12 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 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).

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.

### **5.13 Impact of Covid: Governance**

As part of the Service's preparations for lockdown, the Fire Authority (CFA) delegated powers, in line with our Constitution, to the Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer to ensure that all key decisions could still be taken in a timely manner.

During the period of lockdown remote meetings were introduced to allow the CFA, Executive Committee, Audit and Governance Committee and the Pensions Board to resume their usual duties.

## 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 is 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 2020/21 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 2021.



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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](#)

[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

COMAH: Control of Major Accident Hazards

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  
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আপনার যদি এই নথিটি একটি বকিঙ্গ  
ভাষা, বড় হরফের মুদ্রন বা ব্রহ্মেইনো

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Kurdî, çapa bi tîpên mezin  
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hetim bi me ra têkilliyê  
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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 ਝਿਜਕ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ।

உங்களுக்கு இந்த ஆவணம் ஓர்  
மாற்று மொழியில், பெரிய அச்சு  
அல்லது பிரெயிலில் தவேபப்பட்டால்,  
எங்களைத் தொடர்பு கொள்ள  
தயக்க வண்டாம்.

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 خط بریل 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  
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برائے مہربانی بلا جھجک ہم سے رابطہ کریں

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