

**Tyne and Wear Fire
and Rescue Authority**
Creating the Safest Community



STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

2020 / 2021

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Version:
1.0

Date revised:
-

Date published:
17 November 2021

Produced / reviewed by:
Business Improvement Department

FOREWORD

Welcome to the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) Statement of Assurance for the financial year 2020/21.

The purpose of this statement is to provide reassurance to the communities of Tyne and Wear, the Government and other stakeholders that our business has been conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. As part of the assurance process, we assessed our governance arrangements, financial conduct and operational performance to ensure we continue to fulfil our statutory duties whilst meeting the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018.

The emergence of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which resulted in a nationwide lockdown; we, like many organisations, faced unprecedented challenges, which could potentially affect our daily operations. The Authority operated within the provisions of the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 to ensure effective governance, scrutiny arrangements and engagement with the public continued.

At Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) business continuity arrangements were initiated to ensure our core functions were maintained. A number of control measures were implemented, including making sites 'covid-secure', insulating operational watches and our control room to minimise the transmissibility of the virus in the workplace.

We made significant investment in our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and equipment to enable remote working was possible for all staff. Due to these actions, absence levels remained manageable and there was a minimal impact on our emergency response. During the course of the pandemic, this remained a balancing act to ensure statutory duties were successfully maintained whilst supporting partners and striving to keep our staff safe and well.

We are proud of the way staff have come together and generated a wonderful community spirit in supporting partners and each other. Our workforce responded to calls for assistance from not only the public but also from the wider community, which included local authorities, voluntary organisations, NHS England, and the broader health sector. Activities staff were involved with ranged from delivering medical personal protective equipment (PPE), food parcels and prescriptions to administering lateral flow tests, marshalling at and the management of vaccination sites and administering vaccinations. All of these actions were delivered alongside day-to-day roles. The work our staff carried out has made a huge contribution to the communities of Tyne and Wear, particularly the most vulnerable.

Our commitment to delivering an excellent service to our communities continues to be at the fore of everything we do. Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) assessed our Covid planning arrangements, response and ability to demonstrate an effective service during the pandemic. This resulted in a positive outcome letter, which highlighted the excellent work undertaken by both the Authority and TWFRS.

We continually seek to improve the delivery of our services to ensure that the public is receiving a first class fire and rescue service. The pandemic has pushed us to adopt new ways of working and embrace technological change to overcome the challenges brought about by Covid-19. We will be reviewing these changes to see whether they can be embedded into our business as usual.

It is important to note that our achievements during 2020/21 were made possible by the dedication and passion of our highly trained staff whose clear motivation was the protection and safety of the communities of Tyne and Wear.

As Chair of the Authority and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) of TWFRS, we are satisfied that, during 2020/21 our business has been conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money was safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.



Councillor Tony Taylor
*Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue
Authority Chair*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AT Taylor'.



Chris Lowther QFSM
*Chief Fire Officer
and Chief Executive*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Chris Lowther'.

INTRODUCTION

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the legal basis for establishing the Authority and sets out the Authority's statutory responsibilities, which include providing a fire and rescue service that has the people, equipment and training required to carry out its core function.

This Act is the main piece of legislation under which TWFRS operates. This Act gives the Government responsibility for producing the **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**¹ (the National Framework) which outlines the Government's high-level priorities, and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England.

The National Framework sets out a requirement for the Authority to operate within a clearly defined statutory framework and to produce an annual Statement of Assurance. The Statement should demonstrate how the Authority has acted in accordance with the requirements of the National Framework while discharging its functions, with respect to financial, governance and operational matters.

The key priorities established by the National Framework are:

- the provision for prevention and protection activities and the appropriate response to fire and rescue related incidents in Tyne and Wear;
- the identification and assessment of a range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross border, multi-authority and /or a national nature;
- collaboration with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided;

- being accountable to the communities of Tyne and Wear for the services provided; and
- developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

One of the principal aims of the Statement is to provide an accessible way in which the communities of Tyne and Wear, the Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of the Authority's performance.

The Government is required to report every two years on the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are complying with the National Framework. The Statement is a source of information for the Secretary of State (Home Secretary) to base their biennial report on. The 2020 report by the Home Secretary on fire and rescue authorities' compliance with the National Framework is available [online](#).

¹ Home Office (2018) *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*.

FINANCIAL

The Authority has a duty under the **Local Government Act 1999** to ensure that business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. TWFRS adheres to financial procedures for budget setting, monitoring and the production of the final accounts.

Annual Statement of Accounts

The Finance Director prepares the Annual Statement of Accounts, in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/2021](#) and are based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), known more commonly as the Code. External auditors, [Mazars](#) provide an independent opinion of the accounts to ensure they reflect a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and that appropriate and sound accounting and financial systems are in place. Their report also includes an opinion on their Value for Money Conclusion, which reviews the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#) require the unaudited accounts to be published by 31 May and the audited accounts to be submitted for approval by the end of July each year. However, in response to anticipated disruption to local authorities preparation of the accounts caused previously by the Covid-19 pandemic, and then by adopting the recommendations from the [Redmond Review](#)², the Regulations were amended by the [Accounts & Audit \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) (the 2021 Regulations) to revise and extend the statutory deadlines for 2020/21.

The [unaudited Statement of Accounts](#) for the year ending 31 March 2021, were reviewed and noted by the Governance Committee on 30 July 2021, which was within the revised statutory timescale of 31 July 2021. The Statement of Accounts included the required narrative statement, a statement of responsibilities, the financial statements, and the Annual Governance Statement. The [audited Statement of Accounts](#) for 2020/2021 are required to be approved by the Governance Committee by 30 September 2021, in line with revised statutory timescales.

However, the external auditors gave early notification that they would not be able to complete the audit until the end of November 2021 due to work pressures and delays caused by audit work for 2019/20 significantly overrunning which was a consistent position that was unfortunately reflected nationally across the public sector.

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) *Independent Review into the Oversight of Local Audit and the Transparency of Local Authority Financial Reporting.*

Arrangements were made to accurately report Covid-19 expenditure internally and centrally to the Home Office via the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (NFCC) monthly returns to account for the additional costs incurred and to provide evidence that additional grant funding was required from the Government. The Authority introduced a revised delegation process in order to control costs associated with the pandemic and the process brought order to all related activity and costs, which had to be approved by the CFO in conjunction with the Finance Director. This meant the Authority had clarity over the costs incurred for all actions agreed, this also acted as robust evidence of the use of the CFOs emergency powers in addressing issues, and the associated costs incurred which are fully transparent and accountable.

The Authority received £1.121m of additional funding from Tranches 1 and 2 of the government's Covid-19 special grant allocations and recently was awarded a further £0.228m from The Home Office's Covid-19 contingency funding. The Authority continued to monitor its costs and took advantage of government grant to compensate local authorities for loss of sales, fees and charges income in 2020/21. It reclaimed £0.134m in 2020/21 taking the total additional grant to £1.483m. The Authority has a small balance of funds remaining of just over £0.100m, which it is placing, in a special Covid-19 reserve as it continues to monitor the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic on its services during 2021/22.

Regular reports were provided to the Authority on the use of the additional government grant funding and on all decisions made by the CFO whilst using [emergency powers](#) in accordance with the Authority's standing orders and scheme of delegation.

These reports were presented to the Authority on 13 July 2020, 16 November 2020 and 14 June 2021.

Annual Governance Statement

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 stipulate that the Authority should conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and prepare an [Annual Governance Statement](#). The purpose of the Statement is for the Authority to report publicly on its arrangements for ensuring that business is conducted in accordance with the law, regulations and proper practices and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

The Authority operates a [Code of Governance](#), which adheres to the [Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework](#)³ published by CIPFA in association with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). This framework assists in developing and shaping an informed approach to governance, aimed at achieving the highest standards in a measured and proportionate way. This Code comprises of systems and processes that are used to direct and control the Authority's activities. It also enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and consider whether these objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

³ CIPFA/SOLACE (2016) *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework*

The Annual Governance Statement forms part of the annual Statement of Accounts and reports on the extent of the Authority's compliance with the principles of good governance, including how it manages internal control arrangements, the effectiveness of those arrangements and sets out action for planned changes in the coming year. The Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 was reviewed by the Governance Committee on 28 June 2021 and approved by the Authority on 12 July 2021.

External Audit

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors, Mazars, who provide assurance that the Authority has adequate arrangements in place for securing the efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of its resources. The scope of their external audit work, their findings and opinions on the Authority's accounts and the Value for Money conclusion are included within the [Annual Audit Letter](#). This letter summarises the key findings for the financial year 2020/21 and was discussed and noted at the Authority meeting held on 13 December 2021.

In line with auditing standards, the external auditors produced an Audit Completion Report in which their opinion is given on whether the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as of 31 March 2021 and on its income and expenditure for the year then ended. The Audit Completion Report sets out the detailed findings from the audit of the Authority for the year ending 31 March 2021.

The external auditor concluded there were no significant matters arising that required the Authority to implement any action for improvement.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit provide an independent and objective opinion to risk management, internal control, governance and the effectiveness of the Authority in achieving its agreed objectives. [Sunderland City Council \(SCC\)](#), the lead authority carries out the Authority's internal audit function and provides assurance, on the internal audit work they carry out annually to inform the risk management and governance processes operating within the Authority.

The role of Internal Audit contributes to the assessment of the Authority's internal control mechanisms by examining, evaluating, and reporting on the adequacy and effectiveness. The Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 was agreed by Governance Committee on 13 March 2020. The audits provided substantial assurance in four of the six audit areas and moderate assurance in the other two areas.

Internal Audit also conducted a review of SCC's financial systems, which included, accounts payable; accounts receivable / periodic income and payroll. The transaction-testing audit provided substantial assurance to the respective areas of the financial systems.

In summary, no high or significant risks were identified from the audits completed during 2020/21 and there were no matters material to the overall internal control environment of the Authority. For reassurance, any risks classified as medium risks or above have been included in the improvement plan, which is monitored by senior management. From the audits conducted, there were 20 medium risk actions and 4 low-risk actions, included in the departmental plans (annual plans). The Authority addressed 96% of all of the medium-risk actions recommended.

The main conclusion from the internal auditor annual report provides the reassurance that 'using the cumulative knowledge and experience of the systems and controls in place, including the results of previous audit work and the work undertaken within 2020/21, it is considered that overall, throughout the Service, there continues to be a good internal control environment.'

GOVERNANCE

The Authority is the publicly accountable body that oversees the policy and service delivery of TWFRS and comprises of 17 Members, 16 of which are elected Members, nominated by the five constituent councils of Tyne and Wear: Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland, in line with **Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1985**.

The [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) established routes by which Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) could become involved in the governance of fire and rescue services and in 2017, the PCC for Northumbria became a member of the Authority. Further details about the Authority, its Members and their allowances can be found on the TWFRS [website](#).

Members and staff both adhere to a [code of conduct](#), which is compliant with the [seven principles of public life](#) to ensure high standards are upheld while undertaking their duties. The staff code of conduct is being reviewed to incorporate the new NFCC fire centric [Core Code of Ethics](#).

To enable the Authority to carry out its duties effectively Members meet monthly at the Joint Board of the Authority, between the months of June and April. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) occurs each June and commences the new annual cycle of meetings. The Authority operates [standing orders](#) and [financial regulations](#), which outline how it carries out its affairs, how decisions are to be made and is supported by a clear [delegation scheme](#). The roles and responsibilities of Members and officers are defined in these documents, which form the Authority's constitution.

To support the Joint Board of the Authority, to carry out its duties, it operates several sub-committees, comprising of Members and senior officers who collectively oversee specific elements of the Authority's work. SCC provide a democratic service role to the Joint Board of the Authority and its committees and current and past committee papers, are located on their [website](#). There are three main committees, which convene every three to four months:

- [Governance Committee](#)
- [Policy and Performance Committee](#)
- [Human Resources Committee](#)

The Joint Board of the Authority operates a further three committees and a sub-committee, which meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss specific matters as and when they arise:

- [Appointments Committee](#)
- [Disciplinary Appeals Committee](#)
- [Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee](#)
- [Emergency Committee](#)

The Joint Board of the Authority also operates a Pension Board whose purpose is to assist the Authority in its role as scheme manager of the Firefighters Pension Scheme. The Board consists of employee and employer representatives and oversees the administration of the pension scheme by complying with regulations and legislation imposed by the Pensions Regulator.

Further details about the purpose and functions of the Joint Board of the Authority, its committees and the Pension Board can be reviewed in the [terms of reference](#).

Covid-19 implications on governance

To support the rapid developments associated with the Covid-19 pandemic the Authority adopted a pragmatic approach to ensure decision making could occur at the required pace but with due regard given to maintaining robust governance and accountability arrangements together with the continued safety of staff.

The Authority agreed the CFO could use his emergency powers from 18 March 2020, to ensure the continued operations and response of the fire service for the duration of the pandemic. The CFO was able to make decisions and take actions without immediate proactive recourse to the Authority given the urgent nature of many of the actions that would be required during the crisis. This course of action pursued is included in the existing standing orders of the Authority.

TWFRS structure and leadership

The CFO is the Head of Paid Services, responsible for the day-to-day operational leadership of TWFRS, and accountable to the Chair of the Authority. The CFO participates in monthly planning meetings with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority to discuss the strategic direction and policy for the service. The CFO is also the Authority's adviser on all matters, which are either not the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer (Finance Director / Section 151 Officer) or the Monitoring Officer. The Head of Law and Governance at SCC performs the role of Monitoring Officer role on behalf of the Authority.

TWFRS' Principal Officer team consists of three officers, the CFO, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) who supports the CFO to oversee the operations of TWFRS. Three Area Managers and two Directors are each responsible for functional departments and report to the Principal Officers, collectively forming the [Executive Leadership Team](#) (ELT). The Authority delegates to the ELT, the management of TWFRS and its resources, the delivery of the operational and support services functions and the execution of statutory responsibilities. Policies and procedures ensure TWFRS operates in a safe, controlled and transparent environment in order to meet legal, statutory and regulatory requirements. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is composed of 19 department heads, which report to the ELT and support them in achieving TWFRS' strategic objectives.

Strategic Planning

The [Strategic Community Safety Plan](#) (SCSP) set out TWFRS' approach to serving the communities of Tyne and Wear and incorporates the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). This is an interim document for 2020/21, which was approved by the Authority on 14 December 2020. Prior to the pandemic, work was ongoing to refresh the SCSP and IRMP for 2021-24 however, as the pandemic quickly evolved; resources were diverted to respond to this health emergency and consideration has been given to separating the two and replacing the SCSP with a TWFRS Strategy 2025.

This new five-year strategy will be published in 2021/22 and will modernise the Services' approach to strategic planning, representing a shift in the presentation of information by making better use of technology and graphics. In support of this strategy, a new TWFRS 2025 Programme and Annual Service Operating Plan will set out priorities and actions for the year ahead.

The SCSP is underpinned by three strategies; firstly, a Community Safety Strategy, which explains how resources are targeted and is informed by the [Community Risk Profile](#). There is also an Organisational Development (OD) Strategy, which sets out how the Service aims to lead people, promote continuous improvement and improve the outcomes for staff and the local community.

A new People and OD Plan will replace the OD Strategy in 2021/22. Finally, a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides an analysis of the Services financial position over a four-year period.

Industrial Relation Management

TWFRS participates in political engagement with fire and rescue service representative bodies, which include the [Fire Brigades Union](#), [GMB](#), and [Unison](#). This relationship is managed through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), which meets monthly and is chaired by the ACFO. The JCC considers issues associated with service-employee relations and policy development. This forum complements the daily arrangements that support effective industrial relations management.

Internal communication and staff engagement

The ELT lead TWFRS using a range of communication channels, including senior officer listening events, staff engagement sessions, watch and team talks, staff bulletins, CFO bulletins and vlogs. TWFRS has an intranet site and a SharePoint system to share news and information with staff. In response to the pandemic, TWFRS introduced a covid-portal and App to keep staff up-to-date with information. In 2020/21, all staff were invited to participate in one of four virtual engagement sessions with the ELT and 40 listening events took place providing staff with information on key issues such as TWFRS 2025 Strategy, financial matters, IRMP, service delivery challenges and opportunities.

In addition, TWFRS participated in the following staff engagement:

- HMICFRS Covid-19 Inspection Employee Survey
- Investors in People (IIP) Assessment - focus groups and staff 1-2-1s
- Team discussions about work-life during the pandemic titled 'how we have experienced work'.

A significant amount of information has been captured from the above activities, which has helped inform current and future thinking around improvements for staff and the Service.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Authority has a specific duty to publish equality data under the [Equality Act 2010](#), covering annual equality data and gender pay gap data. This Act simplified and replaced all previous equality legislation and included a new general duty for all public bodies, which came into force on 5 April 2011, followed by the introduction of the Gender Pay Gap Reporting in 2017. The annual [equality data and gender pay gap report](#) was presented to the HR Committee on 5 October 2020.

Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is delivered through the Service's strategic plans, which support staff, managers and Members in understanding the behaviours that are required to enable our core values. The leadership of EDI is set out in the OD Strategy, supported by the ELT 'themed' champions. The focus of the Strategy is to ensure that the processes used to enhance the delivery of the Services vision and embeds EDI within the organisation and the wider community. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for different strands of diversity, e.g. Diversifying our Workforce.

During 2020/21 the Service continued support for the four staff network groups Disability, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + (LGBT+) Gender and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME). The network groups help the Service continue to improve its position with regard to EDI and its positions as an employer of choice. It is important that TWFRS and the services it provides are reflective of the needs of all staff and the wider community it serves. The use of virtual meetings during the pandemic gave the network groups a platform to continue to meet with their members and run online events.

This allowed more staff to participate from different locations, particularly, operational crew who were able to join in events and meetings from their home stations, increasing the reach to the organisation.

Risk Management

The Authority operates a robust risk management framework, to aid the achievement of its strategic priorities, decision-making processes, protection of its reputation and other assets and to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations. The key objectives that underpin this approach are:

- To develop, implement and review the risk management framework and process;
- To promote effective risk management at all levels of the organisation; and
- To encourage and embed an appropriate risk culture across TWFRS.

This framework ensures risk is managed effectively and consistently throughout TWFRS by identifying, prioritising, controlling and monitoring threats to ensure they are eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level and supported by a risk management policy and procedure.

During 2020/21, the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) oversaw the Services' risks, comprising of staff and union representatives, and was chaired by the Authority Chair.

The CRMG maintained a live corporate risk register (CRR), which was updated, monitored and managed by the Business Assurance Manager. In February 2021, the CRMG requested a comprehensive review of the risk management framework and recommendations were presented to the ELT on 6 April 2021. It was agreed that from June 2021, the CRMG would be dissolved and the management of risk transferred to the ELT. It was deemed that this transfer would enhance the reporting cycle, as corporate risk would become a standing agenda item at the monthly ELT meetings, replacing the CRMGs bi-annual review. This in turn would increase corporate oversight, provide additional assurance that risk was being managed appropriately and allow the ELT to develop strategies to manage risks. The ELT will report risk bi-annually (December and June) to the Authority.

Under the requirements of the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) TWFRS operate a business continuity management (BCM) system, aligned with industry best practice (good practice guidelines) and ISO 22301 security and resilience – BCM systems. Business continuity plans (BCPs) mitigate the impact of an incident, which may interrupt critical activities and detail how critical functions will be maintained in the event of significant disruption occurring. In addition to generic BCPs, TWFRS manage a number of specific plans that can be consulted upon, for example, Covid-19 and winter planning. BCPs are reviewed frequently and undergo rigorous testing as part of the annual testing and exercise programme undertaken by the Resilience Team, managers and plan owners at regular intervals to ensure satisfactory compliance with requirements.

The Governance Committee has a responsibility for monitoring risk and governance processes to ensure internal control systems are effective and that policies and practices are compliant with statutory requirements, other regulations and guidance. This includes considering the work of External and Internal Audit and making recommendations concerning relevant governance aspects of the standing orders.

The [Community Risk Profile 2020-23](#) (CRP) also supports the identification of risk by analysing risk across the communities of Tyne and Wear using incident, census, geographical and environmental datasets, including information from partner organisations. This information creates an overall picture of risk in Tyne and Wear, enabling TWFRS to target resources effectively. The CRP informs key strategic documents and ensures TWFRS adopts an evidence-led approach to managing activities and resources.

Health and Safety Management

The Authority effectively manages health and safety by providing the necessary leadership and strategic direction and by ensuring that TWFRS is compliant with legislation and supported by appropriate resources. TWFRS operates a Health Safety and Welfare Committee at both a district and Service level, which includes representatives from relevant departments, and the unions. The health and safety policy and procedure is the Services' health and safety framework and details roles and responsibilities and ensures there is adequate consultation in relation to health safety and welfare.

TWFRS further demonstrates its commitment to health and safety by participating annually in the [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents \(RoSPA\) Achievement Awards](#). As part of this process, a range of evidence and supporting statements are submitted and for 2020, a Gold Award was achieved. This is the fifth consecutive year TWFRS has achieved the Gold Award.

Accident reporting and investigation policy, procedures and arrangements are in place, for reporting to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the [Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences regulations 2013 \(RIDDOR\)](#). There is an operational assurance and debrief policy and procedure to ensure that performance and safety in the operational environment is subject to adequate monitoring and review. The Service is in the process of integrating National Operational Guidance (NOG) into its policies, procedures and guidance and to oversee this work has established an operational guidance implementation group, consisting of staff and union representatives.

The health and safety training procedure references a range of health and safety training to be provided to staff to promote safety and competence. TWFRS delivers the [Institution of Occupational Safety and Health \(IOSH\)](#) managing and working safely qualifications to all staff as appropriate commensurate with their role.

Information Governance Compliance

TWFRS continues to develop and implement a robust information governance framework for the effective management and protection of information. TWFRS complies with its responsibilities as outlined in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and any legislation enacted in the UK

in respect of the protection of personal data included in the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). TWFRS are compliant with the GDPR data protection principles and are committed to ensuring the security and protection of personal data that is processed⁴ providing a secure, compliant and consistent approach to data protection. Additional security measures are in place to protect data such as health or children's data. TWFRS acknowledges that the accuracy and security of personal data is essential to retaining public confidence and trust and has a [privacy notice](#), which details how and why data is collected and how personal information is used.

Data Transparency

TWFRS operates an effective publication scheme, which is committed to openness and data transparency and is aligned with the requirements of the [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#) and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) [Publication Scheme](#). TWFRS publishes information on its website to aid understanding of how the Authority operates, public money is spent and Value for Money is achieved. Information published includes financial information, payments for goods and services to external bodies, suppliers above £500, transactions made via procurement cards, and tender and procurement information. In addition, information about pay and people including senior staff salaries, Member allowances, an organisation chart, the efficiency plan and trade union time can be viewed on the TWFRS website at [transparency](#).

⁴ Processing refers to the collecting, storing, amending, disclosing and destruction of data.

OPERATIONAL

The Authority operates in accordance with a wide range of legislation and its specific functions are set out in the following documents:

- **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**
- **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**
- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**
- **Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007**
- **Localism Act 2011**
- **The Policing and Crime Act 2017**
- **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018**

Covid-19 and the changes made to the way we worked

The impact of Covid-19 challenged the operations of TWFRS; however, the Service was able to comply with its statutory duties by adhering to Government and NFCC guidance, and initiating internal BCPs. A number of safety measures were implemented to make locations 'covid-secure' which included keeping operational watches and control staff separate and advocating that corporate staff work from home. These actions meant absence levels remained manageable and there was minimal impact on emergency response.

Throughout the pandemic, staff responded to emergencies, provided safe and well visits⁵ and worked with businesses to help them understand and comply with fire safety regulations. This remained a balancing act to ensure core functions were maintained whilst keeping staff and the public safe. Throughout these challenges, corporate strategies, policies and the Leadership Bond enabled staff and managers to continue to deliver a service demonstrating the behaviours that support the Services' core values.

In addition to providing statutory functions and whilst implementing the necessary precautions to keep staff and the public safe, TWFRS supported the wider Covid-19 response by providing additional services to the communities of Tyne and Wear. TWFRS took an active and leading role in the Northumbria Resilience Forum (LRF) and worked closely with local authorities and health partners to determine the ways in which fire service staff and resources could be utilised to support the local response.

TWFRS established a logistics cell to triage partner requests for support and 200 staff volunteered to work temporarily alongside partners. The logistics cell coordinated the delivery of medical PPE, equipment and supplies. The logistics cell also delivered food parcels, medication and prescriptions to those who were shielding, conducted training with partners and supported local NHS Trusts to move the deceased from hospital mortuaries to temporary mortuaries. With the introduction of community testing for covid-19 and the national vaccination programme rollout, staff supported the administering of lateral flow tests, vaccination site marshalling and were trained as vaccinators, administering 5189⁶ vaccinations during 2020/21. This additional work was achieved alongside day-to-day roles.

This partnership approach has strengthened existing partnerships, initiated interactions with new partners, and increased engagement with the most vulnerable in the community. The work undertaken has made a huge contribution to local communities and to health and third sector partners.

5 to the most vulnerable or where there was an urgent threat to life from fire.
6 Source: TWFRS (2021) 2020/21 Performance Report End of Year (1 April to 31 March 2021).

Further details about TWFRS' contribution to the pandemic can be found in the Covid-19 highlight reports which were presented to the Authority on 16 November 2020 and 15 February 2021.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

The National Framework requires the Authority to produce an IRMP that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and / or national nature. In July 2020, the CFO provided a progress update to the Authority about the IRMP Response Review 2017-20. The Authority approved that further consideration is given to the remaining operational response proposals in the forthcoming IRMP. The CFO recommended that the outstanding IRMP 2017-21 proposals be transferred to the next IRMP allowing new ways of working and lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic to be considered.

Two reports were presented to the Authority on 12 October 2020, requesting approval to commence two pilots to improve operational response and resilience ahead of a full review of the IRMP. The first report focussed on seeking approval to primary staff an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) at Marley Park Community Fire Station to provide greater resilience for incidents that require an ALP. The second report discussed reintroducing a second appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station, to strengthen capacity and provide support to the deployment of the incident command unit and additional coverage north of the Tyne. The outcome of these pilots will inform the IRMP 2021-24 proposals and will be reported on in next years' Statement of Assurance.

Operational Performance in 2020/21

TWFRS measures and monitors performance using a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) and operational performance is reported quarterly to the Policy and Performance Committee. The quarterly performance reports show progress against targets and the data contained within the reports are extracted from the Incident Recording System (IRS) and Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS). The [2020/21 year end performance report](#) and [past performance reports](#) are available on the TWFRS website. The Home Office collect and analyse data from fire and rescue services in England, which can be viewed on their website [fire and rescue incident statistics 2021](#).

Further information about TWFRS' performance can be viewed in the 2020/21 'Our Year in Review', which details how the Service performed over the last 12 months and includes achievements, case studies, financial information and objectives for the following year.

Prevention

Prevention activities are the most effective way to save lives and minimise injuries. Data shows accidental fire in the home is the biggest cause of fire deaths and TWFRS's Prevention and Education department work to reduce the likelihood of fire fatalities occurring by increasing smoke alarm ownership and educating residents about how they can protect themselves from fire.

Community volunteers, prevention staff and Firefighters carry out free [safe and well](#) visits where safety features such as smoke detectors, and fire retardant bedding are supplied and fitted and advice about safety, security and wellbeing is provided. From 1 April 2021, TWFRS will offer the installation of a kitchen heat alarm to further protect households.

TWFRS operates a safe and well targeting and delivery procedure and a vulnerable person's policy and are able to target those most vulnerable to fire risk. Where appropriate, residents can also be referred to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care and other support networks. In 2020/21, staff and trusted partners carried out 17,163 home visits, of which 1,674 were in households containing at least one elderly person (+65 yrs of age) and 3,225 were households containing at least one person living with a disability. These numbers are significantly lower than previous years due to the enforced changes to ways of working as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

TWFRS also deliver a diverse range of programmes to enhance community safety; however, the delivery of many of these programmes was severely affected by the pandemic with a significant number being suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions. Where achievable, alternative and Covid safe ways of delivery were adopted until restrictions eased. Programmes include:

The [Juvenile Firesetters Education Programme](#) (JFEP) was enhanced in 2020/2021, with 13 additional staff trained to deliver interventions. In August 2020, [Fabtac](#) delivered training to TWFRS staff, staff from neighbouring fire services and partners in Youth Justice.

This increased capacity and knowledge, permitted engagement with young people (over 30 interventions in 2020/2021) in Covid-secure environments such as schools, church halls, community centres and gardens. The plan is to increase the number of JFEP practitioners in 2021/22, to increase capacity and improve partnership working with neighbouring fire and rescue services. In addition to the JFEP, staff engaged with schools located in identified hot spot areas and deliver targeted educational messages.

In March 2020, the Services' interactive safety centre, [SafetyWorks!](#) was temporarily closed. Staff continued to share home fire safety and anti-social behaviour messages to targeted key stage 2 schoolchildren (aged 10/11) initially using virtual platforms, followed by school visits when restrictions would allow. [Safetyworks!](#) reopened in September 2021, with the continued support of partners [Nexus](#), Local Authority Road Safety Teams, [Northumbria Police](#) and the [Royal National Lifeboats Institution](#) (RNLI). Key safety campaigns to reduce accidents, deliberate fires and anti-social behaviour will return for 2021/22.

As face to face contact was not permitted for a large proportion of 2020/21, social media and virtual platforms were used to deliver [safety messages](#) and campaigns. A proactive bonfire campaign was undertaken in the weeks prior to the 5 November 2020, which incorporated educational activities, media messages, bonfire uplift schemes, partnership working across the five local authority areas and the establishment of operational command and control arrangements.

However, the changes to Covid-19 restrictions and a further lockdown resulted in organised bonfire and fireworks displays being cancelled, staff were no longer able to conduct the programmed school visits, and educational materials were instead distributed to schools. During 2020, there was a slight increase in deliberate secondary fires of 12.3% but a 33% decrease in attacks on fire crews.

During 2020/21, 16 reports were received from [Firestoppers](#) and intelligence was passed to Northumbria Police and local authority partners for further investigation, resulting in a variety of partner responses, including legal action. Deliberate secondary fires reduced across Tyne and Wear by 15% when compared to the previous year. Looking forward, the development of the Report IT tool will enable increased efficiency in uplift reporting for operational crews, prevention and protection staff.

The pandemic significantly affected the work of the Community Engagement staff and volunteers, as they were unable to engage physically with communities. Staff continued contact with communities by identifying innovative ways of sharing fire safety messages. For example, the team developed a set of literature including a tailored 'fire safety in the home booklet' and simple checklists, using illustrative pictures to convey fire safety messages. These were designed to target the hard to reach members of the community who have limited language skills, for instance, those living with dementia, those with learning support needs, and those from ethnic communities where English is not their main language.

These resources were distributed electronically via partner organisations, reaching many thousands of people. This work continues and the team are looking to translate further material into other languages. The team are also developing a virtual 'safe and well' to be hosted on the TWFRS website which will be accessible and available in multiple languages.

To further engage communities, multiple information videos have been produced to convey fire safety messages across social media platforms to coincide with specific [multi-cultural celebration events](#) such as Ramadan, Eid, and Diwali. Engagement with communities and partner organisations has continued through virtual meetings and online fire safety talks. The team worked with the [Jack and Josephine Project](#) to make a film to deliver fire safety messages to young people with learning support needs.

TWFRS has seven [Fire Cadet](#) Units providing a training and development programme for young people aged between 13 and 17 years of age. Through fire service activities, the young people develop their physical and mental capabilities to become more responsible, safe and caring members of the communities. Fire cadets are encouraged to participate in social activities for the benefit of the community. During lockdown face to face drill sessions were suspended but weekly virtual sessions were delivered and provided regular contact and support to the cadets. These sessions gave the young people an opportunity to learn new skills and expand their knowledge of service departments and key partners.

The [Prince's Trust Team Programme](#) supports unemployed young people aged 16-25 into employment, training, education or volunteering. During 2020/2021 TWFRS engaged with young people from across Tyne and Wear by distilling the full Team Programme into a bespoke 4-week online course to support young people who felt isolated and excluded during the pandemic. The young people in attendance on the Team Programme improved their confidence and employability by engaging in sessions delivered using Microsoft Teams. The full 12 week Team Programme relaunched in Autumn 2021.

The [Phoenix Programme](#) uses a positive Firefighter role to provide a programme for young people who are the most challenging and disadvantaged in society. In 2020/21, this programme launched in the Autumn, following the first lockdown and the project delivered two courses in November 2020, with four young people on each, before further restrictions came into place. The course delivered fire, water and road safety, CPR and drug and alcohol awareness. For 2021/22, the plan is to deliver 25-30 sessions engaging with 50-70 young people.

The Sunderland Community Hub (SCH) was established in 2018 by Firefighters for members of the community to engage in fitness activities, primarily boxing. This sport led social hub, aims to improve fitness, confidence, teamwork and self-esteem and targets at-risk young people to fulfil their potential by participating in boxing instead of crime and using learned skills to progress in education and employment. The SCH's ethos is "creating champions in the ring and champions in life".

Staff signpost young people to the cadets, SCH, Phoenix Programme and Prince's Trust courses, or partner organisations to continue their engagement. This helps keep the young people out of trouble and they are able to meet new people with likeminded interests. This in turn affects the community as it reduces anti-social behaviour, with fewer young people on the streets.

TWFRS adheres to the national [Prevent Strategy](#), a part of CONTEST, the Government's counter terrorism strategy that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The principle of the Strategy is to prevent any criminal activity from taking place by recognising, supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation. This is undertaken by taking preventative and responsive steps whilst working with young people, learners, partners, families and communities. TWFRS operates a Prevent policy, which aligns with its safeguarding procedures.

TWFRS have strengthened safeguarding procedures and partnerships to manage the increased number of safeguarding concerns reported during the pandemic. The five local authorities now accept the Services' internal safeguarding notification forms, which has improved the quality and consistency of reports from the front line. Firefighters and community engagement activities are critical in identifying vulnerable children, young people and adults, and notifying local authorities of their care and support needs. As staff continue to engage face to face at operational incidents, perform LRF tasks via the logistics cell, deliver safe and well visits and implement JFEP interventions. This has resulted in improved safeguarding reporting and response over this period.

During 2020/21 TWFRS continued to provide [water safety](#) advice to the public and collaborate with partners, which resulted in two live BBC Breakfast broadcasts from Newcastle Quayside involving the RNLI, and detailed the dangers in and around open water.

Six waterside economies made contact to request training be delivered to staff and training will commence in Autumn 2021. TWFRS will be re-engaging with the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) to support, deliver and promote their Don't Drink and Drown campaign in the run up to the festive period.

Protection

TWFRS' protection activities aim to educate and inform businesses about fire safety, promote compliance and minimise the need for prosecution and enforcement activity under the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#). Additionally, the Service are responsible for licensing applications, and the inspection of petroleum and explosives sites.

During the pandemic, the Fire Safety department was able to maintain its statutory duties and deliver critical activities⁷ through the application of business continuity arrangements. The capacity to respond to post-fire incidents, fire safety cause for concerns and risk critical audits were generally unaffected, by the introduction of risk assessments and safe working practices which minimised the risk to staff and the public. Planned fire safety activity, through the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), was evaluated, which led to new ways of working being identified and implemented.

⁷ Those activities necessary for the protection of the public.

This resulted in audits being conducted in different ways for example remotely, and offering businesses self-assessments and virtual appointments. This provided opportunities to assess and discuss changes to their workplaces, and working practices due to the restrictions placed upon them because of the pandemic. Pre-appointment screening was introduced, and all fire safety activities and information gathering processes were streamlined. The aim was to reduce the overall contact time spent at premises to limit the risk of transmission. During 2020/21, the following activities were undertaken:

- 588 fire safety audits on commercial premises, of which 104 led to informal notifications.
- Issued three alteration notices, five enforcement notices and eight prohibition notices⁸.
- No prosecutions were heard in Court due to the pandemic, with one awaiting a hearing that was convicted in the 2021/22 period.
- 23 inspections at petroleum sites and 79 inspections at premises storing explosives / fireworks.
- 472 building regulation consultations and 501 other consultations such as pre, building regulation consultations, licensing and gambling applications.

⁸ Types of notices: Alteration notices (which require relevant authorities be informed of planned alterations that may compromise fire safety); enforcement notices (which require premises to be brought up to standard) and prohibition notices (which will cease or restrict the premises' use).

Audits were completed on a risk basis, generated through the annual RBIP of buildings to establish compliance with fire safety legislation. The RBIP ensures that premises presenting the highest risk and lowest compliance are audited and inspected more frequently. Premises are also prioritised on receipt of information regarding poor fire safety conditions, or where there has been a fire. In line with the competency framework, more experienced and competent staff audit the complex premise types, whereas new staff with less experience audit simple premise types. Fire safety advice is provided in the workplace, to assist staff and visitors in complying with the legislation and achieving a safe environment for all.

As well as conducting post-fire audits following an incident, staff carry out targeted and timely engagements in commercial premises, to improve fire safety awareness within the surrounding areas and promote a safer community. As part of post-fire engagement, and when carrying out risk-based fire safety audits or completing building regulation consultations, staff continually gather risk information to inform Firefighter safety.

TWFRS' Primary Authority Scheme continues to grow since the introduction of fire safety to the scheme in 2014. New partners are joining from a wide variety of sectors, from national housing providers to large retailers including Sainsbury's, Home Group and English Heritage. The scheme currently has twelve members who benefit from the partnership, in areas such as advice on policies and procedures, fire safety training and the implementation of inspection plans.

In accordance with national best practice, protection staff attain the Level 4 Fire Safety Diploma, and to support continuous development they may work towards a Level 5 Diploma, or a fire engineering degree. The team includes staff who work under different terms and conditions however, all training and development is mapped to their individual roles to ensure everyone acquires the skills they need.

The Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 highlighted the need for work both locally and nationally to ensure the safety of people living and working in high-rise premises. TWFRS established a Grenfell Working Group to identify areas of improvement across all functions. The group looked to address the safety requirements identified by the Government and the NFCC, by visiting high-rise properties, conducting fire safety audits, and providing building owners and managers with the opportunity to seek advice. This would enable them to assess the fire safety measures in place within their buildings.

Initial visits to high-rise residential buildings took place in 2017, where Fire Safety Inspectors conducted audits and provided information to operational crews to attain a better understanding of fighting fires in high-rise premises, in addition to engaging with residents to provide assurance on how we would deal with a fire in a high-rise premise. Premises were inspected jointly with prevention colleagues to ensure residents were provided with home safety advice. This work allowed the Service to attain comprehensive operational risk information, carry out checks and to test firefighting facilities.

During 2020/21, work continued with housing authorities, to help them interpret and apply, where appropriate, recommendations from Dame Hackitt's report: [Building a Safer Future](#)⁹. TWFRS continue to support housing associations, businesses and residents with planning for the commencement of the [Fire Safety Act 2021](#) and new regulations on high-risk buildings including high-rise residential buildings, and the progression of the [Building Safety Bill](#) through parliament.

The Fire Safety department ensures the safety of residents through close working with other inspecting authorities and responsible persons, and by the provision of up-to-date operational risk information and realistic training for Firefighters. In 2021, the NFCC Building Risk Review (BRR) identified 220 high-rise residential buildings nationally where further data was required. There is an expectation that this data-gathering exercise will be complete by December 2021.

Emergency Response

TWFRS' emergency response functions from 17 community fire stations that operate various duty systems. Fourteen stations are wholetime, one is on-call and two are staffed using the Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) duty system. These stations are the base for 24 category 1 and 2 appliances (25 with the existing pilot). Fourteen appliances (15 with the existing pilot) operate from seven two-appliance stations and the remaining 10 stations (9 with the existing pilot) have one appliance each. As referenced previously, the Service are piloting the reintroduction of a second appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station and primary staffing the ALP at Marley Park Community Fire Station.

For 2020/21, the Service Delivery operational establishment¹⁰ (excluding 'on call' staff) was 518 and comprised of 364 Firefighters, 94 Crew Managers and 60 Watch Managers. Wholetime staffing operate a 2-2-4 duty arrangement with the staffing establishment across the four watches system at 496, which equates to 124 per watch. As set out in the IRMP 2017-20 the planned minimum 'riders' on duty between the hours of 09:00 to 00:00 is 98, reducing to 90 between the hours of 00:00 to 09:00.

Staffing for the DCCC duty system at Birtley and Rainton Bridge Community Fire Stations has an agreed establishment of 22 with eight 'riders' on duty at any one time, four per station. The establishment at Chopwell Community Fire Station (on-call) is 12 full-time equivalent, with four 'riders' to be available at all times. The role of Service Delivery managers is to ensure the availability of appliances as agreed in the IRMP. The Staffing Team undertakes the day-to-day monitoring of staffing levels. The day-to-day staffing levels for the DCCC and on-call stations is managed locally by supervisory managers and monitored by the respective Station and Group Managers.

TWFRS routinely review the number and types of vehicles and operational equipment to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are able to react appropriately to operational risks.

⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018) *Building a Safer Future. Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Final Report.*

¹⁰ Source: TWFRS Internal HR data. Correct at 22 March 2021.

Fire Control

Fire Control staff play a vital role in supporting the emergency response and are trained to deal with any call they may receive. They are responsible for the end-to-end management of an incident from the first call, to responding to the needs of the Firefighters by dispatching further resources as required, arranging relief crews, liaising with other agencies and providing operational information for the duration of an incident. Fire control and emergency response staff work together to ensure incidents are attended promptly, with the right people, skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively.

Fire Control is staffed 24 hours a day; with 28 staff working a four-watch shift system that comprises of two nine-hour days and two 15-hour nights over an eight-day cycle. Each watch consists of a Watch Manager, Crew Manager and five Operators, with a minimum of five staff on duty at any time. Three day-shift support staff assist the function managerially with the remit of system management, learning and development.

Operational Standards and Assurance

Staff contribute to national working groups, including management development and incident command, which help shape the approach across the fire sector as a whole. This work has influenced changes to TWFRS' promotion process at supervisory and middle manager; enabling the advancement of a number of personnel at Crew, Watch and Station Manager levels.

TWFRS has a statutory duty to ensure that all operational staff are trained to undertake their roles effectively and safely.

Training requirements include a number of core risk critical skills that staff must undertake ensuring acquisition, maintenance and assurance. These skills are independently assessed at agreed intervals for key disciplines such as breathing apparatus and incident command.

TWFRS adhere to the [National Occupational Standards](#) that apply to the fire and rescue service and implement a system of assurance to ensure staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to fulfil the vast array of operational demands placed upon them. A team of officers regularly attend incidents, training and exercises to observe aspects of operational performance. Information gathered on operational performance, to verify and measure compliance with standard operating procedures and incident management systems is recorded on the Risk Management and Assurance Database (RMAD). This ensures consistency across the organisation, learning is captured, areas of notable practice or any issues identified are managed and rectified in an appropriate and timely manner. An Operational Assurance Group (OAG) oversees this work and using the RMAD and action plans are tracked to ensure a fully auditable route to completion.

In addition, the Operational Standards team, assess watches on station across a range of standards outside of operational incidents to ensure all aspects of performance can be observed, assessed and assured. Stations and watches are audited four times a year, with more regular audits undertaken where the need arises. The Operational Standards team independently assess each watches' competency and identify key areas for focus or improvement.

Notable practice and learning for development is shared beyond TWFRS using the National Organisational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) platforms. These platforms enable learning to be shared nationally within the fire and rescue sector (NOL) and with other partners including the police and ambulance services (JOL).

Learning and Development

TWFRS' Learning and Development department is responsible for the training of all staff, both operational and non-operational personnel, ensuring that they are all able to acquire, maintain and develop appropriate technical and professional skills required for their specific roles and to support the achievements of the Services strategic objectives. The departments' primary function is to ensure all staff are able to perform their roles safely, confidently and effectively in accordance with Service training policy and in alignment with identified role maps, [NOG](#) and [Fire Standards](#). The Performance Development Review (PDR) process supports staff and managers to communicate clearly and set expectations about personal objectives and how they align to corporate goals. PDRs support staff to understand how they are performing and what opportunities are available for training and career progression.

Mutual aid agreements

The Authority has provisions in place to offer support outside the geographical area of Tyne and Wear and is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid Protocol through the [National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework \(NCAF\)](#) for the fire service in England.

NCAF guidance sets out the terms under which a fire and rescue authority may expect assistance from, or provide aid to, another authority in the event of a serious national incident such as wide-scale flooding or terrorist attack.

Additionally, in [section 13](#) and [section 16](#) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, there is a legal requirement for neighbouring fire and rescue authorities to enter into formal reinforcement and provide support in emergency situations. TWFRS has arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services, Northumberland, County Durham and Darlington and Cleveland. These arrangements provide for regular cross-border support and assistance in the event of an emergency incident. There is also an arrangement with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service for the provision of a 999 Fire Control Service, which is governed through a formal legal agreement.

The Authority signed up to the National Mutual Aid Protocol, this agreement establishes the terms under which TWFRS may expect to request assistance from, or assist another service in the event of a serious national incident. Deployments for 2020/21 show that TWFRS were mobilised to 156 cross border incidents. This is a slight decrease from 2019/20 (10%). However, the number of incidents attended by neighbouring services in TWFRS was 22, a decrease since 2019/20 (51%)¹¹.

¹¹ Source: Incident Recording System and Mobilising System. 1 April 2020-31 March 2021.

Resilience

The National Resilience programme is an essential part of Government arrangements to protect the national infrastructure in the event of a catastrophic incident. This includes taking responsibility for assurance, training, long-term capability management and Fire Control. A number of National Resilience assets are located within TWFRS' area and assessment and the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) monitors assurance of these assets. Specialist crews, equipment and capabilities enhance TWFRS' ability to respond to incidents such as terrorist attacks, industrial and domestic accidents and natural disasters.

TWFRS has a full Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability and a fully qualified USAR dog and handler, this K9 resource is a valuable addition to the Services' capability. TWFRS hosts hazardous materials Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM), a High Volume Pump (HVP), mass decontamination and a Swift Water Rescue Team. Out of area deployments are requested / co-ordinated by National Resilience.

TWFRS equips and manages a response team for 'Marauding Terrorist Attacks' (MTA) which can be deployed regionally. With the increased threat of terrorism and to ensure the safety of the communities of Tyne and Wear staff train rigorously so they are ready to respond to any unforeseen threat. Following the publication of [The Kerslake Report](#)¹² the required policy and procedure revisions have been made. TWFRS continue to learn from national and international events to ensure preparedness.

This includes proactive response and threat planning with partners in the other emergency services and the wider LRF community.

TWFRS work with emergency partners nationally to support the Governments' counter-terrorism strategy [CONTEST](#). Staff are trained and take on roles as National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) working closely with the police, ambulance services, military and Government agencies to share intelligence and support the management of operational incidents.

Business continuity activity and plan development are coordinated with partners through the Northumbria LRF, planning for national fuel shortages, pandemics, cyber-attacks and severe weather. The LRF, a partnership of emergency responders and other organisations support emergency response in communities across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. Exercises with partner agencies have enhanced resilience arrangements and provided structure to the multi-agency Covid-19 response effort.

¹² Kerslake, R., 2018. *The Kerslake Report. An independent review into the preparedness for, and emergency response to, the Manchester Arena attack on 22nd May 2017.*

INSPECTION, INTERVENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services assess and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the 45 fire and rescue services in England. The inspectorate undertakes a crucial assurance function to consider how effective and efficient fire and rescue services are, how well they manage their people and whether they are fulfilling their statutory obligations.

HMICFRS graded the Service as 'Good' in its [initial inspection](#) during 2018/19. A post-inspection improvement plan continues to be used to progress actions.

In October 2020, HMICFRS carried out a virtual thematic inspection of the Authority's planning arrangements, response and ability to demonstrate effective service during the coronavirus pandemic. This resulted in a positive [outcome letter](#) (dated 22 January 2021) being sent to the CFO and Chair of the Authority, praising the planning and response to the pandemic and recognised that TWFRS had continued to deliver its statutory duties and the Authority continued to adhere to the principles of good governance and scrutiny.

TWFRS continues to respond to the pandemic, whilst acting on areas for improvement identified during previous / thematic inspections. Improvements are driven using effective action planning and regular review by the inspection support team and the management functions of the Authority.

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Authority is committed to continuous improvement to ensure the provision of a first-class fire and rescue service and uses feedback from the HMICFRS inspection and other sources, such as Internal Audit and external assessments, to identify and drive improvements.

TWFRS is reviewing the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic as it looks to adapt its working arrangements to reflect the more effective, efficient ways of working, particularly by harnessing the fuller use of technology.

Further change is anticipated across the sector, as a result of fire reform and the implementation of new NFCC Fire Standards. The points below provide an overview of TWFRS' future plans.

Changes will be made to the strategic planning framework to support continuous improvement, innovation, and the effective use of resources. The Authority will implement a five-year TWFRS Strategy and Programme during 2021/22. The Programme consists of a number of strategic projects to enhance collaboration, enable Service improvement, and promote efficiency. The TWFRS 2025 Programme has three objectives / intended high-level benefits:

- **Inclusion** - Further diversification of the workforce to ensure it is reflective of the community; to have clear, fair and transparent routes to both employment and progression and to have a positive culture where everyone is valued and takes pride and ownership of their actions and behaviour.

- **An All Hazards Approach to Managing Incidents** - Provides an all hazards approach to firefighter safety, focusing on raising awareness and training on hazard and risk recognition and perception, thus allowing commanders to train to respond to the wide range of incidents they encounter. This builds on the Safe Person Concept.

- **Digital and Data** - to enable the effective use of technology to improve the delivery of all services, which will allow a wide range of improvement activity, along with transformational ways of working, robust governance and cyber resilience for the 21st century.

An Annual Service Operating Plan will set out priorities and actions for the year ahead, and detail the work to be undertaken against the three intended / high-level benefits of the 2025 Programme. A Programme Board, was introduced in 2021, to enable projects to be managed in a standardised way to further support the achievements of the Strategy.

Collaboration with partners

The Service has a successful record of blue light collaboration, including co-location at a number of sites, joint training and exercise, and improved operational and preventative activities. The Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened existing partnerships, initiated interactions with new partners, and increased engagement with the most vulnerable in the community. TWFRS will continue to work with health partners to support the delivery of their sustainability and transformation plans, to improve health inequalities, deliver safe and sustainable health, and care services. It is recognised that closer working can strengthen and improve community services to deliver savings for taxpayers.

The Service is currently reviewing opportunities to develop a new tri-station facility at Hebburn, bringing together the fire service, neighbourhood police and ambulance service in one location. In order to meet commitments to energy conservation and minimising the carbon footprint, the station will be designed to be 'carbon neutral' by using modern technology in the form of photovoltaic roof panels and ground source heat pumps to satisfy the energy requirements of a facility of this size. If planning approval is granted, it is envisaged that the new station would be open by summer 2023.

APPENDIX A – AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK REQUIREMENTS

Section 2: Delivery of Functions		
	Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
Identify and Assess	<p>Assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national in nature from fires to terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability. Fire and rescue authorities should work through the Strategic Resilience Board where appropriate when determining what arrangements to put in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning - including a SCSP / IRMP supported by three strategies: the Community Safety Strategy (informed by the CRP), OD Strategy and the MTFS. These strategies are supported by clear policies and procedures. • A risk management policy and procedure to identify, mitigate and evaluate internal and external risks to the business. The CRR and the RMAD record risks and provide corporate oversight of risks to the CRMG. • The PAG, Policy and Performance Committee and the Governance Committee ensure risks are mitigated by monitoring performance. • Raise awareness of community risks through community safety education, the safe and well programme, and safety campaigns. • Work with businesses to reduce risk through the RBIP. • Risk information is held on mobile data terminals, which aid effective response to incidents by operational crews. • Blue light collaboration and participation in the Northumbria LRF working with partners to reduce community risks. Maintain a multi-agency community risk register via the LRF. • Engage with the Government and partners on issues of national resilience through the SRB. The CFO is a member, the SRB ensures capability gaps are brought to the attention of the Government, and where available, funding is secured to address these gaps.
Prevent and Protect	<p>Make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme in place for enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform</p>	<p>The SCSP / IRMP and strategies set out activities to promote fire safety including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and well checks, targeted towards those at greatest risk, particularly engagement with vulnerable persons. This includes a

	<p>(Fire Safety) Order 2005. Target prevention and protection resources on individuals or households at greatest risk from fire in the home, and non-domestic premises where the life safety risk is the greatest.</p> <p>Identify those at greatest risk from fire and work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sector, as well as the police and ambulance services. Develop partnerships to support risk reduction services to those identified as vulnerable and wherever possible share intelligence and risk data.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with other public and voluntary sector organisations – both nationally through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and through local arrangements – can make an important contribution to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of public services and alleviating pressures on local response resources.</p>	<p>safe and well targeting and delivery procedure and vulnerable person's policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to increase efficiency and effectiveness through data sharing / agreements, co-location and working in collaboration with other emergency services, health and local authority partners. • Safety campaigns and initiatives, such as deliberate fire reduction, bonfire, water safety and road safety. A schools education programme and interactive safety centre SafetyWorks! A community facility, in partnership with a range of organisations. • Youth inclusion/diversionary activities such as the Phoenix Programme, Prince's Trust, JFEP and Fire Cadets and the SCH boxing gym. • Deliberate fire reduction strategy and effective use of Firestoppers. • A network of Community Safety Advocates provide education and support to the community and engagement at events. • Proactive and innovative use of social media in line with local and national safety campaigns. • Working with local businesses to promote fire safety by undertaking: fire safety audits, RBIP, partnership working, advice and education, enforcement action. • Established a logistics cell to support partners and the LRF with the local response to Covid-19. Community work included the delivery of medicines, food supplies, and essential goods to vulnerable people and the co-ordination and logistical support at vaccination sites. • Member of the NFCC Prevention, Protection and Business Safety Groups.
<p>Prevent and Protect</p>	<p>In prevention and protection activities, assess what we are aiming to achieve, what type of intervention is most likely to achieve the aims and how best to measure and evaluate outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention and protection activities are targeted to where they are needed. • A quality assurance process through audits and surveys, which include After the Incident Surveys, fire

	<p>Share details of interventions to understand and improve the evidence base of what works best and what is most cost-effective</p>	<p>safety audit surveys and safe and well perception surveys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate a RBIP and participate in a PAS with 12 national partners. • Where necessary, undertake fire investigations and fire safety prosecutions. • Compliments in recognition of the work conducted by staff during the pandemic in support of the LRF, blue light partners and the third sector who, without additional support, would not have had as wide and sustained a reach. • District and service-wide performance action reports relating to prevention and protection activities, measuring performance against local indicators.
Prevent and Protect	<p>Considering the wide range of roles that personnel undertake, including with people with complex needs and vulnerabilities, ensure all staff in public facing roles have the necessary appropriate skills and training to meet such demands.</p> <p>Safeguarding arrangements in place – including ensuring staff have appropriate vetting clearance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) and security clearance for necessary staff working with the community. • Ensure staff have the appropriate skills and relevant training through the OD Strategy and the PDR process. • Provide training by internal and external sources on issues such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), make every contact count (MECC), domestic abuse awareness, safeguarding and hoarding. • Ensure work is informed by wider initiatives to support the most vulnerable in the community (e.g. Dementia Friends, Dyslexia Advocates).
Respond	<p>Make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements.</p> <p>So far as is practicable, enter into reinforcement schemes, or mutual aid agreements, with other fire and rescue authorities for securing mutual assistance.</p> <p>Have effective business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Within</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the necessary level of response to fires and other incidents, as set out in the SCSP / IRMP. Routinely conduct IRMP reviews, drawing on a strong evidence base. • A mobilising system, supported by an emergency call management policy. • Appropriate use of targeted response vehicles (TRVs) to respond to lower risk incidents, considering the demands of the Service, prioritising the speed and weight of response to higher risk incidents. • Familiarisation, inspection and

	<p>these arrangements, meet the full range of service delivery risks and national resilience duties and commitments. Business continuity plans should not be developed on the basis of armed forces assistance being available.</p>	<p>support of high-risk premises. Continuation of high-rise work in line with Grenfell Tower recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the Northumbria LRF and supported the local Covid-19 response. • Collaborate with the ambulance service and the police in the interests of public safety. Support a range of community activities including post incident assurance, requests by partners, hot strikes, fitting anti arson devices and gaining entry for NEAS. Participate in training exercises with the above and other emergency services. • Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act. • Maintain national resilience assets and participate in the national operational guidance programme. • Participate in the NCAF and NRAT audits. • Maintain and test BCPs, which align with the ISO 22301, the international business continuity standard. Tested during the Covid-19 pandemic and reviewed by Internal Audit. • Resilience plans developed and confirmed with the Home Office in the event of depleted resources. • Contingencies in place in the event of industrial action.
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Statutory duty to keep collaboration opportunities under review, notify other emergency services of proposed collaborations that could be in the interests of their mutual efficiency or effectiveness; and give effect to a proposed collaboration where agreed it would be in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness and not have an adverse effect on public safety.</p> <p>Collaborate with other local partners, such as local authorities and wider health bodies.</p> <p>Collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities to deliver intraoperability and interoperability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to increase efficiency and effectiveness through data sharing / agreements, co-location and working in collaboration with other emergency services, health and local authority partners. • Participate in the Northumbria LRF and supported the local Covid-19 response. • Operate SafetyWorks! as a community facility, in partnership with a range of organisations. • Collaborated with other emergency services via the Joint Strategy Board and Delivery Group, underpinned by a Statement of Intent. • Fire-Fire collaboration arrangements

	<p>with other emergency services, wider Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums in line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP).</p> <p>Collaborate with the National Resilience Lead Authority to ensure interoperability is maintained for National Resilience assets.</p>	<p>with Northumberland and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services supported by a Statement of Intent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act. • Participate in the NCAF, and deploy national assets (e.g. USAR and HVP as required). • Operate NILOs and run a NILO course with Northumbria Police and NEAS. • Participate in JESIP, NOL / JOL and joint training with partners. • Participate in regional and national procurement frameworks.
Section 3: National Resilience		
Framework requirement		Compliance evidence
National Resilience	<p>Work with the lead authority to support the national resilience assurance processes to ensure capabilities are maintained at a high state of operational readiness. This includes devolved training and the long-term capability management arrangements.</p> <p>Through NFCC representation on the Strategic Resilience Board, work with the Government to identify and address any national resilience capability gaps through analysis of the National Risk Assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act. • Maintain policies and procedures relating to local and national risks and a multi-agency community risk register via the Northumbria LRF. • Participate in all NFCC groups relating to resilience including the Working and User for each of the New Dimension assets and resources. • Lead and participate in national and local exercises. • Host specialist resources and skills that can respond to an incident as a national capability. • Participate in NRAT multi-capability assurance inspections. • Engage with the Government and partners on issues of national resilience through the SRB. The CFO is a member, the SRB ensures capability gaps are brought to the attention of the Government, and where available, funding is secured to address these gaps.
Gap Analysis	<p>Risk assessments must include an analysis of any gaps between their existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience (as defined above).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Resilience department, who plan and prepare for exceptional events, covering the delivery of key national programmes. • The National Resilience assurance

	<p>Must highlight to the Home Office or Strategic Resilience Board, capability gaps that cannot be met even when taking into account mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action.</p>	<p>cycle comprises of a rolling three-part programme of self-assessment, assurance visits and exercise(s) which follows a 3-year cycle. Each capability within the relevant hosting organisation will be subject to each element of the cycle over the 3-year period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the Government and partners on issues of national resilience through the SRB. The CFO is a member, the SRB ensures capability gaps are brought to the attention of the Government, and where available, funding is secured to address these gaps.
<p>National Coordination and Advisory Framework</p>	<p>Proactively engage with, and support, the NCAF arrangements including the NFCC's lead operational role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CFO is a member of the NFCC Board, Chair of the NFCC Operations Coordination Committee (OCC), Member of the NFCC Community Risk Programme Board, NFCC Steering Group, NFCC Strategic Resilience Board and NFCC New Dimensions II Board. Participate in and support the NCAF.
<p>Response to terrorist attacks or marauding terrorist firearms attacks</p>	<p>Must be able to respond to the threat of terrorism and be ready to respond to incidents within their areas and across England. Be interoperable to provide operational support across the UK to terrorist events as required.</p> <p>Responsible for maintaining the robustness of MTFA capability. Appropriate multi-agency assurance mechanism that will ensure the capability is effective and delivered to the agreed standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in and support the NCAF and JESIP to provide assistance on the occasions that specialist national resilience capabilities can support the resolution of an incident. A Resilience department, who lead the Services participation in national and local exercises and oversee the response to MTA threats. Adhere to the CONTEST Strategy in response to terrorist threats by working with partners to mitigate and disrupt activity related to terrorism. This is a joint approach through all sectors of the community, led by police and intelligence agencies. Participate in collaborative training with partner agencies to improve knowledge and working relationships in relation to MTA incidents. Have trained NILOs and operate NILO courses with Northumbria Police and NEAS. Participate in the Northumbria LRF. Employ a Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Advisor.
<p>National Resilience Assurance</p>	<p>Work collectively and with the Strategic Resilience Board and the national resilience lead authority to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the Government and partners on issues of national

	<p>provide assurance to government that resilience capabilities are fit for purpose and risks and plans are assessed and gaps in capability are identified</p> <p>Work with police forces and ambulance trusts to provide tri-service assurance of capability.</p>	<p>resilience through the SRB. The CFO is a member, the SRB ensures capability gaps are brought to the attention of the Government, and where available, funding is secured to address these gaps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRAT USAR capability team consists of a number of seconded officers with relevant USAR expertise and experience. Their role is to support all elements of the USAR capability with the provision of advice, training, exercising, asset refresh, documentation, and capability assurance. The team leads on the delivery of the capability business plan and assurance process. USAR Capability Officers and Capability Advisor undertake roles as defined within the NCAF arrangements, to support affected FRS at the scene of operations and also assist and support the management of nationally mobilised resources. <p>The Service work with NRAT by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the NRAT team by sanctioning a USAR Capability Officer secondment. • Provision of a National Resilience specific point of contact (SPOC) to maintain direct contact with national resilience. • Provision of a representative (at an appropriate level) to represent the region at various capability National Working Group (NWG) and National User Group (NUG). • Support to NRAT USAR capability by providing representatives on several USAR Technical Working Groups supporting the delivery of the USAR business plan on behalf of the USAR NUG. • Support the delivery of national USAR training as an approved training delivery partner • Support the delivery of the ND2 Project by supporting the USAR Capability and Home Office in the delivery of the USAR First Response Evaluation exercises. • Participate in exercise programmes such as USAR and ensure the
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		<p>training environment provides a challenging and stimulating experience for staff and partner agencies involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have trained NILOs who work closely with counter-terrorist policing and other key agencies.
Section 4: Governance		
Framework requirement		Compliance evidence
Governance	<p>Statutory duty to ensure provision of their core functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates in accordance with a wide range of legislation and adheres to statutory duties. • The operation of standing orders and financial regulations, outline how the Authority / Service carries out its business and how decisions are to be made, supported by a clear delegation scheme. The roles and responsibilities of Members and officers are defined in these documents. • Robust governance arrangements in place, overseen by the Authority, Governance Committee and Policy and Performance Committee. • Governance arrangements are reviewed annually in line with CIPFA principles, and produce an annual Statement of Assurance and Annual Governance Statement (which forms part of the Statement of Accounts) and a Code of Governance.
Managing the Fire and Rescue Service	<p>Appoint an individual – commonly known as a Chief Fire Officer – who has responsibility for managing the fire and rescue service. Each fire and rescue authority must hold this person to account for the exercise of their functions and the functions of persons under their direction and control.</p> <p>The CFO must, in exercising their functions, have regard to the fire authority's IRMP and any set objectives and priorities which may be outlined in a strategic plan. The fire and rescue authority should give due regard to the professional advice of the CFO while developing the IRMP and when making decisions affecting the fire service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operation of standing orders and financial regulations, outline how the Authority / Service carries out its business and how decisions are to be made, supported by a clear delegation scheme. The roles and responsibilities of Members and officers are defined in these documents. • The CFO is the Head of Paid Services, responsible for the day-to-day operational leadership of the fire and rescue service, reports to and is accountable to the Chair of the Authority. • The CFO is supported by a DCFO and AFCO. • The CFO is the Authority's adviser on all matters, which are either not the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151

		<p>Officer) or the Monitoring Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the SCSP / IRMP and the strategies - the Community Safety Strategy, OD Strategy and MTFs.
Documents to be Prepared	<p>Each fire and rescue authority is required to produce:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated Risk Management Plan Annual Statement of Assurance Financial Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IRMP 2017-20 consulted on and proposals implemented. • IRMP 2021-24 is being progressed. • Statement of Assurance 2020/21 (this document). Reviews performance against the requirements of the National Framework 2018. • MTFs, Efficiency plan and Reserves Strategy published.
National Fire Chiefs Council	<p>Consult the NFCC for advice and support when developing improvement plans, particularly in response to inspections.</p> <p>Expectation is that fire and rescue services engage with NFCC and, in turn, that the NFCC works to support and represent every service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to participate in and support the work of the NFCC. • The CFO is a member of the NFCC Board, Chair of the NFCC Operations Coordination Committee (OCC), Member of the NFCC Community Risk Programme Board, NFCC Steering Group, NFCC SRB and NFCC New Dimensions II Board. • The DCFO is the regional representative of the NFCC OCC, regional lead on the NFCC COVID-19 Committee, Chair of the NFCC Scientific Advisory Cell and regional NFCC lead for the NILOs. • The ACFO is the NFCC national lead for Respiratory Protection Equipment, the NFCC Representative on the PH4 group working on national respiratory protection standards for industry, Chair of the NFCC National Command and Control User Group, a member of National Operational Effectiveness Working Group, a member of the NFCC Recruitment Board, a member of the NFCC Direct Entry Board and also a member of the NFCC Fires in Tall Buildings working group. • Other staff are members of multiple NFCC committees and groups. • Adopt and embed the NFCCs Fire Standards.

Section 5: Achieving Value for Money

Achieving Value for Money	Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
Achieving Value for Money	<p>Manage their budgets and spend money properly and appropriately and ensure the efficient and effective use of their resources, pursuing all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while discharging their core duties effectively.</p> <p>Regularly review the numbers and deployment of firefighters and other staff to ensure the fire and rescue service has a workforce that is commensurate with the risks that they face.</p> <p>Financial decisions are taken with the advice and guidance of the chief finance officer and decisions are taken with an emphasis on delivering value for money. Ensure management of finances is undertaken with regard to published guidance.</p> <p>Publish a Medium Term Financial Plan, efficiency plan and reserves strategy.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Plan should include funding and spending plans for revenue and capital, take into account multiple years, the inter-dependencies of revenue budgets and capital investments, the role of reserves and the consideration of risks. Have regard to affordability, CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance, aligned with the Integrated Risk Management Plan.</p> <p>Produce and publish an efficiency plan and publish an annual report on the progress against these efficiencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly consider resources relative to risk through the IRMP, which is subject to routine review and supported by evidence-based data. • Consider Value for Money in all aspects of work, including workforce planning, budget monitoring and business cases. • Proactively address feedback arising from Internal and External Audit. • Manage finances with regard to published guidance, and make this information available via this report, the MTFS, Efficiency Plan and Reserves Policy. • Have a published MTFS and Efficiency Plan, which is aligned to the IRMP and reported on regularly to the Authority. • Strong track record of overachieving the Efficiency Plan (covering 2015/16 to 2019/20) achieved significant savings of £9.287m which was £1.039m in excess of our Government approved target. • Report regularly to the Authority on our capital programme and revenue budget. • Since our last HMICFRS inspection, TWFRS have disposed of redundant and surplus assets (land and building(s)). This has resulted in capital receipts of c£1.5m, which will be reinvested in support of future service improvements, furthermore TWFRS have also benefited from sustained revenue savings of c£50k pa. We continue to review and appraise our land and building assets to ensure we have an adaptable estate that can accommodate emerging and future changes.
Reserves	<p>Publish policy on reserves.</p> <p>Reserves strategy should include details of current and future planned reserve levels, setting out a total amount of reserves and the amount of each specific reserve that is held for each year. The reserves strategy should cover resource and capital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Reserves Policy is published and available on the TWFRS website. • The Reserves Policy gives transparency to stakeholders of the purpose and level of the reserves held by the Authority. • The Reserves Policy references key documents including the Statement of Accounts, this report and the

	<p>reserves and provide information for the period of the medium term financial plan (and at least two years ahead).</p> <p>The strategy should include how the level of the general reserve has been set, justification for holding a general reserve larger than five percent of budget and details of the activities or items to be funded from each earmarked reserve, and how these support the FRA's strategy.</p> <p>Provide clarity on how much funding falls into planned expenditure in Medium Term Financial Strategy, specific projects beyond Medium Term Financial Strategy and general contingency.</p>	<p>reports of internal and external auditors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Reserves Policy is taken into account in all aspects of financial planning, including the Budget Planning Framework.
Commercial Transformation	<p>Improve commercial practices including whether to aggregate procurement with other fire and rescue authorities or local services to improve efficiencies.</p> <p>Demonstrate and support national and local commercial transformation programmes where appropriate. Demonstrate full awareness of the objectives to standardise requirements, aggregate demand and manage suppliers of products and services within their commercial arrangements.</p> <p>Ensure commercial activities; be that the placement of new contracts or the use of existing contracts is in line with their legal obligations (Public Contracts Regulations, the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and transparency. commitments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in regional and national procurement frameworks, and in 2020/21 drove procurement efficiencies of almost £0.653m. • The Authority's standing orders set out clear guidelines for tendering procedures and approvals linked to contract values to ensure Value for Money.
Research and Development	<p>Engage with national research and development programmes, including those overseen by the NFCC, unless there is a good reason not to. Where fire and rescue services embark on research and development outside of any national programme, processes should be put in place to ensure it meets quality standards and, where possible and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in national and research development programmes, including providing staff time to participate in NFCC initiatives. • Emergency Services Network (ESN) is the next generation of critical communications delivered by the Emergency Services' Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP). Utilising EE's 4G mobile

	appropriate, is available to the sector to enable good practice to be shared.	network will replace the current Airwave system and provide a common communications platform for all emergency services supporting collaborative communications and enhancing access to data and information thus improving community outcomes. This is a complex programme being led by the Home Office. TWFRS is preparing to accommodate the transition, which is scheduled for 2023. This involves upgrading control room equipment and installing new communication equipment in appliances.
Trading	<p>A trading company is a separate legal entity and elected members and officers should at all times be aware of potential conflicts of interest when carrying out their roles for their authorities, or when acting as directors of trading companies.</p> <p>Ensure any actions taken in respect of trading companies are considered against the requirements of competition law. Financial assistance – in cash or in kind – given by an authority that establishes or participates in it, should be for a limited period, set against the expectation of later returns, and repaid by those returns.</p> <p>Any assistance should be provided under a formal agreement with the company and must be entered into for a commercial purpose. Before entering into such an agreement, the authority should satisfy itself that it will achieve its objective, and the company should satisfy itself that it will meet its objective in terms of its business plan. The parties should consider any State Aid implications and obtain their own expert advice where necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trading company, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Ltd (TWFRS Ltd), is compliant with all aspects of company law and a constitution is agreed. • TWFRS Ltd Directors have specified roles. • The Authority holds shares, although no dividends have been paid. • All commercial activities are performed in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), the Local Government Order 2009 and the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970. • All commercial activities are exercised through a company within the meaning of Part 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. • All State Aid regulations are observed.
Section 6: Workforce		
	Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
People Strategy	Have in place a people strategy that has been designed in collaboration with the workforce and take into account the principles set out in the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to workforce development is set out in the OD Strategy, soon to be replaced by the new People and OD Plan, which

	<p>NFCC's people strategy.</p> <p>It should cover improving the diversity of the workforce, equality, cultural values and behaviours, recruitment, retention and progression; flexible working; professionalism, skills and leadership; training; health and safety, wellbeing, disabilities and support; and tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination.</p>	<p>reflects the principles and priorities of the NFCC's People Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of career development pathways which encourages growth in the workforce to support high performance. • Decision to adopt the NFCCs Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services, which sets out shared values and behaviours. • Established a new Inclusion Manager post. • Committed to EDI and this is evidenced through our new EDI Policy (autumn 2021) and inclusion in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. • Introduced a revised PDR process that has enhanced the development processes through individual objective setting. • Represented on NFCC working groups including Diversification of the Workforce (looking at how to recruit, promote and retain who represent our communities) and Talent Management Working Group (informing future approaches to Talent Management).
Professional Standards	<p>A coherent and comprehensive set of professional standards across all areas of fire and rescue services work to be developed drawing on existing standards where appropriate. Implement the approved professional standards that result from the national work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong training and development culture that ensures public and firefighter safety. • Adhere to the National Occupational Standards that apply to the fire and rescue service and implement a system of assurance to ensure staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to fulfil the vast array of operational demands placed upon them. • Work closely with the NFCCs Fire Standards Board to support them in developing a new set of professional standards for the sector.
Fitness Principles	<p>Ensure firefighters remain fit and supported in remaining in employment.</p> <p>Have a process of fitness assessment and development to ensure that operational personnel are enabled to maintain the standards of personal fitness required in order to perform their role safely</p>	<p>HR, Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and L&D provide support to all staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For operational staff, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time to undertake physical training on a daily basis when at work, including the Chester Treadmill Test, a fitness assessment that takes place every six months. ○ Annual health monitoring by the

	<p>Ensure that no individual will automatically face dismissal if they fall below the standards required and cannot be deployed operationally. Ensure that all operational personnel will be provided with support to maintain their levels of fitness for the duration of their career.</p> <p>Consider where operational personnel have fallen below the fitness standards required whether an individual is able to continue on full operational duties or should be stood down, taking into account the advice provided by the authority's occupational health provider. In making this decision, the safety and well-being of the individual will be the key issue.</p> <p>Commit to providing a minimum of 6 months of development and support to enable individuals who have fallen below the required fitness standards to regain the necessary levels of fitness.</p> <p>Refer an individual to occupational health where underlying medical reasons are identified that restrict / prevent someone from achieving the necessary fitness; and ensure that the individual receives the necessary support to facilitate a return to operational duties.</p> <p>Fully explore opportunities to enable the individual to remain in employment including through reasonable adjustment and redeployment in role where it appears the medical condition does not allow a return to operational duties.</p>	<p>OHU and associated fitness support/bespoke programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Routine Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) assessment ○ Access to a vaccination programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to an independent qualified medical practitioner ○ Access to advice from a dedicated OH Advisor ○ Access to support from our Welfare Manager ○ Referral to physiotherapy or other specialist occupational health advisor when required. ○ Monthly health education promotions, including stress awareness ○ Access to gym facilities at all stations, headquarters and the Technical Services Centre. ● Established and recruited a Health and Fitness Advisor dedicated to supporting staff achieve their fitness objectives through individualised development programmes and activities. ● Participate in a range of mental health initiatives, including Promoting Positive Mental Health, the Blue Light Time to Change programme, and work with Mind. ● Provide reasonable adjustments and redeployment where necessary to ensure that staff can remain in employment. Recommendations can be made by OHU to assist in this process about capability and reasonable adjustments. ● Report annually on health and fitness data, and have written policies and procedures to support this approach.
<p>Re-engagement of Senior Officers</p>	<p>Must not re-appoint principal fire officers after retirement to their previous, or a similar, post save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interests of public safety.</p> <p>All principal fire officer posts must be open to competition nationally, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No principal fire officers have been reappointed. ● Adhere to recruitment policies and procedures. ● The DCFO appointment and ACFO appointments were internal only due to covid measures in place at the time of recruitment.

	<p>fire and rescue authority's must take account of this in their workforce planning.</p> <p>While the above requirements only extend to principal fire officers, we expect fire and rescue authority to have regard to this principle when re-appointing at any level.</p>	
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Section 7: Inspection, Intervention and Accountability

	Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
Inspection	<p>Cooperate with the inspectorate and its inspectors to enable them to deliver their statutory function. This includes providing relevant data and information to inform inspections.</p> <p>Give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and if recommendations are made, prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.</p> <p>When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the NFCC and Local Government Association.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported HMICFRS data requests and proactively engaged with HMICFRS Discovery Week and Fieldwork Week as part of the inspection process. This included working with the Service Liaison Lead and Inspectorate to ensure all required information was available. • An established Inspection Support Team, part of the Business Improvement department to co-ordinate inspection planning, and support the development of an HMICFRS Improvement Plan. • Implemented an internal communications plan to prepare the Service for inspection. • Supported the regional sharing of information.
Accountability	<p>Have governance and accountability arrangements in place covering issues such as financial management and transparency, complaints and discipline arrangements, and compliance with the seven principles of public life.</p> <p>Each fire and rescue authority must hold the individual who has responsibility for managing the fire and rescue service – an operational or non-operational Chief Fire Officer – to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service and the functions of persons under their direction and control.</p> <p>In demonstrating their accountability to communities for the service they provide, fire and rescue authorities need to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operation of standing orders and financial regulations, outline how the Authority / Service carries out its business and how decisions are to be made, supported by a clear delegation scheme. The roles and responsibilities of Members and officers are defined in these documents. • Robust governance arrangements in place, overseen by the Authority, Governance Committee and Policy and Performance Committee. • The CFO supported by a DCFO and AFCO. • Governance arrangements are reviewed annually in line with CIPFA principles, and produce an annual Statement of Assurance and Annual Governance Statement (which forms part of the statement of accounts)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions; • provide the opportunity for communities to help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement; and • have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service. 	<p>and a Code of Governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear publication scheme, providing information to the public via our website and welcoming feedback. • Annually publish accounts, which have an unqualified opinion from our external auditors and an unqualified Value for Money conclusion. • Seek the views of members of the public through consultations and engagement for example, IRMP and tri-station facility. • Engage with members of the public at community events. • Evaluate work through service user feedback in the form of surveys and audits. • Invite comments, compliments and complaints, and respond to all complaints within 28 days.
<p>Transparency</p>	<p>Must comply with their statutory transparency requirements. Subject to the Local Authority Transparency Code 2015 and publish certain information, including: senior salaries; register of interests; staffing; income and expenditure; property; rights and liabilities; and decisions of significant public interest.</p> <p>Make communities aware of how they can access data and information on their performance.</p> <p>Submit to the Secretary of State any reports and returns that are required; and give the Secretary of State any information with respect to its functions that are required.</p> <p>Provide regular data to the Home Office.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with all aspects of the Data Transparency Code and the ICO Publication Scheme. • Adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations 2018. • Maintain policies and procedures relating to data and information governance. • Publish quarterly performance reports, benchmarked against other metropolitan fire and rescue services. • Report performance through the Statement of Assurance (this report) and the CFOs annual report. • Provide data returns as required to the Home Office and HMICFRS.



STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

2020 / 2021

**Tyne and Wear Fire
and Rescue Authority**

Creating the Safest Community

