TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY **Item No 6**

MEETING: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 28th SEPTEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2014/15

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, DEPUTY CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to present the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2014/15.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The purpose of the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance is to inform our stakeholders how we did during 2014/15, how much we spent and what we spent it on. This document also meets a new requirement placed on us by Government as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012, to prepare an annual Statement of Assurance:

'Fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance'.

One of the principal aims of the statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and our partners may make a valid assessment of our performance.

3 STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

3.1 The guidance states that "the Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State's biennial report under section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004".

3.2 The contents of the document should include as a minimum;

- the statement of accounts
- an annual governance statement
- details of how the Authority meets the requirements of the National Framework

- details of consultation on strategic plans including the IRMP
- assurance regarding operational competence
- consideration to the principles of transparency (set out in the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency)

3.3 Where relevant information is already set out in a clear, accessible and user friendly way within existing documents, it is acceptable to include extracts or links to these documents within the Statement of Assurance. This is the approach we have taken in Tyne and Wear.

4 HOW WE PERFORMED

4.1 We set targets to enable us to monitor our performance enabling us to achieve our vision of 'creating the safest community'. By monitoring our performance we are able to see how we are progressing towards achieving our strategic goals. The Annual Report notes that performance is monitored quarterly by the Management Team and the Policy and Performance Committee. The service delivery Performance Action Group also keeps performance under constant review.

4.2 The Annual Report contains a summary of our performance in 2014/15. We attended 14,501 incidents in 2014/15. The number of primary fires reduced by 1.5%, recording our lowest ever figures and achieving a year on year improvement over the last seven years. The number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires has also seen our lowest ever figure, a reduction of 19% when compared to the previous year.

4.3 2014/15 saw a substantial decrease of 17.2% in deliberate fires, when compared with the same period the previous year, and shows a 34.3% reduction over the last five years.

4.4 Under the Government's Spending Review we continue to face significant reductions in the grant we receive from the Government. This creates a huge challenge in continuing to tackle community risk with fewer resources. Although this will be difficult, our committed workforce will continue to focus upon positive outcomes for the communities we serve.

5 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The first Statement of Assurance was required to be produced and published in the financial year 2013/14. We complied with this and this report is our third Statement of Assurance.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Annual Report contains a retrospective picture of expenditure in 2014/15. This report has no direct financial implications.

7 STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

7.1 The Annual Report / Statement of Assurance directly relates to goal four; ‘to deliver a modern, effective service, ensuring value for money with staff who reflect the communities we serve’. It provides information to help provide public assurance that the organisation is financially viable and continuing to produce results which help deliver the safest community.

8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The report provides information that is accessible to all.

9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Health and Safety implications associated with this report.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 This report has been prepared to provide assurance on our finances, governance and operations throughout 2014/15.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

a) Review the content of this report
b) Approve the document for publication

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Guidance on statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England – DCLG May 2013
- CFOA Circular 2013-10: Annual Statement of Assurance