

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting of the GOVERNANCE  
 COMMITTEE to be held in the Fire  
 Authority Rooms at the Fire and Rescue  
 Service Headquarters, Nissan Way,  
 Barmston Mere, Sunderland on **MONDAY  
 29 NOVEMBER 2021** at 10.30am

## A G E N D A

Item	Page
1. <b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2. <b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
3. <b>Minutes of the last Meeting of the Governance Committee held on 30 July 2021</b>	1
(Copy attached).	
4. <b>Corporate Risk Management</b>	7
Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority (copy attached).	
5. <b>Statement of Assurance 2020/2021</b>	17
Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority) and the Finance Director (copy attached).	
6. <b>Compliments and Complaints Annual Report</b>	65
Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority (copy attached).	

7. **Internal Audit Annual Progress Report 2021/2022** 77  
Report of the Head of Internal Audit (copy attached).
8. **Treasury Management Second Quarterly Review 2021/2022** 85  
Report of the Finance Director (copy attached).
9. **Audited Statement of Accounts 2020-2021** 103  
Report of the Finance Director (copy attached)
- Please note that the following items will be printed separately: -*
- (i) Letter of Representation
  - (ii) External Auditor's Audit Completion Report
  - (iii) Audited Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2021
10. **IRMP 2021-2024 Consolidated Document** 107  
Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority (copy attached).

CHRIS LOWTHER  
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority)

19 November 2021



Minutes of the meeting of the GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held in the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Barmston Mere on Friday 30 JULY 2021 at 10.30 a.m.

**Present:**

Councillor Dodds in the Chair

Councillors Flynn and Ord.

**Appointment of Chair**

In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee, it was:-

25. RESOLVED that Councillor Dodds be appointed as the Chair for this meeting.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Bell, Burdis and Dick together with Mr Cook, Knowles, Davies, Waddell, CFO Lowther, ACFO McVay, Area Manager Clark and Ms. Davis and Greener

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes**

26. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 28 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## **Treasury Management – Annual Review of Performance 2020/2021**

The Finance Director submitted a report setting out the annual borrowing and investment performance for the financial year 2020/2021 in accordance with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Authority on 13 March 2020.

Members were advised that the average rate of the lead authority's borrowing at 2.83% compared favourably when benchmarked against other authorities and had helped to keep the revenue cost of the Authority's borrowing low in comparison. This being one of the lowest in the Country.

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on financial markets and economic forecasting. The Bank of England (BoE) Base Rate was lowered to 0.10%, a historic low announced on 19 March 2020 to help stimulate the economy and remained in place. Recovery would take time and considerable challenges to the economy remained.

The Finance Director advised the Committee that the Authority had benefited from the fact that its budgeted investment income had been maintained throughout the year at a rate of return of 0.73% in 2019/2020 compared to the benchmark rate of 0.53%, which was a positive outcome for the financial year.

The Authority had benefited from the fact that its budgeted investment income had been maintained throughout the year at a rate of return of 0.13% in 2020/2021 compared to the benchmark rate of -0.07%. The investment policy continued to reflect the priority to 'protect' the funds of the Authority first and foremost.

The positive position of performance against the benchmark however needed to be taken into context as the budget for 2020/21 was set before the pandemic struck the UK. The Authority in reality saw its interest receivable budget fall significantly because of the lowering of the Base Rate by £228,000 (from £264,000 to only £36,000) in the financial year although this reduction was cushioned by the additional Covid grant funding provided in year from the Government.

Members were then advised that the Authority had not exceeded any of its Treasury Management (TM) Prudential Indicators during 2020/2021. This limit was set at £49.250 million for 2020/2021 and the highest level reached by the Authority of £37.543 million during the year was below this limit. Had the Government not granted additional funding, this could have occurred. The Lead Authority and the Fire Authority were both within the limits set for all of the TM Prudential Indicators and continued to be monitored on a daily basis.

Councillor Ord having enquired if the surplus interest was moved into reserves, was advised by the Finance Director that the interest went to help fund the revenue budget. He reported that the budget had been set on the basis of certain assumptions on what the rates would be and on this occasion had been off-set by the reduction in debt charges.

In conclusion, the Finance Director reported that Treasury Management and issues with the capital programme and the financial position of the Fire Authority all featured in the Statement of Accounts for review by the External Auditor.

Consideration having been given to the report, it was:-

27. RESOLVED that the report and the Treasury Management performance of the Authority for 2020/2021 be noted.

### **Statement of Accounts 2020-2021 (Subject to Audit)**

The Finance Director submitted a report to provide members with:-

- An opportunity to scrutinise and question the draft Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 (Subject to Audit) – (Appendix B), the Finance Officer's Narrative Statement and the Annual Governance Statement that were required to be published separately alongside the Accounts in accordance with the requirements of both the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as amended by the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020;
- To provide members with details of the Statement of Accounts process and the key dates that electors had to challenge the accounts as revised statutory timescales had been affected by the government in light of the coronavirus pandemic; and
- To provide members with the Letters of Assurance required by the external auditor as part of the final accounts process.

Members were advised that the revised requirements introduced by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 issued in March 2021 meant that local authorities must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of August 2021. Therefore, the draft unaudited accounts must be published by 31 July 2021 at the latest. The requirement for the accounts, once audited, to be approved by the Committee would normally have been by 31 July 2021 however the amended timescale was that the audited accounts must be approved by 30 September 2021.

Members were referred to Section 3 of the report and advised that the certified Accounts and the required Statements and Notices would be published on the Authority's web site on Friday 30 July 2021 in accordance with the revised regulations

The draft financial statements for 2020/2021 subject to audit (Appendix B) were to be certified by the Finance Officer in accordance with the regulations. The narrative statement also provided a helpful summary (Appendix C). In accordance with the requirements, the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) had to be published whether it had been approved or not by the Authority. A copy was attached at Appendix D to the report and replicated the AGS scrutinized by the Committee in June and approved by the July Authority meeting.

The Finance Director drew the attention of the Committee to the document tabled which detailed adjustments to the 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts (subject to audit) and reported that these adjustments had also been reflected in revised Letters of Assurance brought today for the Chair of the meeting to sign at the conclusion of the meeting to give assurance on all activities and processes followed. He explained that the External Auditor would then give an opinion when auditing the accounts.

The Committee was advised that the required adjustments had been in relation to asset valuations and resulted in a net increase of £0.487 million. The Finance Director assured that the Statement of Accounts to be published on the website would include these adjustments and that Members and electors had the right of challenge in accordance with the inspection periods detailed in the report.

The Finance Director explained that the narrative contained in the Statement of Accounts tried to draw out the main issues of the financial year, for example, how Covid-19 had impacted and how effective the service had been in responding. He reported that there had been no accidental fire deaths recorded during the year despite residents being at home during lockdowns and the service had maintained having the fastest response times in the country.

The Committee was advised that there had been slippage in the Capital Programme of £11.2 million and works totalling £3.6 million had been completed. A notable completion had been the purchase of 14 fire appliances which had been delivered in April 2021 and the next 10 appliances had been delayed into 2021/2022 by which time the entire fleet would have been replaced. The slippage of £7.6 million of Capital Programme rolls forward to the next financial year.

The Revenue Budget Outturn position for 2020/2021 was reported to the Fire Authority on 12 July 2021 and showed a net overall underspend of £0.965 million, at £48.996 million compared with an original budget of £49.961 million. The Authority had made a huge positive drive during the year to achieve this level of saving with a number of significant initiatives as well as savings accrued due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic arrangements. There had been strong and robust financial management in 2020/2021, continuing the Authority's sound track record in this regard.

The Finance Director reported that despite austerity and the pandemic, the Authority was in a reassuring financial position having managed to reinvest in the service this was reflected in the IRMP.

The Finance Director reminded Members that at the last meeting Ms Greener from Mazars had advised that potentially the audit would not be completed until the end of November 2021 and a Committee meeting would be scheduled. He advised that the delay was due to dramatic change to the amount of audit work required for public services and major resource implications of a shortage of auditors in the work market. The Government had recognised the increase in work and fees and had made additional funding available but at this stage the share to the Authority was unknown.

28. RESOLVED that:

- (i) both the draft and unsigned Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 as adjusted (subject to audit) and the separate Statements, set out in detail in Appendices B to D of the report, in compliance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the amendments set out in the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 be noted;
- (ii) the contents of the Letter of Assurance from those charged with Governance (Appendix F), as revised, be approved; and,
- (iii) the Letter of Assurance, as revised, from those charged with discharging management processes and responsibilities (Appendix G) be noted.

### **Treasury Management – First Quarterly Review 2021/2022**

The Finance Director submitted a report on the Treasury Management Performance for the first quarter of 2021/2022.

Members were advised that Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates had continued to be volatile, primarily in response to the economic impact of Covid-19. In respect of borrowing, due to the temporary use of reserves to fund the Capital Programme no new borrowing has been taken out to date during 2021/2022.

It was noted that the Authority's interest rate on borrowing was very low, currently 2.78%, and as such the Authority continued to benefit from this low cost of borrowing and from the ongoing savings from past debt rescheduling exercises.

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators were regularly reviewed and the Authority was within the limits set for all its Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2021/2022. The statutory limit under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003, which was required to be reported separately, (also known as the Authorised Borrowing Limit for External Debt) was set at £50.272 million for 2021/2022. The Authority's maximum external debt during the financial year to 30 June 2021 was £35.423 million and was within this limit. Details of all of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators were set out in Section 2 of Appendix A. The finance Director assured the Committee that the indicators were monitored on a daily basis.

The Committee was advised that the Authority had achieved a rate of return on its investments of 0.01% in the first quarter of 2021/2022 compared with the benchmark rate of -0.08%. Performance remained above the benchmark rate, whilst still adhering to the prudent policy agreed by the Authority, in what remained a very challenging market.

The Finance Director highlighted that whilst the interest rates on debt had been low, the returns on investments had also been negligible. He assured that the Authority's investment policy would continue to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure it

had flexibility to take full advantage of any changes in market conditions which would benefit the Authority.

In conclusion, the Finance Director having reiterated that there had been no cashflow issues during the year as a result of additional Covid grant funding provided in year by the Government, it was:-

29. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Treasury Management performance for the first quarter of 2021/2022, be noted; and
- (ii) the Lending List Criteria at Appendix B and the changes to the Approved Lending List at Appendix C, be noted.

(Signed) K. DODDS,  
Vice-Chairman

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 4**

**MEETING: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 29 NOVEMBER 2021**

---

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT**

---

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

---

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the outcome of the latest quarterly review of the Authority's current Corporate Risk Register (CRR) undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) at their meeting on 7 September 2021.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The CRR is the culmination of a wide ranging review of the risks facing the Fire Authority following detailed analysis of both internal and external factors which could impinge on the work of the Authority.
- 2.2 This information and the subsequent analysis of it is utilised to inform and underpin the Authority's approach to Corporate Risk Management. In line with the Risk Management Policy and Procedure the register is regularly reviewed by ELT and reported to the Fire Authority on a bi-annual basis.
- 2.3 To ensure independent scrutiny of the register ahead of submission to Fire Authority the members of the Governance Committee are requested to note the content of the report and challenge its content to ensure that risks are being addressed appropriately through internal scrutiny. (Minute 24/21 refers).

## **3 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (CRR)**

- 3.1 Risk management work is ongoing and continues to be undertaken by the ELT as part of their standing monthly meeting agenda item. As part of the ongoing risk management process the group reassess existing risks, identify new risks and subsequently ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to manage and mitigate risks as far as practicable.
- 3.2 The CRR hosts details of risks that could have a significant impact on the medium and long-term goals of the Authority. The CRR currently has 10 risks which directly impinge on the work of the Authority.
- 3.3 Risks are categorised using a 5x5 risk matrix producing a score between 1 and 25 which subsequently allocates a risk rating ranging from trivial to Intolerable. Risks that are above the trivial/tolerable threshold (moderate, substantial or intolerable) require further consideration and a decision taken as to how the risk

should be treated and a decision is taken by ELT as to the potential inclusion within the CRR.

- 3.4 The CRR underwent a 'cleansing exercise' following a full review of Risk Management in April 2021, please see appendix A for further details. Of the 10 risks currently shown on the CRR 3 risks have been categorised as having a 'substantial' impact on the service should the risk not be treated and mitigated against appropriately, namely:-

11/02 *Risk that financial pressures will impact on Service's decision making and delivery of its goals/priorities and objectives* (risk rating 12, risk trend static).

01/20 *Risk that the impending Remedy for Age Discrimination in Pension Schemes results in detrimental Financial and workforce impacts for the Service* (risk rating 10, risk trend static).

03/21 *Failure to attain anticipated grading as a result of HMICFRS may impact on the reputation of the Service and represent a significant increase in workload to implement improvement activities* (risk rating 12, risk trend increased likelihood from 3 to 4 following September review).

- 3.5 The remainder of the risks are classified at 'moderate' and can be seen within the CRR, along with details of mitigating factors undertaken against all risks (attached as Appendix B).

## **4 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The CRR directly supports Goal 2 of the 2020-21 Strategic Community Safety Plan (interim) 'to respond appropriately to the risk'.
- 4.2 Regular updating and approval of the Authority's CRR will ensure that the Authority has in place suitable and appropriate arrangements to mitigate the risks facing the Authority and its staff in delivering services to our community

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

## **6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The committee is recommended to:

- a) Review the content of this report and provide challenge where appropriate.
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate.
- 

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

Fire Authority Report 13 September 2021 – Corporate Risk Management – Item No.7





OFFICIAL

<b>Date:</b>	4 May 2021	<b>Item No.:</b> Part 1, item 1.4
<b>Title:</b>	Corporate Risk Management	
<b>Author:</b>	WM Hill	
<b>Presented by:</b>	ACFO McVay	
<b>For information or decision</b>	Discussion and decision	
<b>Coordination committee:</b>	N/A	
<b>Number of Attachments:</b>	2	
<b>Date created / version number:</b>	25 April 2021	
<b>Contact -</b>		
<b>Name</b> Bev Hill	<b>Email:</b> Beverly.hill@twfire.gov.uk	<b>Tel:</b> 1646

## 1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the proposed changes to the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and agree the future process for reporting against and the escalation/de-escalation of risks within the CRR.

## 2 Decisions required

- 2.1 ELT are requested to note the content of this report for discussion and decision.

## 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 ELT are invited to:-
- Review the content of the report and note its content
  - Endorse recommendations set out within section 5.1 (revised risk descriptors), 6.1 (amendments to CRR) and point 7 (future reporting de-escalation and escalation of risks) of this report
  - Receive further reports as required

## 4 Introduction and background

- 4.1 Following approval of the revised way in which risk is managed by ELT at their meeting on 6 April 2021 the CRR has been updated and all current risks have been reviewed by their owners to provide a descriptor that ensures it is reflective of the risk identified.
- 4.2 A meeting to review revised descriptors between the Resilience Team and ACFO McVay was undertaken on 22 April 2021. As a consequence of this discussion a number of recommendations to cleanse the register were identified and have been outlined within this report for consideration by ELT.
- 4.3 Furthermore this report outlines recommendations for future reporting on and escalation/de-escalation of risks between the CRR and departmental risk registers.

## 5 Revised descriptors

- 5.1 All current risk descriptors were reviewed and where appropriate amended within the register, attached as appendix A. For information purposes, attached as appendix B, the comparison between old and new descriptors can be seen. The revised descriptors are for discussion and approval or otherwise by ELT.

## 6 Amendments to the CRR

- 6.1 The following proposed changes to the risk register are outlined below:-

*08/28 Failure to effectively and safely deploy and manage operational staff and resources at incidents leading to staff and public being exposed to unnecessary risks.* It is proposed that this risk is **archived** as it is felt that the elements that led to its inclusion in the register have now been captured within other risks and are being managed appropriately.

*10.04 Risk that spending and/or policy decisions of one of our partners has a negative impact on the sustainability of collaborative work and therefore a detrimental impact on the communities that we serve.* It is proposed that this risk is **archived** with any specific risks being managed appropriately at departmental level (risk ER/CS/PE/1605 refers). In addition to this risk 11/02 within the CRR has been redefined and now includes an element of risk relating to collaborative working.

*18/01 Significant National Events resulting in new or updated legislation which impacts across the entire Service.* It is proposed that this risk is **de-escalated** to departmental level to be monitored and escalated appropriately as and when any legislative changes are made.

*11/01 Risk that we do not realise the savings proposed in our IRMP in a situation where the authority is having to manage sustained cuts in its budget resulting in reduced financial resilience and potential impact on service delivery.* It is proposed that this risk is **de-escalated** and monitored at departmental level with escalation being done should it be deemed appropriate.

*08/31 Disruption to the operation of key ICT systems/ applications resulting in downtime which would impact on the delivery of key activities across the service.* It is proposed that

*this risk is **de-escalated** and managed appropriately at departmental level (risk ER/SPRA/ICT1401 refers).*

*08/10 Risk of a serious attack/assault by member of the public on staff resulting in injury which may impact on the individual's health and/or delivery of key services. It is proposed that this risk is **de-escalated** to front facing services and managed appropriately at departmental level.*

*12.01 Risk that a potential dispute by fuel suppliers could lead to fuel shortages resulting in a detrimental impact on the services we deliver. It is proposed to **archive** this risk with re-escalation should intelligence dictate the necessity.*

*ER/SP/BSIT1901 Failure to attain anticipated grading as a result of HMICFRS may impact on the reputation of the Service and represent a significant increase in workload to implement improvement activities. Risk **escalated** from departmental risk register following review of inspection criteria and as part of initial self-assessment BSI have identified areas of improvement that represent a risk in not maintaining Good grading in the forthcoming inspection scheduled for Autumn.*

## **7 Future reporting and escalation/de-escalation of risk**

- 7.1 Previously updates against risks were sought quarterly at the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) and the register updated appropriately. ELT may recall they approved the dissolution of the CRMG at their meeting on 6 April 2021 as part of the review of the risk management process.
- 7.2 As Risk Management has been agreed as a monthly standing item on the ELT agenda it is proposed that the group continue to update mitigation against risks on a quarterly basis. For this purpose it is proposed that WM Business Assurance and SM Risk and Assurance attend the quarterly meeting to update the register as necessary with any supporting discussion points being captured within the meeting minutes.
- 7.3 The intervening meetings of ELT will provide the opportunity to monitor the register and receive updates against any emerging, escalated or de-escalated risks.
- 7.4 For the purpose of escalation/de-escalation a verbal update or briefing note as per point 6.1 above can be provided, ELT to advise of their preferred method. It is proposed that the Executive Services Manager captures ELT discussion and decisions within the meeting minutes with any changes to the register being advised to WM Business Assurance.

## **8 Supporting TWFRS vision and values**

- 8.1 This report supports the Service's vision and values to 'Respond appropriately to the Risk' and 'To plan and prepare for exceptional events'.

## **9 Risk analysis**

- 9.1 There are no risk implications associated with this report.

## **10 People Impact Assessment**

- 10.1 There are no people impact implications associated with this paper.

## **11 Resource implications**

11.1 There are no resource implications associated with this paper.

## **12 Recommendations**

12.1 ELT are requested to endorse the changes to the CRR and approve a preferred way of reporting/escalating and de-escalation of risk as outlined in point 7 above.

## **13 Background papers**

- Review of Risk Management, ELT paper 6 April, Part 1 item 1.2
- Risk Register – Appendix A
- Amended Risk Descriptors – Appendix B



CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

**Guidance for Completion :-**

- IDENTIFY RISK** - Consider the cause, event and effect to create a risk description; consider impact of this risk on wider Service implications.
- ASSESS RISK** - Complete the BASELINE RISK RATING - using the matrix for guidance on the respective worksheet. Select 1-5 for likelihood/impact, score and rating; repeat for CURRENT RISK RATING.
- TREAT RISK** - Capture actions taken/planned within the MITIGATION/CONTROL MEASURES.
- REPORT RISK** - Use this template to communicate risks/progress to your stakeholders.
- REVIEW RISK** - Regularly review the risk and record on the Risk Management and Assurance Database.

Refer to Admin Procedure 2.38 Risk Management or contact a member of the Resilience Team for further information/support.

Archived Risks

Risk No	Category	Risk Description	Risk Owner	Risk Manager	Link to Corporate Goal	Link to Departmental Risks	Departmental Risk Number(s)	BASELINE RISK RATING				CURRENT RISK RATING				Risk Trend	MITIGATION / CONTROL MEASURES	Previous Mitigating Actions
								Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Rating	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Rating			
08/29	People	Wide spread non-availability of key staff (not related to industrial action) for a prolonged period of time resulting in the inability to deliver core activities. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO ODI/ DCO CS	SMG	Cross Cutting			4	4	16	INTOLERABLE	2	4	8	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021:</b> The full annual review of all departmental business continuity plans has been undertaken (August 2021) and critical activities have been refreshed with appropriate contingency arrangements being identified for any loss of resources to ensure that any interruption to business would be managed appropriately. Following a comprehensive review of risk management the reporting cycle of corporate risks has been increased (monthly) therefore members of ELT receive regular reports to ensure enhanced corporate oversight of risks which enables resources to be allocated appropriately to ensure business as usual continues. Early August ELT received a report to significantly increase the throughput of recruits through the brigade training centre resulting in further work being commissioned to finalise the plans for final approval. Additional resilience within the Fire Safety team through the introduction of two Primary Authority green book positions and Station Manager roles within the department. Risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 25 May 2021:</b> Degradation plan for FS in place to ensure that prohibition notices can be served all other critical activities covered within specific or departmental Business Continuity Plans that are reviewed regularly to ensure the impact of a business interruption is mitigated appropriately with risk being eliminated, reduced or managed appropriately. Risk assessments continue to be reviewed to ensure premises remain COVID secure with staff undertaking regular rapid flow tests to ensure the workplace is safe. The service have produced an infographic which aligns to the easing of restrictions outlined within the governments roadmap to clearly communicate messages to staff to ensure any return to the workplace is within acceptable parameters. The COVID portal is updated regularly with government and management guidance. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point, however, direction of travel is changed from increased to steady state.</p>	Mitigation
11/02	Financial	Risk that financial pressures will impact on Service's decision making and delivery of its goals/priorities and objectives. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	CFO	Finance Director	Cross Cutting		ER/SD/1401	5	5	25	INTOLERABLE	4	3	12	SUBSTANTIAL	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021</b> received notification of pay award for staff. Grey book confirmed 1.5% and green book have currently been offered 1.75%. This represents an additional cost to the revenue budget which will have to be funded from either corporate underspend during the year or use of reserves. Also received notification that the Comprehensive Spending review will take place towards the end of the Autumn. Risk rating remains unchanged.</p> <p><b>Update 07 June 2021:</b> The outturn position for the financial year 2021 is currently being finalised and will be reported to members at July's authority meeting. With regard to covered funding the authority received £1.463 million of which we spent £1.380 million and the surplus funds of £0.103 million is to be transferred to the covid19 reserve to address any further potential related costs. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 15 Feb 21:</b> The Authority approved its revenue budget for 2021/22 on 15th February setting a net budget requirement of £48.542m (which takes into account utilisation of £1.178m of reserves which the in year losses 2021 grant will hopefully replenish once determined later in 21/22). The Final Finance Settlement saw no changes to government funding as set out in the Provisional Settlement however the Authority was notified of a net council tax deficit for 2021 of £47k and a business rates deficit of £2,086k because of the impact of covid19 both of which adversely impacted on the budget for 21/22. These are the main reasons the Authority had to use reserves in order to balance its budget for 21/22. The Budget means a council tax increase of 1.99% to avoid a referendum of £85.64 at Band D for 21/22 (£83.97 in 2021). No Covid 19 grant money for the fire service was confirmed for 21/22 and the government did not change its Finance Settlement for any of the comments made by the Authority in the consultation process unfortunately as expected. There remains uncertainty of funding into the medium term which will be clarified by the proposed CSR21 in the summer. There is also risks that the government's in year losses 2021 grant does not meet the reserves utilised to balance the budget for 21/22 and this position will be regularly reviewed throughout 21/22 and also that additional covid costs are not met by government. Again this position will be monitored appropriately and reported to government with the aim of receiving additional funding. Update 26 Jan 21: The Authority's Provisional Grant settlement for 2021/22 was broadly as assumed in the updated October 2020 MTF's reported to Authority. A balanced budget for 21/22 is expected without the need to draw down on reserves but this position may change as some data on business rates income is still not known nor is the amount the Govt has promised to meet 75% of any in year 2020/21 losses on council tax and business rates income. Covid 19 grant funding for 2021 will be fully exhausted and it is very disappointing to report that nationally none of the £1.55bn for 21/22 has been allocated by the government to any fire service, so we will have to assess if any additional costs are to be incurred and how they will be funded unless the HO are allocated funding at a later date. We will monitor any implications on all these aspects set out above on the revenue budget position for 21/22.</p>	Mitigation
08/15	Cross Cutting	Strike action or other industrial action as a result of a national or local dispute resulting in disruption to business continuity. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO ODI/ DCO CS	ELT	Cross Cutting	Service Delivery	ER/SD/1403	4	5	20	INTOLERABLE	2	4	8	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021:</b> DCF0 Health has produced a document (Strategic Principals and Concept of Operations in relation to the threat of Industrial Action) to support the industrial action business continuity plan to assist in any action to ensure that the service would understand what our approach would be. The risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 02 June 2021:</b> there remains no change at present in the national picture and productive relationships continue with union representatives. As there is no intelligence to suggest this will change it is suggested that it would be appropriate that the risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p>	Mitigation
09/05	Cross Cutting	There is a risk that protective security measures fail resulting in an unauthorised access to sensitive information, attacks on personnel or premises that impacts directly on service delivery and the reputation of the Service. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO OD	ELT	Cross Cutting			3	4	12	SUBSTANTIAL	2	4	8	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update August 2021</b> ICT health check has been commissioned by ARISTI following which an action plan has been produced to assist in gaining Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation. Work has commenced on enhancing security on all of our stations in terms of access both vehicle and footfall.</p> <p><b>Update 25 May 2021:</b> In terms of physical security of staff there are robust lone working procedures in place in addition to out of hours management procedures in relation to frequent contact. A 'buddy' system is also operated to ensure that where lone working is not deemed appropriate, where historic data would suggest there may be potential to expose staff to volatile situations. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 04 March 2021</b> Following a meeting on 03 March 2021 it has been determined that it will be unlikely that the service can achieve the Cyber Essentials accreditation this year and will be more likely next year (late 2022). This is due to some devices which are part of the mobilisation system which touch our corporate network and due to the age of the equipment it would result in a non-compliance until they have been replaced. We are looking at options about the replacement of these devices anyway as part of the ESN implementation (which is also the main reason we need the Cyber Essentials accreditation). Existing controls in place for our corporate network and since our mobilisation system has not changed and is currently compliant with the Airwave CoCo it would remain the same.</p>	Mitigation
08/13	People	Failure to make sufficient and consistent progress in diversifying the service workforce. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO OD	HR Director	Cross Cutting			3	4	12	SUBSTANTIAL	2	4	8	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021:</b> Work continues in relation to the review of recruitment and selection. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 02 June 2021:</b> work on reviewing recruitment and selection processes in relation to operational firefighters to diversify the intake continues. We now have the benefit of our new inclusion manager who joined the service in February 2021. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p>	Mitigation
13/01	Cross Cutting	Risk that the transition from Airwave to ESN will not be completed within the timescales and agreed budget set by central government leading to an impact on service delivery communications. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	DCO CS	AM SP	Cross Cutting			3	3	9	SUBSTANTIAL	4	2	8	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021</b> final business case has now been approved by the Major Projects Review group. Government are in discussions with Airwave to extend the current contract to 2026 to mitigate any risks to the delivery of the project. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 06 June 2021:</b> full business case remains outstanding for sign off by government. Independence Assurance Panel has concluded that this is the correct technology to use after consulting with Emergency Services around the world. The delivery of the project seems to be increasingly likely however there are still unanswered questions as to the financial implications for each FRS. Update 25 February 2021: Project is still awaiting sign off of the full business case at ministerial level. Paper has updated Fire Authority members of the current position following which the CFO has written to the home office to establish the future financial state. Impact of this risk has been reduced to score 2 from 3 given the current situation in terms of longer term financial planning. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p>	Mitigation

01.20.	Cross Cutting	Risk that the impending Remedy for Age Discrimination in Pension Schemes results in detrimental Financial and workforce impacts for the Service. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO OD	Finance Director/HR Director	Cross Cutting	Finance and Procurement	ER/HR/FP2001 ER/HR/FP/1703	5	3	15	INTOLERABLE	5	2	10	SUBSTANTIAL	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021</b> The pension team has been strengthened to deal with the additional work from remedy awaiting further guidance from government. The risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 17 June 2021:</b> additional guidance from government recently received (in respect of the complexity of contribution holidays, HMT have suggested these cases should not be processed at this time, which means in HMT's view that these cases cannot be actioned) has identified that the estimate in relation to the number of employees that would be effected (13) has reduced slightly. Those who the recent guidance will impact on will be contacted as appropriate. The recent additional guidance does not change the current risk rating.</p> <p><b>Update 02 June 2021:</b> monthly workforce planning meetings continue and look at vacancy scenarios including 'worst case' scenarios and necessary future planning is discussed in an effort to identify any gaps to ensure effective workforce planning measures / actions can be undertaken. ELT will receive update report re workforce planning and a report detailing options to increase recruitment capacity at their meeting in July 2021. The pensions team is being strengthened to deal with the additional workload with regards to immediate detriment which the authority is committed to for all retirees that are affected. We continue to review the guidance and publish any updates on the intranet as necessary and signpost members to the relevant Pensions portal. We currently estimate that we have a maximum of 13 employees that could retire in this financial year where immediate detriment applies. Overall we estimate we have in total 80 grey book staff affected by pension remedy (either currently employed or retired). The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 15 Feb 21:</b> Immediate Detriment Guidance has been provided by the Government however this fails to provide sufficient detail for the Authority to be able to accurately assess which option is best for those affected. Legal opinion recently confirmed that FRA's can carry out Immediate Detriment but this could be open to challenge as the authority does not have the complete guidance to provide a fully informed choice for those affected. This stance has been adopted by the majority of FRA's as we await more detailed guidance from the government. We will of course comply with all legal requirements. The government has also notified FRA's of the fact the next revaluation of the firefighters pension scheme has been put back a year to 24/25. This could reflect the fact they are going to take into account remedy in the next revaluation exercise. At this stage it is not clear who will pay for remedy and the Authority's MTFs has no recognition of this cost on the assumption the government pension scheme changes were age discriminatory and that they therefore need to fully fund the corrective action in the form of remedy. This position will be monitored in the next year and the CSR21 may also provide some clarity on this matter. Any change will be reflected in the MTFs in due course. All those affected and still currently employed will be transferred to the 2015 scheme on 1st April 22 and all retrospective changes must be introduced by 1st October 23. Those retiring will not receive immediate detriment as guidance is still not adequate in our opinion and we have in effect until 1st Oct 23 to plan for any workforce implications as a mass retirement position is not anticipated. If it is then we have time to make good the prospective gap by effective workforce planning measures / actions.</p>	<a href="#">Mitigation</a>
01.21.	Cross Cutting	Risk that Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) Switch off will happen in December 2025 and move to digital services will fail. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	DCO CS	AM SP	To deliver a modern effective service, ensuring value for money with staff who reflect the communities we serve	Information and Communications Technology	ER/SPRA/ICT1704	5	5	25	INTOLERABLE	5	1	5	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021</b> Plans in place to incorporate the SIP upgrade into the new Lifex/ICCS. The risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 06 June 2021:</b> Meetings have taken place with BT and Frequentis and work is ongoing to integrate SIP into the new Lifex/ICCS System prior to ISDN lines being terminated. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p>	<a href="#">Mitigation</a>
02.21.	Cross Cutting	Risk that inadequate workforce planning and recruitment will impact on the ability to implement IRMP proposals in relation to the proposed increases in establishment. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO OD	AM CS/AM SD	To respond appropriately to the risk			3	4	12	SUBSTANTIAL	3	2	6	MODERATE	→	<p><b>Update 24 August 2021:</b> Consultation closed 11 August 2021 and the consultation report is being produced to be submitted to Fire Authority at their meeting on 13 September in relation to IRMP proposals. Recruits course in September 2021 has been increased to 36 from 24 recruits. The risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 03 June 2021:</b> IRMP consultation phase is expected to commence following June Fire Authority, however, should all the proposals be approved this results in an increase in establishment of 54 posts in total. There is currently a recruits course of 24 being delivered with a further course with a minimum of 24 currently in the planning stages for Q3 in 2021. It is envisaged that following this there is potential for a further 3 recruits courses to be programmed and delivered to address this risk in addition to future planning for any impact of the Pension Remedy. Pilots in terms of additional fire appliance A02 and staffing of the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) M03 are being undertaken and supported through voluntary transfers, swap a shift, pre-arranged overtime and dayshift staff providing cover for shortfalls. ELT receive a quarterly report outlining current staffing figures, progress against recruitment and retirement profiles. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p>	<a href="#">Mitigation</a>
03.21.	Cross Cutting	Failure to attain anticipated grading as a result of HMICFRS may impact on the reputation of the Service and represent a significant increase in workload to implement improvement activities. <a href="#">Full Risk Descriptor</a>	ACO OD	AM SP	Cross Cutting			3	4	12	SUBSTANTIAL	3	4	12	SUBSTANTIAL	↑	<p><b>Update 22 Sept:</b> results from traunce 1 and results of reality testing has resulted in the likelihood being increased from 3 to 4 which has increased to a substantial risk.</p> <p><b>Update 24 August 2021:</b> Weekly meetings with ELT continue and reality testing of evidence is ongoing to identify any gaps. The risk remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 08 June 2021:</b> A draft risk register has been produced and will be agreed by ELT. Weekly meetings in relation to preparation for inspection with members of ELT continue therefore corporate oversight is being maintained in this area. The risk rating remains unchanged at this point.</p> <p><b>Update 14 July 2021</b> Following announcement of the inspection week taking place w/c 25 October the following update has been provided. In addition to the ongoing risk and impact as a result of potential COVID related sickness absence, an issue has been presented to the HMI preparation group concerning the timing of fieldwork and the clash with school holidays. In anticipation of a formal inspection schedule for fieldwork, heads of department have been asked to review leave around this time within their teams to ensure that each potential interviewees remain available.</p> <p><b>Update 25 June 2021:</b> Building on the weekly HMI meetings and focus on key areas and previous AFIs as well as focussed meetings on areas relating to the people strand and communications it is considered that the control measures are significantly mitigating this risk. Corporate oversight and governance are strong and overall, this risk has been significantly reduced. It is recommended that the risk can now be considered as a 2 likelihood and 3 impact. Agreed at the July meeting of ELT.</p> <p><b>Update April 2021.</b> Following review of inspection criteria and as part of initial self assessment GSI have identified areas of improvement that represent a risk in not maintaining Good grading in the forthcoming inspection scheduled for Autumn. DCFO Health now chairs a weekly meeting as part of HMI preparation activity and SLO will work closely with relevant departments to support improvement in these areas. Risk escalated to likelihood of 3 from 2 to reflect this. Risk escalated by ACO McVay following discussions with WM Hill re latest departmental update and increase in overall risk rating.</p>	<a href="#">Mitigation</a>

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 5**

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: 29 NOVEMBER 2021**

---

**SUBJECT: STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2020/21**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) AND THE FINANCE DIRECTOR**

---

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to present Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority's 2020/21 Statement of Assurance (SOA) for Committee consideration, endorsement and progression to full Fire Authority for agreement to publish.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Each fire and rescue authority (FRA) in England is required to provide sufficient assurance they are acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 (National Framework).
- 2.2 Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament every 2 years on:
- the extent to which FRAs are acting in accordance with the National Framework; and
  - any steps taken by her for the purpose of securing that FRAs act in accordance with the National Framework.
- 2.3 The SOA is a source of information used by the Secretary of State for their biennial report.
- 2.4 By producing a SOA, we provide information to communities, the Government, local authorities and partners, which allows them to make a valid assessment of our performance during 2020/21.

## **3. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

- 3.1 The SOA is a 'look-back' document, which provides information on the Authority's financial, governance and operational performance during 2020/21, and includes details of how the requirements of the National Framework are met and future improvements. The SOA provides information and evidence to demonstrate compliance with the National Framework and signposts to supporting documents.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The SOA does not present any risks to the Authority as it demonstrates appropriate governance arrangements are in place.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The publication of the SOA supports the Authority to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources, providing value for money to the public. The SOA has no direct financial implications and contains a retrospective picture of expenditure in 2020/21.

#### **6. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of the SOA. The SOA contains a retrospective picture of our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of the SOA. The SOA contains a retrospective picture of our approach to health and safety.

#### **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the contents of the SOA.
  - b) Agree that they are satisfied that the SOA properly and accurately reflects the risk environment and good governance arrangements of the fire and rescue service.
  - c) Progress the SOA to full Fire Authority for their approval in its current form.

---

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- HM Government (2004) Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Home Office (2018) Fire and Rescue National Framework
- TWFR (2021) Annual Governance Review 2020/21

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



# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

**2020 / 2021**

# CONTENTS

	Foreword	Page 3
1	Introduction	5
2	Financial	6
3	Governance	10
4	Operational	16
5	Inspection, Intervention and Accountability	27
6	Future improvements	28
	<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>30</b>
	Meeting the requirements of the National Framework	

<b>Version:</b> 1.0	<b>Date revised:</b> -	<b>Date published:</b> 17 November 2021	<b>Produced / reviewed by:</b> 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'.



**Chris Lowther QFSM**  
*Chief Fire Officer  
and Chief Executive*

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

# 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**<sup>1</sup> (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](#).

<sup>1</sup> 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](#)<sup>2</sup>, 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](#)<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 processed<sup>4</sup> 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](#).

<sup>4</sup> 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 visits<sup>5</sup> 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 5189<sup>6</sup> 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 activities<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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 notices<sup>8</sup>.
- 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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](#)<sup>9</sup>. 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 establishment<sup>10</sup> (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.

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

<sup>10</sup> 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%)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> 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](#)<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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
<b>Identify and Assess</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The PAG, Policy and Performance Committee and the Governance Committee ensure risks are mitigated by monitoring performance.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of community risks through community safety education, the safe and well programme, and safety campaigns.</li> <li>• Work with businesses to reduce risk through the RBIP.</li> <li>• Risk information is held on mobile data terminals, which aid effective response to incidents by operational crews.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevent and Protect</b>	<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"> <li>• Safe and well checks, targeted towards those at greatest risk, particularly engagement with vulnerable persons. This includes a</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Youth inclusion/diversionary activities such as the Phoenix Programme, Prince's Trust, JFEP and Fire Cadets and the SCH boxing gym.</li> <li>• Deliberate fire reduction strategy and effective use of Firestoppers.</li> <li>• A network of Community Safety Advocates provide education and support to the community and engagement at events.</li> <li>• Proactive and innovative use of social media in line with local and national safety campaigns.</li> <li>• Working with local businesses to promote fire safety by undertaking: fire safety audits, RBIP, partnership working, advice and education, enforcement action.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Member of the NFCC Prevention, Protection and Business Safety Groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prevent and Protect</b></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"> <li>• Prevention and protection activities are targeted to where they are needed.</li> <li>• A quality assurance process through audits and surveys, which include After the Incident Surveys, fire</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• Operate a RBIP and participate in a PAS with 12 national partners.</li> <li>• Where necessary, undertake fire investigations and fire safety prosecutions.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• District and service-wide performance action reports relating to prevention and protection activities, measuring performance against local indicators.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevent and Protect</b>	<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"> <li>• Undertake Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) and security clearance for necessary staff working with the community.</li> <li>• Ensure staff have the appropriate skills and relevant training through the OD Strategy and the PDR process.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Ensure work is informed by wider initiatives to support the most vulnerable in the community (e.g. Dementia Friends, Dyslexia Advocates).</li> </ul>
<b>Respond</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• A mobilising system, supported by an emergency call management policy.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Familiarisation, inspection and</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• Participate in the Northumbria LRF and supported the local Covid-19 response.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire &amp; Rescue Services Act.</li> <li>• Maintain national resilience assets and participate in the national operational guidance programme.</li> <li>• Participate in the NCAF and NRAT audits.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Resilience plans developed and confirmed with the Home Office in the event of depleted resources.</li> <li>• Contingencies in place in the event of industrial action.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaboration</b></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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Participate in the Northumbria LRF and supported the local Covid-19 response.</li> <li>• Operate SafetyWorks! as a community facility, in partnership with a range of organisations.</li> <li>• Collaborated with other emergency services via the Joint Strategy Board and Delivery Group, underpinned by a Statement of Intent.</li> <li>• Fire-Fire collaboration arrangements</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire &amp; Rescue Services Act.</li> <li>• Participate in the NCAF, and deploy national assets (e.g. USAR and HVP as required).</li> <li>• Operate NILOs and run a NILO course with Northumbria Police and NEAS.</li> <li>• Participate in JESIP, NOL / JOL and joint training with partners.</li> <li>• Participate in regional and national procurement frameworks.</li> </ul>
Section 3: National Resilience		
Framework requirement		Compliance evidence
<b>National Resilience</b>	<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"> <li>• Participate in mutual assistance arrangements / options under sections 13/16 of the Fire &amp; Rescue Services Act.</li> <li>• Maintain policies and procedures relating to local and national risks and a multi-agency community risk register via the Northumbria LRF.</li> <li>• Participate in all NFCC groups relating to resilience including the Working and User for each of the New Dimension assets and resources.</li> <li>• Lead and participate in national and local exercises.</li> <li>• Host specialist resources and skills that can respond to an incident as a national capability.</li> <li>• Participate in NRAT multi-capability assurance inspections.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Gap Analysis</b>	<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"> <li>• A Resilience department, who plan and prepare for exceptional events, covering the delivery of key national programmes.</li> <li>• The National Resilience assurance</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Coordination and Advisory Framework</b></p>	<p>Proactively engage with, and support, the NCAF arrangements including the NFCC's lead operational role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Participate in and support the NCAF.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Response to terrorist attacks or marauding terrorist firearms attacks</b></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"> <li>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.</li> <li>A Resilience department, who lead the Services participation in national and local exercises and oversee the response to MTA threats.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Participate in collaborative training with partner agencies to improve knowledge and working relationships in relation to MTA incidents.</li> <li>Have trained NILOs and operate NILO courses with Northumbria Police and NEAS.</li> <li>Participate in the Northumbria LRF.</li> <li>Employ a Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Advisor.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Resilience Assurance</b></p>	<p>Work collectively and with the Strategic Resilience Board and the national resilience lead authority to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with the Government and partners on issues of national</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> <p>The Service work with NRAT by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the NRAT team by sanctioning a USAR Capability Officer secondment.</li> <li>• Provision of a National Resilience specific point of contact (SPOC) to maintain direct contact with national resilience.</li> <li>• Provision of a representative (at an appropriate level) to represent the region at various capability National Working Group (NWG) and National User Group (NUG).</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Support the delivery of national USAR training as an approved training delivery partner</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Participate in exercise programmes such as USAR and ensure the</li> </ul>
--	--	--

		<p>training environment provides a challenging and stimulating experience for staff and partner agencies involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have trained NILOs who work closely with counter-terrorist policing and other key agencies.</li> </ul>
Section 4: Governance		
Framework requirement		Compliance evidence
<b>Governance</b>	<p>Statutory duty to ensure provision of their core functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates in accordance with a wide range of legislation and adheres to statutory duties.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Robust governance arrangements in place, overseen by the Authority, Governance Committee and Policy and Performance Committee.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Managing the Fire and Rescue Service</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The CFO is supported by a DCFO and AFCO.</li> <li>• The CFO is the Authority's adviser on all matters, which are either not the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151</li> </ul>

		<p>Officer) or the Monitoring Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the SCSP / IRMP and the strategies - the Community Safety Strategy, OD Strategy and MTFs.</li> </ul>
<b>Documents to be Prepared</b>	<p>Each fire and rescue authority is required to produce:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated Risk Management Plan</li> <li>Annual Statement of Assurance</li> <li>Financial Plans</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRMP 2017-20 consulted on and proposals implemented.</li> <li>• IRMP 2021-24 is being progressed.</li> <li>• Statement of Assurance 2020/21 (this document). Reviews performance against the requirements of the National Framework 2018.</li> <li>• MTFs, Efficiency plan and Reserves Strategy published.</li> </ul>
<b>National Fire Chiefs Council</b>	<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"> <li>• Continue to participate in and support the work of the NFCC.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Other staff are members of multiple NFCC committees and groups.</li> <li>• Adopt and embed the NFCCs Fire Standards.</li> </ul>

## Section 5: Achieving Value for Money

Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
<p><b>Achieving Value for Money</b></p> <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. 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"> <li>• Regularly consider resources relative to risk through the IRMP, which is subject to routine review and supported by evidence-based data.</li> <li>• Consider Value for Money in all aspects of work, including workforce planning, budget monitoring and business cases.</li> <li>• Proactively address feedback arising from Internal and External Audit.</li> <li>• Manage finances with regard to published guidance, and make this information available via this report, the MTFS, Efficiency Plan and Reserves Policy.</li> <li>• Have a published MTFS and Efficiency Plan, which is aligned to the IRMP and reported on regularly to the Authority.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Report regularly to the Authority on our capital programme and revenue budget.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reserves</b></p> <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"> <li>• A Reserves Policy is published and available on the TWFRS website.</li> <li>• The Reserves Policy gives transparency to stakeholders of the purpose and level of the reserves held by the Authority.</li> <li>• The Reserves Policy references key documents including the Statement of Accounts, this report and the</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• The Reserves Policy is taken into account in all aspects of financial planning, including the Budget Planning Framework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Commercial Transformation</b></p>	<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"> <li>• Participate in regional and national procurement frameworks, and in 2020/21 drove procurement efficiencies of almost £0.653m.</li> <li>• The Authority's standing orders set out clear guidelines for tendering procedures and approvals linked to contract values to ensure Value for Money.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Research and Development</b></p>	<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"> <li>• Engage in national and research development programmes, including providing staff time to participate in NFCC initiatives.</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>

	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.
--	---	---

<b>Trading</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• TWFRS Ltd Directors have specified roles.</li> <li>• The Authority holds shares, although no dividends have been paid.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• All commercial activities are exercised through a company within the meaning of Part 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.</li> <li>• All State Aid regulations are observed.</li> </ul>
----------------	--	--

**Section 6: Workforce**

	<b>Framework requirement</b>	<b>Compliance evidence</b>
<b>People Strategy</b>	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"> <li>• Commitment to workforce development is set out in the OD Strategy, soon to be replaced by the new People and OD Plan, which</li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>• A range of career development pathways which encourages growth in the workforce to support high performance.</li> <li>• Decision to adopt the NFCCs Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services, which sets out shared values and behaviours.</li> <li>• Established a new Inclusion Manager post.</li> <li>• Committed to EDI and this is evidenced through our new EDI Policy (autumn 2021) and inclusion in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.</li> <li>• Introduced a revised PDR process that has enhanced the development processes through individual objective setting.</li> <li>• 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).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional Standards</b></p>	<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"> <li>• A strong training and development culture that ensures public and firefighter safety.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Work closely with the NFCCs Fire Standards Board to support them in developing a new set of professional standards for the sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fitness Principles</b></p>	<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&amp;D provide support to all staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For operational staff, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Annual health monitoring by the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<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"> <li>○ Routine Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) assessment</li> <li>○ Access to a vaccination programme.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All staff receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Access to an independent qualified medical practitioner</li> <li>○ Access to advice from a dedicated OH Advisor</li> <li>○ Access to support from our Welfare Manager</li> <li>○ Referral to physiotherapy or other specialist occupational health advisor when required.</li> <li>○ Monthly health education promotions, including stress awareness</li> <li>○ Access to gym facilities at all stations, headquarters and the Technical Services Centre.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Established and recruited a Health and Fitness Advisor dedicated to supporting staff achieve their fitness objectives through individualised development programmes and activities.</li> <li>● Participate in a range of mental health initiatives, including Promoting Positive Mental Health, the Blue Light Time to Change programme, and work with Mind.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● Report annually on health and fitness data, and have written policies and procedures to support this approach.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Re-engagement of Senior Officers</b></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"> <li>● No principal fire officers have been reappointed.</li> <li>● Adhere to recruitment policies and procedures.</li> <li>● The DCFO appointment and ACFO appointments were internal only due to covid measures in place at the time of recruitment.</li> </ul>

	<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>	
--	---	--

**Section 7: Inspection, Intervention and Accountability**

	Framework requirement	Compliance evidence
<b>Inspection</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Implemented an internal communications plan to prepare the Service for inspection.</li> <li>• Supported the regional sharing of information.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Robust governance arrangements in place, overseen by the Authority, Governance Committee and Policy and Performance Committee.</li> <li>• The CFO supported by a DCFO and AFCO.</li> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions;</li> <li>• provide the opportunity for communities to help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement; and</li> <li>• have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service.</li> </ul>	<p>and a Code of Governance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear publication scheme, providing information to the public via our website and welcoming feedback.</li> <li>• Annually publish accounts, which have an unqualified opinion from our external auditors and an unqualified Value for Money conclusion.</li> <li>• Seek the views of members of the public through consultations and engagement for example, IRMP and tri-station facility.</li> <li>• Engage with members of the public at community events.</li> <li>• Evaluate work through service user feedback in the form of surveys and audits.</li> <li>• Invite comments, compliments and complaints, and respond to all complaints within 28 days.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Transparency</b></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"> <li>• Comply with all aspects of the Data Transparency Code and the ICO Publication Scheme.</li> <li>• Adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.</li> <li>• Maintain policies and procedures relating to data and information governance.</li> <li>• Publish quarterly performance reports, benchmarked against other metropolitan fire and rescue services.</li> <li>• Report performance through the Statement of Assurance (this report) and the CFOs annual report.</li> <li>• Provide data returns as required to the Home Office and HMICFRS.</li> </ul>



# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

2020 / 2021

**Tyne and Wear Fire  
and Rescue Authority**

*Creating the Safest Community*



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 6**

**MEETING: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 29 NOVEMBER 2021**

---

**SUBJECT: COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

---

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Policy and Performance Committee with an overview of the compliments and complaints received by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 During 2020/21, TWFRS received 41 compliments and 27 complaints, the volume of both are minor in comparison to the 47,173 'official' interactions recorded with the public. The attached report provides analysis of the compliments and complaints received.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Compliments and complaints are a valuable source of information and can help identify areas of good practice, underlying problems and / or potential areas for improvement. When coupled with service user feedback retrieved from surveys,<sup>1</sup> compliments and complaints can help build a picture of how TWFRS is performing overall.
- 2.2 Whilst TWFRS strives for operational excellence, there may be occasions when it does not deliver to the standards expected and welcomes stakeholder views about its performance, allowing the opportunity to investigate and correct circumstances of underperformance and learn from the outcomes in order to improve the quality of service provided.

## **3 COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**

- 3.1 Compliments allow TWFRS to hear the views and experiences of service users and the public and sharing these positive comments helps to boost staff morale and enhance performance in the workplace. The relatively low number of compliments received may reflect the previous absence of consistent recording and reporting, although a process has been introduced to address this. Further analysis of the compliments received is presented in section 3 of the main report. The full list of compliments is available to Members on request.

---

<sup>1</sup> This refers to after the incident surveys, fire safety audit surveys and safe and well perception surveys

3.2 Complaints also provide useful service user feedback and analysis can support the identification of potential areas for improvement. Of the 27 complaints received just under half, 48% were upheld following investigation. The highest number (eight) related to complaints about on duty staff conduct, although only two of these, 25% were upheld. Further details and analysis of complaints is offered in sections 4 -10 of the attached report, including a breakdown by department, cause and outcome.

#### **4 RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 There are no risks associated with the complaint handling process however; the current procedure is under review. This does, not affect the quality of the complaint handling process as complaints are actioned within strict timescales and the complainant is informed of progress during the course of the investigation.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

#### **6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

#### **7 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

#### **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 Members are recommended to:

- a) Endorse the contents of this report
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

---

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

## Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/21

### Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the compliments and complaints received by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. In total 41 compliments and 27 complaints, were received the volume of both are minor in comparison to the 47,173 'official' interactions recorded with the public.

Whilst the numbers of compliments and complaints are low as a proportion of the total number of interactions, TWFRS remains committed to providing the highest quality service to the communities of Tyne and Wear and recognises feedback as an essential component of this continuous improvement journey which includes enhanced reporting and analysis, for example the introduction of this annual report.

Compliments allow TWFRS to hear the views and experiences of service users and the public and sharing these positive comments helps to boost staff morale and enhance performance in the workplace. The relatively low number of compliments received may reflect the previous absence of consistent recording and reporting, although a process has been introduced to address this. Further analysis of the compliments received is presented in section 3. The full list of compliments is available to Members on request.

Complaints also provide useful service user feedback and analysis can support the identification of potential areas for improvement. Of the 27 complaints received just under half, 48% were upheld following investigation. The highest number (eight) related to complaints about on duty staff conduct, although only two of these, 25% were upheld. Further details and analysis of complaints is offered in sections 4 -10 of the attached report, including a breakdown by department, cause and outcome.

Other developments during the year include the introduction of a designated complaints and compliments intranet page and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) provided complaint handling training to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). A new complaints policy and procedure in draft and information on these developments can be found in section 11.

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The statutory duties undertaken by TWFRS ensure that staff regularly interact with the public and feedback is received about the service provided through a variety of channels including verbally, in person or by telephone, in writing by letter, email, text, social media or via the website. This report details the compliments and complaints received by TWFRS from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 TWFRS is committed to providing the highest quality service to the communities of Tyne and Wear and recognises feedback as an essential component of its continuous improvement journey. Feedback offers critical reflection of performance against standards and may describe activities undertaken to an exceptional standard or identify areas for improvement.
- 1.1 Feedback in the form of praise highlights where staff have gone above and beyond their duty, ensuring they are recognised for their efforts. Whilst TWFRS strive for operational excellence, there may be occasions where it does not deliver to the standards expected and when this occurs, TWFRS welcomes the opportunity to investigate and correct circumstances of underperformance and learn from the outcomes, in order to improve the quality of service provided.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 As reported to the Home Office, during 2020/21, 26,555<sup>1</sup> calls were received to the Control Room and 15,142<sup>2</sup> incidents attended. In addition, 4,888<sup>3</sup> home safety checks and 588<sup>3</sup> fire safety audits were conducted in this period. In total, 47,173 'official' interactions with the public were recorded. This figure is lower than previous years due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and Government restrictions. As a result, of the pandemic TWFRS adapted its ways of working to continue its statutory responsibilities, while minimising face-to-face contact to protect both staff and the public.
- 2.2 There were 79 contacts received to the complaints and compliments mailbox, 41 were compliments, 29 complaints and the remaining nine were classified as 'other' contacts. The other contacts were forwarded to the relevant internal department for review and response.
- 2.3 Of the 29 complaints received, two were for external organisations and were redirected to the North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS) and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). Details of the 79 contacts can be viewed in figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Contacts received 2020/21**

Contact	Count
<b>Compliments</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>29</b>
TWFRS	27
External - NEAS / NFRS	2
<b>Other contacts</b>	<b>9</b>
Employment matters <sup>4</sup>	3
Data information request	2
General enquiry <sup>5</sup>	2
Money dispute	1
Secondary employment dispute	1
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>79</b>

- 2.4 The scope of analysis for this report is the 27 complaints and the 41 compliments received.

## 3. Compliment analysis 2020-21

- 3.1 For monitoring purposes, TWFRS define compliments as '*praise given by a service user or partner for a service provided, or to thank an individual, team or department for their actions*'. Therefore, interdepartmental compliments have not been included in this report.
- 3.2 When the number of compliments received (41) is compared with the total number of interactions recorded (47,173) this figure is extremely low. It is likely that more compliments were received to TWFRS for the period however; they have not been disseminated beyond the recipient and / or their department. This may be because previously there was no consistent method of recording and reporting compliments. Steps have been put in place to

<sup>1</sup> Source: mobilising system for call, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Source: IRS for incident data, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Source: CFRMIS for HSC data and audits, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Includes applications, grievances, pensions and employer liability claims.

<sup>5</sup> Queries in relation to Covid-19 policy / or general procedural decisions.

address this matter, including a dedicated complaint and compliments email address and intranet page. Since these changes were implemented, there has been an increase in compliments being reported internally.

- 3.3 One compliment highlighted that due to the busy roles undertaken by TWFRS it is easy to forget the consistent positive contributions made:

*'I understand the high demands placed upon your organisation, and during these difficult times it's easy to forget about the constant amazing job that you do. Always placing others before yourself, which displays numerous traits, selfless, commitment, courage, heroism, team work to name a few. Thank you once again for outstanding service'.*

- 3.4 The 41 compliments came from a number of sources for example, service users, members of the public, blue light partners, third sector organisations, MPs and the Government. Where contact details were provided compliments were acknowledged. The full list of compliments is available to Members on request.

- 3.4.1 A large proportion of the compliments were in recognition of the work conducted by staff during the pandemic in support of blue light colleagues and partners. Written 'thank yous' referred to the additional activities undertaken by staff and volunteers to keep communities safe. Extracts of praise include:

- *'The work that firefighters and staff have done has been critical to the response to the pandemic. We have heard many amazing examples of what has been achieved'.* **Home Secretary and Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities**
- *'My Ministerial colleagues and I have been incredibly thankful for the work that everyone in the fire and rescue services across England has done to keep put communities safe'.* **Home Secretary**
- *'I am so appreciative and grateful for all you are doing in keeping our communities safe and healthy, and you have all my support in rising to the challenges you continue to face'.* **Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear**
- *'They represent the best of us, with tireless commitment to public service, and a can-do attitude in dangerous, high-pressure situations, which are made even harder by the pandemic'.* **Member of Parliament for Blaydon**
- *'...I was inspired by my colleagues' desire to do the right things to protect our residents, communities, businesses and our own teams...I was a bit awestruck by the combination of creativity, commitment and sheer hard graft which delivered the work of the SCG'.* **Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Chair**
- *'I would like to thank you personally for the genuine and proactive wiliness you demonstrate towards joined-up activities, as replicated by those other senior leaders of TWFRS'.* **Northumbria Police Chief Constable**

- 3.4.2 Feedback was also received from third sector organisations, which staff interacted with during the pandemic to support the most vulnerable in society, which included the coordination and transportation of food parcels and essential goods; which without that additional support, the reach of many of these organisations would not have been as wide. The 'thank yous' show the contribution TWFRS made to local communities and how much this was valued:

- *'Your team went the extra mile in order to assist us with the logistics of getting food supplies to our local Corps for them in turn to distribute to the most needy'.* **Salvation Army**
- *'...many of our clients live alone and due to shielding were also feeling very isolated and some had started to experience a decline in their mental health and wellbeing. Clients commented that the Firefighters who visited to drop off shopping always made time for a quick socially distant chat, impacting positively on how they were feeling'.* **Mental Health Concern**
- *'TWFRS saved the day on a number of occasions providing volunteers and a vehicle to help deliver food and activity packs to the community. The guys were always on hand and happy to help'.* **Byker Children and Young People's Partnership**
- *'Without your support we would have struggled to deliver 3 hot meals a week to over 80 families'.* **Gateway at Howden Hub**
- *'The resource you are providing us is invaluable as it means service users get their food at an appropriate time in the day – rather than after office hours when we used to deliver it'.* **Angelou Centre**
- *'Thank you for all of the work you do in uplifting our communities'.* **Building Futures East**

3.4.3 Compliments were received about emergency response and prevention activities and this feedback illustrates the breadth of the work undertaken by TWFRS, including safe and well visits, attendance at fires, flooding incidents, person extraction and the rescue of pets and wildlife. A number of the compliments repeated similar themes such as the professionalism and kindness of staff and the timeliness of response. Examples include:

- *'Due to your swift reaction time and professionalism, we suffered no structural damage which enabled us to remain fully operational, helping us provide a full service to the client...and its residents'.* **Service user**
- *'...assist with the extrication of a patient from an upstairs flat as they needed to be conveyed to the RVI for admission. The NEAS staff who were in attendance felt that the two Services worked together effortlessly to ensure that the patient was safe and secure at all times and all on scene ensured that everything was explained to the patient and their family throughout whilst ensuring at all times that the dignity of the patient was meticulously respected. They noted that the Fire Service staff were amazing'.* **The North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust**
- *'...we had a severe leak in our home. They arrived incredibly quickly... immediately got a plan in action to seal our roof as best they could from the heavy rain...The team all had an incredibly positive attitude, were really reassuring and made us feel safe. We are incredibly grateful for the team's help that night and cannot thank them enough for their efforts'.* **Service user**
- *'I want to say a big thank you to [name] and your night team for helping me when my cat got stuck on your fence. They were very kind and helpful'.* **Service user**
- *'...a herring gull was caught on some fishing line and hanging from a chimneystack... teams worked quickly and efficiently to get the bird down and as he was unhurt I was able to release him straight away'.* **RSPCA**

- *'Sincere thank you to [name], who came to the rescue of my toddler and newborn baby trapped in my car in Newcastle city centre...what a kind and helpful team and so much appreciated'. Service user*
- *'Can I just say a massive thank you to all the crews that attended...on Friday. You are all our heroes every single one of you need medals for saving our residents lives that were trapped. You all go above and beyond in your jobs'. Service user*

3.4.4 Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a legal obligation to comply with the general equality duty, which incorporates nine protected characteristics.<sup>6</sup> To meet statutory obligations, when exercising functions, TWFRS must aim to:

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

3.4.5 The compliments show positive interactions with members of the public including those with protected characteristics such as the elderly or those with disabilities. Feedback about how staff 'approached a situation' and treated people fairly, with dignity and respect, demonstrating some of the 'softer skills' staff possess when interacting with the public:

- *'This is how you do access right. Doesn't make it a big deal, and sorts it out themselves without me having to ask - big thank you to @Tyne\_Wear\_FRS for making things so easy and stress-free #AccessMatters'. Service user*
- *'The carers and family...would like to say thank you for how you quickly responded and the absolute lovely way with total respect treat[ed] her that afternoon...she is a disabled young lady'. On behalf of a Service user*
- *'Hello, can I say a big thank you to the Firefighters who dried my flat after a flood from the flat above. You are all 4 stars. God bless you. Keep safe. Love & prayers an 85 yr old'. Service user*
- *'A crew attended to our grandmothers property...I just want to thank them for how they approached the situation and the professionalism shown. The family greatly appreciate it'. On behalf of a Service user*

3.5 Compliment statistics are reported quarterly to the Corporate Governance Board and the narrative is published monthly on the intranet for staff to review alongside running totals.

## 4. Complaints analysis

4.1 Complaints have been categorised based on the LGOs definition of a complaint:

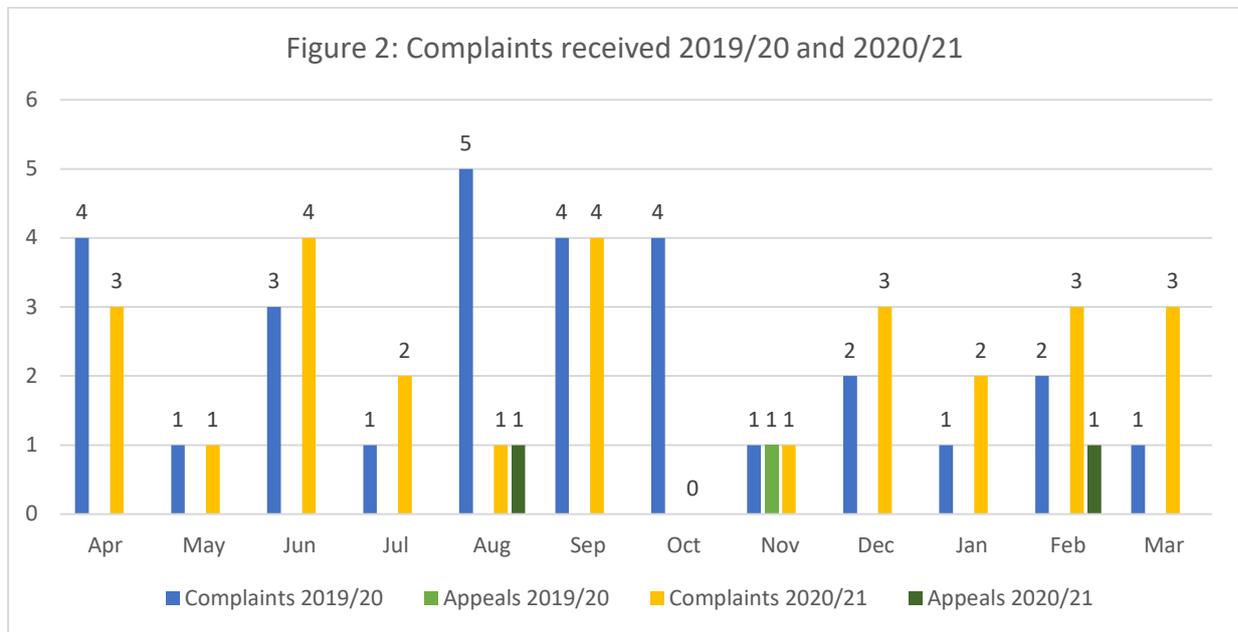
*'An expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action by one or more members of the public. This may be about the standard of our service provided by us or on our behalf, or the manner in which it was provided'.*

---

<sup>6</sup> Nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

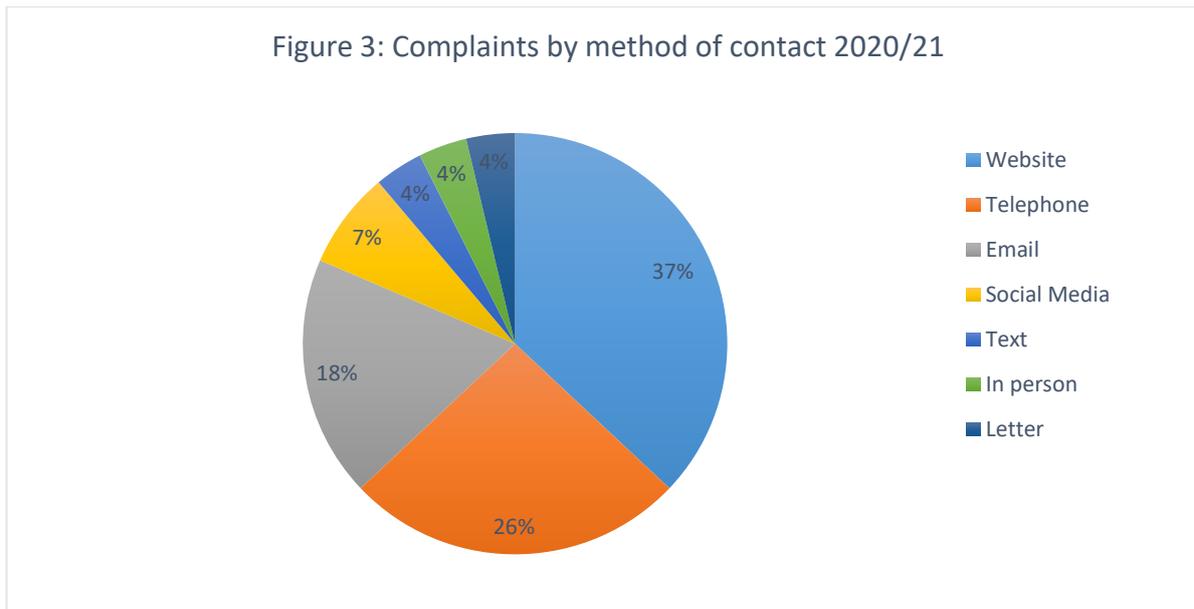
4.2 During 2020/21, 27 complaints were received, a reduction of two when compared with 2019/20. Two of the 27 complaints were anonymous, the same number as 2019/20, and enough information was provided for one of the complaints to be fully investigated. The second complaint however, was unable to be investigated due to lack of information provided by the complainant. The details of both complaints have been analysed and captured within the findings.

## 5. Volume of complaints received



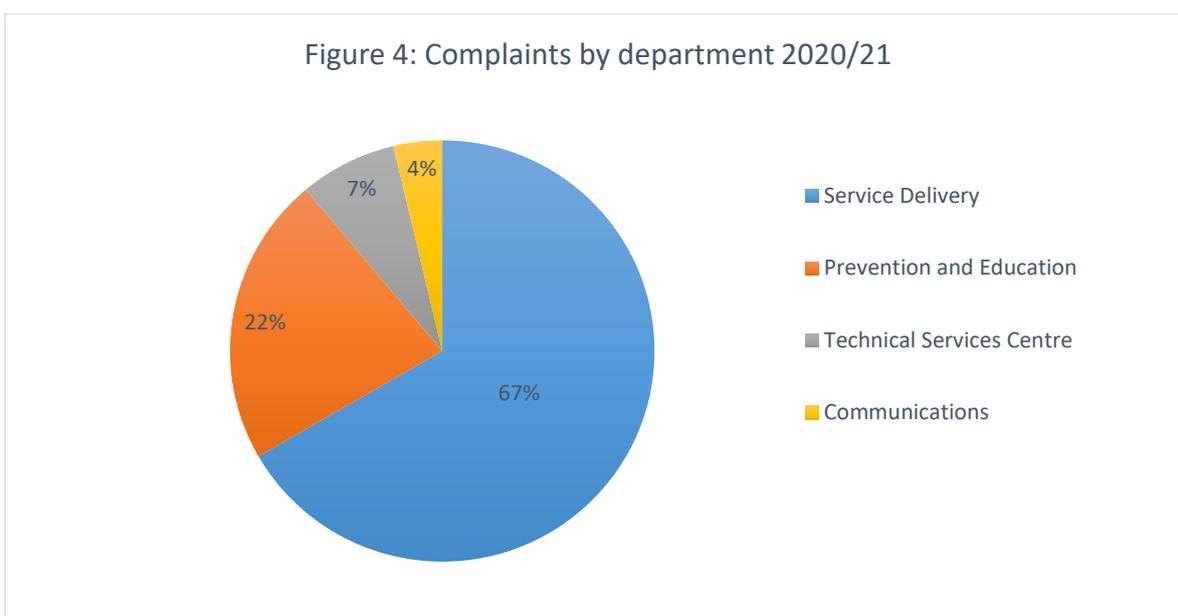
- 5.1 Figure 2 illustrates complaints received by month for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and when compared, the complaints per month are roughly consistent for each financial year with the exception of August and October, which saw a reduction for the 2020/21 period.
- 5.2 Two appeals were received during 2020/21, one in August 2020 and one in February 2021. Both complainants were dissatisfied with the outcome of their primary investigation and appealed the decision to the Chief Fire Officer. As a result, two secondary investigations were conducted and the outcome of both were to uphold the original investigation decision.
- 5.3 The appeal stage is the final stage of TWFRS' complaint process however; complainants can choose to raise their complaints with the LGO. During 2020/21, no LGO complaints were received.
- 5.4 It should be noted that there is no a data comparison for 2019/20 for the following sections of this report as the data recorded was previously not coded / categorised.

## 6. Complaints by method of contact



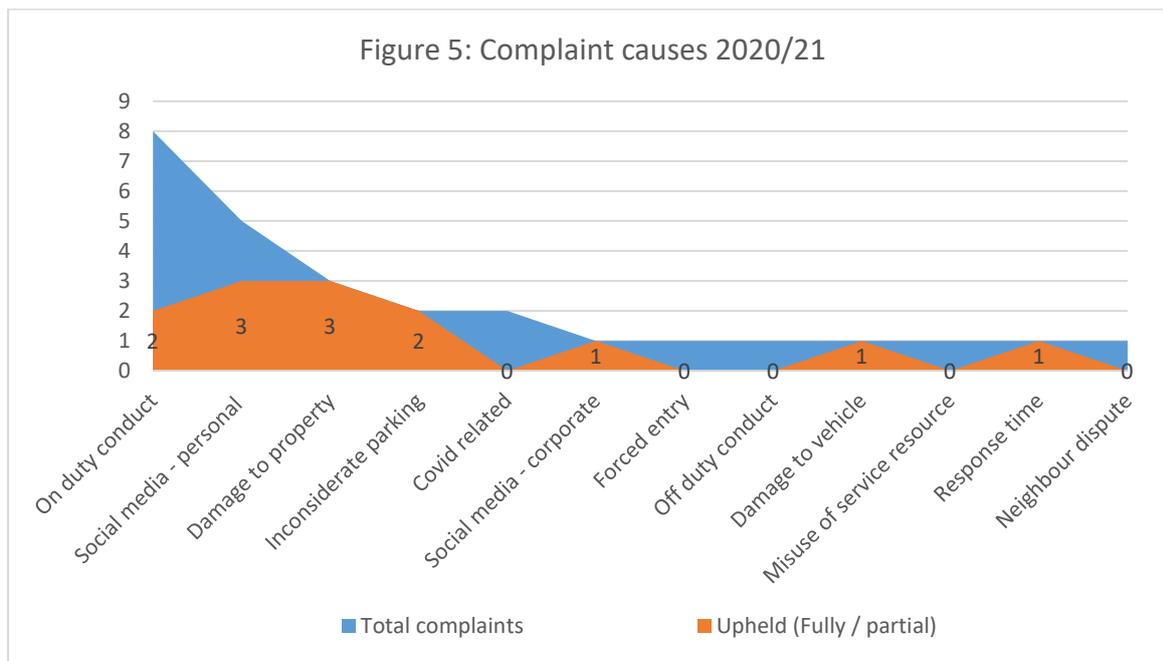
- 6.1 Figure 3 illustrates, that 37% of complaints were received via the website, closely followed by telephone at 26% and email at 8%. It can be surmised that complainants may prefer to use the website as this is a quick and easy method to submit a complaint which can be undertaken at a convenient time, particularly for those who work 9 to 5 or have busy family lives and may prefer to make contact outside of traditional 'working hours'.
- 6.2 The data also shows that 70% of complaints were received without the complainant having to speak with a member of staff. The remaining 30% comprise of telephone or face-to-face contact. Even though the service operates 24 hours a day, the telephone complaints were reported 'in hours' via departmental contacts or Business Services and none were reported via the Control Room.

## 7. Complaints by department



- 7.1 Figure 4 shows complaints by department and as expected the largest volume of complaints were attributed to Service Delivery. The Service employs 861<sup>7</sup> staff, and 58% (496) work in Service Delivery therefore this broadly correlates with this department having the largest proportion of complaints (67%) and the fact that their roles are naturally public facing.
- 7.2 Service Delivery staff attended 15,142 operational incidents in 2020/21, the largest volume of face-to-face contact recorded within the 47,173 'official' interactions. Therefore, it is foreseeable that this department would receive the highest proportion of complaints.

## 8. Complaint causes



- 8.1 Identifying the principal cause of a complaint is helpful to support analysis but it also provides an instructive way to understand where TWFRS may need to target improvement. Figure 5 shows the top three complaints, making up almost two-thirds of the total complaints were in relation to on duty conduct (8), personal social media accounts (5) and property damage (3).
- 8.2 48% of complaints were upheld which indicates in these instances that TWFRS or the staff involved were found to be at fault. Examples of why a complaint may be upheld could include, TWFRS or a staff member were found to have not acted accordingly, provided a poor service or that their actions or decisions may have had a negative impact on an individual. A complaint would be partly upheld if it was identified that TWFRS or a staff member had got some things wrong, but not all the issues that were complained.
- 8.3 In those instances where a complaint was upheld an apology was provided, supported by an explanation of why the occurrence happened and the action(s) taken to put this matter right to avoid it happening again. 85% of the complaints upheld were fully upheld and 15% were partly upheld.
- 8.4 Sixteen officers investigated 27 complaints, and of that figure, five were assigned multiple complaints due to their scope of responsibility. These five officers conducted between two and four investigations each, the other nine officers conducted one investigation each. 56% of investigations were conducted by a Station Manager, 26% by a Group Manager, 11% by a Department Head, 4% an Area Manager and 4% a Watch Manager.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Core HR, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

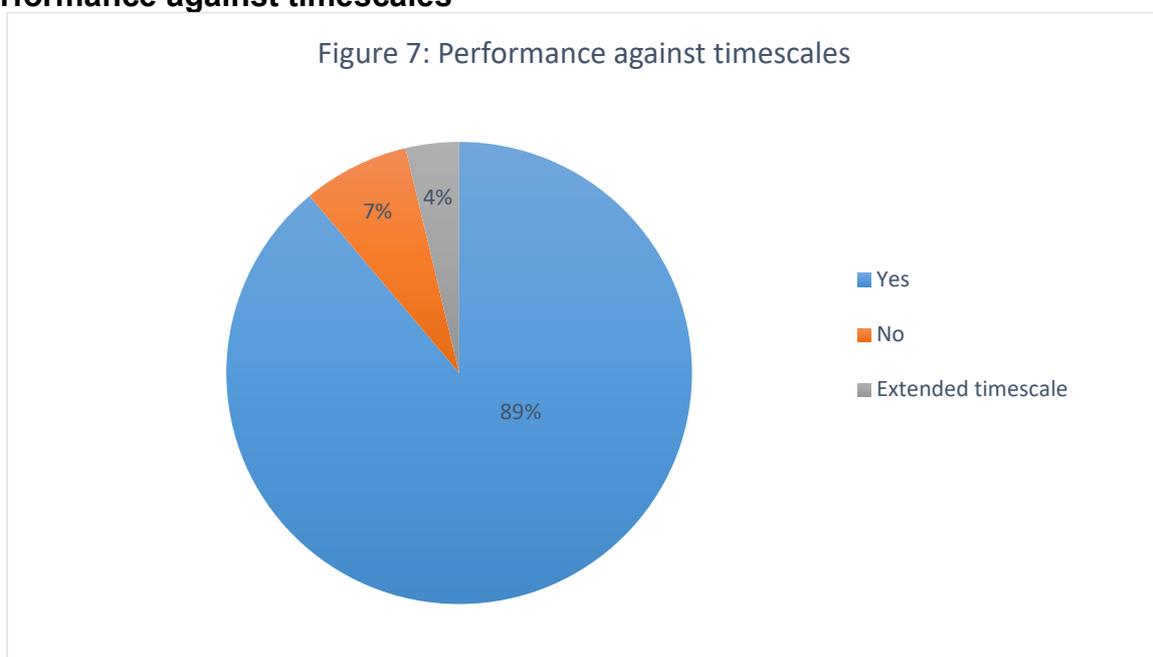
## 9. Complaint outcomes 2020/21

Figure 6: Complaint outcomes

Causes of complaints	Total complaints	% upheld
On duty conduct	8	25%
Social media - personal	5	60%
<b>Damage to property</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Inconsiderate parking</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>
Covid related	2	0%
Social media - corporate	1	100%
Forced entry	1	0%
Off duty conduct	1	0%
<b>Vehicle damage</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>
Misuse of service resource	1	0%
<b>Response time</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>
Neighbour dispute	1	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>48%</b>

- 9.1 Although the highest category of complaints was in relation to on duty conduct, 8/27, only 25% of these complaints were upheld.
- 9.2 Staff use of personal social media received the second highest number of complaints 5/27, the complaints were about photographs or comments made on personal accounts whilst demonstrating affiliation to TWFRS, 60% of these complaints were upheld.
- 9.3 The data shows the eight complaints received about property damage (3), inconsiderate parking (2), vehicle damage (1), response time (1) and corporate social media (1) were all upheld. Hypothetically, staff could have avoided these complaints by undertaking a different courses of action and / or behaviours.
- 9.4 Of the five complaints received in relation to covid (1), forced entry (1), off duty conduct (1), misuse of service resource (1) and a neighbour dispute (1) none were upheld.

## 10. Performance against timescales



- 10.1 The complaint procedure specifies that complaints are to be responded to within 28 days, unless the complaint is complex in nature and / or additional time is required to support the investigation process. 89% (24) of complaints were responded to within 28 days.
- 10.2 The three complaints closed outside of the 28 day timescale were because one complaint required support from Sunderland City Council legal department therefore this prolonged the investigation. The remaining two complaints were received via social media and there was a delay in receiving full information from the complainant therefore this impacted the commencement of the investigation.

## **11. Developments in 2020/21**

- 11.1 In addition, to the introduction of this report there have been other developments including the transfer of compliments and complaints ownership from the Principal Officers Suite to the Business Improvement Team.
- 11.2 With the establishment of the Corporate Governance Board in October 2020, there has been improved internal reporting, compliments and complaints are discussed quarterly via the corporate governance scorecard and highlight report.
- 11.3 A designated intranet page has been established where staff can view the corporate governance scorecard and guidance in relation to compliments and complaints
- 11.4 The LGO conducted 'effective complaint handling' training with SLT in May 2020. This training included:
- information about defining and analysing complaints;
  - planning investigations;
  - evaluating information and making sound decisions;
  - communicating decisions effectively and;
  - resolving and learning from complaints.
- 11.5 Feedback from this training will be analysed with a view to organising training for other key staff.
- 11.6 A literature review and peer research was undertaken to analyse good practice in order to inform the new complaints policy and procedure.

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 7**

**GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: 29 NOVEMBER 2021**

---

**SUBJECT: INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT – 2021/2022**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report sets out the performance of Internal Audit up to November 2021, areas of work undertaken, and the internal audit opinion regarding the adequacy of the overall system of internal control within the Authority.

**2. Key Performance Indicators**

2.1 Performance against the agreed KPIs to date is shown in Appendix 1. KPI's are currently on target in all areas.

**3. Summary of Internal Audit Work**

3.1 Six audit areas are included in the 2021/22 plan.

3.2 To date two audits have been completed, these audits relate to Project Management and Financial Management – Reserves Strategy. Two further audits relating to Counter Fraud and Information Governance are due to commence imminently.

3.3 The remaining planned audits are scheduled to be completed by the end of the financial year, as follows:

- Performance Management
- Corporate Governance.

3.4 The current overall opinion against each risk area, based on the last three years' audit work is shown in Appendix 2. As can be seen the position remains very positive.

3.5 It is anticipated that the agreed plan will be delivered in full by the year end.

**4. Conclusions**

4.1 This report provides information regarding progress against the planned audit work for the year and performance targets.

4.2 It remains the opinion of Internal Audit that, overall throughout the Authority, there continues to be an adequate system of internal control.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1 Members are asked to consider the report.

### **Background Papers**

Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2021/2022  
Governance Committee, 8th March 2021

.

## Appendix 1

Internal Audit - Overall Objectives, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Targets for 2021/22			
<b>Efficiency and Effectiveness</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1) To ensure the service provided is effective and efficient.	1) Complete sufficient audit work to provide an opinion on the key risk areas identified.	1) All key risk areas covered over a 3 year period	1) Achieved
	2) Percentage of draft reports issued within 15 days of the end of fieldwork.	2) 90%	2) Achieved (100%)
	3) Percentage of audits completed by the target date (from scoping meeting to issue of draft report).	3) 87%	3) Achieved (100%)
<b>Quality</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1) To maintain an effective system of Quality Assurance.	1) Opinion of External Auditor	1) Satisfactory opinion	1) Achieved
2) To ensure recommendations made by the service are agreed and implemented.	2) Percentage of agreed high, significant and medium risk internal audit recommendations which are implemented.	2) 100% for high and significant. 90% for medium risk	2) High and significant – Achieved (100%) Medium – Achieved (96%)
<b>Client Satisfaction</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>KPI's</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1) To ensure that clients are satisfied with the service and consider it to be good quality.	1) Results of Post Audit Questionnaires	1) Overall average score of better than 1.5 (where 1=Good and 4=Poor)	1) Achieved (Average score for last 12 months is 1.0)
	2) Results of other Questionnaires	2) Results classed as 'Good'	2) None undertaken
	3) Number of Complaints / Compliments	3) No target – actual numbers will be reported	3) No compliments or complaints received



## Internal Audit Coverage

Key Risk Area	2018/19 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2019/20 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2020/21 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2021/22 Audit Opinion / Assurance	Scope of planned audits 2021/22	Overall Opinion from Previous 3 years work
Corporate Governance		Procurement - Substantial		Corporate Governance Arrangements	Review of the Corporate Governance Arrangements in place within the service	Substantial
Service / Business Planning, IRMP		IRMP - Substantial				Substantial
Financial Management	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and Accounts Payable - Substantial	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and Accounts Payable - Substantial	Financial Transaction Testing – Payroll and Accounts Payable - Substantial  Business Development/Income Generation - Substantial	Financial Transaction Testing – Payroll and Accounts Payable  Reserves Strategy - Substantial	Financial transaction testing on payroll and accounts payable.  Review of the Service's reserves strategy.	Substantial
Risk Management		IRMP - Substantial				Substantial
Procurement and Contract Management	Review of the contract management arrangements for a sample of key contracts –	Review of the contract management arrangements for a sample of key contracts – Substantial	Contract Management Arrangements - Moderate			Substantial

Appendix 2

Key Risk Area	2018/19 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2019/20 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2020/21 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2021/22 Audit Opinion / Assurance	Scope of planned audits 2021/22	Overall Opinion from Previous 3 years work
	Deferred to 2019/20	Procurement – Substantial				
Human Resource Management	Implementation of Core HR - Substantial	Managerial Assessment Programme - Substantial	Workforce Planning - Substantial			Substantial
Asset Management		Asset Management - Substantial	Contract Management Arrangements - Moderate			Substantial
ICT	Review of the cyber security arrangements in place for the service – Moderate  Review of the business continuity/disaster recovery arrangements in place for the Service - Substantial		ICT Systems Developments - Moderate			Substantial
Fraud and Corruption	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and Accounts	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and Accounts	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and Accounts	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll and	Financial transaction testing on payroll and accounts payable.	Substantial

## Appendix 2

Key Risk Area	2018/19 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2019/20 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2020/21 Audit Opinion / Assurance	2021/22 Audit Opinion / Assurance	Scope of planned audits 2021/22	Overall Opinion from Previous 3 years work
	Payable - Substantial	Payable - Substantial	Payable – Substantial	Accounts Payable		
Information Governance	Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation – Substantial	Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation - Substantial	Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation - Substantial	Compliance with General Data Protection Regulation	Review the results of the Service's Data Protection Officer's assurance work.	Substantial
Business Continuity & Contingency Planning	Review of the business continuity/disaster recovery arrangements in place for the Service - Substantial	Business Continuity Planning - Substantial				Substantial
Performance Management	Performance Management Arrangements – Substantial  Integrated Risk Management Plan, Response Review Report - Data Quality - Substantial			Performance management arrangements	Review of the Service's performance management arrangements	Substantial
Payroll	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll - Substantial	Financial Transactions Testing on Payroll - Substantial	Transaction Testing – Payroll - Substantial	Transaction Testing – Payroll	Financial transaction testing on payroll	Substantial

**Appendix 2**

<b>Key Risk Area</b>	<b>2018/19 Audit Opinion / Assurance</b>	<b>2019/20 Audit Opinion / Assurance</b>	<b>2020/21 Audit Opinion / Assurance</b>	<b>2021/22 Audit Opinion / Assurance</b>	<b>Scope of planned audits 2021/22</b>	<b>Overall Opinion from Previous 3 years work</b>
Partnership Working		Review of the contract management arrangements for a sample of key contracts – Substantial				Substantial
Project Management	Implementation of Core HR - Substantial			Project Management Arrangements - Moderate	Review of the Service's project management arrangements	Substantial

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT – SECOND QUARTERLY REVIEW 2021/2022**

**REPORT OF THE FINANCE DIRECTOR**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To report on the Treasury Management performance for the second quarter of 2021/2022.

**2. Introduction**

- 2.1 Sunderland City Council as Lead Authority performs the treasury management function on behalf of the Authority.
- 2.2 This report sets out the Treasury Management performance for the second quarter of the financial year 2021/2022, in accordance with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy agreed by Authority. This information is based on the data for Sunderland City Council, which incorporates the investment and borrowing figures for the Authority.

**3. Summary of Treasury Management Performance for 2021/2022 – Quarter 2**

- 3.1 The Authority's Treasury Management function continues to look at ways to maximise financial savings and increase investment returns to the revenue budget, whilst maintaining a balanced risk position. Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates have continued to be volatile, primarily in response to the economic impact of Covid-19 and the scale and pace of recovery. In respect of borrowing, due to the temporary use of reserves to fund the Capital Programme, no new borrowing has been taken out to date during 2021/2022. This position continues to be monitored closely by the Authority.
- 3.2 No refinancing of debt has been possible in 2021/2022 during the period as rates have not been considered sufficiently favourable. The Authority's average interest rate on borrowing is low, currently 2.81%, and as such the Authority already benefits from this low cost of borrowing and from the ongoing savings from past debt rescheduling exercises. Based on advice from the Authority's treasury management advisor, performance continues to see the Authority's average borrowing rate compare favourably to other authorities.

- 3.3 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators are regularly reviewed and the Authority is within the limits set for all of its Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2021/2022. The statutory limit under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003, which is required to be reported separately, (also known as the Authorised Borrowing Limit for External Debt) was set at £50.272m for 2021/2022. The Authority's maximum external debt during the financial year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 was £35.423m and is well within this limit. More details of all of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators are set out in Section 2 of Appendix A for information.
- 3.4 The Authority's investment policy is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure it has flexibility to take full advantage of any changes in market conditions which will benefit the Authority.
- 3.5 The Authority has achieved a rate of return on its investments of 0.01% in the first two quarters of 2021/2022 compared with the benchmark 7-Day LIBID (London Interbank Bid) rate of -0.08% (set at 0.125% less than the corresponding 7-Day LIBOR rate, which due to the fall in gilts means the benchmark rate has become negative). Performance remains above the benchmark rate, whilst still adhering to the prudent policy agreed by the Authority, in what remains a very challenging market.
- 3.6 More detailed Treasury Management information is included in Appendix A for information.
- 3.7 The regular updating of the Authority's Authorised Lending List is required to take into account financial institution mergers and changes in institutions' credit ratings since the last report. The updated Approved Lending List is shown in Appendix C for information.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Committee is requested to note the Treasury Management performance during the second quarter of 2021/2022.
- 4.2 Members are also requested to note the Lending List Criteria at Appendix B, the Approved Lending List at Appendix C and the Risk Management Review of Treasury Management at Appendix D.

**Detailed Treasury Management Performance – Second Quarter 2021/2022****A1 Borrowing Strategy and Performance – 2021/2022**

- A1.1 The Borrowing Strategy for 2021/2022 was approved by the Authority on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- A1.2 The Borrowing Strategy is based upon interest rate forecasts from a wide cross section of City institutions. The view when the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy was drafted was that the 0.10% Bank of England (BoE) Base Rate would remain until March 2024 due to the slow rate of recovery of the economy and the need for the Government to see the burden of the elevated debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio falling significantly. PWLB borrowing rates were expected to rise, albeit gently, during 2021/2022 across all periods but could be subject to exceptional levels of volatility.
- A1.3 The BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 voted unanimously to leave the Base Rate unchanged at 0.10%. What has changed is the previous stance of not tightening monetary policy, to now flagging that modest interest rate increases may be on the horizon. While financial markets have been anticipating an increase in the Base Rate to 0.25% by mid-2022 and to 0.50% by the end of 2022, Link Asset Service, the Authority's treasury advisors, believe any rise will not occur before mid-2023.
- A1.4 The MPC still projects GDP to grow by 7.25% in 2021 but has revised upwards its forecast for 2022 from 5.75% to 6%. There were no changes announced to its programme of quantitative easing purchases due to finish by the end of 2021 at a total of £895bn.
- A1.5 ONS data shows the annualised Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate at 3.1% in September 2021, down from 3.2% in August but still significantly higher than the 2.0% rate in July. The large change in the level of the index is expected to be temporary and the situation remains volatile and uncertain. The rapid rise can largely be attributed to base effects, in particular discounted restaurant and café prices during 2020 resulting from the Government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme and the VAT reduction for the sector introduced last August. The BoE expects inflation to peak at over 4% during 2021 with MPC forecasts showing inflation slightly under its 2% target in 2-3 years. The initial surge in inflation in 2021 and 2022 is attributed to a number of factors including energy price increases and supply shortages relative to demand. An additional concern is how trade with the EU will evolve once distortions caused by the pandemic have passed now that the UK no longer has tariff-free access to EU markets.
- A1.6 Investment rates are likely to remain at very low levels throughout 2021/2022. With short-term investment rates forecast to be materially below long-term borrowing rates, it continues to be likely that some investment balances will temporarily be used to fund long-term borrowing requirements. Such funding is wholly dependent upon market conditions and will be reassessed if the appropriate conditions arise.
- A1.7 Link Asset Services, the Authority's treasury advisors, reviewed their interest rate forecasts in August 2021 in light of continued volatility in the financial markets. Their

previous forecast that the BoE Base Rate would increase to 0.25% by September 2023 has been brought forward to June 2023 with a further increase to 0.50% by March 2024. These forecasts, and MPC decisions, will be liable to further amendment as updated economic data becomes available and emerging developments in the financial markets.

A1.8 The following table shows the average PWLB rates for Quarters 1 and 2.

<b>2021/2022</b>	<b>Qtr 1* (Apr - Jun) %</b>	<b>Qtr 2* (Jul – Sep)</b>
7 days notice	-0.08	-0.08
1 year	0.81*	0.87*
5 year	1.18*	1.15*
10 year	1.68*	1.52*
25 year	2.14*	1.90*
50 year	1.94*	1.68*

\*rates take account of the 0.2% discount to PWLB rates available to eligible authorities that came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012.

A1.9 High levels of volatility in the financial markets have continued during 2021/2022 although the successful roll out of the vaccination programme has boosted sterling and the markets. Continued uncertainty around global Covid-19 infection rates and degrees to which vaccination programmes have been successfully rolled out in other countries has depressed gilt yields as investors move from riskier assets such as shares and into bonds. Investor cash flow uncertainties and the need to maintain liquidity in these unprecedented times has depressed short-term rates available to very low levels.

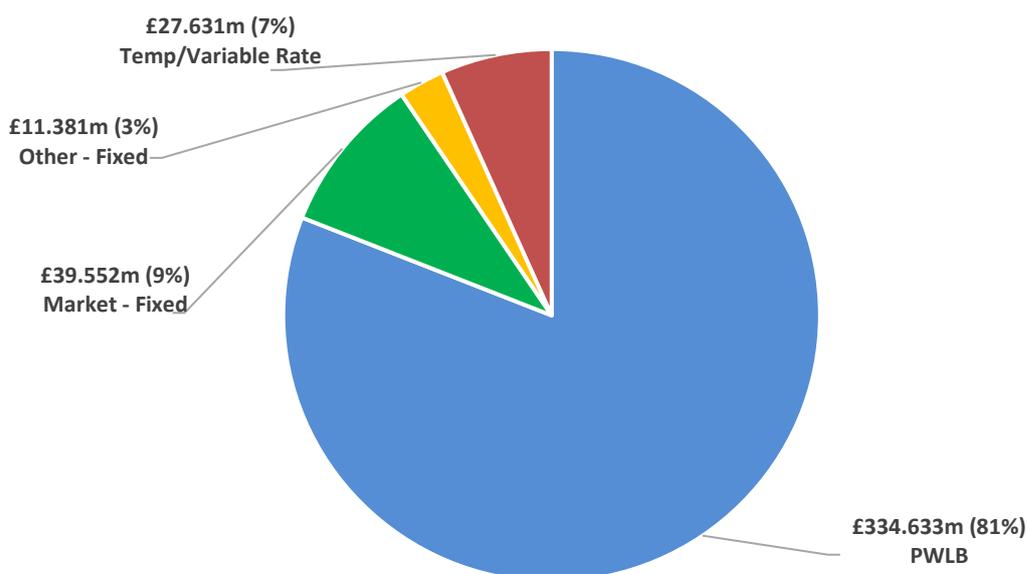
A1.10 There is expected to be a gradual upward movement in PWLB rates over the next three years as world economies, including the UK, recover from the economic shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Link Asset Services predict a gradual rise in PWLB rates reaching 1.20%, 1.70%, 2.10% and 1.90% for 5, 10, 25 and 50-year durations respectively by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with further increases of between 0.30% and 0.40% across each duration by March 2024. With so many external influences weighing on the UK economy, interest rate forecasting remains very difficult. From time to time, gilt yields, and consequently PWLB rates, can be subject to exceptional levels of volatility which could occur at any time during the forecast period.

A1.11 The strategy for 2021/2022 is to adopt a pragmatic and flexible approach in identifying the low points in the interest rate cycle at which to borrow, and to respond to any changing circumstances to seek to secure benefit for the Authority. A benchmark financing rate of 2.60% for long-term borrowing was set for 2021/2022 in light of the views prevalent at the time the Treasury Management policy was set in March 2021.

A1.12 Due to high levels of volatility in the financial markets, with borrowing rates forecast to remain low over the short-term, no new borrowing has been undertaken in the current financial year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The Treasury Management team continues to closely monitor PWLB rates to assess the value of possible further new borrowing in line with future capital programme requirements.

A1.13 The Lead authority's total treasury portfolio position (which includes the Authority's total borrowing of £11.228m) at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 is set out below:

<b>Borrowing Summary at: 30 September 2021</b>		
	<u>Principal</u>	<u>Ave rate</u>
<u>Fixed</u>		%
PWLB	334,633,333	2.95
Market – Fixed	39,551,658	4.41
Other – Fixed	11,381,307	0.00
	385,566,298	3.01
<u>Variable</u>		
Temporary/Other – Variable	27,631,207	0.01
	27,631,207	0.01
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>413,197,505</b>	<b>2.81</b>



## A2 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators – 2021/2022

A2.1 All external borrowing and investments undertaken in 2021/2022 have been subject to the monitoring requirements of the Prudential Code. Under the Code, Authorities must set borrowing limits (Authorised Borrowing Limit for External Debt and Operational Boundary for External Debt) and must also report on the Authority's performance for all of the other Treasury Management Prudential Indicators.

A2.2 The statutory limit under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (which is also known as the Authorised Borrowing Limit for External Debt) was set by the Authority for 2021/2022 as follows:

	<b>£m</b>
Borrowing	34.454
Other Long-Term Liabilities	15.818
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>50.272</u></b>

The Operational Boundary for External Debt was set as shown below:-

	<b>£m</b>
Borrowing	29.454
Other Long-Term Liabilities	15.818
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>45.272</u></b>

- A2.3 Both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Limit include an element for long-term liabilities relating to PFI schemes and finance leases. These have been brought onto the Authority's Balance Sheet in compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).
- A2.4 The Authority's maximum external debt in respect of 2021/2022 (to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021) was £35.423 million and is within the limits set by both of these indicators.
- A2.5 The table below shows that all other Treasury Management Prudential Indicators set by Sunderland City Council (which includes the Authority's data) have been complied with:

Prudential Indicators	2021/2022 (at 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2021)	
	Limit £'000	Actual £'000
<b>P9 Maturity Pattern</b>	Upper Limit	
Under 12 months	50%	8.89%
12 months and within 24 months	60%	1.76%
24 months and within 5 years	80%	1.17%
5 years plus	100%	89.30%
A lower limit of 0% for all periods		
<b>P10 Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 365 days</b>	75,000	0

### A3 Investment Strategy – 2021/2022

- A3.1 The Investment Strategy for 2021/2022 was approved by the Authority on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The general policy objective for the Authority is the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The Authority's investment priorities in order of importance are:
- The **security** of capital;
  - The **liquidity** of its investments and then;
  - The Authority aims to achieve the **optimum yield** on its investments, but this is commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.

A3.2 As at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, funds managed by Sunderland City Council’s in-house team on behalf of the Authority amounted to £27.514 million and all investments complied with the approved Annual Investment Strategy.

A3.3 The following table shows the return received on these investments compared with the benchmark 7-Day LIBID (London Interbank Bid) rate, which the Authority uses to assess its performance.

	<b>2021/2022 Return %</b>	<b>2021/2022 Benchmark %</b>
Return on investments (to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021)	0.01	-0.08*

\* the 7-Day LIBID rate is set at 0.125% less than the corresponding 7-Day LIBOR rate, which due to the fall in gilts means the benchmark rate has become negative.

A3.4 Investments placed in 2021/2022 have been made in accordance with the approved Investment Strategy and comply with the Counterparty Criteria in place, shown in Appendix B, which is used to identify organisations on the Approved Lending List.

A3.5 Investment rates available in the market remain lower than those achieved in previous years and reflect the fall in the BoE Base Rate to a historic low of 0.10% on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

A3.6 Due to the continuing volatility in the financial markets resulting from Covid-19 the Authority has followed advice from our Treasury Management advisers and has operated a more risk averse strategy by placing funds in shorter dated liquid investments than previously.

A3.7 Advice also continues that the above guidance is not applicable to institutions considered to be very low risk, mainly where the government holds shares in these organisations (i.e. RBS) and therefore have the UK Government rating applied to them, or separately in respect of Money Market Funds which are AAA rated.

A3.8 The regular updating of the Authorised Lending List is required to take into account financial institution mergers and changes in institutions’ credit ratings. Any changes since the last Treasury Management report are indicated in bold on the Approved Lending List shown in Appendix C.



**Counterparty Criteria**

The Council takes into account not only the individual institution's credit ratings issued by all three credit rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's), but also all available market data and intelligence, the level of government support and advice from its Treasury Management advisers.

Set out below are the criteria to be used in determining the level of funds that can be invested with each institution. Where an institution is rated differently by the rating agencies, the lowest rating will determine the level of investment.

<b>Fitch / S&amp;P's Long Term Rating</b>	<b>Fitch Short Term Rating</b>	<b>S&amp;P's Short Term Rating</b>	<b>Moody's Long Term Rating</b>	<b>Moody's Short Term Rating</b>	<b><u>Maximum Deposit</u> £m</b>	<b><u>Maximum Duration</u></b>
AAA	F1+	A1+	Aaa	P-1	120	2 Years
AA+	F1+	A1+	Aa1	P-1	100	2 Years
AA	F1+	A1+	Aa2	P-1	80	2 Years
AA-	F1+	A1+	Aa3	P-1	75	2 Years
A+	F1+ / F1	A-1	A1	P-1	70	365 days
A	F1	A-1	A2	P-1	65	365 days
A-	F1 / F2	A-1 / A-2	A3	P-1 / P-2	50	365 days
<b>Local Authorities</b> (limit for each local authority)					30	2 years
<b>UK Government</b> (including debt management office, gilts and treasury bills)					300	2 years
<b>Money Market Funds (CNAV, LVNAV and VNAV)</b> Maximum amount to be invested in Money Market Funds is £120m with a maximum of £50m in any one fund.					120	Liquid Deposits
<b>Local Authority controlled companies</b>					40	20 years

Where the UK Government holds a shareholding in an institution the UK Government's credit rating of AA- will be applied to that institution to determine the amount the Council can place with that institution for a maximum period of 2 years.

The Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services recommends that consideration should also be given to country, sector, and group limits in addition to the individual limits set out above; these new limits are as follows:

**Country Limit**

It is proposed that only non-UK countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA+ by all three rating agencies will be considered for inclusion on the Approved Lending List.

It is also proposed to set a total limit of £50m which can be invested in other countries provided they meet the above criteria. A separate limit of £300m will be applied to the United Kingdom and is based on the fact that the government has done and is willing to take action to protect the UK banking system.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Limit £m</b>
UK	300
Non-UK	50

**Sector Limit**

The Code recommends a limit be set for each sector in which the Council can place investments. These limits are set out below:

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Limit £m</b>
Central Government	300
Local Government	300
UK Banks	300
Money Market Funds	120
UK Building Societies	100
Foreign Banks	50

**Group Limit**

Where institutions are part of a group of companies e.g. Lloyds Banking Group, Santander and RBS, then total limit of investments that can be placed with that group of companies will be determined by the highest credit rating of a counterparty within that group, unless the government rating has been applied. This will apply provided that:

- the UK continues to have a sovereign credit rating of AA-; and
- that market intelligence and professional advice is taken into account.

Proposed group limits are set out in Appendix C.

## Approved Lending List

## Appendix C

	Fitch		Moody's		Standard & Poor's		Limit £m	Max Deposit Period
	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term		
<b>UK</b>	<b>AA-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Aa3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>AA</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>300</b>	
<b>Lloyds Banking Group</b>							Group Limit 70	
Lloyds Bank Plc (RFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	70	365 days
Lloyds Bank Corporate Markets plc (NRFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	70	365 days
Bank of Scotland Plc (RFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	70	365 days
<b>Royal Bank of Scotland Group</b> (See Note 1)							Group Limit 75	
The Royal Bank of Scotland Plc (RFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	75	2 years
National Westminster Bank Plc (RFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	75	2 years
NatWest Markets plc (NRFB)	A+	F1	<b>A2</b>	<b>P-1</b>	A-	A-2	75	2 years
Santander UK plc	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Barclays Bank plc (NRFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Barclays Bank plc (RFB)	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Clydesdale Bank *	A-	F2	Baa1	P-2	A-	A-2	0	
Co-Operative Bank Plc	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	0	
Goldman Sachs International Bank	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	70	365 days
HSBC Bank plc (NRFB)	AA-	F1+	A1	P-1	A+	A-1	70	365 days
HSBC UK Bank plc (RFB)	AA-	F1+	<b>A1</b>	P-1	A+	A-1	70	365 days
Nationwide BS	A	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Standard Chartered Bank	A+	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Close Brothers Ltd	A-	F2	<b>Aa3</b>	P-1	-	-	50	365 days
SMBC Bank International Ltd	A	F1	A1	P-1	A	A-1	65	365 days
Top Building Societies (by asset value)								
Nationwide BS (see above)								
Coventry BS	A-	F1	A2	P-1	-	-	50	365 days

	Fitch		Moody's		Standard & Poor's		Limit £m	Max Deposit Period
	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term		
Leeds BS	A-	F1	A3	P-2	-	-	50	365 days
Nottingham BS **	-	-	<b>Baa3</b>	<b>P-3</b>	-	-	0	
Principality BS **	BBB+	F2	Baa2	P-2	-	-	0	
Skipton BS **	A-	F1	<b>A2</b>	<b>P-1</b>	-	-	<b>50</b>	<b>365 days</b>
West Bromwich BS **	-	-	Ba3	NP	-	-	0	
Yorkshire BS **	A-	F1	A3	P-2	-	-	50	365 days
<b>Money Market Funds</b>							120	Liquid
Prime Rate Stirling Liquidity	AAA				AAA		50	Liquid
Insight Liquidity Fund	AAA		-		AAA		50	Liquid
Aberdeen Liquidity Fund (Lux)	AAA		AAA		AAA		50	Liquid
Deutsche Managed Sterling Fund	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	Liquid
Foreign Banks have a combined total limit of £50m								
<b>Australia</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd	A+	F1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	365 days
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	A+	F1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	365 days
National Australia Bank	A+	F1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	365 days
Westpac Banking Corporation	A+	F1	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	365 days
<b>Canada</b>	AA+		Aaa		AAA		50	
Bank of Nova Scotia	AA-	F1+	Aa2	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
Royal Bank of Canada	<b>AA-</b>	F1+	Aa2	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
Toronto Dominion Bank	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
<b>Denmark</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
Danske A/S	A	F1	A2	P-1	A	A-1	50	365 days
<b>Finland</b>	AA+		Aa1		AA+		50	
OP Corporate Bank plc	WD	WD	Aa3	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
<b>Germany</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
DZ Bank AG (Deutsche Zentral-Genossenschaftsbank)	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank	AAA	F1+	Aaa	P-1	AAA	A-1+	50	2 years
NRW Bank	AAA	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA	A-1+	50	2 years

	Fitch		Moody's		Standard & Poor's		Limit £m	Max Deposit Period
	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term	L Term	S Term		
<b>Netherlands</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
Bank Nederlandse Gemeenten	AAA	F1+	Aaa	P-1	AAA	A-1+	50	2 years
Cooperatieve Rabobank U.A.	A+	F1	<b>Aa2</b>	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
Nederlandse Waterschapsbank NV	-	-	Aaa	P-1	AAA	A-1+	50	2 years
<b>Singapore</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
DBS Bank Ltd	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
Oversea Chinese Banking Corporation Ltd	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
United Overseas Bank Ltd	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
<b>Sweden</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
Svenska Handelsbanken AB	AA	F1+	Aa2	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
<b>Switzerland</b>	AAA		Aaa		AAA		50	
Credit Suisse AG	A	F1	<b>A1</b>	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
UBS AG	AA-	F1+	Aa2	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
<b>USA</b>	AAA		Aaa		AA+		50	
Bank of New York Mellon	AA	F1+	Aa1	P-1	AA-	A-1+	50	2 years
JP Morgan Chase Bank NA	AA	F1+	Aa1	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days
Wells Fargo Bank NA	AA-	F1+	Aa1	P-1	A+	A-1	50	365 days

## Notes

### Note 1

#### **Nationalised / Part Nationalised**

The counterparties in this section will have the UK Government's AA- rating applied to them thus giving them a credit limit of £75m.

\* The Clydesdale Bank (under the UK section) is owned by National Australia Bank

\*\* These will be revisited and used only if they meet the minimum criteria (ratings of A- and above)

Any bank which is incorporated in the United Kingdom and controlled by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) is classed as a UK bank for the purposes of the Approved Lending List.



## Risk Management Review of Treasury Management

Set out below are the risks the Authority faces as a result of carrying out its Treasury Management functions and the controls that are in place to mitigate those risks:

Risk	Controls
<p><b>1. Strategic Risk</b> The Authority's strategic objectives could be put at risk if borrowing costs escalated, or investment income was reduced, or there was a combination of the two. This could result in a negative impact on the Authority's budget and could ultimately lead to a reduction in resources for front line services.</p>	<p>This risk is mitigated by the adoption of a Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Authority in March each year for the next financial year, in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. The Treasury Management Strategy sets out a borrowing strategy and investment strategy for the year ahead. The strategy is based on the view of the Lead Authority's Finance Section on the outlook for interest rates, supplemented by the views of leading market forecasters provided by the treasury advisor (currently Link Asset Services).</p> <p>The strategy also sets the Authorised Borrowing Limit (setting the maximum amount that the Authority may borrow) and various prudential indicators to ensure the Treasury Management function is monitored and properly managed and controlled.</p>
<p><b>2. Interest Rate Risk</b> The risk of fluctuations in interest rates affects both borrowing costs and investment income and could adversely impact on the Authority's finances and budget for the year.</p>	<p>The Authority manages its exposure to fluctuations in interest rates with a view to minimising its borrowing costs and securing the best rate of return on its investments, having regard to the security of capital, in accordance with its approved Treasury Management Strategy.</p> <p>The risk is mitigated due to the prudent view taken on interest rates adopted in the budget after taking into account the Lead Authority Finance Section's view of the financial markets, specialist expert advice, other information from the internet, other domestic and international economic data, published guidance and Government fiscal policy.</p> <p>A pro-active approach is taken by the Treasury Management team, which closely monitors interest rates on a daily basis and takes necessary actions to help mitigate the impact of interest rate changes over the short, medium and longer term as appropriate.</p>

## Risk

### 3. Exchange Rate Risk

As a result of the nature of the Authority's business, the Authority may have an exposure to exchange rate risk from time to time. This will mainly arise from the receipt of income or the incurring of expenditure in a currency other than sterling.

### 4. Inflation Risk

There is a risk that the rate of inflation will impact on interest rates as a direct result of the intervention of the Bank of England to control inflation through the use of interest rates, where inflation rates have exceeded or are projected to exceed the target rates agreed between the Bank of England and Government.

### 5. Counterparty Risk

The Economic Downturn and problems encountered by some authorities with Icelandic Banks has demonstrated that there is a risk of losing funds/investments deposited with counterparties when carrying out its investment strategy activities.

## Controls

All borrowings and investments are made in sterling and are therefore not subject to exchange rate risk.

This risk is minimal as all other foreign exchange transactions are automatically converted into GBP sterling by the Authority's bankers on the day of the transaction.

Economic data such as pay, commodities, housing and other prices are monitored by the treasury advisors. These are considered as part of an overall view on the influences on inflation rates, which in turn inform the Authority's view on interest rate forecasts when drafting annual budgets and reviewing treasury management performance.

Regular meetings are held with treasury advisors to provide updates on economic data to monitor any changes in inflation rates that may influence interest rates so that the Treasury Management Strategy can be revised and updated as necessary and any remedial action taken.

The prime objective of the treasury management activity in this area is the security of the capital sums it invests. Accordingly, counterparty lists and limits reflect a prudent view of the financial strength of the institutions where funds are deposited.

The Authority also only uses instruments set out in its investment policy and places limits upon the level of investment with the Counterparties approved within the Authority's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement.

The Lead Authority Finance Officer has delegated authority to amend both the Lending Criteria and the Approved Lending List in response to changes in the financial markets should the need arise and these changes are reported to the relevant Committee at the next available opportunity.

The Treasury Management team continually monitor information regarding counterparties using credit ratings, news articles, the internet, Credit Default

## Risk

## Controls

Swap prices, professional advice and other appropriate sources to formulate its own view to keep the approved lending list up to date and fully informed, using the latest available information.

### 6. Capital Financing and Refinancing Risk

There is a risk that opportunities for rescheduling of the Authority's debt portfolio are constrained.

The risk is currently mitigated as the Authority via its Lead Authority has access to the funds of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB).

PWLB funding could come under pressure in future years because of Government targets to reduce the level of public debt which could see a return to the operation of the PWLB quota system as operated in previous years where Government funding was restricted. However, the Government has not indicated that this is an option that they are currently considering.

### 7. Statutory and Regulatory Risk

There is a risk that regulations covering Treasury Management will change and the Authority fails to respond to those changes.

The Authority ensures full compliance with the current legislative requirements under the Local Government Act 2003 and the Prudential Code, which also requires full compliance with the latest CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. All Treasury Management Prudential Indicators are monitored daily and all Treasury Management practices fully comply with the Revised Code of Practice and this is reported to and agreed by the Authority.

### 8. Treasury Management Arrangements Risk

There is a risk that the Authority does not carry out its Treasury Management function effectively and thereby the Authority could suffer financial loss as a result.

This is unlikely to happen because the Treasury Management function is required to ensure the Authority can comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements. As such the Authority has access to a well established Treasury Management team that operates under the Lead Authority Finance Officer and is staffed appropriately with a good mix of both experienced and qualified staff.

Professional advice is regularly accessed to ensure the team is up to date and that they can inform senior management and Members of all developments and provide the necessary expert advice and guidance in this specialist area of finance.



TYNE & WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No. 9

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: 29 NOVEMBER 2021

---

SUBJECT: AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021

REPORT OF THE FINANCE DIRECTOR

---

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Authority's Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 (subject to audit) were produced by the revised statutory deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 in compliance with the government's Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as amended by the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021, and were presented to this Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to allow members the opportunity to both digest and challenge any areas of the accounts, they so wished. In accordance with the revised regulations the Statement of Accounts and the required supporting papers were also lodged on the Authority's website on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to inform the public of their rights to inspect and challenge the published Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 subject to audit.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that Mazars LLP (our external auditors) are required to report on the final accounts and report certain matters to Members prior to an audit opinion being provided on the Authority's accounts.
- 1.3 Mazars LLP have audited the financial statements of the Authority under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office, and International Standards on Auditing (ISA) issued by the Auditing Practices Board.
- 1.4 Once Governance Committee has approved the Letter of Representation (**item i**), noted the contents of the External Auditors 'Audit Completion Report' (**item ii**), and approved the amended Statement of Accounts (**item iii**), Mazars LLP can then formally provide an opinion on the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. All of these items will be sent out to members separately but in advance of the meeting, as the audit work is almost but not quite completed at the point of writing this report.

## 2 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 To present the Letter of Representation for 2020/2021, and to receive the Audit Completion Report from Mazars LLP concerning the financial statements for 2020/2021. This also provides their opinion on both the Authority's Statement of Accounts and its arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (Value for Money).
- 2.2 To present an audited Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021, which has been revised to take into account the auditor's findings, for approval by members of this Committee. A complete list of the amendments is to be included as **Appendix A** to this report for information.

## 3 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021

- 3.1 A **Letter of Representation** which sets out the principles used in preparing the accounts and provides the external auditor with the necessary assurances required by the accounts and audit regulations has to be prepared by the Finance Officer (this will be shown as **Item i** to this report and will be sent out separately).
- 3.2 In line with Auditing standards, Mazars LLP produces an **Audit Completion Report** (this will be **Item ii** and will be sent out separately), in which the external auditor's opinion is given on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31st March 2021 and on its income and expenditure for the year then ended. The auditors will also be in attendance at the meeting in order to present their Audit Completion Report directly to members of the Committee.
- 3.3 This communication from the auditors is in addition to the Annual Audit Letter, which will continue to be presented to the full Authority and to the Governance Committee annually.
- 3.4 The amended Statement of Accounts reflects all of the changes identified during the audit process and Mazars LLP is to formally provide their opinion on the audited Statement of Accounts before the end of November 2021 although this fails to comply with the revised statutory timescales in place for the 2020/2021 accounts of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 because of extenuating circumstances and excessive workloads. The key messages expected from the audit are set out in Section 4 of this report for information.
- 3.5 Following the audit, the amended Statement of Accounts 2020/2021 will be set out in **Item iii** (which will be sent out separately once the audit work has been completed) and will include a number of changes identified from the audit, which will be detailed at **Appendix A**, (which is also to be sent out separately once finalised).

## 4 KEY MESSAGES

- 4.1 The full and detailed communication will be included in the Audit Completion Report (Item ii), which will be sent out separately in advance of the meeting. Having discussed the audit of the accounts with the external auditors it has been indicated at the time of writing this report that although work is still ongoing that it will be positive and in summary will show:
- the external auditors propose to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements;
  - the external auditors have not identified any material weaknesses in the accounting and internal control systems; and,
  - the external auditors will also provide commentary on their findings on whether the Authority had proper arrangements in place to achieve value for money for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and this will be done by exception under the new reporting arrangements. This will be based on three key criteria set out below and will be detailed in their Audit Completion Report:
    1. Financial sustainability – how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
    2. Governance – how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks;
    3. Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.
- 4.2 On the basis of the amendments agreed with the external auditors, Mazars LLP will formally provide an opinion on the amended Statement of Accounts by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The Authority is also required to publish its Audited Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 on its web site preferably before the statutory deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 appropriately signed by the Chair of this Committee and re-certified by the Finance Officer in line with the reporting requirements set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as amended by the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The auditors indicated that they would not meet the statutory timescales in advance of the audit due to other workloads and a backlog of external audit work from 2020/21 and agreed a revised more achievable timescale of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021. This was conveyed to the public in a separate Notification included on the Authority's website on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Members are requested to:

- a) Approve the Letter of Representation (Item i),
- b) Note the contents of the External Auditor's Audit Completion Report (Item ii),
- c) Approve the amended Audited Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (Item iii).

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No. 10**

**MEETING: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 29 NOVEMBER 2021**

---

**SUBJECT: IRMP 2021-2024 CONSOLIDATED DOCUMENT**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY), THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

---

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This paper presents the Service's consolidated Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 for the committee's awareness.
- 1.2 Following approval by Fire Authority Members at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021, of the proposed IRMP actions for 2021-24, a consolidated document incorporating these actions has been produced for publication. The IRMP 2021-24 document is presented at Appendix A. The consolidated IRMP document brings together the IRMP actions agreed by the Fire Authority and the operating context within which these will be delivered.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As reported at the October 2021 meeting of the Fire Authority, the Authority is required, as set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018, to produce an IRMP covering at least a three year period. This IRMP must be easily accessible and publicly available.
- 2.2 At the October 2021 meeting, four proposed IRMP actions for 2021-24 were approved following a period of formal consultation and subsequent amendment. This approval enabled the design and production of the IRMP 2021-24 consolidated document for publication.
- 2.3 A copy of the consolidated IRMP document was provided to Fire Authority members informally and is now being formalised through the Governance Committee and Fire Authority to ensure that there is good governance surrounding its publication.

### **3 KEY POINTS FOR INFORMATION**

3.1 The IRMP 2021-24 consolidated document presented to Members:

- Provides information on what an IRMP is and does, to support public understanding;
- Provides a signposts to the Service's Community Risk Profile – the comprehensive range of information used to inform community risk management and the development of corporate strategy and the IRMP;
- Demonstrates how prevention, protection, response, and resilience activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents, and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities;
- Outlines the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
- Sets out the high level management strategy to ensure the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are met, and recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Enquiry are implemented;
- Presents the four actions as approved by Authority following the period of formal consultation with partners, the public, representative bodies and staff.

3.2 One of the key outcomes of the 'State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2020' Report was to establish a programme of work to result in consistency with how FRS' identify and determine risk as part of the IRMP process. On 18 May 2021, the new Fire Standard on Community Risk Management Planning was issued, with Fire and Rescue Services having 18 months to implement the standard.

3.3 Planning is already underway to evolve the IRMP document into a Community Risk Management Plan, (CRMP) which will combine the Service's current Community Risk Profile, IRMP, and Community Safety Plan documentation. This new approach, aligned to the new Fire Standard, will be implemented within the required timescale.

### **4 SUMMARY**

4.1 The IRMP 2021-2024 document has been designed and produced following approval from Members to proceed with four key actions that required Fire Authority approval.

4.2 The IRMP 2021-24 document presents the Authority's approach to community risk management planning, signposting to key sources of risk management information.

4.3 Whilst the Authority's current approach already aligns to the requirements of the new Community Risk Management Fire Standard, the end product (the published corporate document) will be evolved over the coming months to become a 'Community Risk Management Plan.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 All risk considerations relating to IRMP were incorporated in the proposals subsequently approved by Fire Authority. No new significant risks or issues have emerged as a result of the design of the IRMP 2021-24 document.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications of the production and publication of the IRMP 2021-24 document.

## **7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment identified no new equality and fairness implications, as a result of the publication of the IRMP. As with all corporate documentation, the IRMP 2021-24 document will be made available in alternative formats or languages if requested.

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no additional or significant health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The committee is recommended to:
- a) Note the publication of the IRMP 2021-24 document.
  - b) Approve the IRMP consolidated document to be presented to the full Fire Authority meeting for their information.

---

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- NFCC Community risk management planning strategic framework (available at <https://www.ukfrs.com/community-risk/community-risk-management-planning-strategic-framework>)



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



# **INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

(IRMP)

**2021 - 2024**

# CONTENTS

1	Foreword	Page 4
2	COVID-19	5
3	Introduction	6
4	Our Area	7
5	Our Locations	8
6	Community Risk	9
7	Safe and Well in the Community	13
8	TWFRS Strategy 2025	14
9	TWFRS 2025 Programme	15
10	Managing Performance	16
11	Finance	17
12	IRMP Actions 2021-2024	20
13	HMICFRS	22
14	Service Improvement and Innovation	23
15	Governance	24
16	Inclusive Service	25
17	Supporting Health and Wellbeing	26
18	Heightened Threat of Terrorism	27
19	Operational Communications	28
20	Our Environment	29
21	Further Information	30

**Version:**  
1.0

**Date revised:**  
-

**Date published:**  
8 November 2021

**Produced / reviewed by:**  
Business Improvement Department



# INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021 - 2024

# FOREWORD



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

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

As the Chair of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority, it is a pleasure to introduce our Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 (IRMP).

This IRMP sets out how the Service will implement changes to manage our resources to address evolving risks in the most effective and efficient way, to achieve our vision of 'creating the safest community'.

I am proud that we have highly trained, dedicated, professional and motivated employees, who will help deliver this IRMP over the next four years.



**Chris Lowther QFSM**  
*Chief Fire Officer  
and Chief Executive*

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

The Fire and Rescue Service has faced many challenges in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested all areas of the Service. I believe we have met, and continue, to meet these challenges with resilience, professionalism, and leadership.

Our IRMP 2021-24 acknowledges these challenges, represents a reinvestment in our front line services, and affirms our commitment to continuously reviewing and improving the services we provide to the public, to ensure we always deliver a first class fire and rescue service.

Our IRMP has been developed using intelligence, insight, and an understanding of current and future risks, both in Tyne and Wear and nationally. We will continue to be adaptable and innovative to address the changing needs we face, and work with our valued partners and the community, to achieve our vision and deliver a Service we are proud of.

# COVID-19

While this IRMP was in its development and consultation phase, the emergence of COVID-19 coronavirus and the subsequent global pandemic saw a rapid and profound change in the functioning of our society to tackle this health emergency.

The Service made an early decision to protect and maintain its response model to ensure we could provide a proportionate and resilient response to incidents on the basis of risk and demand, at a local, regional and national level.

We recognised the potential of the virus to affect a number of locations (stations) and needed to ensure we were able to maintain our ability to provide an effective level of response to the public.

Responding to the COVID-19 strengthened existing partnerships through national and local associations. It also presented opportunities to work with new partners, increasing engagement with the most vulnerable in our community.

These partnerships included a wide range of activities to support both residents and our front-line colleagues, including:

- **Delivery of essential items to vulnerable people**
- **Delivery of PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities**
- **Packing/re-packing food supplies for vulnerable people**
- **Supporting the NHS at COVID-19 Vaccination centres**
- **Enhanced working with partners at co-locations.**

The full impact of COVID-19 on the public sector is not yet fully known, however should the financial position change as a result of the pandemic then the IRMP 2021-24 Plan will be adapted and amended accordingly.



# INTRODUCTION

## What is an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) ?

Our IRMP is how we drive continuous improvement and innovation in our Service, ensuring that services are planned, designed and delivered in a way that balances, efficiency and community risk. We use the IRMP process to improve community outcomes, strengthen prevention, reduce costs, reduce incidents and manage the risk in our communities.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all fire and rescue authorities to respond to fires and a range of other emergencies. Additional responsibilities result from a range of legislation including the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. In addition to those duties, a legislative obligation, enacted through the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), is to produce and publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

*“Each Fire and Rescue Authority must produce an integrated risk management plan that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority or national nature. The plan must have regard to the community risk registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate”.*

The IRMP is the approach adopted to make significant changes to the shape of the Fire and Rescue Service. This ensures the balance of efficiency and community risk when planning, designing and delivering services. The IRMP ensures risk and available resources are balanced.



# OUR AREA

Tyne and Wear consists of the five local authority areas of Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. It borders Northumberland County to the North and Durham County to the South.

It is a densely populated metropolitan area with 1.1 million residents covering 538km<sup>2</sup>. Whilst only representing 6% of the region's land, it is home to 43% of the region's population with over 500,000 households.

Further information about the demographic makeup of the community is detailed in the **Community Risk Profile**.

The population is growing, ageing and becoming more diverse, presenting further challenges for service provision.

- 5 local authorities
- 1.1 million residents
- Over 500,000 households
- 1 international airport
- 2 major cities
- 2.41 million m<sup>2</sup> retail floor space
- 3 universities

- Average age of 40
- 95.4% White British
- 95.9% English speaking
- 65% Christian
- 21.2% of households aged 65 or over
- 41% of properties rented
- 36,600 non-domestic properties
- Higher than average case of mental health issues\*

- Lowest median household total wealth\*
- No coastal flood risk & limited river flood risk
- Better than average casualty rates for road traffic accidents\*\*

### North East

- Highest rate of unemployment \*
- Highest rate of hospital admissions due to alcohol\*
- Higher than average mortality rates from alcohol\*
- 16% of adults smoke\*
- Highest rate of mortality attributable to smoking\*
- Highest number of hospital admissions due to drug use (per 100,000 population)\*
- Highest levels of obesity\*
- Higher than average levels of antisocial behaviour\*

\*Great Britain \*\* England

## INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

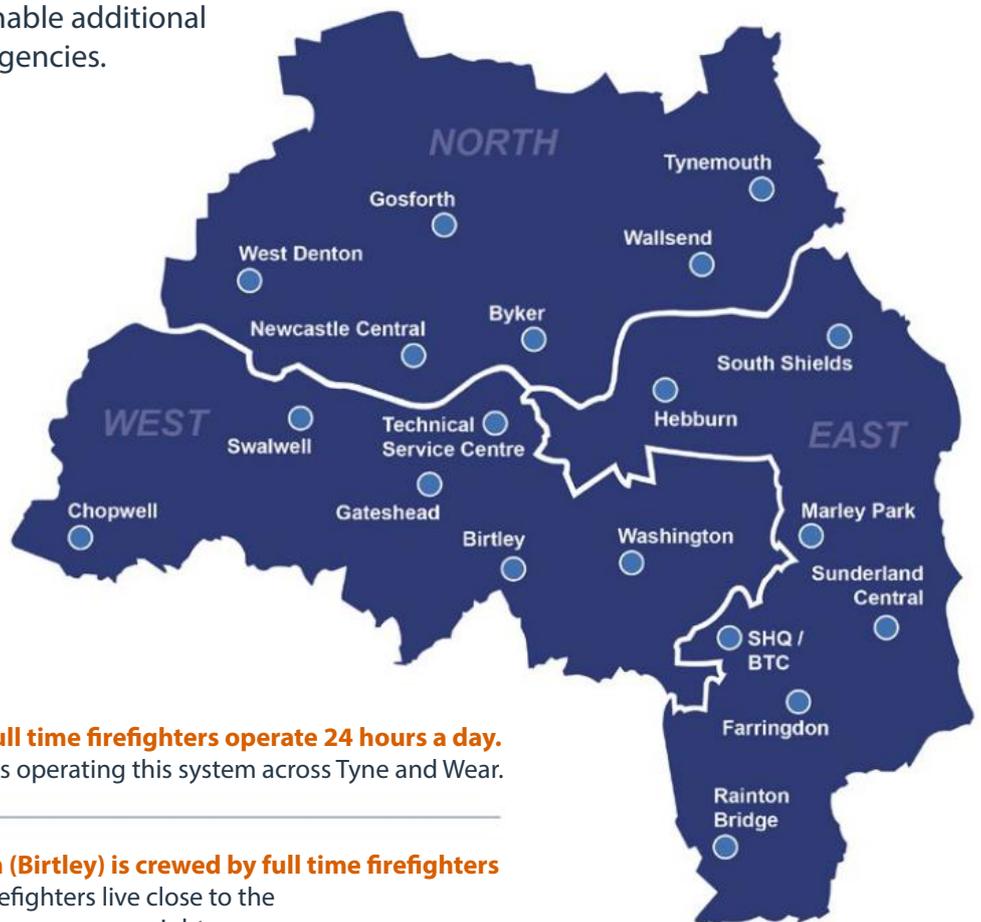
2021 - 2024

# OUR LOCATIONS

The Service operates from 17 community fire stations across Tyne and Wear, staffed in a number of different ways to reflect local risks and demands.

Our stations, staff and fire engines (appliances) are strategically placed across Tyne and Wear to ensure efficient and effective response to fires and other emergencies. Appliances work across the whole of the Tyne and Wear area and can be mobilised whilst away from their home station. We also have robust arrangements with neighbouring services to enable additional support during major emergencies.

The map below illustrates the positions of our 17 Fire Stations, Headquarters, Training Centre, Technical Service Centre.



## Shift Patterns

**A wholtime station is where full time firefighters operate 24 hours a day.** There are currently 15 fire stations operating this system across Tyne and Wear.

**Our day crewing on-call station (Birtley) is crewed by full time firefighters during daylight hours.** These firefighters live close to the fire station and provide emergency cover overnight.

**One of our stations (Chopwell) is operated by on-call (part time) firefighters who respond to emergency calls via an alerter.** On-call firefighters will either live or work near to the station.

# COMMUNITY RISK

Our role as a Fire and Rescue Service is to mitigate risk in the community to reduce the likelihood of fires, and other emergencies. If they do occur, we work to reduce the impact on individuals and the community.

The **Community Risk Profile (CRP)** informs our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and Corporate Strategy. It provides a comprehensive and forward looking assessment of the risks in our community that will both impact upon, and shape service delivery over the coming years.

This information plays a key role in the development of our IRMP and other key documents and ensures we follow an evidenced approach to managing our activities and resources. All Fire and Rescue Authorities have a statutory responsibility to produce an IRMP that sets out how it will address locally identified risks.

**For more information about our CRP please use the link [here](#).**

## Prevention

*Supporting safer, healthier, more inclusive communities.*

Prevention is at the forefront of our proactive approach to prevent incidents from happening, through education, advice and intervention. Our preventative work is informed by understanding our community and through collaborative working with partners to identify those who are most at risk.

We work to educate our community about what they can do to keep themselves safe from fire, as well as reducing the risk of a wide range of other emergencies.

As Tyne and Wear has two major rivers, and a length of coastline, water safety is a focus for the Service. Working in collaboration with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), we pioneered a water safety throw bag initiative working with local riverside businesses to provide throw bags and practical training. This innovative work helps manage the risk associated with water in our area, and is being adopted by other Fire and Rescue Services across the country.

We work with a range of partners to ensure the safety of our community. This includes working closely with the Health Service and the Police, who are similarly seeking to address social and health inequality to improve community outcomes.

We deliver a range of activities to engage with young people across the five local authority areas of Tyne and Wear, this includes Safetyworks, Fire Cadets and our Junior Fire-setters Education Programme. Our Safetyworks centre is a dedicated interactive education space for young and vulnerable people, where we provide hands on safety advice in a range of scenarios including, fire safety in the home, road, rail and water safety, basic first aid and crime prevention. Safetyworks is delivered by our Prevention and Education team in conjunction with Northumbria Police, Local Authority Road Safety teams and Nexus.

Our dedicated Prevention and Education teams and volunteers provide a valuable link with hard to reach people ensuring that, as a Service, we can help all communities in the Tyne and Wear area and provide support to particularly vulnerable groups.

**For more information on Prevention please see our [Community Safety](#) pages on our website, to book a Safe and Well visit please see [here](#).**

## Protection

### *Supporting economic growth through intelligence led proportionate regulation.*

Our protection work aims to reduce the risk and impact of fire on the business community, and safeguards our firefighters. We are focussed on reducing the regulatory burden on compliant businesses through promoting the principles "Better Business for All", but we will not shy away from enforcement action where it is in the interest of public safety.

Our targeted risk based inspection programme, is continually monitored and reviewed annually to ensure effective use of resources without overburdening businesses with unnecessary regulation. By prioritising premises based on risk, premises type and history of compliance, we ensure that our activities are conducted in a way that helps to support business. We operate an intelligence led approach to our engagement activities by identifying trends in non-domestic fires and areas of poor compliance; for example our successful campaign in targeting commercial premises with anti-arson advice where a suspicious fire has occurred nearby and supporting NFCC campaigns such as the Business Safety Week, Sprinkler Safety Week, Fire Door Safety Week.

We fully support and promote economic growth through better regulation. However, we will not hesitate to take enforcement action where necessary to ensure the safety of the public and our staff. The Authority will continue to prosecute in cases where serious breaches pose significant risk to life.

### **Grenfell Tower Inquiry response**

In response to the Grenfell Tower inquiry, we established a Grenfell working group to fully evaluate the impact of the inquiry recommendations. Each recommendation is evaluated to ensure improvements are made to our operational response, and the wider organisational support mechanisms. Incidents such as the Grenfell tower fire have presented challenges to members of the public, FRS's and other key responding agencies. As with all emergency incidents, the importance of extracting learning is paramount, which allows a holistic approach to review and improvement. The Service ensures that all actions and learning identified are shared internally, and also externally to other blue light responders and partners. We are continuing to learn from the Grenfell tower tragedy to ensure we prevent a similar incident occurring in Tyne and Wear. However, we are also ensuring we have the skills, knowledge and expertise to respond to a similar incident effectively.

**For more information on Protection please see our [Community Safety](#) pages on our website [here](#).**

## Response

*Protecting 1.1 million people each and every day.*

Making a timely and appropriate response to fire and rescue incidents is one of our top priorities. The Service is consistently one of the fastest FRS in the country in responding to fires. This means we reduce life risk, injuries and damage to property.

To better protect our communities, we respond to incidents with the right people, with the right training, with the right resources and at the right time. Our community fire stations across Tyne and Wear enable us to deliver excellent services to the public each and every day.

The following response activity gives a picture of how we make Tyne and Wear a safer place to live, work, and visit:

- We have successfully reduced the number of accidental fires in people's homes
- In 2020/21 the Service recorded zero fire deaths in people's homes
- Our highly trained swift water rescue teams respond to water related incidents and the increased risk of flooding resulting from climate change

- We respond more effectively to incidents in high buildings with our aerial ladder platforms supporting operational response
- We continue to reduce the risk of injury to our firefighters by introducing new technology e.g. Body Worn Video Cameras
- We invest in equipment which provides improved safety and reduced exposure for casualties and members of the public
- We have reduced the risk of injury to our firefighters by introducing new technology to suppress fires without needing to enter unstable buildings

Our record demonstrates the excellence of our past responses to community fire and rescue incidents but we are always focused on how we improve in the future.

**For more information visit the 'Your Area' section on our website.**

## Resilience

*Ready to tackle, with confidence, threats to everyday life in our communities.*

By collaborating with partners, we have strengthened our capacity and capability to respond effectively to, and speed recovery from, incidents or threats that can cause major disruptions in our communities.

Our resilience arrangements cover major events such as:

- **Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosives incidents**
- **Major industrial accidents and transport incidents**
- **Collapse of large structures**
- **Terrorism-related incidents**
- **Natural disasters, such as flooding.**

These are exceptional events but, if they happen, they can be highly disruptive for our communities. We, and our partners, must have a high degree of preparedness to react quickly and effectively to reduce the impacts, locally, regionally and nationally.

We have specific responsibilities under the National Resilience Programme (NRP). This programme is central to the Government's plan to increase resilience to exceptional incidents that threaten our national infrastructure.

We host a number of national assets that enhance our ability to respond to major incidents on a local, regional and national scale. Assets include Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Mass Decontamination and response to Marauding Terrorist Attacks (MTA).

We also respond to incidents involving hazardous materials, with rapid identification of substances involved. We participate in the National Counterterrorism Programme and testing joint responses to potential major incidents in collaboration with other emergency services, the armed services, Government departments and others.

Locally, we are a key member of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This is a statutory partnership of emergency services, local authorities, clinical commissioning groups, hospital trusts and other organisations. Participation in the Forum helps us to build a community risk register, which identifies the significant local risks and sets out how we and our partners will respond to such incidents.

**For more information please see our [Community Safety](#) pages on our website and [LRF](#).**

# SAFE AND WELL IN THE COMMUNITY

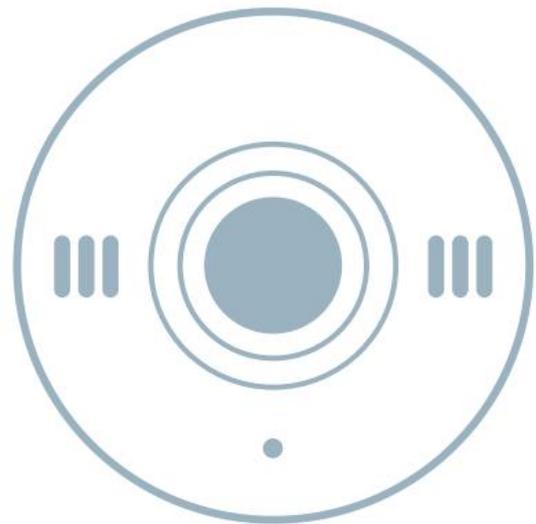
We deliver on average 20,000 Safe and Well visits a year, using data and intelligence to target the most vulnerable in our community.

We continue to develop and deliver Safe and Well visits. Each visit represents an opportunity to 'make every contact count.' Collaboration with other public services continues to be essential if we are to maximise the impact of public funding and reduce bureaucracy for the public. We are working closely with our partners, focussing our support on the areas we can have the greatest impact.

The number of older people within Tyne and Wear is predicted to rise over the next decade. This will generate increased demand on all public services for example slips, trips and falls. While increased life expectancy is good for Tyne and Wear, age is a risk factor for fire. Since the largest percentage increase in population is in the 65 years and over category, our policies, procedures and resource allocation will need to be continually adapted to protect this vulnerable group.

The esteem in which the Service is held gives us access to people's homes. This, alongside the successful reduction of fire risk through prevention, has led to a greater understanding that we can make a real difference to the wider health and wellbeing of our communities.

We undertake Safe and Well in all communities within our area. The Service continues to collaborate with health and social care partners to deliver falls prevention visits to those aged 65 years and over, whilst raising awareness of frailty and its impact. In the case of a medical emergency, we also help the ambulance service gain entry into property. Feedback from health colleagues on our involvement across all these activities is very positive.



# TWFRS STRATEGY 2025

The Services' new longer term five year Strategy sets out our commitment and intention to deliver high quality services that meet the needs of our communities now and in the future.

Our Strategy presents a clear vision, strategic goals and our priorities over a five year period to strengthen our Service. By exploring new and innovative ways of working, we will continue to deliver a first class service to the people of Tyne and Wear.

We will continue to collaborate and strengthen work with Blue Light Partners and other Stakeholders efficiently, providing value for money.

The Service has evolved and dealt with significant challenges over recent years, including those brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic, we will continue to adapt and improve as a Service ensuring we always respond promptly, with the right people, skills and equipment to deal with any incident effectively.

## Our Strategic Goals



### Service Effectiveness

TWFRS are committed to protecting our communities 24-7. We will target our fire prevention and protection activities to those at greatest risk from fire. We will enforce business fire safety legislation and compliance, delivering a first class emergency response that provides value for money.



### Efficiency

TWFRS will deliver a robust financial planning approach, we will align budgets and resources appropriate to the risk, never compromising on public safety. Collaborating with other Blue Light partners and achieving value for money.



### People

TWFRS will develop and maintain an inclusive workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible, and diverse. Our leaders will be role models, providing positive leadership in line with our values. The health, safety, and welfare of our staff and our community is paramount, and is built into all that we do.

# TWFRS 2025 PROGRAMME

To help us achieve our Vision and Strategic Goals, the Service has developed the TWFRS 2025 Programme that will drive and direct Service transformation over the next five years. There are three strategic priorities of this programme:



## **Inclusion**

Further diversification of the workforce to ensure we reflect our whole 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 Firefighter Safety**

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 delivery of all our services, which will allow us to offer a wide range of improvement activity, along with transformational ways of working and robust governance and cyber resilience for the 21st Century.

# MANAGING PERFORMANCE

The Service is developing a Annual Service Operating Plan to set out our priorities and actions for the year, and the plan will detail the work we will undertake to achieve and take forward our Strategy 2025.

Our performance is monitored, managed and analysed at station, local authority and Service level, to enable us to identify issues and implement improvement action where required. This approach also allows us to identify successes, so we can build on these and promote good practice across the Service.

**For more information on our Performance Reports please see the link [here](#).**

The data captured in our quarterly performance reports is scrutinised by our Performance Action Group (PAG), reported quarterly to Fire Authority, and published on our website to ensure transparency.

The impact of our IRMP actions is monitored and measured through this robust performance management approach, allowing us to adapt and improve on a continuous basis.

Our **Statement of Assurance** provides an accessible way for our Stakeholders to see how we are achieving our strategic goals and review our corporate achievements.

# FINANCE

We continue to face a period of significant change which is coupled with financial uncertainty due to the potential adverse impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and EU Exit will have on the national economy and consequently on public sector funding.

Our financial planning approach continues to be both flexible and robust despite all of the potential uncertainties. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), reported in February 2021, shows a broadly neutral financial revenue budget position from 2021/22 to 2024/25, based on the Government assertion that austerity has ended and that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will not adversely impact on the Government's planned investment in public services.

Future clarification is expected in the Governments Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 (CSR21). The aim of our MTFS remains unchanged, keeping efficiency and value for money at the heart of all our plans for the Service and is updated regularly to reflect the most current available data and information.

The **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)** provides an analysis of the financial position likely to face the Authority over the next four years. It establishes approaches that direct and reinvest our limited resources in addressing the strategic priorities of the Authority, achieve value for money in the use of those resources and assist the budget planning framework for the preparation of the **Revenue Budget** and **Capital Programme**.

The External Auditors present the Annual Audit Letter to the Authority each year. This audit examines our Statement of Accounts and gives an independent opinion on both the Service's financial health and sustainability and also their views and conclusion on how the Authority achieves value for money. It is pleasing to report that an unqualified opinion has always been achieved in both key areas of the Authority's finances.

The Authority embraces national joint collaborative procurement initiatives with other emergency services to ensure we get the most appropriate equipment, uniform and services at the best price.

## Revenue Budget

Balancing risk and resources will always be a challenge for the Authority but this is especially so given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Government spending when so much is presently unknown in terms of the impact on the economy of both the COVID-19 pandemic and EU Exit. There is also the added complication that locally generated income has also been adversely affected by the pandemic and the Authority has used £1.178m of its reserves in order to balance its budget in 2021/22.

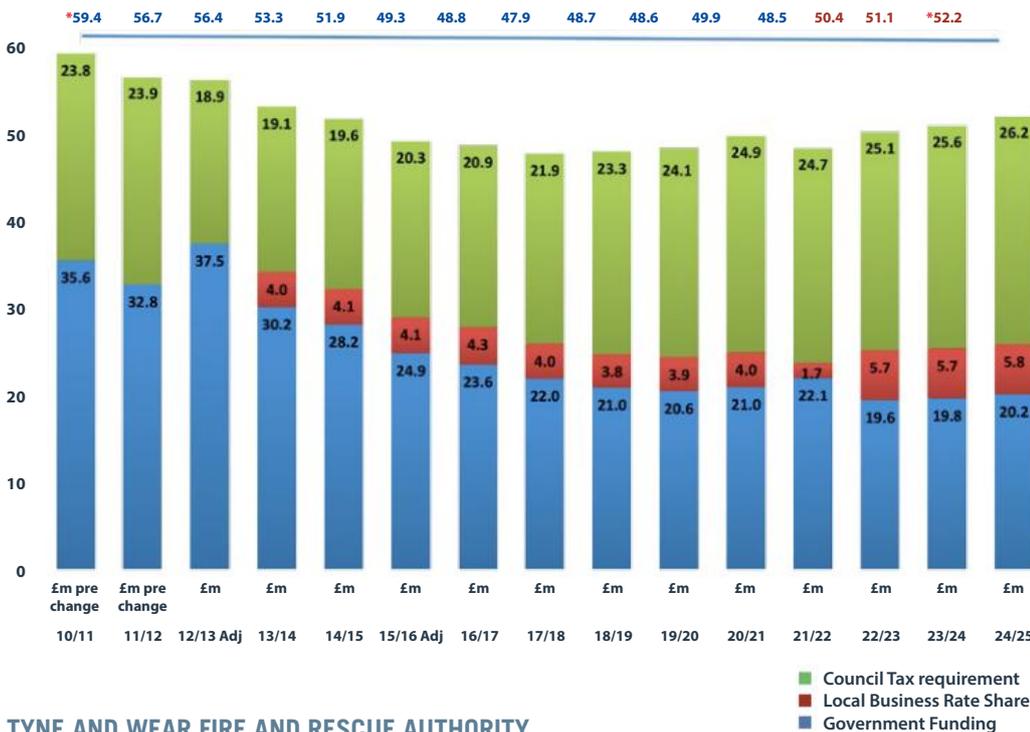
With a one year settlement in 2020/21 and 2021/22, it has been a challenge planning for the future with any degree of certainty. The Authority continues to drive efficiencies and has achieved planned underspends in 2019/20 and 2020/21 so that it can reinvest its limited resources into service priority areas identified through the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and TWFRS 2025 Programme for the future.

This is in addition to the Authority's strong track record of overachieving its Efficiency plan (covering 2015/16 to 2019/20) when we achieved significant savings of £9.287m which was £1.039m in excess of our Government approved target.

A revised MTFS has been issued for 2021/22 to 2024/25, and is based on very moderate financial settlements over the medium term where we are projecting a sustainable budget position up to the end of 2024/25. Any changes to this position will be reported to Authority in the form of a revised MTFS if necessary.

The current position setting out a fully sustained budget over the medium term means that the Authority's IRMP can continue to identify efficiencies but these can now be reinvested into service priorities.

### Cumulative impact of cuts 2010 to 2025 (current MTFS February 2021)



**Total net budget reduction of \*£7.2m (-12.1%)**

From 2017/18 includes the Authority's more prudent estimates of Council Tax and Business Rates income. Based on these figures, pace of reduction slows and Core Spending Power (CSP) increases from 2019/20. However the cut to CSP over the 4 year settlement to 2019/20 was -2.0%; the worst of all fire authorities. One year settlements for both 20/21 and 21/22 saw an inflation increase in govt grant and an increase in its CSP however these were both well below the national average. **The 2022/23 to 2024/25 projections are based on the revised improved grant position in 21/22 being sustainable and an assumed continued recovery from Covid19.**

## Capital Programme

Since 2015/16 the Authority does not receive any Government funding to pay for capital expenditure, which covers the cost of replacing fire vehicles, specialised appliances, modernising community fire stations, acquiring essential fire equipment to keep both our firefighters and the public safe and ICT equipment to support modern and effective ways of working. We are exploring ways to cover these significant costs, but with limited revenue funding, the Authority will have little option but to continue to use its limited reserves, and this position is reflected within the Authority's separately published Reserves Policy 2020/21 to 2024/25 which also aligns with the current MTFs.

## Business Rates Retention

The Government was reviewing the way that business rates are currently distributed with the aim of implementing a revised funding system for April 2020, however external factors including EU Exit and the pandemic have resulted in further delays until April 2022 at the earliest.

We will continue to work with Government on these proposed changes to our funding arrangements to ensure we can continue to deliver effective and efficient fire and rescue services, but this adds yet another layer of uncertainty to those already identified.



# IRMP ACTIONS 2021 - 2024

The IRMP 2021-2024 actions have been developed to continuously improve delivery of services by focusing on reinvestment, and to reflect external risks and challenges.

1



**To introduce an additional fire appliance.**

Following a comprehensive review of risk and incident data, we commenced a pilot in October 2020 introducing an additional fire appliance (fire engine) into our fleet. This appliance was based at West Denton Community Fire Station, which was identified, using extensive data and risk information, as the optimum location for this resource.

Following continued review of the pilot, the Service is proposing to keep this additional appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station, on a permanent basis. This represents a positive investment in resources, creating an additional 4 Crew Manager roles and 12 firefighter roles, and will enhance operational response and resilience across the Service area.



**This proposal will result in the addition of 4 Crew Managers and 12 Firefighter roles into the Service.**

2



**To primary staff the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs).**

Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) are used to respond to various incidents at height. As a result of IRMP 2014-17, at a time when there were successive requirements to save money as a result of significant and prolonged budget cuts to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, it was agreed to reduce the number of ALPs from three to two. Currently, firefighters staff both the primary fire appliance (fire engine) at that station, and also the ALP. When required, ALPs are crewed by those firefighters, meaning the primary fire engine becomes unavailable to attend emergency incidents.

Following significant national incidents, and a review of risk and demand data in Tyne and Wear, we are proposing to primary crew the two remaining ALPs.



**This proposal will result in the addition of 8 Crew Managers and 16 Firefighter roles into the Service.**

3



**To change the current shift arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station.**

Current staffing arrangements in the Service include a combination of on-call, day crewing close call (DCCC) and 2-2-4 (2 day shifts; 2 night shifts; 4 days off duty). Following a legal challenge of the DCCC staffing arrangement in 2018, the High Court declared this arrangement is unlawful, and subsequently directed all FRS to change these arrangements, in the absence of any local agreement with the Fire Brigades Union. No such agreement has been reached between the FBU and TWFRS, therefore we have to propose and implement an alternative staffing model at this station.

To meet this ruling, we proposed a change from Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) shift system, to Day Crewed shift system, at Birtley Community Fire Station. This meant the station would be crewed full time for 12 hours during the day, and fire cover would be provided by neighbouring stations at night. At the TWFR meeting on September 13th, the Service was asked to re-consider this proposal following concerns raised by members of the TWFR on behalf of residents in Birtley. At the meeting of the TWFR on October 11th, a new proposal was approved that will see a Day Crewing On-Call (DCOC) staffing model introduced. This will replace the current Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) arrangements. This is planned to be implemented by the end of March 2022.



**This proposal will result in the addition of 1 Crew Manager role into the Service.**

4



**To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station.**

Current staffing arrangements in the Service include a combination of on-call, day crewing close call (DCCC) and 2-2-4 (2 day shifts; 2 night shifts; 4 days off duty). Following a legal challenge of the DCCC staffing arrangement in 2018, the High Court declared this arrangement is unlawful, and subsequently directed all FRS to change these arrangements, in the absence of any local agreement with the Fire Brigades Union. No such agreement has been reached between the FBU and the Service, therefore we have to propose and implement an alternative staffing model at this station.

To meet this ruling, the Service is proposing a change from Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC), to the 2-2-4 shift system, at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station.



**This proposal will result in the addition of 2 Watch Managers, 3 Crew Managers and 8 Firefighter roles into the Service.**

# HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out the first inspection of TWFRS in 2018/19.



The Service received the following judgements:



**Effectiveness**  
An assessment of how effective the Service is at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other emergencies.  
HMICFRS judgement: **GOOD**



**Efficiency**  
An assessment of how efficiently the Service uses its resources and manages risk.  
HMICFRS judgement: **GOOD**



**People**  
An assessment of how well the Service looks after its people.  
HMICFRS judgement: **GOOD**

To ensure continuous development within the Service, we welcome inspection and proactively address areas of improvement and drive national practice.

HMICFRS carried out a thematic inspection of the Service in 2020 to assess our initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they confirmed we continued to meet all our statutory duties whilst carrying out additional activities to support the community.

To read the full reports, please see [here](#) for more information.

HMICFRS produces an annual **State of Fire Report (2020)** updated on progress against a number of recommendations made by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor in relation to national reform of the Fire sector. The recommendations are summarised here:

- the Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity;
- the sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk;
- the sector should review and reform how effectively pay and conditions are determined;
- the Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner;
- there should be a code of ethics; and
- the Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change.

We continue to work with the Home Office, NFCC and LGA to progress these.

# SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Continuous improvement and innovation is an important part of delivering a first class Fire and Rescue Service. We embrace external inspection, audit and peer review to gain feedback to help us identify areas for improvement and good practice. In addition to audit and inspection, the Service has also been successful in achieving several awards and accreditations:



For more information on our Awards and Accreditations please see [here](#).

## INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021 - 2024

# GOVERNANCE

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

In line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018, the Fire Authority produces an annual Statement of Assurance which covers governance, financial and operational matters. The statement demonstrates how the Authority is meeting its legal obligations and how the Fire Service is delivering against its stated objectives in their current Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The Service operates a corporate governance framework which is based upon guidance jointly issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government framework - 2016 Edition'.

The framework comprises of the systems, processes, cultures and values through which we are able to direct and control their functions, and account to, engage with and, where appropriate lead the communities of Tyne and Wear.

The Annual Governance Statement is published as part of the Annual Statement of Accounts. The Annual Governance Statement demonstrates measures taken by the Authority to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance are adhered to. The statement shows how the Authority manages its governance and internal control arrangements and measures the effectiveness of those arrangements.

# INCLUSIVE SERVICE

TWFRS are committed to being an inclusive Service that reflects the community we serve. We are proud of our achievements to date, although we acknowledge work still needs to be done across the sector to diversify.

Having been rated as “Good” across all Her Majesty’s Inspectorate pillars in 2018, we consider ourselves to be a high performing, inclusive and innovative organisation. Although we were delighted to maintain our Investors in People Gold Award status in 2020, we know we must strive for continuous improvement.

Effective workforce planning is essential to deliver our IRMP. This includes a focus on diversification, inclusion, and raising awareness of the varied role of the FRS to ensure continuous improvement in this area. In addition to four well established Staff Network Groups, we have also recently established a new Inclusion Manager role and are introducing a Neurodiversity Staff Network Group.



# SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Work is not only a positive thing for individual's health and wellbeing, we also recognise that a healthy workforce is beneficial to the Service as an employer.

TWFRS strives to create a work environment which is positive, safe and healthy, which in turn increases morale and improves work -life balance both of which have a positive impact.

We believe improved health and wellbeing of our workforce is a positive thing and we continue to invest in resources that prevent people being absent or support individuals when absent from the workplace for health related reasons. We undertake robust case management approach to sickness absence to ensure we are providing comprehensive support facilities including signposting to a range of external specialist resources for those individuals with poor mental health which is recognised as a top cause of ill-health in the Fire and Rescue Service sector.

As a Service it is paramount that our workforce have good physical and mental wellbeing to be able to respond effectively to our community needs. With an ageing workforce it is essential we have the relevant provisions in place to monitor, manage and improve their health and wellbeing. In 2021 we appointed a Health and Fitness Advisor to provide staff with up to date fitness and nutrition advice and guidance. This will support our key priority of Firefighter safety by ensuring our fitness standards are maintained across the Service.

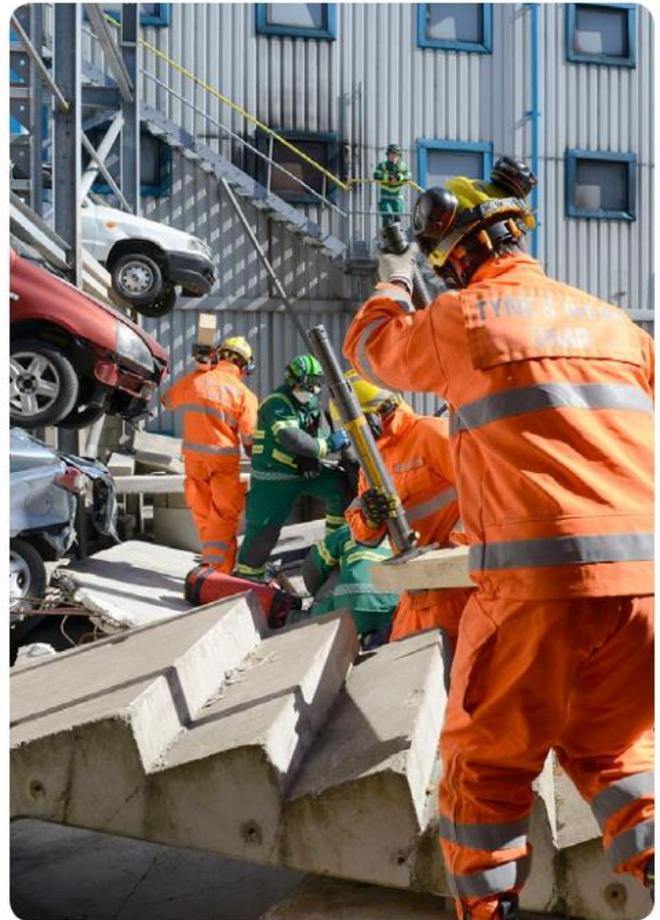
We have a dedicated Trauma Support and Welfare Manager to aid our workforce in managing their mental health due to the nature and incidents our front line workers encounter on a day to day basis. Our Trauma Support Team is nationally recognised and the team have been extended to deliver training across the Service. The wellbeing of our employees is being supported by our management structure and to do this successfully, we are providing them with First Aid Mental Awareness training so they have the skills to identify and signpost staff.



## HEIGHTENED THREAT OF TERRORISM

The changing threat to national security cannot be underestimated. The type and scale of risk changes continuously, so our resilience capacity must change to cope with this. We use modern technology and up-to-date intelligence to identify and address the changing risks, and this intelligence is fed into the development of our IRMP actions.

We support national response to terrorist incidents and ensure we learn the lessons from tragic events to ensure we can better protect our communities. We continue to work closely with our partners and ensure that our staff are trained in the emerging risks. We take a lead role in co-ordinating and hosting multi-agency counter-terrorism exercises. Whilst they are resource intensive, they strengthen our collective ability to respond to any potential terrorist attacks regionally and across the UK.

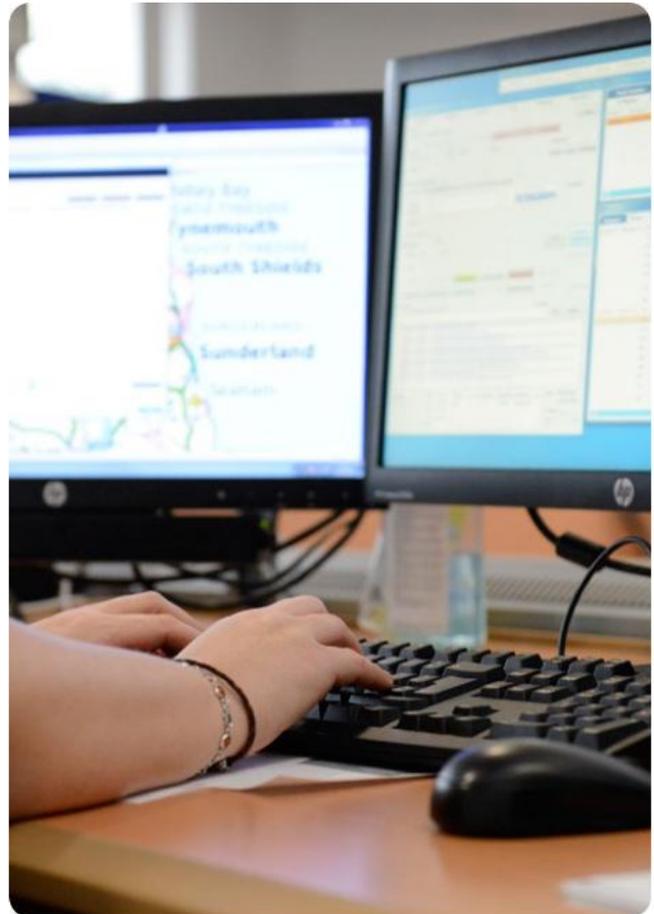


# OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Emergency Services Network (ESN) is the next generation of critical communications for the three Emergency Services and other user organisations that is being delivered by the Emergency Services' Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

Utilising EE's 4G mobile network it 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. Our Service is making preparations to accommodate transition which is currently scheduled during 2024. This involves upgrading equipment in our Control Room and installing new communications equipment in fire appliances.



# OUR ENVIRONMENT

Protecting the environment, whilst delivering our statutory functions, is important to the Service. TWFRS have a long and proven track record of implementing environmental and energy saving measures.

Works completed to date:

- **Our Owned Estate is fully illuminated (internal and external) by LED lighting**
- **All our flat roofed buildings are insulated to current Building Regulation standards**
- **Solar PV panels are installed at two locations; these provide both on-site generated electricity and also provide a financial return.**
- **Electric Vehicle charging points (rapid charge, twin terminals) have recently been installed at our Service Headquarters and Technical Service Centre to support the roll out of our EV Fleet. Four additional sites have recently had 240v trickle chargers installed.**
- **We operate a service wide BEMS systems that allows us to manage, measure and control energy usage across our estate**
- **Two locations have grey water harvesting systems.**

In 2020 the Service was successful in obtaining £30k of SALIX grant funding. This funding has helped ensure TWFRS has clear focus on our plans to become a carbon neutral FRS by 2035.

2020 also saw the creation of TWFRS's Environmental Task Group (ETG). The purpose of the ETG is to review, monitor and drive change within TWFRS in support of carbon reduction measures and environmental consideration, covering all aspects of our Service.

We work closely with other emergency services providers via the One Public Estate 'Blue light Group', feedback from this group helps TWFRS make informed decisions regarding environmental investment.

More information on Salix Finance Ltd - Government Funding can be found [here](#).



## FURTHER INFORMATION

This IRMP sets out how we will deliver our vision of ‘Creating the Safest Community’ and our commitment to improve community safety, response and resilience whilst continuing to meet the financial challenge of fire service reform.

If you would like to comment on this document or the services provided by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, you can:

**Write to:**

Business Improvement Department  
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service  
Headquarters  
Nissan Way  
Barmston Mere  
Sunderland  
SR5 3QY

**Phone:** 0191 444 1500

**E-mail:** [IRMP@twfire.gov.uk](mailto:IRMP@twfire.gov.uk)

Alternatively, if you would like more information regarding Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, you can:

**Visit our website:**

[www.twfire.gov.uk](http://www.twfire.gov.uk)



**Like us on Facebook:**

[www.facebook.com/twfrs](http://www.facebook.com/twfrs)



**Follow us on Twitter:**

[www.twitter.com/tyne\\_wear\\_frs](http://www.twitter.com/tyne_wear_frs)



**Follow us on Instagram:**

[www.instagram.com/twfrs](http://www.instagram.com/twfrs)

If you would like our plan in another format or language, please contact us so we can discuss your needs. For further details, please contact **0191 444 1500**

A glossary of abbreviations can be found [here](#).



# INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP)

2021 - 2024

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



