Governance and Assurance Framework
2021 – 2023

Incorporating the local code of governance

Contents

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1. Governance and Assurance Overview

The Fire 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 used economically, efficiently, effectively and ethically.

The Fire Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 2000 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. In light of this, the Fire Authority has adapted the way in which it operates by exploring opportunities to collaborate with other blue light services and increasing its joint working and partnership arrangements with other agencies.

In order to discharge its responsibilities, the Fire Authority is responsible for putting in place a sound system of control, including arrangements for good governance and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Fire Authority committee structure supports transparency of governance and also ensures Members and the public have the opportunity to scrutinise the way the Fire Authority is run at the very highest level. The committee structure consists of the:

- Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee
- Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC)
- People and Culture Committee
- Local Pension Board

This Governance and Assurance Framework 2021-2023 explains how the Fire Authority delivers good governance and how it will review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. This framework is consistent with the principles of the *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework* (CIPFA/ Solace, 2016).

2. Introduction

Local code of governance

The local code of governance within the Fire Authority comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Fire Authority is directed and controlled; and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and influences the community. The local code also enables the Fire Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the local code of governance and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot fully eliminate the risk of failure, and therefore can only provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance of effectiveness.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Fire Authority to publish a statement on internal control in accordance with proper practice. Proper practice has been defined as an **Annual Governance Statement** which will accompany the Statement of Accounts each year. The External Auditor is required to review the Annual Governance Statement and report its findings in the annual report - ISA260. The External Auditor's annual report is presented to the Audit Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC) and can be viewed by visiting: www.avonfire.gov.uk/documents/category/189-audit-governance-and-ethics-committee

The CIPFA/Solace Framework
The *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*, published by CIPFA/Solace in 2016, sets the standard for Local Authority governance in the UK. This framework is intended to assist the Fire Authority in reviewing its governance arrangements and its approach to risk management. The overall aim of the framework is to ensure a sound system of control is in place and that there is clear accountability for decision making, to enable:

resources to be directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, sound and inclusive decision making; and
clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for Service users and communities.

The diagram overlap illustrates the seven core principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other.
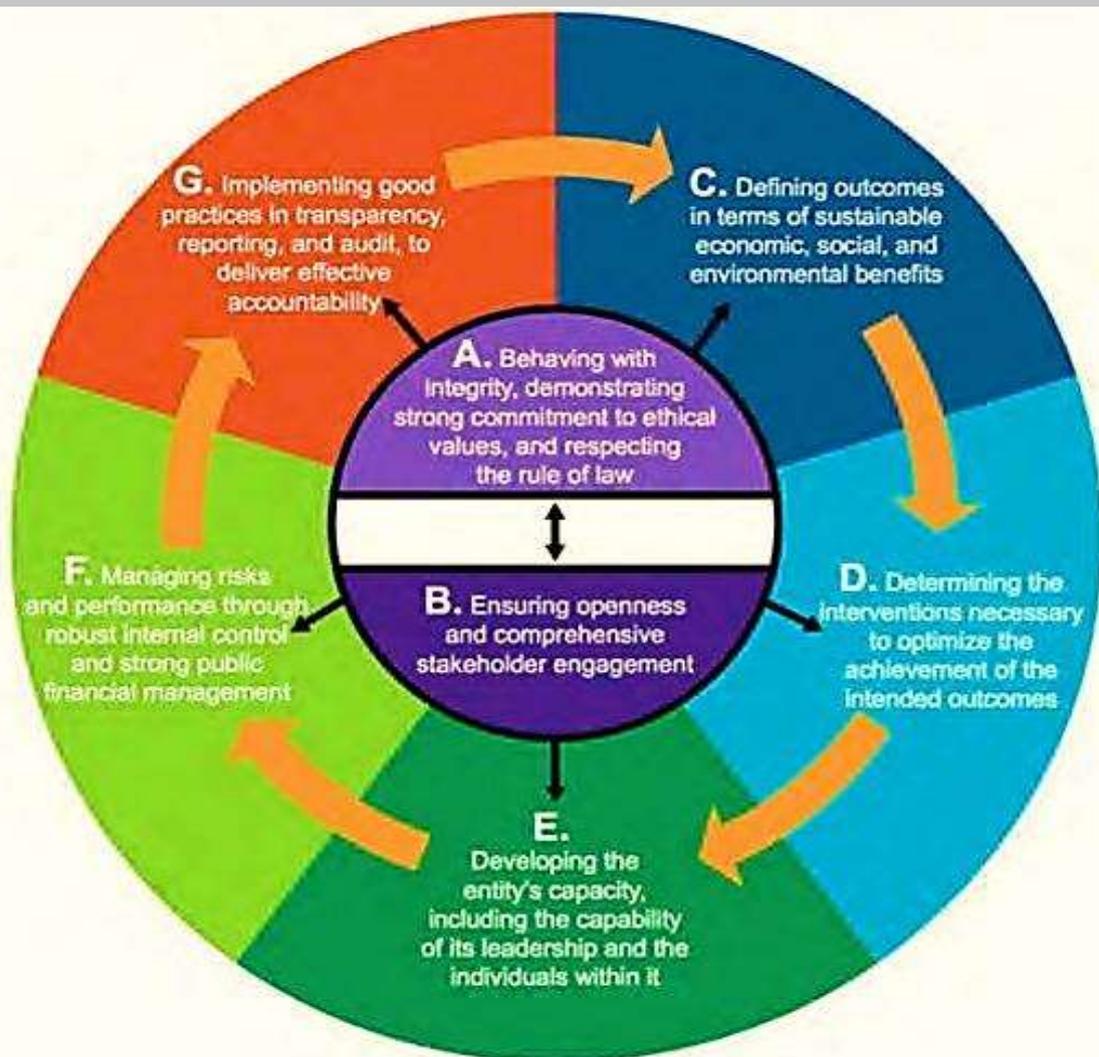
Diagram 1 - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework CIPFA / Solace, 2016.

In order to achieve good governance, the Fire Authority should demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the core and sub-principles of the framework, these being:

a. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

b. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

c. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

d. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.

e. Developing the Authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

f. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

g. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.   The   Annual   Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement provides an assessment of the effectiveness of the Fire Authority's governance arrangements and is an acknowledgment of the responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance in place.

The Fire Authority is required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the CIPFA/Solace Framework and to report publicly on the extent to which the Fire Authority complies with its own local code of governance, including how the Fire Authority has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements.

Each year the Corporate Assurance Unit carries out a review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and if necessary produces an annual analysis and action plan detailing recommendations for improvement. The unit is also responsible for analysing the CIPFA/Solace guidance in relation to the development of the Annual Governance Statement and ensuring that the statement is signed and approved by the AGEC.

4. Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee

The Fire Authority has approved delegated responsibility to the AGEC to consider, scrutinise and review issues relating to audit, governance, and the management of risk.

Their work includes examining and approving the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Assurance and the Corporate Risk Register. The Committee also reviews the Code of Conduct for Members, and preparation and training for the new requirements for dealing with investigations into Members' conduct.

4.1 The AGEC Terms of Reference:

Membership
There will be 7 Members of the Committee with a quorum of 4.
Determination of Member Conduct cases will be determined by a Panel of 3 Members (from different political groups). The Panel is a Sub-Committee.

Meeting Frequency
Full Committee – 4 times per municipal year
Member Conduct Panel - as required

Reporting to Full
Committee – Minutes go to the Fire Authority
Panel – inform the annual review.

Purpose
Undertaking the role of the Authority's Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee and any associated issues.

4.2 Functions

Audit
- To oversee all audit issues on behalf of the Authority.
- To consider all internal and external audit reports received, review management action plans and monitor their implementation.
- To agree the internal and external audit plans.
- To scrutinise and approve the Statement of Accounts and Narrative Report and bring any matters of concern to the Authority.
- To make recommendations to the Authority on the appointment of internal and external auditors and agree auditor terms of engagement and fees
- To monitor the performance of internal and external auditors, to keep under review the quality of their work and their independence and to ensure audit firm rotation.
- To keep under review the Authority's arrangements for whistleblowing and the prevention and detection of fraud, money laundering, corruption and bribery.

4.3   Governance and Risk Management

- To scrutinise and approve the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Assurance.
- To undertake an annual review of the Authority's governance arrangements and make recommendations to the Authority.
- To review on an annual basis any complaints and compliments received pertaining to the Committee's areas of responsibility.
- To keep under review the Corporate Risk Register and the corporate business continuity planning framework seeking assurance of appropriate management action.

4.4   Agendas and Reports

In accordance with Avon Fire Authority Standing Orders, a paper or electronic copy of the agenda and reports to be submitted to a Committee meeting shall be sent to every Member at least five clear days before the meeting at which the reports are to be submitted. This excludes Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

The purpose of reports is to ensure that Members have all relevant information to make an informed judgment and reasoned decision. Reports to be discussed at meetings should first be provided to Members in written format so that they have an opportunity to review report content and any recommendations in advance of the meeting. Reports need not be lengthy but provide sufficient detail to give Members all relevant information. In exceptional circumstances, verbal reports can be provided to Members, but only with prior permission of the Chair.

4.5   Members' Code of Conduct

- To promote and maintain high standards of conduct and assist Members of the Authority to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- To keep under review the Members' Code of Conduct and make recommendations for revision to the Authority.
- To ensure that Members receive appropriate training relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- To deal with cases referred by the Monitoring Officer relating to individuals to whom the Members' Code of Conduct applies by way of the Member Conduct Panel.

4.6   Lead Officer

Director of Corporate Services

5. Management of risk

Following the publication of the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England by the Home Office, Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to continue to publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan.

5.1 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

The IRMP identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities. The aims of the IRMP are to improve community safety and ensure productive use of our resources. The IRMP itself is now contained within our new Service Plan 2021-2024 which came into being from 1 April 2021.

5.2 Strategic Assessment

The Strategic Assessment identifies issues which have the potential to affect the future strategic direction of the Service. The assessment follows the widely used PESTELO format by analysing the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and organisational factors that may affect the Service now and in the future.

5.3 Operational Response Activity

The Baseline report is produced to provide information regarding our operational response activity and its effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with the risk and demands placed upon the Service. Using data gathered over the last six (financial) years, the Baseline Report is designed to inform at a strategic level, to highlighting trends and potential risks faced by the Service. The information contained in this document will help inform the future development of the Service by ensuring risk and demand are matched in the most effective way, and also captured within the IRMP Risk Register.

5.4 Corporate Risk Register (CRR)

The CRR is a way of identifying significant corporate risks to the Service, assessing the likelihood and impact of those risks materialising, and ensuring there are adequate control measures in place to mitigate those risks.

Risk owners are required to review and update each risk on a monthly basis to ensure each risk shows current progress and an accurate reflection of the planned interventions to reduce risk. The Service Leadership Team (SLT) and AGEC provide further scrutiny by examining one or two risks per month in detail.

5.5 Performance Report

AF&RS measure performance using a number of Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) designed to measure how effective we are at meeting our key purposes of Preventing, Protecting, Responding and building Resilience.

5.6 Risk and Assurance matrix

Appendix 1 - The Assurance Framework articulates the first, second and third line of sources of assurance against the key controls in place to mitigate the risks to the Authority achieving its objectives. The framework is aligned to the Authority's Constitution to ensure appropriate coverage of all assurances across its committees.

6. Our approach

In order to determine the effectiveness of our governance arrangements the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive (CFO/CE), Clerk to the Authority/Monitoring Officer and the Treasurer will provide the primary source of assurance. A wide range of external sources will also provide assurance, including the results of corporate assessments, inspections, Internal Audit and External Audit.

Although an Annual Governance Statement is produced as a one off exercise each year, all areas of activity within each of the seven core principles will be risk assessed and the risks where appropriate, will be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register. In order to deliver good governance the Fire Authority will ensure:

- There is a clear vision of purpose and intended outcomes for the public and that it is clearly communicated, both within the organisation and to external stakeholders.
- Arrangements are in place to review the vision and its implications for the governance arrangements.
- Arrangements exist for measuring the quality of services for the public, for ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the aims and objectives and for ensuring that they represent the best use of resources.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Fire Authority and its scrutiny and Officer functions are clearly defined and documented, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication.
- Codes of Conduct defining the standards of behaviour for Members and staff are in place, which conform to appropriate ethical standards, and are communicated and embedded across the Fire Authority.
- Standing Orders, standing financial instructions, a Scheme of Delegation and supporting procedures, which are reviewed and updated as appropriate, clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks.

The core functions of an Audit committee, as identified in CIPFA's 'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2018 Edition)', are undertaken by Members via the AGEC in order to:

- be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the Authority's objectives
- be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievement of the Authority's objectives

In relation to the Authority's internal audit functions:

- Oversee its independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism;
- support the effectiveness of the internal audit process;
- promote the effective use of internal audit within the assurance framework.

- consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements and the control environment, reviewing the risk profile of the organisation and assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues, including partnerships and collaborations with other organisations

- monitor the effectiveness of the control environment, including arrangements for ensuring value for money, supporting standards and ethics and for managing the Authority's exposure to the risks of fraud and corruption

- consider the reports and recommendations of external audit and inspection agencies and their implications for governance, risk management or control support effective relationships between External Audit and Internal Audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and encourage the active promotion of the value of the audit process

- review the financial statements, external auditor's opinion and reports to Members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by External Audit.

7. Our priorities

In order to ensure that we have the highest standards of governance within the Fire Authority, a number of key priorities for the next three years have been identified:

- **Raise awareness of our governance arrangements**: We will continue to raise awareness of the governance framework with the public; and strengthen the processes by which we formally scrutinise our current practices and take forward key issues and improvements.

- **Partnership governance**: We will continue to develop good and effective partnership working, whilst ensuring the governance arrangements in place are robust and fit for purpose. We will continue to drive forward this work to maximise the opportunities afforded by partnership working for the benefit of the communities we serve.

- **Business continuity and risk management:** We will further enhance our strong track record in risk management by linking our approach to business continuity. We will strengthen our approach to business continuity and ensure arrangements in place are regularly reviewed and tested.

- **Supporting Members in their growing role**: We will continue to ensure that Members are supported in their roles through the use of training and the fostering of positive Member-Officer relations.

This framework is based upon a baseline assessment using the CIPFA/Solace governance framework and divided into the seven core principles of good governance. Each principle is further broken down into specific activities and projects, of which a manager has overall responsibility for the management and monitoring of performance against each activity.

The diagram below illustrates how the seven core principles within the Good Governance Framework contribute to the Authority's strategic aims 'to make our communities SAFER' and 'to make our Service STRONGER'.

The seven core principles are considered to have equal importance. The graphic below provides an example of the practical steps taken to implement the seven principles.

G.
- Financial Statements
- Annual Governance Statement
- Update on audit recommendati

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SERVICE PLAN

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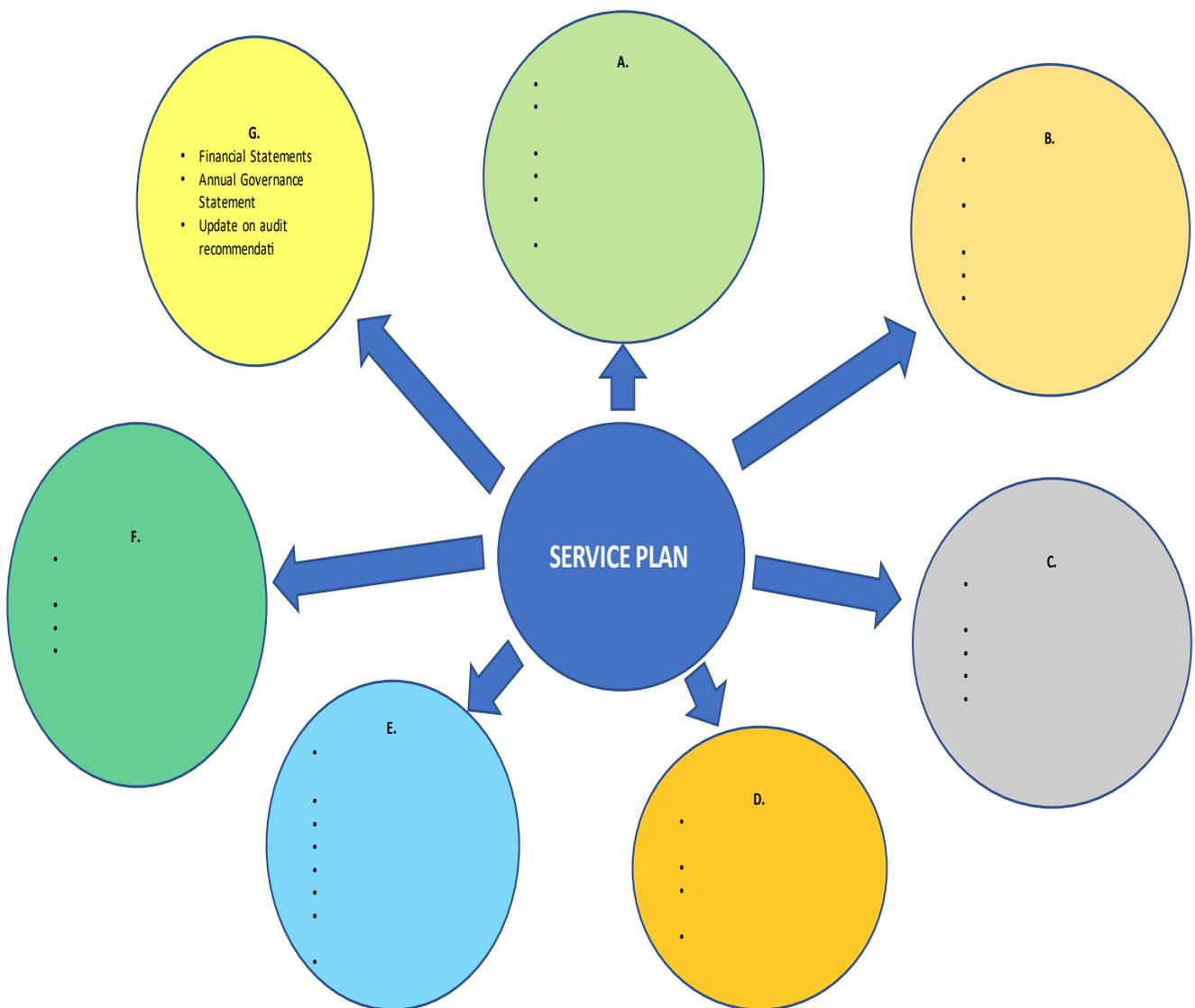
8.1 A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

The Fire Authority is accountable not only for how much it spends, but also how the resources within the organisation are used. In addition, the Fire Authority has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential to have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

We will:

- Ensure Members and Officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.
- Ensure that organisational values are put into practice and that they are communicated and understood.
- Establish, monitor and maintain codes of conduct and ethical standards.
- Develop policies and procedures which are aligned to core values.
- Act with integrity and demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law
- Ensure that Members and Statutory Officers are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Effectively deal with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions and ensure corruption and misuse of power are dealt with efficiently.

8.2 B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

As a public body the Fire Authority is accountable to the public, and national government in a variety of ways and means, and under a range of legal requirements and expectations. Clear channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as members of the public, external organisations and partnership agencies.

We will:

- Ensure an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness.
- Use formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions and courses of action.
- Effectively engage with key stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that successful and sustainable outcomes are achieved.
- Exercise leadership through a robust system of scrutiny which effectively engages local people and external stakeholders.
- Develop formal and informal partnerships which are mutually beneficial and focused on those areas most at risk.
- Ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the Fire Authority, in partnership or by commissioning.
- Implement effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account.

8.3 C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

One of the key functions of good governance is to set out clearly what the Fire Authority is trying to achieve for the public, partnerships and its staff. Managing expectations, balancing demands and determining priorities are essential components in the decision making process.

We will:
- Exercise strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and communities.
- Ensure outcomes are delivered on a sustainable basis within the limits of our available resources.
- Make best use of our resources and ensure the public receive excellent value for money.
- Take a long term view when making decisions, taking account of associated risks and financial constraints.

8.4 D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Determining what course of action to take and the intervention to use is a strategic decision based on the resources needed for the successful delivery of the intended outcome. It is important that robust control measures are in place to ensure interventions and the intended outcomes provide value for money, satisfy legal and regulatory requirements, and benefit the wider community.

We will:
- Ensure option appraisals are produced indicating how intended outcomes will be achieved and the associated risks.
- Consider the feedback from the public and other stakeholders when making decisions about service improvement.
- Establish and implement control mechanisms that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.
- Ensure capacity exists to generate the information required and regularly review interventions to ensure budgets are in accordance with planned expenditure.
- Ensure realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure are produced in order to inform the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- Ensure the MTFP sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or changes in the external environment.
- Ensure the achievement of 'social value' through business planning and commissioning.

8.5   E. Developing the Authority's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Effective governance relies on appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills and appropriate qualifications, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve the intended outcomes within the specified periods.

In terms of good governance, we will:

- Review policies, plans, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuous improvement.
- Recognise the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved.
- Develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources.
- Ensure Members and Officers work together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
- Ensure Members and Officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.
- Develop the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluate their performance, as individuals and as a group.
- Ensure effective leadership throughout the organisation and have robust protocols in relation to the discharge of functions and the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.
- Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation.
- Take steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.
- Hold staff to account through regular performance reviews.
- Ensure arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.

8.6   F.   Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The management of risk and a strong system of financial control are essential for the successful delivery of intended outcomes. The strategic allocation of resources, monitoring of performance and the efficient delivery of objectives must be considered as part of the decision-making process.

The Fire Authority promotes and encourages constructive challenge and scrutiny through its committee structure. Members of the public have a facility to participate in meetings and Members have an opportunity to scrutinise risk and performance information and apply constructive debate and challenge on policies and key performance indicators.

When managing risk and performance we will:

- Provide Members and the public with regular reports on Service delivery plans and on progress towards the achievement of objectives.
- Effectively monitor service delivery including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.
- Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the inherent risks and the financial, social and environmental implications.
- Ensure an effective scrutiny function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made.
- Encourage effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making.
- Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (financial statements).
- Ensure counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.
- Ensure a robust and integrated risk management system is in place and that responsibilities for managing risk are clearly allocated.
- Ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control arrangements is provided by the internal auditor.
- Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal information.
- Ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.
- Ensure well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.

8.7 G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Members have overall responsibility for directing and controlling the organisation's plans and activities, however effective accountability is not only concerned with the reporting of completed actions, but also to ensure robust feedback mechanisms are in place to enable continuous improvement.

Both External and Internal Audit contribute to effective accountability by carrying out independent reviews and producing annual reports of their findings for publication on the Fire Authority's external website.

In order to provide transparency and accountability we will:

- Write and communicate reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensure they are easy to access and interrogate.

- Report at least annually on performance, value for money and use of resources in a timely and understandable way.

- Ensure robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publish the results on the assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance.

- Ensure the financial statements are prepared on a timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations.

- Ensure recommendations for corrective action made by External Audit are acted upon, and an effective Internal Audit service with direct access to Members is in place.

- Welcome peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implement recommendations when required.

- Gain assurances on the risks associated with delivering services through third parties and ensure this is evidenced in the Annual Governance Statement.

- Ensure when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The guidance notes for *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* makes a useful distinction between the functions of 'overseeing financial processes, and to ensure and promote good ethical conduct', and 'overseeing audit and risk management'.

The focus of the AGEC should be on the former whilst the Corporate Assurance Unit should be on the latter.

9.1 Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC)

- To consider and review issues relating to audit, governance, and risk management.
- To scrutinise and approve the Statement of Accounts and Narrative Report and bring any matters of concern to the Authority.
- To keep under review the Members' Code of Conduct and make recommendations for revision to the Authority.

9.2 The Clerk (as the Monitoring Officer)

- Works with key officers to produce reports which inform Members of corporate issues.
- Works with the CFO/CE to review the declarations of interest of Members and Officers.
- Reviews Members training, briefing, induction and development needs; and arranges training as appropriate.
- Reviews and revises delegations, protocols, documents and policies to ensure that they correctly reflect current legislative requirements and meet the needs of the Fire Authority.
- Implements annual reminders of corporate governance requirements to ensure that they remain visible.
- Raises the visibility and accessibility of the role of Monitoring Officer, to encourage Members and staff contact.
- Provides a legal know-how service to Members and Officers on key matters.

9.3 **The Treasurer** contributes to the effective leadership, maintaining focus on its purpose and vision through rigorous analysis and challenge. Also contributes to the effective corporate management, including strategy implementation, cross organisational issues, integrated business and resource planning, risk management and performance management. The Treasurer supports the effective governance of the organisation.

In addition, the Treasurer will ensure the Medium-Term Financial Strategy reflects the Fire Authority's corporate priorities as set out within our Service Plan (including the Integrated Risk Management Plan) including joint planning with partners and other stakeholders.

9.4 **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).** The Service has committed to achieving an HMICFRS rating of 'Good' across all three pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people. To do this, we are addressing the findings of the HMICFRS report dated December 2018 by assigning responsibility, actions and timescales to all concerns raised within the report. We will continue to commit resources to co-ordinate and report progress to the Service Leadership Team (SLT), the Fire Authority and HMICFRS.

9.5 **Fire Standards Board**
The new Fire Standards Board has now been established to oversee the identification, organisation, development and maintenance of professional standards for fire and rescue services in England. National professional standards are a key component of continuous improvement in any sector and form a point of focus, against which performance can be measured and further improvement or new requirements can be identified. In short, they identify "what good looks like" and the future work of the Fire Standards Board will therefore be inextricably linked to the HMICFRS inspection regime as national standards are finalised and published.

9.6 **National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)**
The Core Code of Ethics (Core Code) is designed to guide all FRS employees in their day-to-day conduct, providing professional standards of practice and behaviour to carry out business honestly and with integrity and to underpin organisational culture. It provides the expectations for how employees should behave in any given situation, to assist with decision-making.

9.7 **External Audit**
External Audit and HMICFRS inspection reports and findings will be fully considered by the Fire Authority and, where necessary, the Service Leadership Board and team will develop an action plan which relates to areas identified as requiring improvement. Progress will be monitored by the Corporate Assurance Unit and corrective action or additional measures will be initiated through the SLT.

9.8 **Internal Audit**
Internal Audit is an independent and objective assurance service to the Fire Authority which completes a programme of reviews throughout the year, to provide an opinion on the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements of the Fire Authority.

In addition, a National Fraud Initiative and proactive fraud detection work is undertaken, which includes reviewing the control environment in areas where fraud or irregularity has occurred. Any significant weaknesses identified in the control environment are reported to the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee and the External Audit provider.

9.9 Corporate Assurance Unit

The Corporate Assurance Unit is the central hub for monitoring service improvement within the organisation. It is responsible for internal/external audit activities and the quality assurance of corporate objectives and priorities. This includes improvement plans, the Corporate Risk Register, strategic and tactical objectives, audit recommendations, suggestion scheme, policy production and business plans.

Other examples of the work covered include:
- Assist and support the inspection process (HMICFRS).
- Develop systems and processes for the monitoring of action plans and audit recommendations.
- Develop and coordinate the business planning process.
- Build effective liaison with key bodies and influence groups.
- Monitor and review best practice to ensure lessons learned are capitalised upon.
- Provide strategic information to key stakeholders, staff and external agencies.
- Identify areas of service improvement for consideration by SLT.
- Produce reports for the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee.
- Monitor the corporate risk register, audit recommendations and action plans.

The Corporate Assurance Unit is responsible for horizon scanning for organisational change, identifying corporate priorities, and supporting the Director of Corporate Services in all areas of service improvement.

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Appendix A – Assurance Framework

ASSURANCE ACTIVITY	1st Line of Assurance — Management oversight and reporting		2nd Line of Assurance — Functional oversight/ reporting and monitoring	3rd Line of Assurance — Fire Authority and Committee scrutiny, Independent inspection, monitoring and review			3rd Line of Assurance cont. — External and Internal Audit					
								Internal Audit				
	Service Leadership Board	Service Leadership Team	Key targets and Performance Indicators	Elected Member scrutiny and approval	HMICFRS	External Consultancy	External Audit	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Governance												
Fire Authority Constitution	√			√				√	√	√	√	
Elected Members Induction and Development	√	√	√	√			√					
Fire Authority Committee Structure	√	√		√			√					
Service Plan/IRMP	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√			
Strategic Assessment	√	√	√	√	√							
HMICFRS Action Plan	√	√	√	√	√		√				√	
Emergency Services Collaboration	√	√		√	√		√				√	
Statement of Assurance	√	√		√	√							
Annual Governance Statement	√	√		√			√	√	√		√	√
Governance and Corporate Risk Management	√	√	√	√	√		√			√		
National Fraud Initiative	√						√	√	√	√	√	
Service Leadership Charter	√	√			√							
Members Code of Conduct	√			√								
Avon Pension Board	√			√								
Performance Management	√		√		√						√	
Whistleblowing/Confidential Reporting	√		√	√	√							
Annual Governance Health Check	√	√		√						√		
Annual Performance Report	√	√	√	√	√		√					

Statutory Officers (the Clerk/Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority and Treasurer) also have a key role in governance as documented in the content of this Governance and Assurance Framework (page 19) and the Constitution.

ASSURANCE ACTIVITY	1st Line of Assurance — Management oversight and reporting		2nd Line of Assurance — Functional oversight/ reporting and monitoring	3rd Line of Assurance — Fire Authority and Committee scrutiny, Independent inspection, monitoring and review			3rd Line of Assurance cont. — External and Internal Audit					
								Internal Audit				
	Service Leadership Board	Service Leadership Team	Key targets and Performance Indicators	Elected Member scrutiny and approval	HMICFRS	External Consultancy	External Audit	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Financial												
Statement of Accounts	√	√		√	√	√						
Medium Term Financial Planning	√	√	√	√	√		√			√		
Efficiency/savings programme	√	√	√	√	√		√					
Value for Money opinion	√	√		√	√		√					
Budgetary control	√	√	√	√	√							
Key Financial controls	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	
Procurement/Contract Management	√	√	√	√	√				√	√		
Financial Regulations	√		√	√								
ISA 260				√			√					
Anti-Fraud and Corruption Survey	√			√								
Related Party Transactions	√	√										
SLA Payroll and financial Services	√		√	√								
Procurement Strategy	√	√	√	√	√							
Reserves Strategy	√	√		√			√					
Treasury Management Strategy	√			√			√					

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ASSURANCE ACTIVITY	1st Line of Assurance — Management oversight and reporting		2nd Line of Assurance — Functional oversight/ reporting and monitoring	3rd Line of Assurance — Fire Authority and Committee scrutiny, Independent inspection, monitoring and review			3rd Line of Assurance cont. — External and Internal Audit	Internal Audit				
	Service Leadership Board	Service Leadership Team	Key Performance Indicators	Elected Member scrutiny and approval	HMICFRS	External Consultancy	External Audit	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Operational												
Peer reviews	√	√	√	√	√							
National Operational Guidance	√	√		√	√							
Emergency Services Collaboration	√	√		√	√		√					
Fire Standards Board	√	√		√	√							
Joint Organisational Learning and National Operational Learning	√	√	√	√	√							
Safeguarding and Partnership working	√	√	√	√	√							
Maintenance of Skills Training (MOST)		√	√		√							
13/16 arrangements		√			√							
Fallback Control		√			√							
Service Delivery Strategy	√	√	√		√							
IT												
Business Continuity	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√	
ICT Contract management	√	√	√	√					√			
Emergency Services Network	√	√	√	√	√							
Transformation Programme	√	√	√	√	√		√				√	
ICT Strategy	√	√		√	√					√		
Software Licensing	√	√	√		√					√		
IT Software Assets Tracking	√	√								√		
Cyber Security and Penetration Testing	√	√			√	√						
GDPR/Data Protection	√	√	√	√				√	√			
Information Security Management	√	√	√					√	√			
Disaster Recovery exercises	√	√			√	√			√			
Everbridge Communication System	√	√										

ASSURANCE ACTIVITY	1st Line of Assurance — Management oversight and reporting		2nd Line of Assurance — Functional oversight/ reporting and monitoring	3rd Line of Assurance — Fire Authority and Committee scrutiny, Independent inspection, monitoring and review			3rd Line of Assurance cont. — External and Internal Audit					
							External Audit	Internal Audit				
	Service Leadership Board	Service Leadership Team	Key targets and Performance Indicators	Elected Member scrutiny and approval	HMICFRS	External Consultancy		2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Estates and Fleet Management												
Estates Strategy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√	
Property Maintenance and controls		√	√			√		√			√	
Equipment maintenance and workplace inspections		√	√			√						
Fleet and Fleet Asset Management Strategy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√	
Capital Strategy	√			√			√					
People												
Recruitment and retention process	√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√	
Culture change action plan	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√		√	
Training and Development	√	√	√	√	√	√			√			
Health, Safety, Welfare and Wellbeing Strategy	√	√	√	√	√	√			√	√		
Communication and Engagement	√	√			√							
Organisational/unit structures	√	√		√	√		√					
Succession planning and resource utilisation	√	√	√		√	√	√				√	
Values and Behavioural Framework	√	√		√	√							
Personal Development Reviews	√	√	√		√			√			√	
DICE Strategy	√	√	√	√	√	√				√		
Collaboration Strategy	√	√	√		√							
Corporate Services Strategy	√	√	√		√							
Service Delivery Support Strategy	√	√	√		√							

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