



## Annual Governance Statement

**2021 – 2022**

(Including the former Statement on Internal Control)

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Avon Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that it delivers its services in accordance with the prevailing legislation, regulations and Government guidance and that proper standards of stewardship, conduct, probity, and professional competence are set and adhered to by all those working for and with the Authority. This will ensure the services provided to the people of Avon are delivered efficiently, effectively, and economically, and that public money is used wisely, is properly accounted for, and achieves optimum value for money.
- 1.2 The Authority is committed to continuously improving its services to meet the needs of the public; reviewing and developing what it does; and consulting with the public about its activities on a regular basis. In discharging these responsibilities, the Authority is required to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place for the control and management of its business affairs, service performance, finances and for the management of the risks it faces.
- 1.3 The Annual Governance Statement also meets the requirements of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which 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.

## 2 What this Statement will tell you?

- 2.1 The Governance Statement is based upon a baseline assessment using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace) Governance Framework and is 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.
- 2.2 The Statement is written to provide a clear, simple assessment of how the governance framework has operated over the past financial year and it will also identify any improvements made and any weaknesses or gaps in the arrangements that require addressing. Its main aim is to provide you with confidence that the Authority is effectively managed, and delivers the services required in accordance with current legislation, our stated aim, objectives, and values, and in a way that provides value for money.

### 3 The CIPFA/Solace Governance Framework

- 3.1 The Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 is aligned to the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework', published by CIPFA/Solace in 2016. 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 CIPFA/Solace Framework is to ensure a sound system of control is in place and that there is clear accountability for decision making.
- 3.2 In order to achieve good governance, the Fire Authority will demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the seven core principles of the CIPFA/Solace 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 entity'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.
- 3.3 Each year the Fire Authority will ensure its governance arrangements are tested against the seven core principles by:
1. Reviewing existing governance arrangements (**annual governance analysis and action plan**).
  2. Developing and maintaining an up-to-date Code of Governance, including arrangements for ensuring ongoing effectiveness (**process, policy, and governance review**); and
  3. Reporting publicly on compliance with the local code on an annual basis on how the Fire Authority has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year and on planned changes (**Annual Governance Statement**).

## 4 Who is responsible for ensuring good governance?

- 4.1 The **Fire Authority** has overall responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control), and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, effectively, and ethically.
- 4.2 The Fire Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 2003 and subsequent Localism Act 2011 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and ethics. Internal arrangements for ensuring good governance include:
- 4.3 The **Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee** will consider and review issues relating to Audit, Governance, Risk Management, and the conduct of Members. Their work includes scrutinising and approving the Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Assurance, and the Corporate Risk Register. The Committee also keeps under review the Code of Conduct for Members and ensures that Members receive appropriate training relating to the Code of Conduct. By way of a Member Conduct Panel, the Committee deals with cases referred by the Monitoring Officer relating to Members' conduct.
- 4.4 The **Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee** will consider and review the Fire Authority's policies, plans and objectives. Their work includes scrutinising performance against key indicators, considering reports on the outcome of reviews and making recommendations for improvement, and to monitor aspects of service improvement.
- 4.5 The **People and Culture Committee** will keep under review the Authority's compliance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and make recommendations to the Authority and/or the Service Leadership Board (SLB) as necessary and the determination of employee related issues.
- 4.6 The **Local Pension Board** will assist the Scheme Manager in administering the various firefighter pension schemes by providing governance and the scrutiny of policies, pension documentation, decisions, and outcomes.
- 4.7 The **Service Leadership Board** consists of the most senior executive officers of the Service. The SLB has overall responsibility for the organisation's strategic direction, leadership and decision making. The Board considers strategic operational, financial and performance matters and risk. It has overall responsibility for management of the organisation, the establishment of strategy, direction-setting and both capital and revenue requirements. The Board monitors and oversees Service operations, ensuring competent and prudent management, good governance, sound planning and suitable procedures for the maintenance of adequate systems of internal control

and for compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations. For Governance purposes, the Fire Authority Clerk and Treasurer are the formal advisors to SLB, as part of the SLB monthly formal meeting, where strategic and statutory issues are considered.

- 4.8 The **Service Leadership Team** provides day to day leadership and management for the Service, overseeing a working environment which supports the effective achievement of goals and priorities (both operational and non-operational), maintains all necessary standards of compliance and good practice, and helps ensure that the Service is a great place to work. It is also responsible for making key decisions to minimise and manage risk, initiating corrective action through the application of new and existing internal control processes.
- 4.9 **The Clerk** (as the Monitoring Officer) is responsible under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to oversee and report on the lawfulness of decision-making and has a duty to prepare a report to the Authority if any proposal, decision or omission by the Authority or any Committee has given rise, or is likely to give rise, to a contravention of any enactment or rule of law or code of practice or maladministration. The Clerk is responsible for advising upon and overseeing governance arrangements for the Fire Authority and for ensuring that all meetings are properly organised and convened in accordance with the Fire Authority's Constitution. The Clerk is also responsible for reviewing papers and minutes to ensure that they are comprehensive and accurate to enable appropriate and lawful decisions to be made by elected Members. The Clerk also provides a legal know-how service to the Fire Authority and Service Leadership Board on key matters and reviews the Constitution, documents and policies, as required, to ensure that they correctly reflect current legislative requirements and meet the needs of the Fire Authority.
- 4.10 **The Treasurer** is the S112 Officer and has statutory duties in relation to the financial governance and stewardship of the Fire Authority. The Treasurer oversees the financial affairs of the Fire Authority and provides professional advice and guidance to the Fire Authority to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory financial requirements, including the Fire Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts. The Treasurer provides effective strategic management of the Fire Authority Financial Strategies, including the Medium-Term Financial Plan, Reserve Strategy and the Annual Budget. The Treasurer monitors and reports on the financial health of the Fire Authority, which includes the oversight of the monthly monitoring and forecasting of budgets and reporting on projected overspends or underspends. The Treasurer works closely with both External and Internal Audit to ensure the Fire Authority complies with statutory and regulatory financial requirements and to ensure a sound system of internal financial controls and systems are in place, as part of the wider Governance Framework. The Treasurer is a professional advisor to the Service Leadership Board, on key strategic and statutory financial matters and financial risk.
- 4.11 **External Audit** and **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)** reports and findings will be fully considered by the Fire Authority and where necessary the Service Leadership Board will develop an Improvement Plan which

relates to areas identified as requiring improvement. Progress will be monitored by the Corporate Assurance team and corrective action, or additional measures will be initiated through the Service Leadership Team.

- 4.12 **Internal Audit** is an independent and objective assurance service to the Fire Authority who complete a programme of reviews throughout the year, to provide an opinion on the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements of the Fire Authority.
- 4.13 In addition, the Government's **National Fraud Initiative** proactively conducts fraud detection work, which includes reviewing the control environment in areas where fraud or irregularity has the potential to occur. Any significant weaknesses in the control environment identified are reported to the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee and the external audit provider, currently Deloitte LLP.
- 4.14 The **Corporate Risk Register** is regularly reviewed by the Service Leadership Team and Board, and escalated to the Fire Authority Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC), as necessary. The current Risk Management policy requires the Corporate Risk Register to be presented to the AGEC twice a year.
- 4.15 **The Community Risk Register** is the responsibility of the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and provides information on emergencies that could happen within the Avon and Somerset area, together with an assessment of how likely they are to happen and the impacts if they do. The information contained within the Community Risk Register is used to inform Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) Corporate Risk Register and the annual Strategic Assessment.

## 5 What is the system of Internal Control?

- 5.1 The Fire Authority is responsible for putting in place a sound system of control, which includes the arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 5.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of ensuring good governance arrangements are in place and it is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. However, the arrangements in place cannot completely eliminate the risk of failure, and therefore can only provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance of effectiveness.
- 5.3 The overarching system of internal control is made up of several policies, procedures and corporate strategies that collectively ensure the key principles of governance are delivered. The table below provides a sample of the plans, policies, and internal control measures in place:

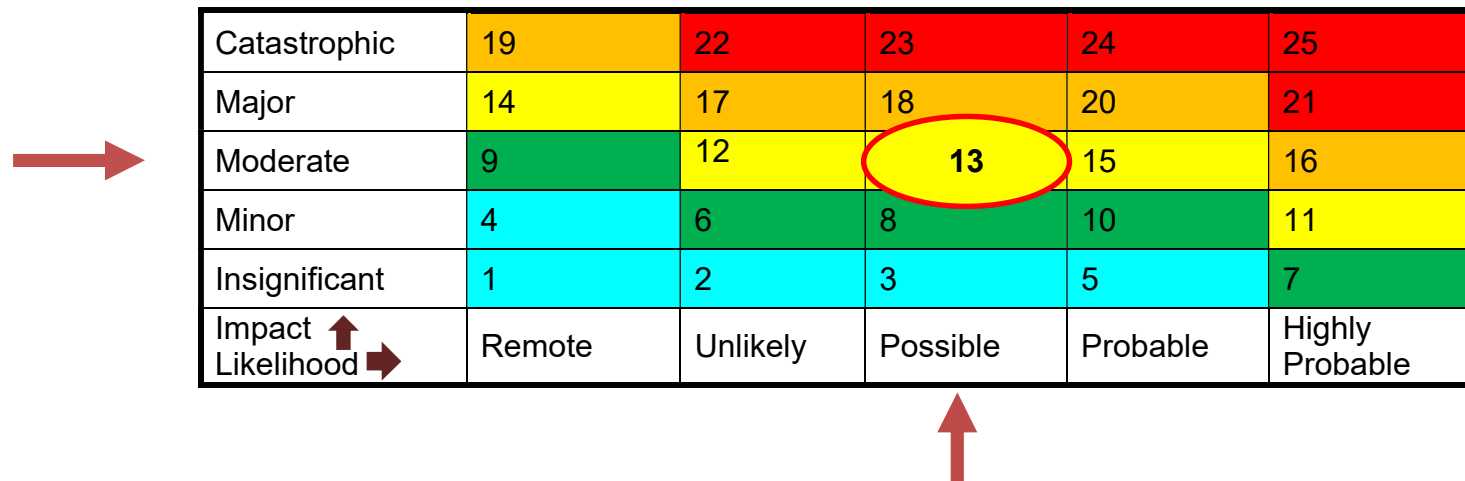
Governance and internal control arrangements	Service Delivery and Service Delivery Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Authority Constitution</li> <li>• Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC)</li> <li>• Members' Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Scheme of Delegation</li> <li>• Data Protection and Information Security Policies</li> <li>• Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)</li> <li>• Financial Regulations, Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Standing Orders</li> <li>• Risk Management Strategy</li> <li>• Confidential Reporting Code</li> <li>• Treasurer financial reporting to the Fire Authority</li> <li>• Anti-Fraud &amp; Anti-Corruption Strategy</li> <li>• Contract Procedure Rules</li> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Internal Audit</li> <li>• Treasurer and Clerk roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Delivery Strategy</li> <li>• Service Delivery Support Strategy</li> <li>• Business Continuity Management Policy</li> <li>• Pandemic Response Policy</li> <li>• Mobilisation Policy</li> <li>• Avon Fire Authority Enforcement Policy</li> <li>• Business Fire Safety Risk Based Inspection Policy</li> <li>• High Absence Level Operating (HALO) Policy</li> <li>• Operational Preparedness Policy</li> <li>• Degradation Plan</li> <li>• Environmental Policy</li> </ul>



Staff policies and strategy	IT and Communications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Services Strategy</li> <li>• External Compliments and Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Data Protection Policy</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Policy</li> <li>• Equality Policy</li> <li>• Health, Safety and Welfare Policy</li> <li>• Attendance Management Policy</li> <li>• Conditions of Service</li> <li>• Discipline Policy</li> <li>• Grievance Policy</li> <li>• Health and Fitness Policy</li> <li>• People and Development Strategy</li> <li>• Values and Behaviour Framework</li> <li>• Dyslexia Policy</li> <li>• Transfer, Appointments and Promotions Policy</li> <li>• Annual Leave Policy (Support Staff)</li> <li>• Special Leave Policy (Support Staff)</li> <li>• Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy</li> <li>• Bullying and Harassment Policy</li> <li>• Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy</li> <li>• Flexible Working Hours Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Maternity Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policy</li> <li>• Probation Policy (Support Staff)</li> <li>• Operational Training Policy</li> <li>• Succession Planning Policy</li> <li>• Promotion Process Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access Control Policy</li> <li>• Anti-virus Policy</li> <li>• Disc Space Usage Policy</li> <li>• Copyright Policy</li> <li>• Email Retention Policy</li> <li>• IT Change Control Policy</li> <li>• IT Patching Policy</li> <li>• Security Incident Management Policy</li> <li>• IT Systems Lockdown Policy</li> <li>• IT Systems Acceptable Use Policy</li> <li>• IT Wireless Access Policy</li> <li>• Laptop and Mobile Devices Security Policy</li> <li>• Operating Systems Policy</li> <li>• Remote Access Policy</li> <li>• Social Media Policy</li> <li>• Photographic and Video Policy</li> <li>• Media Handling Policy</li> </ul>

## **6 Annual Review of Effectiveness 2021/22**

- 6.1 The Authority is required under Regulation 6 of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to carry out an annual review of the system of internal control to ensure appropriate governance of its affairs and to facilitate the preparation of an Annual Governance Statement. Under Regulation 10, the Governance Statement must be published alongside the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- 6.2 In order to determine the effectiveness of AF&RS governance arrangements, the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk and the Treasurer provide the primary source of assurance. A wide range of external sources will also provide assurance, including the results of corporate assessments, inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS), Internal and External Audit (through the annual audit of accounts and the Auditor's Annual Report, which will include commentary on Value for Money).
- 6.3 Each year the Head of Corporate Assurance, Continuous Improvement and Planning, carries out a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and if necessary, produces an action plan detailing recommendation for improvement. The processes being reviewed in this Statement have operated throughout the whole of the financial year ending 31 March 2022 and have remained in operation up to the date of approval of the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.
- 6.4 The Corporate Risk Register (CRR) is a way of identifying significant corporate risks to the organisation, assessing the likelihood and impact of those risks materialising, and ensuring there are adequate control measures in place to mitigate those risks.
- 6.5 The CRR is a live document which accurately reflects the level of our current risks, the planned interventions to mitigate risks and progress against these mitigations. The Service Leadership Team (SLT) reviews the CRR each month and, for further scrutiny, examines two risks per month in detail. SLT aim is to ensure cross-functional consideration is applied to risk scores and a Service wide view of interventions and control measures are taken into account when analysing specific risks and planned mitigations. The Audit Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC) monitors and reviews the CRR every six months as part of the governance arrangements seeking assurance that appropriate management actions are in place.
- 6.6 Our Corporate Risk Management Strategy includes a risk matrix which provides a risk score for the likelihood and the impact of a risk materialising. The table below provides details of how the risk score is determined. For example, if the likelihood of the risk materialising is 'possible', and the impact if this did happen is 'moderate', the risk score will be 13.



Catastrophic	19	22	23	24	25
Major	14	17	18	20	21
Moderate	9	12	13	15	16
Minor	4	6	8	10	11
Insignificant	1	2	3	5	7
Impact ↑ Likelihood →	Remote	Unlikely	Possible	Probable	Highly Probable

6.7 We use the matrix to identify the category of risk at the Inherent, Current and Planned stages of the risk journey. There are four main options for controlling risk: Terminate, Transfer, Tolerate and Treat. Treat is the most common response when the current risk score is high. By treating the risk, the Fire Authority is able to monitor the controls and actions in place to ensure the risk is reduced to an acceptable level.

**Terminate:** some risks can only be contained at an acceptable level by terminating the activity. The capacity to address risks in this way is limited, but it could apply to some projects that are no longer considered viable. This may also be used where a risk is determined as no longer current.

**Transfer:** normally involves transfer of a risk or passing of risk to another area of the organisation or to a partner organisation.

**Tolerate:** this applies when it may be appropriate to tolerate the risk at an agreed stage without any further action due to limited ability to mitigate or disproportionate cost of mitigation when compared to benefit. This risk will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure the risk remains at a tolerable level.

**Treat:** the most common response in most cases, achieved by taking action to reduce the probability of the risk occurring or by reducing the impact. This enables the activity to be continued but with controls and actions in place to ensure the reduction of the risk to an acceptable level.

- 6.8 The table below provides a summary of the top three risks, and their risk scores, as of **31 March 2022** which have been given a risk action of 'Treat'. The table provides a summary, and the detail of the Corporate Risk Register is available on the Service's external website. Please contact the Head of Corporate Assurance, Continuous Improvement and Planning, to view a copy of the full version of the CRR, and this will be made available to if Members require.

Risk	Description	Risk Action	Current risk score	Controls and Planned Mitigation
CR15 – Pensions	The Fire Authority is required to meet the governance standards of the Pensions Regulator. As part of the risk management process a risk register is required to document the key risks to the pension scheme.	Treat	21	<p>The Fire Authority Local Pension Board has clear terms of reference and carries out its role in accordance with the requirements of the legislation and the pension's regulator, this includes ensuring they have appropriate knowledge and understanding to perform their role. The Board also has a specialist, independent Chair to assist with informed scrutiny together with receipt of legal updates and scrutiny reports. The Board has a specific risk register for the firefighter pension schemes which is reviewed at least twice a year.</p> <p>Internally the Service has an in-house specialist to assist with compliance through by providing additional capacity, knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>There is an up-to-date Service Level Agreement with the pension scheme administrators for all schemes to manage and monitor performance and compliance with the pension regulator's requirements.</p> <p>There is a Joint Consultative Committee meeting quarterly to raise and consider any corporate issues arising from Local Government Pension Scheme changes and/or application.</p> <p>The level of risk in the Corporate Risk Register reflects the governance challenges arising from the outcome of the McCloud legal case on pensions. Strategic and technical</p>

				<p>working groups are in place to progress the legal cases implications (with regard to immediate detriment and remedy) in line with legal, Home Office, LGA and TPR advice as well as a cross region working group on the immediate detriment issues.</p> <p>Provision has been made in the Internal Audit schedule to audit the compliance and control framework for processing immediate detriment payments against guidance and good governance.</p>
CR04 – People Capacity, Capability, and representation	To enable the Service to recruit and retain experienced personnel and ensure sufficient capacity to meet statutory requirements and organisational priorities.	Treat	20	<p>To ensure there is sufficient staff capacity, capability, and representation there are several controls in place. This includes recruitment processes, forward planning, promotion &amp; succession planning, a degradation plan, establishment management process, retirement forecasting and sickness &amp; modified duty monitoring and management.</p> <p>This is further supported by the following mitigations: Running a Whole-time firefighters training school during 2022 and 2023 with timings aligned with the recruitment campaigns. Exploring the potential for further external transfers. On-going On-Call and Reserve recruitment and continued focused recruitment for Control and Corporate Staff, with a range of options utilised to address difficulties in recruiting in specialist roles, plus a Sickness absence Improvement Strategy.</p> <p>The level of risk reflects the difficulties filling specialist and technical roles due to public sector salary levels, significant skills shortages, and competitive employment market.</p>
CR12 – Cyber Security	To ensure the effective deployment of IT software, and	Treat	20	<p>There are a range of internal controls, alerts, processes, and testing in place to combat the risks and impacts around cyber security. The Service has a number of software applications</p>

	monitoring systems to combat cyber security threats.			including Anti-Virus protection and active monitoring in place. The requirements around cyber security are set out in the contract and regular testing takes place. The IT infrastructure project will further enhance cyber security. This area of risk is dynamic for most organisations, with heightened global risks on cyber security and an increase in remote and diverse ways of working and more cloud-based services, and therefore the cyber security risk remains high but the risk level and controls are regularly reviewed.
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6.9 An annual review of effectiveness based on the seven core principles of the CIPFA/Solace Framework was undertaken in July 2022 and was informed by the following:

- The views of the External Auditor
- The views of the Head of Internal Audit contained in the Annual Audit report 2021/22
- A review of our performance against our stated objectives and targets as reported to the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee (PRSC)
- The effectiveness of any changes and improvements made during the last financial year.

6.10 **Appendix A** provides a summary of the outcomes from the annual review of effectiveness in 2021/22. The annual review can be viewed on our website at [www.avonfire.gov.uk](http://www.avonfire.gov.uk)

## 7 The Head of Internal Audit opinion 2021/22

7.1 The Head of Internal Audit has formed the opinion that based on the areas reviewed during the 12 months ending 31 March 2022; the Service has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance, and internal control. Internal Audit also stated *‘our work has identified further enhancements to the framework of risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective’*

7.2 Completion of Internal Audit actions are monitored by management through the internal action tracking spreadsheet and AGECC also monitors their implementation. Internal Audit also carry out an annual follow up audit to check and verify progress towards the management recommendations and actions. Internal Audit found that reasonable progress has been made in fully implementing internal audit actions, and a number of actions remain in progress towards their forthcoming completion dates.

## **8 Significant governance issues identified in 2021/22**

- 8.1 When determining whether an issue is significant and needs to be included within the Annual Governance Statement, the following will be considered:
- seriously prejudiced or prevented the achievement of a principal objective
  - resulted in the need to seek additional funding or required a significant diversion of resources from another part of the Fire Authority's business
  - had a material impact on the accounts
  - attracted significant public interest or seriously damaged the Fire Authority's reputation
  - resulted in formal action being taken by the S112 Officer or the Monitoring Officer
  - received significant adverse commentary in external inspection reports and which the Fire Authority has yet to address in a timely manner
  - been identified by the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee as significant.
- 8.2 Our External Auditors are expecting to issue an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the 12 months ending 31 March 2022, subject to completion of the remaining audit procedures.
- 8.3 It is also part of External Audit's role to be satisfied proper arrangements have been made to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (Value for Money – VFM). The External Auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses in the Fire Authority's arrangements to secure value for money.
- 8.4 The 2021/22 Internal Audit review of Financial Controls focussed on Devolved Budgets as in line with the Financial Improvement Plan presented in 2021/22, the Service is further enhancing its budgetary control activities through the roll out of devolved budgets, in line with good practice across the public sector. The Internal Auditors reported a reasonable assurance opinion and agreed four low category actions with management. It noted the Service had established policies and procedures clearly setting out the framework for Devolved Budgets. The Fire Authority has also updated and strengthened its Constitution, particularly in relation to Financial Regulations to further support the devolution of budgets across the organisation.

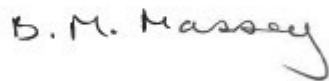
## 9 Conclusion

- 9.1 On the basis of our self-assessment and the annual analysis of the system of internal control we believe our governance arrangements are adequate and effective. However, we will continue to be proactive in our approach to monitoring the effectiveness of our governance identifying areas of improvement. As a result of our self-assessment, we will produce an action plan identifying areas for improvement.

## 10 Statement of commitment

- 10.1 We have been advised of the result of the 2021-22 review of the effectiveness of the governance and internal control framework, and of the plans to address identified weaknesses to ensure continuous improvement of the systems in place. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters set out in Appendix A to enhance further the Service's governance and internal control arrangements.
- 10.2 This Annual Governance Statement was approved by the Audit Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC) on 22 November 2022 and has been signed by the Chief Executive, the Chair of Avon Fire Authority and both Statutory Officers.

We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and that we will monitor their implementation and operation over the next year and as part of our next annual review of effectiveness.



Chair of Avon Fire Authority: Councillor Brenda Massey



Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive: Simon Shilton





Statutory Finance Officer (S151 Officer): Verity Lee



Clerk (Monitoring Officer): Amanda Brown

## 11 Glossary of Terms

<b>AF&amp;RS</b>	Avon Fire & Rescue Service
<b>AFA / FA</b>	Avon Fire Authority / Fire Authority
<b>AGEC</b>	Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee
<b>AGS</b>	Annual Governance Statement
<b>CFO / CEO</b>	Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Officer
<b>CIPFA</b>	Chartered Institute of Financial Accountants

<b>CPD</b>	Continuous Personal Development
<b>CRR</b>	Corporate Risk Register
<b>DAPs</b>	Data Analysis Packs
<b>DICE</b>	Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality
<b>FAQ</b>	Frequently Asked Questions
<b>FBU</b>	Fire Brigade Union
<b>FoI</b>	Freedom of Information
<b>FRS</b>	Fire and Rescue Service
<b>FSOL</b>	Fire Service Operational Learning
<b>GDPR</b>	General Data Protection Regulations
<b>HFSV</b>	Home Fire Safety Visit
<b>HMICFRS</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service

<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>HWA</b>	Health and Wellbeing Advisor
<b>IRMP</b>	Integrated Risk Management Plan
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>JCC</b>	Joint Consultative Committee
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicators
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Association
<b>LRF</b>	Local Resilience Forum
<b>MHAP</b>	Mental Health Action Plan
<b>MHFA</b>	Mental Health First Aid
<b>MTFP</b>	Medium-Term Financial Plan
<b>NFCC</b>	National Fire Chiefs Council

<b>NOG</b>	National Operational Guidance
<b>ORS</b>	Opinion Research Survey
<b>P&amp;CC</b>	People & Culture Committee
<b>PDR</b>	Personal Development Review
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>PRA</b>	Purchase Requisition Authorisation
<b>PRSC</b>	Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee
<b>RAG</b>	Red, Green, Amber
<b>SARI</b>	Stand Against Racism and Inequality
<b>SEN</b>	Staff Engagement Network
<b>SLB</b>	Service Leadership Board
<b>SLT</b>	Service Leadership Team

<b>TRiM</b>	Trauma Risk Incident Management
<b>TAPB</b>	Transfers, Appointments, Promotion Board

## 12 Appendix A – Outcomes of the annual review of effectiveness 2021/22

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CIPFA/SOLACE Principle 1</b>  <b>‘Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law’</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Supporting evidence</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire Authority Members are required to adhere to the Avon Fire Authority (AFA) Constitution which includes a Members’ Code of Conduct, decision making practices, arrangements for whistleblowing and the prevention and detection of fraud, money laundering, corruption and bribery</li> <li>• The Fire Authority, its Committees and Avon Fire &amp; Rescue Service (AF&amp;RS) utilise all the powers contained in the following legislation for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004</li> <li>○ Civil Contingencies Act 2004</li> <li>○ Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005</li> <li>○ Fire Safety Act 2021</li> <li>○ Building Safety Act 2022</li> <li>○ Policing and Crime Act 2017</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The new 2021 Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England covers the conduct of officers and staff</li> <li>• Grant of dispensation for Members is utilised once a year for voting on the council tax precept</li> <li>• Induction for new Members and Regular Members Development Workshops include topics such as budget setting and draft budget, our Service Plan, HMICFRS and the values and behaviour framework</li> <li>• Breaches of security and data protection are recorded and investigated.</li> <li>• Declarations of interests made at all meetings</li> <li>• Register of interests and register of gifts and hospitality (members and staff)</li> <li>• Personal Development Review of officers and staff (Performance Appraisals)</li> <li>• Station and Department visits by Officers and Members</li> <li>• External Compliments and Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Discipline and Grievance Policies</li> <li>• Harassment &amp; Bullying Policy, Toolkit and recording systems</li> <li>• Monthly Bulletin includes updates from the Chief Fire Officer, news, incidents, our people, and events.</li> <li>• AF&amp;RS Leadership Charter sets out what we expect from leaders within Avon Fire &amp; Rescue Service including decision making practices</li> <li>• Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Strategy and Response Plan</li> </ul>

- Confidential Reporting Code and Guidance
- Clerk and Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer (CFO/CEO) regularly review and monitor register of declarations
- DICE Strategy (2019-22) sets out how we are meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Ethics, values and DICE training for Members and staff
- The Firefighter development programme ensures expected behaviours and values are communicated to Firefighters in development.
- The Probation Policy for Corporate Staff supported by the induction checklist and probation review process
- Procurement Strategy in place 2019-22
- Contract Procedure Rules, Contract monitoring and procurement processes
- Ethical values statement included in contracts with external service providers
- Purchase Requisition Authorisation (PRA) electronic compliance system
- Use of Bluelight e-procurement system
- Policy Production and Management process
- Impact Assessments for Equality and Data Protection for all policies and projects
- Collaboration Strategy and Collaborative Working Framework
- Register of Collaborations and Partnerships
- Service Plan (2020-23) was published in April 2020 which sets out our Mission, Vision, and Values
- Corporate Risk Register
- The Transparency Code page on the AF&RS website is regularly reviewed and updated
- Enforcement action is taken under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, where compliance coaching to responsible people is not achievable
- Breaches of security and data protection are recorded and investigated
- Participation in the National Fraud Initiative
- Work of External Audit and Internal Audit, with Internal Audit plan agreed by the AGEK, focusing on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members

## Actions implemented in 2021/22

- The Fire Authority Constitution has been updated in both April 2021 and April 2022 including amendments to reflect the introduction of devolved budgets. There have been no changes to the Members' Code of Conduct, which remains a key element of the Constitution.
- The Constitution includes arrangements for whistleblowing and the prevention and detection of fraud and money laundering, corruption and bribery. No concerns were raised in 2021-22.
- New Members to Avon Fire Authority attended an Induction in June 2021, when they were issued with key documents including the Members' Code of Conduct. Elected Members were reminded to volunteer as station champions. Several Elected Members have taken up this opportunity to work directly with fire stations in their constituencies. For officers and staff, this is a rolling programme, visits will continue and provide an opportunity for open discussion at all levels. This may be in person or via conference call or video call.
- FA Members were invited to attend the quarterly Member Development Briefings which include updates and training on key issues. Members Development Workshops and briefings were conducted throughout the year
- The Values and Behaviour framework is embedded throughout the Service, including Member training sessions, and with suppliers to ensure values align and are upheld as part of contract reviews and procurement process.
- Values based recruitment was introduced in 2020, requiring candidates to demonstrate alignment with our values by providing examples of when they have used each of our values and what the outcome was. This has enabled the Service to attract and employ new recruits and corporate staff who are aligned with the Service values, and will help to embed these across all Service areas.
- Development Pathways for staff promotion were launched
- SLB/SLT review of culture in relation to disciplinary and grievance cases and lessons arising.
- ACAS training sessions held for Single Point of Contacts (SPoC) and Investigating Managers.
- Introduction of Code of Ethics and actions taken to embed across organisation.
- Three Personal Development Review (Performance Appraisals) workshops for managers delivered this year.
- The Terms of Reference for the PRSC were reviewed during 2021-22, following the appointment of the new Chair and updated within the April 2022 version of the Constitution.
- SLT keep the Leadership Charter under review to embed employee commitment to values, behaviour framework and code of ethics.
- The DICE e-learning programme has been revised and will relaunch during the Autumn period in 2022. All staff are required to complete the programme and demonstrate their learning in everyday practices. A new DICE training programme aimed at Watch Managers has been under development and will be launched in 2022/23.
- Staff are encouraged to submit e-Rec cards to their colleagues to thank them for their support or to recognise them aligned to the values. Themed e-Rec cards have also been created for specific events or awareness days, for example International Women's Day.
- The Service bulletin 'The Shout' recognises 'Value Stars', with staff recognised for their values-aligned work in the AF&RS Awards.
- During 2021-22, AGEK kept policies under review, e.g. the Members' Code of Conduct and did not identify necessary amendments.
- Members are required to submit an updated Member Form 2 each municipal year, updating and declaring their interests.
- Purchase Requisition Authorisation (PRA) process reviewed and amended. New contract procurement rules introduced. Embedding new processes and identifying improvements around sustainable procurement.



- 2022-2025 Service Plan published, effective 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. This was carried out in line with the NFCC CRMP Strategic Framework and AF&RS annual planning cycle, to identify all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks, challenges, and opportunities.
- A full Impact Assessment process has been developed to encompass all areas of Impact Assessment as part of any Policy Review. This has been used across the Service in early 2022 on a trial basis.
- Following the expiry of the Coronavirus Regulations, live FA meetings have been held by Members since May 2021
- One data protection case reported to Information Commissioners Office during 2021-22
- The culture survey was re-run in June 2021 with a 35% staff response rate
- Stakeholder engagement sessions held to obtain feedback from key departments on bullying & harassment. Review of cases undertaken to assess themes and actions required. Bullying & Harassment Policy updated but changes not yet implemented.
- An audit plan was agreed by AGEK focusing on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members
- The Collaboration Strategy was refreshed. The Collaboration Framework, Procedures and supporting documents have been updated to include due diligence checks when identifying potential suitable partners; the requirement to ensure alignment of partner values; reference to the Core Code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services and reference to the Values & Behaviour Framework.

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- Fire Authority Members will consider adopting the LGA's Model Councillor Code of Conduct which was approved by the LGA in December 2020, and updated by the LGA in January and May 2021. In the interim, Members will continue to be bound by the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in the Fire Authority Constitution.
- The Clerk has asked for LGA's assistance in reviewing the current level of reporting to the Fire Authority and Committees and that review may result in recommendations to update the Constitution to refine Term of Reference for each of the Committees.
- In June 2022, two new Members to Avon Fire Authority attended an Induction where they were introduced to key documents and expectations. This was closely followed by the FA AGM. Members attended a session by SARI on unconscious bias in July 2022 and will continue to receive ongoing training.
- Procurement exercise due to begin to purchase an upgrade to our existing Learning Management System which will provide a Personal Development Review facility. There are further PDR workshops planned in 2022/23.
- At the FA General Meeting in June 2022, elected Members were reminded to volunteer as station champions. Two new elected members have volunteered to act as station champions. Officers and staff continue to visit stations on a rolling programme.
- Service policies will be reviewed as part of the Transformation Team's strand on Policy in 2022/23
- People & Culture Committee updated on issues and trends arising from Discipline and Grievance cases. Ongoing discussions with SLB/SLT. Zero Tolerance statement introduced and sessions with Middle Managers and work teams to make this a reality
- During 2022/23 the Harassment & Bullying Policy will be reviewed and published, with a confidential reporting tool implemented as part of the Digitisation strand of Transformation.

- The Corporate Risk Management Strategy, Corporate Risk Register and risk scoring matrix will be reviewed
- A revised Community Risk Management Plan will be produced which will inform the 2023-2026 Service Plan. This will utilise data from community risk assessments, risk research and horizon scanning, ensuring we align to the Fire Standards Board - Strategic Community Risk Management Planning.
- Risk Management training will be provided to SLT and Members to support the Corporate Risk Register
- Service will continue to collaborate with teams, the People Services Forum and Unions to embed the Values and Behaviour Framework.
- Leadership academy will be launched.
- Zero tolerance statement is being introduced in 22/23.
- Continue to analyse quantitative and qualitative data from the Cultural Survey to make improvements.
- All current and future DICE training will include a section on Values and the Behaviour Framework. A full review of the equalities e-learning will be conducted in June 2023.
- Review underway to update induction and probation process and supporting tools with the introduction of the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) model.
- Draft Modern Slavery Policy will be reviewed with the new requirements under Modern Slavery Act
- The Clerk will monitor for any new legislation which may impact AF&RS or the Fire Authority and will brief staff/Members, as necessary and ensure policies/procedures are updated as necessary.
- Avon FA have responded to a consultation asking for the re-introduction of virtual/hybrid meetings for FA and Committee meetings.
- Updated training to reflect the changes in legislation with the introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022.
- Research undertaken to compare AF&RS draft Bullying & Harassment policy with Services deemed excellent by HMICFRS. Policy due to be released by end of 2022 with implementation tools and training to ensure it is understood and embedded.
- The Collaboration Framework, Collaboration Procedures, supporting documents and Registers will be published on our Intranet.

## CIPFA/SOLACE Principle 2

### ‘Ensuring Openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement’

#### Supporting evidence

- Annual Performance Report
- Freedom of Information Act publication scheme and Code of Practice
- Local Government Transparency Code reviewed and updated regularly
- Privacy Notices published on the website and regularly updated
- FA website provides information regarding the Strategies, Policies, Service Plan (and supporting documents) as well as news and information about levels of performance, incidents, and the work that we do in the community, minutes, and papers from FA Meetings
- The Service Plan is prepared in consultation with key stakeholders:
  - Level 1 – Staff, Avon FA Members, Rep Bodies, and the SEN
  - Level 2 – Local communities, Avon and Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner, local businesses, local authorities and bordering fire and rescue services
  - Level 3 – Avon & Somerset Constabulary, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and Avon & Somerset Local Resilience Forum members
  - Level 4 – Local media and local Members of Parliament (MPs)
- The FA and Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee monitors the level of service delivery to the public via post-incident surveys conducted by Opinion Research Services, a suite of Performance Indicators and Quarterly reports
- Accessibility statement reviewed, updated, and republished
- Public consultation takes place for the Draft Budget Strategy annually, and any significant changes to the Service Plan.
- Consultation with staff through SEN, Research and Development Groups, Transformation team and equipment working groups.
- SEN aims to involve staff in Service decisions and allows for a platform for staff to raise issues that may affect the Service
- Tactical Research and Development group utilises the knowledge and experience of staff with regards to advances and innovation within the fire sector, to improve firefighter and community safety
- Member engagement sessions
- Video recording and live streaming of AFA meetings
- Enhanced social media presence with quality and engaging content
- External and Internal Annual Reports published on the website
- HMICFRS and auditor Inspection reports published on the website
- Induction course available for new members and all members are made aware of the Service’s documents and procedures regarding: Codes of conduct, Whistleblowing, Compliments and complaints, Anti-fraud and corruption
- Record of decision making and supporting materials

- Corporate Communication strategy and plan
- Medium-Term Financial Plan and Budget Consultation
- Registers are in place to assist in monitoring collaboration, partnership, and Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) referral arrangements
- Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) constitution, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) negotiations committee in place
- Health & Safety (H&S) Committees for staff at all levels to be able to contribute to the decision-making process
- Collaborations in procurement/purchasing ensure the Service shares knowledge, resources, buying power and best practice, to deliver the best value service to our communities
- The Collaborative Working Framework and Operational Guidance sets out ways of working for staff
- The Collaboration Strategy sets out the Service and AFA commitment to collaborative working
- Partnership agreements, memorandum of understanding, Service Level Agreements are in place
- Work of the FA and key decisions promoted on AF&RS website and other communication channels
- Avon FA meetings and committees recorded and available on YouTube
- An annual benchmarking report of our results is produced by Opinion Research Survey (ORS) which compares us to other FRSs.
- The DICE Team connect with organisations within our Service area to engage with and understand the needs of our community
- Community Safety Campaigns are evaluated to identify improvements in community engagement
- The Service publishes a monthly bulletin to keep staff and stakeholders informed of changes which have come from consultation
- Business cases are presented to SLB/SLT for consideration and approval.

### **Actions implemented in 2021/22**

- Accessibility statement reviewed, updated and re-published
- Public consultation including Budget strategy and key budget strategy questions, were included in the Service Plan consultation.
- Consultation with staff through SEN, Research and Development Groups, and Transformation team working groups. Watch Manager workshops were reintroduced and well attended with a lot of positive feedback. More focus on the things that matter at SEN meetings has led to a significant increase in attendance across all staff groups.
- Member Development Briefings continue to take place four times a year when key FA documents are briefed and discussed, including feedback from consultations, in addition to the provision of ad hoc training, as required.
- Video recording and live streaming of AFA meetings until May 2021
- A second cultural survey was conducted as well as in-depth focus groups. Results were published on the intranet and shared with staff. Following the rollout of Microsoft 365, the Service has published more content on Teams and are seeing incremental improvement in engagement with content shared. This content has included messages from the CFO and SLT roundup videos.
- Work of FA and key decisions promoted on AF&RS website and other communication channels.
- A review of all collaborations and partnerships commenced and registers were updated to include a RAG rating for each arrangement
- Collaboration with the NFCC on national projects including the procurement of PPE, consumables, specialist uniform and Emergency Response Vehicles Framework agreement

- Members of Procurement in Partnership (PiP), a group of collaborative South West public sector organisations including police, NHS, universities and councils. Joint Supplier Day with other PiP members was successful. National frameworks for PPE and Emergency Response Vehicles now in place. Continue to be members of PiP.
- The Service has several R&D groups in place for areas such as water rescue, high rise incidents, aerial appliances, heavy rescue and driving. Groups meet regularly, led by the Technical Service team with minutes, outcomes and actions captured
- A Communications Charter was created to reduce the number of platforms the Service uses in line with the adoption of Microsoft 365.
- The Community Risk Report 2022 has been published. The findings of this report and any subsequent engagement will form the foundation of the risk-driven action planning for the next Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).
- Several SLB horizon planning workshops were carried out during 2022.
- Strategic Options on long-term training infrastructure have been agreed.
- Job Descriptions continually reviewed. Several new job descriptions introduced. Streamlined job description template trialled.
- DICE created a Community & Partnership database with over 40 contacts for community-based organisations and other key stakeholders across all sectors of employment. This database is available to all staff and has proven to be a useful tool for engagement and relation/partnership building with local communities. DICE work with SARI under SLA objectives to improve Service understanding of increasingly diverse communities and how best to engage and remove barriers that may hinder access to services.

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- A new website to support digital engagement with public and staff will be designed, built and launched followed selection of new provider.
- FA Standing orders require that an Agenda and copies of all reports are submitted to every Member at least five clear days before the FA or Committee meeting (excluding bank holidays and weekends). The Service has also introduced Modern.gov, a system for the administration of all meetings and sharing of reports.
- The Service will determine extent of consultation required based on amends made to the Service Plan Proposal and Service Plan.
- Continue to analyse quantitative and qualitative data from the Cultural Survey to make improvements.
- Continuation of filming and publishing all AFA meetings to the AFA YouTube channel
- Member Development Briefings will continue to take place four times a year
- The employee relations policy will be reviewed.
- More Watch Manager workshops to increase staff engagement and facilitation of discussion on key themes from the cultural review.
- The Service communicate across 13 different platforms. Following the introduction of Microsoft 365, the aim is to reduce the number of channels used to four main platforms, as well as increase staff personal accountability for communicating across platforms.
- The Service will create a new SharePoint intranet site
- Job Description reviews are ongoing to update statements on DICE, Community, H&S and environmental responsibilities
- Training will take place on Community Safety activities for all wholetime operational staff. Development of intranet pages on community engagement processes and replacement of existing Memos. Update/refresh Station Reference Guide SRG2 Community Safety.

- Redraft 'Making Avon Fire & Rescue Service a better place for all' document in line with findings from the cultural survey. Continue to promote the use of Microsoft 365 applications and encourage staff to engage with the platforms.
- Effective evaluation carried out following the wholetime recruitment campaign, although more engagement from staff required. The Corporate Communications Team continues to conduct quarterly scoring and evaluation of all campaigns and communication activity in a bid to gather insight and evidence on the effectiveness of communications.
- A strategic options report will be presented to AFA to determine the next steps / timescales for implementing a long-term training delivery model and the required infrastructure once the Joint Training Centre (Severn Park) PFI Contract ends in 2028
- Workshop to take place with SLB in September 2022 to refresh the 3-year Service Plan.  
A new Strategic Assessment and Baseline Report will be produced accompanied by a new Community Risk Report 2023.
- Work on joint initiatives with Kent FRS such as e-tendering portal and continue to explore possible other possible procurement collaboration opportunities.
- The MTFP and supporting narrative report included information on key concerns and risks considered as well as budget setting assumptions and justifications. The annual accounts reflect the actuals for the year and the narrative report reflects how this has varied from budgets and prior years with key explanations as required.
- A discovery event has been organised which will involve members of our staff meeting with about 20 young BAME and disadvantaged people to share knowledge about one-another and create a direct line from the community to our recruitment process & the Yes You Can campaign. The key aim of the event is to learn more about any potential barriers the young people may encounter when trying to access AF&FS services or gain employment with the Service, and to provide an insight into the range of employment opportunities within the Service. AF&FS will work collaboratively with Babbasa to identify and mitigate any barriers and encourage the young people to consider AF&RS as an employer of choice.

### CIPFA SOLACE Principle 3

#### **‘Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits’**

#### **Supporting evidence**

- The Baseline Report sets out the level and location of risks, providing information on the effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with the risks identified, and the Operational demands placed on AF&RS
- The Service Plan including the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is updated and reviewed by the FA on an annual basis. The Service Plan explains how the Service matches resources to risk, which also contains an agreed set of quality standard measures.
- The Collaboration Strategy and Framework sets out the intended principles on which the Service enters partnerships. Partnership agreements set out intended outcomes and how effectiveness is monitored
- Transformation Strategy and scope sets out the intended outcomes of the workstreams and initiatives
- Communication and campaign plans identify audience and stakeholders and the intended impact on the community
- Service plans, corporate strategies and action plans set out Service aims, objectives, and values
- Performance figures are produced and reported to the FA highlighting key areas of activity. Additional scrutiny is provided by Elected Members via the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee
- Regular reports on progress against the Service Plan objectives with key matters arising reported to the FA
- The Service publish a Final Accounts report that contains full details of the Authorities financial affairs including the Treasurer’s foreword, Budget reports and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Monitoring of HMICFRS inspection action plans co-ordinated and reported by HMICFRS Service Liaison Officer
- The Corporate Risk Register is monitored and reviewed monthly by SLT and twice a year by AGECC
- Business Continuity Policy and Plans are in place for all departments to ensure ‘Business as Usual’ can continue if disruptions occur
- External Audit - Value for Money opinion
- Outcomes resulting from the Internal Audit inspection process
- The Strategic Assessment enables AF&RS to identify issues with the potential to affect the future strategic direction of the Service
- An annual benchmarking report of results is produced by Opinion Research Survey (ORS) which compares AF&RS with other FRSS.
- Capital investment is structured to achieve appropriate life spans and adaptability for future use of resources to optimise social, economic and environmental wellbeing
- Impact assessments are undertaken for new policies and projects (data protection, equalities, environmental)
- AF&RS Environmental Strategy 2020-2030 outlines the approach to protecting the environment, and being more climate-resilient
- FA papers include sections to consider the financial, legal, environmental and sustainability impacts
- The Transformation programme aims to meet the needs of the users, improve services to the community, increase efficiency, capacity and cohesiveness, and maximise the added value of digital solutions
- Environmental impact is monitored by monthly/quarterly Performance Indicators on Energy, Water, Business Travel & Carbon Emissions

- The Capital Asset & Projects Board is made up of Service managers with responsibility for Capital Projects and Asset Management including Property, Fleet & Equipment, ICT, Procurement and Finance. This group considers the financing of capital projects, procurement and the ongoing management of assets throughout the Service
- Social, economic and environmental factors are considered and implemented within procurement processes and contract management
- The DICE Strategy sets out how AF&RS ensure fair access to Services
- Equality Impact Assessments ensures projects and policies are assessed for potential impact on people with protected characteristics
- In addition to the publishing of the minutes of our public meetings, we comply with the Local Government Transparency Code by publishing the mandatory and recommended data set which can be found on our website.

### **Actions implemented in 2021/22**

- Refresh of performance scorecard for future vision for next 3 years.
- The Collaboration Strategy, Collaborative Framework, Collaborative Procedures and supporting documents have been updated.
- More evaluation and insight work undertaken to improve understanding of key audiences and how to better target communications.
- Round 1 HMICFRS Inspection Action Plan was closed in January 2022 (at V1.39) following publication of our Round 2 inspection report on 15 December 2021. It was 94% complete (96 actions out of a total of 102) - outstanding actions have been carried forward as standalone legacy actions into the Round 2 action plan, or assimilated into associated actions within the new Round 2 action plan.
- The Round 2 HMICFRS inspection report confirmed that the three causes of concern resulting from Round 1 have now been resolved. As a result, monitoring of progress against the 63 new actions included in our Round 2 action plan is undertaken by SLT every other month (as opposed to every month during Round 1) to apply a degree of proportionality to the process and lessen the administrative burden on lead officers. The Round 2 action plan will continue to be tabled to every meeting of the PRSC for Member-led scrutiny.
- An audit schedule was agreed by the AGECEC and carried out, focusing on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members.
- 4 year MTFP produced which identifies where money needs to be invested to mitigate future risks. Strategic Risk Assessment will be included within the Service Plan, with a view to 2050, which demonstrates long-term thinking.
- The new Capital Prioritisation and Steering Group to ensure all potential capital projects and replacements are assessed for affordability and impact in terms of the Service's overall objectives.
- Business Continuity E-learning has been launched and is available for all staff. Business Continuity Steering Group meet quarterly.
- The Strategic Assessment 2021 is in place alongside the Community Risk Report 2022. New Cadcorp Risk Modelling software procured, supporting both future service plans ensuring the matching of resources to risk
- PESTELO analysis undertaken to inform the Strategic Assessment and Service Plan
- Annual action plan produced and performance against Environmental Strategy reported annually to PSRC.
- In line with the Environmental Strategy 2020-2030, a single environmental performance indicator has been established: Carbon emissions to track progress towards our Net Zero by 2030 goal. Annual environmental report produced and published.
- FA and Committee report templates were updated to include financial implications 'up front' and to incorporate key considerations, risks and legal/policy implications (which includes equality/diversity, environmental/sustainability, crime/disorder, and data protection)



- A full Impact Assessment process has been developed to encompass all areas of Impact Assessment as part of any Policy Review. There has been a marked increase in the volume of completed and approved Impact Assessments. Work is ongoing to achieve necessary changes to Policy, Process and Digital ways of working

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- A new Baseline Report 2022-2025 will be produced.
- Refresh of Performance Scorecard aligned to refresh of Service Plan.
- Introduction of visual Microsoft PowerBI performance dashboards.
- Updated Collaboration Framework, Collaboration Procedures, supporting documents and Registers will be published on the Intranet.
- Continue with active monitoring of HMICFRS-related actions and recommendations via SLT and PRSC.
- Progress against the HMICFRS Round 2 Inspection Action Plan has been declared as one of the Chief Fire Officer's top three priorities
- The Risk Management Strategy will be reviewed and amended in line with the new InPhase Risk Management software and recommendations from the Internal Auditors
- Business Continuity folders issued to all Stations. Review and refresh of Business Continuity documents.
- A new Strategic Assessment 2022-2025 will be produced. Risk Register will align to the CRMP strategic framework and fire standards board- strategic CRMP.
- Macro and micro environmental analysis will be considered in reviewing the Strategic Assessment.
- An additional Corporate Risk introduced to ensure compliance with all relevant environmental legislation and regulations, and to ensure the Service's goal of Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 is achieved. Combined Impact Assessment in development for all projects, policies, collaborations etc, including environmental impacts such as climate change and ecological impacts. ISO 14001-compliant Env. Management System (EMS) in development
- Transformation scope and priorities to be reviewed in 2022 due to capacity and shifting timeframes for completion. Priority action list being created following SLT consultation in June 2022.
- Revised DICE Strategy and other key related documents will be available to all staff via the DICE channel on Microsoft Teams.
- Further work to centralise and roll out the new Impact Assessment process across all activities within the Service.

## **CIPFA SOLACE Principle 4**

### **‘Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes’**

#### **Supporting evidence**

- Decision making protocols set out in the Leadership Charter and the Avon Fire Authority Constitution
- Discussion between Members and officers on the information required to support decision making
- Avon Fire Authority Papers, Option Appraisals and Business Cases
- Public Consultation takes place when significant changes are proposed within the Service Plan.
- Budget consultation, Final Accounts, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- Budget guidance and protocols are in place
- A forward plan sets out key dates for developing and submitting plans and reports to Avon FA, Committees, SLB and SLT
- The Service Plan is a rolling 3-year plan which is reviewed and updated each year, in line with a pre-prepared timeline
- SLB/SLT and Member Planning Workshops/Engagement Sessions take place to help determine the actions within the Service Plan
- Service strategies and station/unit plans are regularly reviewed to ensure they align with priorities and targets set out in the Service Plan
- The Capital Asset and Projects Board is made up of Service managers with responsibility for Property, Fleet & Equipment, ICT, Procurement and Finance. This group considers the financing of capital projects, procurement, and the ongoing management of assets throughout the Service
- Various staff working groups, for example SEN and R&D Groups, seek feedback from our staff when implementing new projects.
- Attendance at the Local Resilience Forum ensures a joined-up approach with Cat 1 and Cat 2 responders and the voluntary sector
- Attendance at Safeguarding Boards ensure a joint approach to delivering services to our most vulnerable service users.
- Risk Management Strategy
- Strategies and plans are regularly reviewed and adapted where necessary
- KPIs have been established and approved for each service element and included in the Service Plan and are reported upon regularly
- Reports include detailed performance results and highlight areas where corrective action is necessary
- Reports are automated where possible to ensure capacity in generating information

## **Actions implemented in 2021-22**

- A Leadership Charter is in place.
- AFA Constitution reviewed.
- Business case template has been revised with the governance process for sign off amended. This includes financial information and associated risks. FA papers have increased emphasis on the financial costs of any proposed changes in business cases.
- Public consultation took place for the Draft Budget Strategy
- Part of the budget setting process is to now consider Service developments and changes with SLB and SLT, to ensure budgets are set with the fulfilment of Service objectives in mind. The Service plan and MTFP processes have also now been aligned in terms of timescale to ensure this continues.
- Devolved budgets are now being rolled out across the Service with templates and initial reporting shared at Director level in 2021-22
- MTFP informed by an increase in financial and business planning.
- New Corporate online system, InPhase, procured with applications for Corporate Planning, Risk Management and Project Management.
- Communication Strategy 2021-2024 was published
- Representation at Health & Wellbeing Boards
- National Guidance being followed; PESTELO analysis is contained in National Guidance and will form part of the Strategic Assessment planning process.

## **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- Corporate Forward plan developed detailing key dates for papers, meetings, and committees. Draft agendas prepared for all meetings.
- Start to build Business Planning into new Corporate online system, InPhase
- Review and identify opportunities for staff engagement and feedback.
- The Risk Management Strategy will be updated following advice on best practice from advisory internal audit report
- AFA constitution will be reviewed again, and the Leadership Charter will be updated to include behavioural elements.
- Internal Audit benchmarking to be undertaken of the business cases & benefits realisation within the Service.
- Safeguarding training will be updated and embedded across the organisation through actions in the Service Plan.
- New Capital Steering & Prioritisation group with a focus to ensure the forward Capital programme is sustainable and affordable.
- MTFP, which will be refreshed and informed by the Capital Steering Group.
- Macro and micro environmental analysis will be considered in reviewing the Strategic Assessment.

## **CIPFA SOLACE Principle 5**

### **‘Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it’**

#### **Supporting evidence**

- Regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes
- Local Performance Indicators and agreed annual targets
- Monthly target updates, Absence Monitoring, PDR completion monitoring, H&S target monitoring and Incident monitoring
- HMICFRS Inspections, Reports and Action Plan is monitored and reported to SLT and Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee
- New Member training and continued development for Members
- Employees Pay Structure – Hay evaluations conducted as required to ensure corporate staff salaries are in line with their responsibilities
- Performance and benchmarking information produced monthly and reported to the local managers, the SLT, PRSC, and the FA.
- Performance levels are challenged, and remedial actions discussed and implemented
- Data analytics are used to match resource to risk
- Estates Strategy sets out the rationale for funding and resourcing work on our buildings
- Fleet Strategy sets out the rationale for funding and resourcing work on our fleet
- Business cases are reviewed by SLB/SLT to ensure that resources are matched to Service priorities
- Internal and External Audit Recommendations are tracked and reported to SLT and AGEC
- Welcome briefing and Member’ induction programme is regularly updated to reflect the changing environment and includes a briefing to Members on the Statutory Officer roles
- S112 and Monitoring Officer appropriately qualified and with high levels of experience
- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations appear within the Fire Authority’s Constitution
- The Financial Services contract provides access to a range of financial support services and resources
- Strong regional and national finance support networks provide good resource on financial issues
- Financial Regulations are published online and integrated into internal procedures
- Members are appointed by the four unitary Authorities to Avon FA, following discussion with political group leaders to ensure political balance (each committee is chaired by a different political party and the split of members sitting on each committee represents the percentage of members from each party nominated to the Fire Authority)
- Each Service role has a job description for corporate staff and role map for uniformed officers. Each appointment is made using fair selection practices that measure candidates against criteria for each post. This ensures selection of the right people with the right skills, qualifications and experience. Staff are further supported by policies, guidance notes, training courses including bespoke online learning and courses, alongside corporate and business plans to ensure they have the support they need to carry out their roles.
- SLB visits to stations and departments to aid communication and understanding of objectives

- Standing orders and financial regulations are reviewed regularly, any legal and organisational changes are considered and acted on
- Protocol for Member/Officer relations: roles of Chair and Chief Fire Officer published on external website
- MOST knowledge standards have been written for flexi officers and frequency of repeats set
- Incident command assessments are carried out on a two-yearly basis
- Specialist skills are assessed through peer assessment within that speciality
- Access to update courses/ information briefings on new legislation
- Succession Planning Policy and Report
- The Transfer, Appointments and Promotions Board (TAPB) ensures that all the processes named in the title are carried out in a consistent way using clear and transparent criteria based on business needs
- Development pathways, training plans, and apprentices
- Debrief and Monitoring, Lessons learned from projects
- Public access statements, public consultation and LGA Peer Review
- Cultural Survey, Cultural Review and Action Plan,
- Human Resource policies, Health & Safety Policies
- Health and Wellbeing Advisors, Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP), Mental Health Training Programmes, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), Trauma Risk Management (TRiM)
- Employee Assistance Programme, Counselling Services, Family Liaison Officers, Blue Light Champions
- WeR1 staff network, health and wellbeing topics for talks and workshops, podcasts, and case studies
- SLB commitment digital technology investment for operational incidents and elsewhere across the Service to improve staff safety

### **Actions implemented in 2021-22**

- Internal Audit of Performance Management and KPIs, finding the Service's performance management control framework to be well-designed with performance measures clearly defined and regularly reported on. Benchmarking data review found to be effective.
- PRSC continue to oversee the scrutiny of the performance of AF&RS and delivery of the Authority's policies, plans and objectives. A 'Service Roundup' report is a standing item for the FA to brief Members on recent operations.
- Round 2 HMICFRS inspection report confirmed that the three causes of concern resulting from Round 1 have now been resolved. As a result, monitoring of progress against the 63 new actions included in our Round 2 action plan is undertaken by SLT every other month (as opposed to every month during Round 1) to apply a degree of proportionality to the process and lessen the administrative burden on lead officers. The Round 2 action plan will continue to be tabled to every meeting of the PRSC for Member-led scrutiny.
- A new Project Management system has been trialled within Transformation and internally audited.
- Internal Audit Plan agreed by AGECE focusing on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members. Internal Audit reports and Action Tracking are reported monthly to SLT and twice a year to AGECE, streamlined to highlight exceptions
- Risk Based Inspection Programme scheduled. New Risk Modelling software procured 'CadCorp' (SIS Desktop, Risk Modeller and Workload Modeller).

- Talent Management programme planned.
- Decision taken that HR would not be involved in every recruitment due to capacity. A risk assessment is undertaken, and line managers received training on recruitment from ACAS.
- As part of the revised constitution the financial aspects were reviewed and scrutinised by the Treasurer, which links to the changes in roles and responsibilities around devolved budgets.
- New Members were notified to the Authority in June 2022 and following the AGM on 22 June 2022, the Clerk appointed Members to Committees in accordance with the agreement reached with the political group leaders.
- Members received updates on new fire safety legislation. Legislation was introduced because of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry findings.
- Monthly reports sent to Department heads detailing those staff whose PDR is out of date.
- A second culture survey conducted in June 2021, with a 35% response rate. Since the 2018 Cultural Review, the Service has implemented plans to drive a new culture with the 'Principle of Public Life' at its heart. To assess cultural change programme progress, Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by AF&RS to undertake a Cultural Review survey of its employees, which was completed by 298 staff members. The survey results showed that the Service has taken positive steps in its cultural change journey. However, the results also showed that negativity was more prevalent among respondents in three staff categories: those with 10+ years' service; corporate staff; and those who had experienced discrimination, prejudice, harassment, or bullying
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy launched. Health and Fitness Policy reviewed and updated.
- Mental Health Action Plan launched in April 2021.
- During 2021/22 a full Health & Safety and Welfare team was in place to support Service requirements.
- MHFA course available with additional 8 new TRiM practitioners to complete course by the end of 2022.
- A Succession Planning Policy was produced and published. A Succession Planning report has been regularly presented to the People and Culture Committee to provide assurance around mitigations of current succession planning risks and monitor the position regarding succession planning projections.
- MOST Knowledge standards continue to develop and link to the National standards/NOG. As part of the transformation, professional standards is part of the development. Pump priming funding being invested to move this area forward at a pace.
- New TAPB page on intranet includes all vacancies and anonymised transfer list and minutes of TAPB Board meetings. Transfer list sent to Station & Group Managers monthly to allow informed local decision making. Clear and transparent plan for new Watch Manager structure communicated to everyone. Drop-in sessions held for question and answers.
- Development Pathways launched August 2021. Team undertook station visits to give awareness of development pathways and changes to the promotion process.
- Alignment with Fire Standard for Operational Learning started. Operational Assurance is now a single function within Learning & Development. System and policy review has started, implementation is aligned with the NOG implementation in process.
- Key Estate Strategy projects progressing including Avonmouth (Phase 1 completed), Bedminster Refurbishment (out for tender), Weston (Feasibility designs), Bath (Collaboration Schemes developed) and PSDS Grant Funding for Renewable Energy.
- Fleet Strategy published to interface with the environment and premises strategy, including funding elements. Supported by a Fleet replacement strategy.

- The Collaboration Framework, Collaboration Procedures and supporting documents have been updated to reflect better recording of the benefits to be gained from working together.
- Following significant investment, the Service now operates 2 drones. Drones have been used on several incidents and have also been deployed to assist partner agencies. The drones are capable of sending live footage which can be easily shared with Officers, Service Control and partners, to provide a real time reflection of incident status. With footage also used to plan incident actions.
- All appliances are fitted with CCTV cameras and are used on route to and during incidents capturing real time accurate information.

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- Labour market review conducted for several critical roles and market supplements introduced or increased. Review underway to compare spinal column point distribution with South West Fire Services and Local Authorities to identify salary differentials and assess costs to address gaps.
- Risk Based Inspection Programme due for completion by September 2022, thereafter Avon Data Warehouse will be developed to provide a repository for all knowledge relating to risks within AF&RS. This will enable data analytics and data sharing. Annual training for staff in the use of risk Modelling and some staff to receive SQL training.
- Close out reports are used to share information and lessons learnt post Transformation activities.
- Continue with active monitoring of HMICFRS-related actions and recommendations via SLT and PRSC.
- The Induction for new Members in June 2022 reminded Members of their roles and the responsibilities of Lead Directors. Members are provided with key documents including the latest FA Constitution.
- Both the Clerk and Treasurer will complete professional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training for their role
- HR Business Partner model introduced. Enables closer working with hiring managers to ensure recruitment processes are fit for purpose, fair, consistent, and inclusive.
- The new CFO has produced a programme of visits to stations/units for 2022/23. Following which a programme of visits will be arranged for SLT members and there will be a new facility for feeding back and collating common themes to help address these.
- FA Standing Orders and financial regulations are kept under review, as they form part of the Constitution, which is working document. There are no planned changes unless they are recommended by the LGA as part of their review of reporting.
- The public are now able to attend Authority meetings in person by giving the Clerk notice in advance. They must still submit Public Access Statements 2 days in advance of a meeting.
- Member/Officer relations policy is published as part of the 2022 re-issue of the Constitution. The new Chief Fire Officer/Chief Exec has continued weekly telephone calls with the FA Chair to keep her abreast of day-to-day issues.
- The FA Agenda includes as a standing item a 'Service Roundup' which updates members on operational issues.
- Quarterly Member Development sessions are used to help identify and address any concerns raised by Members.
- Half day development day per month for SLT including external providers delivering leadership training.
- A new talent management programme to be launched in 2023.
- Promotions policy to be reviewed, with consideration of including the transfer policy.

- Procurement exercise to purchase an upgrade to existing Learning Management System which will provide a PDR facility. PDR training workshops for managers continue to be delivered.
- Implement a single linked Operational Assurance process that aligns to National Operational Guidance and Fire Service Operational Learning (FSOL). Business case in place to build team to support. This process will link to Health & Safety, risk assessment and Strategic Actions and Tactical Actions as defined in National Operational Guidance and required by FSOL
- The Service aim to achieve a HMICFRS inspection rating of 'Good' across all three pillars (effectiveness, efficiency, and people)
- The Service will continue to analyse data from quantitative and qualitative reports, using information to identify areas for consideration and improvements, and to update the culture change action plan and Making Avon Fire and Rescue Service a better Place to Work.
- Human Resources policies to be reviewed as part of the Transformation Work Programme.
- NFCC Attendance Management Policy making good progress. The HR Business Partner model introduced in May 2022 provides the capacity to finalise this policy and supporting processes, and commence the training of employees and line managers to embed this. The introduction of the Welfare Form and welfare focussed discussions will assist in changing the attendance and wellbeing culture.
- All Health and Safety Policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be reviewed and updated by the end of 2023.
- Recruitment processes have taken place and a new interim Health, Safety, Welfare, Wellbeing and Fitness (HSWAF) manager has been appointed. An interim deputy manager has been appointed and the subsequent vacant post of Health and Safety advisor has been filled on an interim basis. The process to appoint a substantive HSWAF Manager will run in the Autumn of 2022.
- Mental Health Action Plan will be reviewed and updated by the end of September 2022.
- Additional internal TRiM workshops will be provided for all practitioners and additional guidance will be completed by the end of 2022. New Wellbeing Advisor to work on new Suicide prevention course. Blue Light Champion role to be reviewed by the end of 2022 and additional support provided.
- Support available to all staff on topics such as cost of living, sleep, anxiety, grief, and post Covid 'new normal'. Utilising the SEN, as workshops currently not running due to post vacancies. Past workshops are still available on the Intranet for staff to access.
- The risk assessment review procedure has been drafted and is currently being used. Regarding training this is planned to roll out in 2022/23. Ad hoc risk assessment training is delivered as requested and required by staff need. In 2023 we are anticipating that all H&S risk assessments will need aligning to NATOG.
- Outcome of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) procurement will be finalised in Autumn 2022. Intention to introduce EAP and/or enhanced counselling provision in Autumn/Winter 2022.
- Several projects taking place as part of the Transformation programme which will enhance digital capability on the fireground and contribute to increased firefighter safety. The Service are investing in a Risk Based Inspection Programme and intend to develop a data warehouse capability to provide detailed risk information. The Service are continuing to explore the use of BA telemetry and are seeking assurances from other FRS's in relation to its reliability and benefits before committing on a path for AF&RS.
- Research to be carried out on blended fleet, and Fleet Strategy to be updated to reflect any changes.
- Estates Net Zero plan being produced to support 2030 target. Avonmouth Completion (August 2022), Bedminster Construction Phase (January 2023), Bath Collaboration agreement, funding and design / construction progression, Weston Detailed design and construction programme to be developed.



## **CIPFA SOLACE Principle 6**

### **‘Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management’**

#### **Supporting evidence**

- A Corporate Risk Strategy and Risk Management strategy are in place
- Corporate Risk Register is reviewed and reported each month which is scrutinised by SLT, followed by updates to AGECEC twice a year
- PRSC includes elected members from each political party. They are provided with monthly performance updates and encouraged to challenge areas of under-performance on behalf of the FA. PRSC Terms of Reference detail how this is done. Responsible officers answer questions and provide solutions to overcome performance issues
- South West Regional Operational Assurance Group work on standardising processes and procedures for operational assurance, and sharing of risk critical information, allowing Services to better carry out joint operations, with larger data sets, and improved joint learning
- NFCC Community Risk Strategic framework followed to identify & assess foreseeable fire and rescue related risks as part of the IRMP
- Risk Management processes managed by the Health and Safety (H&S) department who monitor and support relevant managers to review all risk assessments in line with their required review periods. Business risks are identified and managed by local managers
- FA papers include a mandatory summary of risk
- Performance map showing all key activities have benchmarking and performance measures
- Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing, and distributing timely reports that are adhered to
- Discussion between Members and Officers on the information required to support decision making
- Publication of papers, agendas, and minutes of meetings with evidence of improvements as a result of scrutiny
- Terms of Reference/Constitution
- Budget monitoring reports, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), financial regulations and standing orders, cost performance
- Audit plan approved by AGECEC annually and audit reports which are circulated to the SLT and AGECEC for consideration and approval
- Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014)
- Participation in the National Fraud Initiative
- Code of conduct, Register of Interests, Gifts & Hospitality Register
- Annual Governance Statement produced each year and presented to the AGECEC for approval
- 2021-2023 Governance and Assurance Framework
- Mandatory staff training for data protection and information security
- Data management procedures, Record of Processing Activity (ROPA), Retention Schedule, Privacy Notices
- Data Protection Officer, registered on Information Commissioner's Office Data Protection Register, and Data Protection Coordinator
- Senior Information Risk Officer/Owner
- Data Protection Policy, Freedom of Information Policy, IT policies and Security Incident Management Policy

- Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA)
- Robust IT Infrastructure and commitment to invest in digital technology for continuous improvement
- Data sharing agreement/register, Partnership agreements, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's)
- Collaboration and formal partnerships register
- Register of Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) referral and delivery mechanisms
- Internal Audit undertake transactional testing as part of the audit plan
- Financial management supports the delivery of services and transformational change as well as securing good stewardship

### **Actions implemented in 2021-22**

- Members were provided with regular updates on Service delivery via performance reports to the PRSC. The PRSC were encouraged to scrutinise and challenge poor performance. A Service Update report was also provided at every FA meeting.
- NFCC Community Risk Strategic framework followed to identify and assess foreseeable fire & rescue related risks as part of the IRMP
- The risk assessment review procedure was drafted and is being used, with training delayed due to Covid-19.
- Performance Management Internal Audit conducted in 2022 and found AF&RS to be effective
- Monthly reporting is shared with budget managers and SLT to ensure performance is as expected
- The Corporate Forward Plan was used to plan reports required for meetings
- Members are accustomed to the new report templates, which are easier to digest in advance of meetings, facilitating enhanced scrutiny. In addition, access to papers in advance of meetings has been improved by the introduction of the Modern.Gov system.
- Report templates contain a subheading for the report writer to outline operational, financial, or reputational risks for consideration.
- The Constitution was reviewed, and a new version published in Apr 2022, which included an updated Terms of Reference for the PRSC, and new wording to reflect the introduction of devolved budgets. This also included Terms of Reference for AGECE, for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment.
- Regular training was provided to all elected Members including quarterly Member Development sessions.
- Updated financial monitoring has been shared throughout 2021-22 with SLT, SLB, the FA and its committees for both revenue and capital. Financial regulations were reviewed as part of an overall Constitutional review and an updated Budgetary Control Framework was published. These have been reviewed as part of a wider constitutional review and have been updated as appropriate. A budgetary control framework has also been approved and published to support the regulations.
- The 2021-22 Audit Plan was agreed and put in place, focusing on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members, with Audit reports are presented to SLB, SLT and AGECE to ensure FA members are fully informed
- AF&RS completed and published the National Fraud Initiative review with support from Bristol City Council. No areas of concern raised.
- Each year Members submit Member Form 2 to disclose their interests to be added to the Register of Interests.
- Tender process completed for Internal Audit providers
- Governance and Assurance Framework published on website

- Data management procedures reviewed.
- 3 data protection and information security courses rolled out with 87.74% completion on basic Information Security course
- Record of Processing Activity, Retention Schedule maintained, Privacy Notices reassessed/amended to cover insurance purposes
- Information Governance Manager confirmed as Data Protection Officer, qualified as FoIA Practitioner, and registered with ICO.
- Senior Information Risk Officer/Owner confirmed in place.
- Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Information Security, and Security Incident Management Policies were monitored
- Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) amalgamated into Joint Scoping procedure, and pilot version implemented.
- FireWatch upgrades progressed, and an appointment will be made on a 16-hour secondary contract initially to manage the project
- IT infrastructure project is in progress with regular reports presented to the FA and AGEC
- Digital PM appointed and digital mind map created and published to identify necessary digital improvements
- The Collaboration Framework, procedures and supporting documents were updated, with a Combined Scoping Impact Assessment to ensure completion of a full Data Protection Impact Assessment if deemed necessary by the Data Protection Team.
- Part of the budget setting process is to consider Service developments and changes with SLB and SLT to ensure budgets are set with the fulfilment of Service objectives in mind. Service Plan and MTFP processes aligned in terms of timescale to ensure this continues.
- Finance audit completed receiving an internal audit opinion of 'substantial assurance'
- The 5-step approach as directed by the National Community Risk and Management Planning Strategic Framework is being followed.

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- As the Constitution is a working document, changes may be considered by the Constitution Working Group during 2022-23. The Clerk has contacted the Local Government Association (LGA) to seek assistance in relation to content and amount of information which should be provided to members in the form of reports. This may result in recommendations and amendments to the Constitution.
- The Clerk will continue to ensure during meetings that Members have sufficient time to ask questions and properly scrutinise reports.
- All agendas, papers and minutes will continue to be published for scrutiny on the new Avon FA website.
- Member Development sessions will continue to be used to provide training to Members (e.g., on new Fire Safety law)
- Risk management strategy will be reviewed and published in line with best practice and training to appropriate staff will be rolled out.
- Dashboards created using Microsoft Power BI, an interactive data visualisation software product, will be produced
- Additional admin support in place to help with training roll out. Ad hoc risk assessment training will be delivered as requested and required by staff need. In 2023, AF&RS is anticipating that all H&S risk assessments will need aligning to NOG.
- The Provision of Operational Risk Information System (PORIS) will establish data sets for risk information relating to risks 10km either side of the Service borders, including specific risks beyond this where appropriate. Information will be shared on ResilienceDirect.
- The 5-step approach as directed by the National Community Risk and Management Planning Strategic Framework will be followed and align to the Fire Standards Board, Strategic Risk Management Planning and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- The Head of Corporate Assurance, Planning & Continuous Improvement will review and update the Risk Management Strategy

- A new online system, InPhase, has been purchased which has a risk management module. Training will be provided once set up.
- Continue to benchmark incident and sickness information and report accordingly. Benchmarking of HMICFRS data is presented on the Data Analysis Packs (DAPs)
- The Corporate Forward Plan will continue to be provided to Members at every FA meeting, and will be supported by the new Modern.gov system, which ensures that agendas are prepared in advance and all report writers are aware of the timeline for reports.
- Financial monitoring will continue to be provided to all relevant meetings with additional reporting to SLT and SLB on capital and other key areas of finance. Another review of the Constitution and Financial Regulations will be undertaken to ensure these documents are updated in line with developments.
- AF&RS will work towards the Audit Plan agree and in place. Audit reports will continue to be presented to SLB/SLT and AGEC to ensure FA members are fully updated
- Members will continue to submit the Member Form 2 annually to disclose their interests to be added to the Register of Interests. There is also a standing agenda item requiring Members to disclose interests in advance of an agenda item discussing a tender exercise.
- The system for Members declaring their interests will not change but the form they complete will be updated and improved online.
- The Service will continue to complete the NFI reviews to ensure standards are maintained.
- AGS draft to be presented to AGEC September 2022 and finalised November 2022
- Monthly meetings in place between the Head of Corporate Assurance, Planning & Continuous Improvement, Corporate Assurance & Planning Manager and RSM to monitor progress against the Internal Audit Plan to ensure contractual requirements are being met.
- A new course on personal data and data breach management will target all staff at Station Manager level
- Planned campaign of phishing exercises to begin once parameters set within new IT security programmes
- A new course to update on ICO and possible changes arising from Data Protection and Digital Information Bill
- Data management procedures to be reviewed, DPIA guidance to be rewritten to cover amalgamation into Joint Scoping procedure which will be monitored any DPIA amendments to be put in place
- ROPA and Retention Schedule to be maintained, and extract to be published online
- Privacy Notices to be reassessed and amended where necessary, privacy notices for forthcoming CCTV system and personal monitoring devices to be written
- Planned use of policy rollout tool / e-learning package to record staff acknowledgement of receipt of Acceptable Use and IT policies.
- IT infrastructure project will continue to progress, including the planned appointment of a Digital Developer, with regular reports presented to the Fire Authority and AGEC
- The Collaboration Framework, Collaboration Procedures, supporting documents and registers will continually reviewed and updated to reflect new and best practice, and be published on AF&RS Intranet.
- On an annual basis as part of the budget setting process, AF&RS will consider Service developments and changes with SLB and SLT to ensure budgets are set with the fulfilment of Service objectives in mind. The Service plan and MTFP processes are aligned in terms of timescales to ensure this continues.

## **CIPFA SOLACE Principle 7**

### **'Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability'**

#### **Supporting evidence**

- Annual Performance report
- Internal Audit Plan, reports and recommendations, External Audit, Value for Money Audits. Circulated to the SLT and AGEC for consideration and approval
- Level of Council Tax, Spending within Budget, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTEP), well managed and timely capital programme
- Final Accounts Report, Efficiency Returns, Policy Documents, Budget Monitors and Outturns
- Website up to date with Transparency Code and Local Publication Scheme information
- Incident data is published to aid responses to FOI requests
- Service Plan and strategies published on the website
- AFA Meeting minutes, reports and committee papers all published on the website
- Annual Governance Statement (AGS) produced each year and presented to the AGEC for approval
- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations reviewed on an annual basis and updated for approval by the Fire Authority
- SLT and AGEC are updated on progress of corrective actions and recommendations for consideration and sign off
- Compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial Management Code.
- Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010) and compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
- HMICFRS inspection process and findings
- Partnership agreements, e.g., Community Safety Partnership Agreement

#### **Actions implemented in 2021/22**

- The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTEP) and supporting narrative report updates include information on key concerns and risks considered, as well as budget setting assumptions and justifications.
- Annual accounts provide the actuals for the year and the narrative report reflects how this has varied from budgets and previous years, providing key explanations as required.
- 365 requests processed under the Freedom of Information Act, and 43 processed under other legislation or transferred, with 97% responded to within legal deadline.
- All Fire Authority and Committee minutes and papers have been published on our website.
- The tender process has been completed for our Internal Audit providers
- Annual Governance Statement (AGS) produced ensuring the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations

- AF&RS engaged with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in a total of 5 x referred cases within 2021-22; 3 of which were accepted as our actions upheld, and 2 x remain unsettled.
- The introduction of Modern.Gov for report writing and production of packs for Members ensured a clear chain where reports pass through appropriate Senior Managers/Lead Directors, to 'take ownership' of reports and carefully check accuracy.
- Corporate Forward Plan was updated and used to ensure agendas were populated appropriately throughout the year
- An audit schedule was agreed by the AGEC and implemented which focuses on key areas of risk to provide assurance to Members
- Progress on Internal Audit recommendations, Audit reports, and external audit annual report presented to SLB, SLT and AGEC to ensure FA members are updated
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010) reviewed
- Round 2 HMICFRS inspection fieldwork completed in summer 2021 and final report published December 2021. HMI Wendy Williams confirmed the three causes of concern arising from Round 1 have been formally discharged and no new causes of concern were issued.
- The Collaboration Framework, procedures and supporting documents have been updated to reflect partner roles and responsibilities

### **Improvements planned / delivered in 2022/23**

- Negotiations with the FBU at a National Level during Covid now planned for 22/23.
- The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and supporting narrative report on key concerns and risks will be updated annually
- Templates for transparency requests will be reviewed to provide clarity greater with aim to reduce requests for Internal Review.
- Investigate financial and resource costs for Disclosure Log to cut repeat and duplicate requests.
- Arrange meetings with Information Asset Owners responsible for commonly requested data to confirm procedures for collating, legal requirements, and potential exemptions.
- Write a full procedure for vexatious case assessment once decision on an ongoing First Level Tribunal case is supplied.
- All Fire Authority and Committee meetings will continue to be recorded and the footage uploaded for the public to watch.
- Continued use of Modern.Gov and the Corporate Forward Plan to improve version control and reporting efficiency. Ensuring Senior Managers/Leads 'take ownership' of report accuracy. Open papers published a week before meetings and approved minutes published.
- AGS draft to be presented to AGEC September 2022 and finalised November 2022.
- Performance information will continue to be reviewed by the PRSC
- Audit reports will continue to be presented to SLB/SLT and AGEC to ensure FA members are fully updated
- Internal Audit Management actions will be monitored, and reporting optimised, to keep SLB, SLT and AGEC informed on progress.
- The Collaborative Working Framework will be reviewed to align to the Collaboration Strategy and the reflect new and best practice.
- All partnership agreements, MOUs, or other written agreements to include clear roles, responsibilities, and commitments of each party
- Actions drafted and approved by the PRSC from the most recent HMICFRS inspection report, published on 15 December 2021, will continue to be addressed by assigning responsibility, actions, and timescales to all areas for improvement identified. Resource will be allocated to coordinate and report progress to SLT, PRSC and HMICFRS.