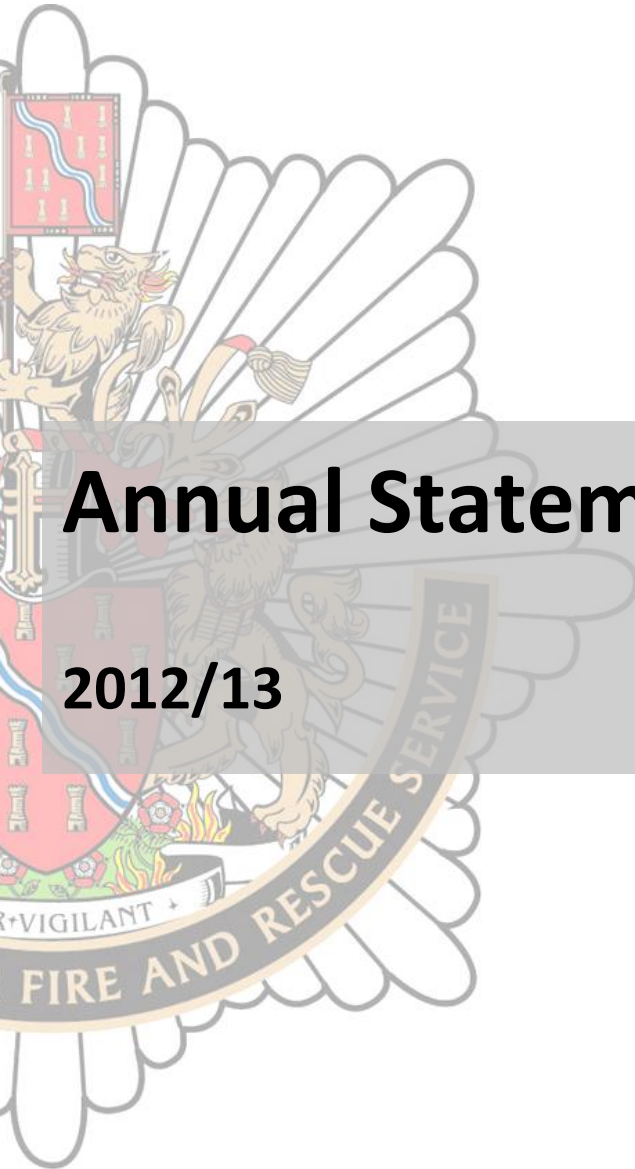


Annual Statement of Assurance

2012/13



GREATER MANCHESTER
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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1 INTRODUCTION

The [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England \(2012\)](#) introduced a requirement for all English Fire and Rescue Authorities to:

- Produce an annual statement of assurance, providing assurance to communities and government on financial, governance and operational matters
- Demonstrate how they have meet the framework commitments
- Show how they meet the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

The purpose of this statement is to provide that assurance to Government and to the public of Greater Manchester in respect to the areas highlighted above for the financial year 2012/13¹.

Historically we have provided a statement of assurance as part of our annual governance arrangements in support of our statement of accounts relating to finance and governance.

In 2011/12 we extended the annual assurance statement to include operational assurance and in 2012/13 introduced an assurance opinion in respect to our Prevention and Protection activities.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority operates with a series of committees who assist in assuring that the Fire and Rescue Service is fit for purpose and offers public value. These committees are:

- The Planning Resources and Performance Committee
- The Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee
- The Prevention and Protection Committee
- The Emergency response Committee

The current terms of reference and delegated powers for these committees can be found at this [link](#).

From here, this statement will identify the measures of assurance in place for operational, financial and governance purposes and finish with a statement from the Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority and the County Fire officer as to the adequacy of assurance measures.

¹ The latest government guidance on how the Statement of Assurance should be constructed can be found through this [link](#)¹.

2 ASSURANCE ON OPERATIONS

The National Framework outlines the requirement of Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide assurance on operational matters. It does not prescribe how this assurance is provided, stating that operational matters are best determined locally by Fire and Rescue Authorities working in partnership with communities, local citizens, businesses, civil society organisations and others.

Fire and Rescue Authorities function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key legislative documents defining these responsibilities are:

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

The purpose of this section is to provide assurance that our service is delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities and in consideration of our Integrated Risk Management Plans and local strategies including cross-border, multi authority and national arrangements.

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the requirement that each fire and rescue authority must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The plan must have regard to the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate.

At GMFRS we incorporate Integrated Risk Management within our Corporate Plan and combine corporate and integrated risk management to ensure we deliver our core purpose in the most effective way, and whilst integrated risk management largely determines the Service's corporate aims, corporate risk management supports their achievement. The Service reviews and updates its three year Corporate Plan / IRMP annually to ensure it remains current.

External and internal consultation is an essential part of the development of the IRMP and for every IRMP, the Service uses stakeholder analysis to develop a proportionate consultation plan. This analysis ensures that potential stakeholders are consulted, involved and informed of the proposals to ensure their input is incorporated within the final plan.

A copy of the 6 week consultation plan and outcome of the 2013-16 Corporate Plan consultation can be found at the link below:

[Consultation Plan & Outcomes](#)

Integrated risk management is supported by the use of risk modelling, this is a process by which data is used to assess the likelihood of fire and rescue related incidents within Greater Manchester. The information is then used to identify geographic areas at higher risk where a combination of prevention, protection and response activities would have the greatest impact.

During 2012/13 we improved the way in which we model and predict risk by:

- Calculating and displaying risk at a lower geographical area – a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)
- Including data relating to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- Incorporating historical data on fire incidents which occur in non-domestic buildings

We update the risk model on a regular basis and use the outcomes to direct and prioritise our prevention, protection and response activities.

A copy of the Corporate Plan summary document can be found at the link below:

[Corporate Plan Summary Document 2013/16](#)

A copy of the 2013/16 Corporate Plan can be found at the link below:

[Corporate Plan 2013/16](#)

A copy of the document detailing the changes made to the Risk Model can be found at the link below:

[Risk Model Changes](#)

Operational Assurance

To assist in achieving the aims identified within the Corporate Plan 2012/15, the Service is committed to providing a robust and credible Operational Assurance (OA) Plan that includes constructive involvement and communication between support departments, Borough Commands and their respective representatives and which seeks to ensure:

- The service delivery elements of the organisation are effectively working to achieve the aims and delivery goals set out within the Corporate Plan.
- The Service has a safe, well-trained and competent workforce to meet the demands placed upon them.

The Operational Assurance Department produces an annual Audit Plan and periodically reports on performance against the plan through the Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee.

A copy of the outcome report for the 2012/13 assurance plan can be found at the link below:

[Operational Assurance outturn report 2012/13](#)

A copy of the Operational Assurance Plan for 2013/14 can be found at the link below:

[Operational assurance Plan 2013/14](#)

Prevention & Protection Assurance

There is a developing Audit and Assurance function to review the Prevention and Protection aspects of the service which is being built on the audit process currently in place within the Area Protection Teams.

Specific areas of activity aligned to providing assurance against service delivery include:

- Audit process aligned to key line of enquiry
- Review of workplace activities
- Continual team monitoring, team development and sharing of best practices
- Personal performance reviews aligned to performance management
- Quality Assurance audits
- Adoption of the Service's peer review methodology

A copy of the Protection and Prevention Services Audit Plan for 2013/14 can be found at the link below:

[Prevention & Protection Audit Plan 2013/14](#)

Mutual Aid Agreements

Fire and Rescue Authorities must make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with mutual aid agreements. These agreements are reinforcement schemes. Fire and rescue authorities therefore need to enter into reinforcement schemes, as far as is practicable, for securing mutual assistance between authorities and for the purpose of discharging their functions.

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Authority holds mutual agreements for reinforcements with all its surrounding fire and rescue authority areas. We have formal, written agreements with Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside and West Yorkshire and are in the process of formalising what was previously an informal agreement, with Derbyshire.

National Resilience

For the purposes of this document, national resilience is defined as the capacity and capability of fire and rescue authorities to work together and with other Category 1 and 2 responders² to deliver a sustained, effective response to major incidents, emergencies

² As defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

and disruptive challenges, such as (but not limited to) those identified in the [National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies](#).

It refers to risks that need to be planned for on a strategic, national basis because their impacts and consequences would be of such scale and/or complexity that local resources would be insufficient, even when taking into account mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action.

The National Framework makes clear there is a need to plan for, and occasionally respond, to incidents of such scale and/or complexity. Thus, the Government retains strategic responsibility for national resilience, though, of course, it is heavily reliant upon local fire and rescue authorities in support of this. And so, the National Framework sets out the requirement of Fire and Rescue Authorities to work collectively but also with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board to provide assurance to government that:

- Risks are assessed, plans are in place and any gaps between existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience are identified
- Existing specialist national resilience capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient
- Any new capabilities that fire and rescue authorities are commissioned to deliver by Government are procured, maintained and managed in the most cost-effective manner that delivers value for money whilst ensuring capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient

A national protocol provides support and resilience to Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service. The participation of all Fire and Rescue Authorities in the protocol is essential to ensure the ready availability of fire and rescue service resources in the event of large scale emergencies wherever they occur.

The protocol sets out the terms under which Fire and Rescue Authorities may expect to request assistance from or provide assistance to each other in the event of a serious incident such as a terrorist attack. It is aimed at the deployment of specialist resources hosted by fire and rescue authorities across the country.

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service regularly deploys its specialist resources in support of other brigades during serious events with all costs being recovered from the fire and rescue authorities seeking assistance.

Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is an integral part of our corporate risk management process. In relation to BCM processes and procedures, fire and rescue authorities have to satisfy the requirements of both the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004.

We are legally required to 'write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority is able to continue its functions'. In order to ensure Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority is compliant with both pieces of legislation, we have adopted the processes

and procedures contained in the British Standards 25999 Parts I and II (BS 25999) for Business Continuity Management and Systems and the new BS ISO 22301:2012.

Through mechanisms of horizon scanning, structured meetings, generic and bespoke plans, training of personnel, exercises and an audit process, the Authority strives to ensure an appropriate level of service is available to the communities of Greater Manchester at all times.

Whenever necessary, due to an emerging situation (such as a flu pandemic) affecting the availability of fire fighters, we systematically reduce the numbers of fire engines available, crewing only those fire engines that continue to provide the optimum risk based fire cover. This process of degradation continues down to a BCM minimum of 21 fire engines to meet our published performance standards in such circumstances.

In addition, we have a county-wide BCM plan (known as County Guard) to address significant industrial action; which is designed to provide the BCM minimum in all circumstances. Any staff choosing not to take industrial action would enhance the levels of fire engine availability above the BCM minimum. However, in such situations, there may well be an effect on local service provision, an effect on mutual aid and a reduction or cessation of ability to support some or all of the national resilience provision.

The resources provided and the plans written for the potential challenges and emergencies faced by the Service are constantly reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team and tested throughout the organisation by the Contingency Planning Unit based at Fire Service Headquarters.

3 FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

All local authority accounts are required to adopt 'proper accounting practice' based on either statutory requirements or the code of practice on local authority accounting published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). These specify the principles and practices of accounting required to prepare a Statement of Accounts that 'present a true and fair view'.

The Treasurer to the Authority and Chair of the Authority provide an annual statement summarising and supporting the annual accounts, these summaries and a copy of the accounts are approved and signed off by the Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee, making them publically available.

An independent audit of the accounts is undertaken by an external audit provider. For the year 2011/12 this work was undertaken by the Audit Commission and for 2012/13 by Grant Thornton.

The external provider undertakes a review of the accounts and forms an overall opinion which is published in September of each year.

The District Auditor conducted an audit of the accounts for the financial year 2011/12 in accordance with the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Code of Audit Practice and provided an unqualified opinion on the accounts.

A copy of the statement of accounts for 2012/13 can be found at the link below:

[Statement of accounts 2012/13](#)

A copy of the financial statements for 2012/13 can be found at the link below:

[Financial Statement 2012/13](#)

The audit opinion for the accounts 2011/12 can be found at the link below:

[Audit opinion of accounts 2011/12](#)

4 ASSURANCE ABOUT GOVERNANCE

The Authority's governance framework comprises the systems and processes, the culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and supports its community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its core purpose and strategic aims and to consider whether these aims have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

In 2001, CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) introduced a Local Government governance framework (*Corporate Governance in Local Government: A Keystone for Community Governance*). The Authority adopted the framework in August 2003 as its own Local Code of Corporate Governance. Subsequent updates have been issued as follows:

- In June 2007, CIPFA/SOLACE published a revised framework entitled *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. Following an Internal Audit assessment of the Authority's performance against this framework, the Authority adopted the revised framework in January 2008.
- In March 2010, CIPFA/SOLACE published an addendum to the governance framework on the role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in Local Government.
- In December 2012, a revised guidance note was published to accompany the framework with updated examples of evidence.

The preparation of the Annual Governance Statement to support the Annual Statement of Accounts is a statutory requirement for local authorities. Its purpose is to demonstrate and evidence that there is a continuous review of the effectiveness of the Authority's internal control, performance and risk management systems. This allows an assurance on their effectiveness to be provided so that users of the accounts can be satisfied that proper arrangements are in place to govern spending, safeguard assets and maximise operational effectiveness. The process also enables the production of a corporate action plan to address any identified weaknesses.

The Annual Governance Statement is signed by the Chairman of the Authority and the County Fire Officer & Chief Executive on behalf of the Members and senior officers and approved by the Audit, Standards and Scrutiny Committee.

The Authority has a statutory responsibility to conduct, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of committees and management with responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report, Operational Assurance Annual Report, Protection Services Annual Report and also work completed by external inspectorates.

On the basis of the opinions of the senior officers, Internal Audit has formed the following opinion:

“We are satisfied that the Authority’s internal control, corporate governance, and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and are operating effectively. We are satisfied that the enhancements identified will further improve our governance and internal control arrangements. We will assess their implementation and the effectiveness of dealing with the issues outlined as part of the formal risk management process.”

An annual review assessing levels of compliance with the Authority's Local Code is completed by Internal Audit to ensure high standards of governance are maintained and to support the Authority's statutory Annual Governance Statement. In addition, to further develop these arrangements, a part year assessment was completed by Internal Audit to follow up on any issues identified by the previous year's reviews.

For the year 2012/13 Internal Audit provided a conclusion that:

“Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Authority’s position against the Local Code of Corporate Governance is still considered to be strong. There are some areas where further detailed work is being carried out to ensure full compliance with the code.”

A copy of the Internal Audit report, Corporate Governance Arrangements – Annual Assessment for 2012/13 can be found at the link below:

[Internal Audit - Governance Review 2012/12](#)

A copy of our Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 can be found at the link below:

[Annual Governance Statement 2012/13](#)

Performance Management

A suite of corporate metrics and targets are used to support the Service, the Fire and Rescue Authority and members of the public to scrutinise the delivery of the Service's Corporate Plan / IRMP. The Service publishes detailed quarterly progress reports along with an annual performance review to both drive improvement and to ensure transparency of its performance.

Quarterly progress reports are publicly available on the Fire and Rescue Authority website: <http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/nk>

A copy of the final quarter outturn report for 2012/13 is available at the link below:
[Performance Report 2012/13 Quarter 4](#)

Manager Assurance Statements

The Assurance Statement is a self-assessment to assist managers to annually review the quality of the governance arrangements around the service areas for which they are responsible. The completed statements have identified several areas at an operational level where further action is required to improve governance within the Authority. Appropriate action to address the issues has been agreed.

This process has been further developed through the introduction of assurance maps for each service area which identify key areas of service delivery and the assurance related activities within these areas. These maps are reviewed annually in preparation for completing the Assurance Statements.

Internal Audit and the Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee

Internal Audit undertake a key role in assessing our assurance related activities, a significant proportion of the Annual Audit Plan is focused on providing assurance that operational and strategic risks are effectively managed to ensure the Authority's core purpose & aims are achieved and quality services provided.

Internal Audit undertakes an annual review of our assurance related activities and provides an assurance opinion within the annual governance statement. The review of our arrangements during 2012/13 resulted in the following opinion:

“Assurance can be gained that the Authority is committed not only to properly managing its affairs but to striving to improve on its assurance arrangements. This is particularly evident in the key areas of risk management, service planning, performance management, and corporate governance. In conclusion it is the opinion of the Treasurer that the Authority operates an effective overall internal control environment.”

Internal Audit report directly into the Audit, Scrutiny and Standards committee who approve the internal audit work plan, oversee audit activity and review outcomes from the work undertaken.

External Assessment / Peer Challenge

In May 2010, as part of the wrap up of Comprehensive Area Assessment, (CAA), local authorities including fire and rescue authorities became responsible for their own performance. This includes the improvement of outcomes in their local area and involving local people in the identification of local priorities.

There are no mandatory requirements placed upon the Fire and Rescue Authority or local authorities and the approach, for now at least, is a case of pick what is most appropriate to your service and the needs of your locality.

Members of the Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee agreed to adopt the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence framework alongside the LGA's peer challenge offer to provide external scrutiny and assurance of the Service's progress in achieving the Fire and Rescue Authority's core purpose and strategic aims.

The British Quality Foundation undertook an assessment of the organisation during 2012. Overall, the Service was awarded 3 out of a possible 5 stars and is the first fire and rescue service in the UK to receive this award. In total, there were 91 potential areas for improvement. These have been reviewed by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and LT to group common improvement themes together and used to inform directorate priorities and activities for 2013-14.

Peer Challenge has been developed by the sector through the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) and the Local Government Association (LGA). The challenge is improvement focused and looks at the key areas of assessment (KAA) common for any fire and rescue service:

A copy of the EFQM / Peer Challenge Committee Paper can be found at the link below:
[EFQM & Peer Challenge Committee Paper](#)

A copy of the EFQM report can be found at the link below:
[EFQM Report 2012](#)

A copy of the EFQM Action Summary can be found at the link below:
[EFQM Action Summary](#)

5 ASSURANCE DECLARATION

On the basis of the opinions of the senior officers, we are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance, and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and are operating effectively and that any enhancements identified will further improve our assurance arrangements.

Signed:

Councillor David Acton, Chairman of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority & Steve McQuirk, County Fire Officer & Chief Executive on behalf of the Members and Senior Officers of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority.

Date: