



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

Purpose: Approval

Date: **26 JULY 2021**

Title: **Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. The Annual Statement of Assurance ('Annual Statement') is a document that is required by the National Framework for Fire and Rescue (2018) to provide assurance to local communities and government on financial, governance and operational matters. Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority must publish an Annual Statement which is made accessible to all stakeholders to enable transparency of fire and rescue services in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight for the period April 2020 to March 2021.
2. 2020/21 has been a challenging year for the Service (Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service) and our communities, with the escalation and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented situation has given rise to a challenge faced by all emergency responder agencies to ensure that they can keep communities safe. The COVID-19 pandemic has dominated the year and impacted the working practices of the Service in various ways, but operational and corporate performance, and our range of assurance mechanisms, have remained strong, illustrating how both the Service and its workforce have adapted to the unparalleled circumstances the pandemic has created.
3. As illustrated in Appendix A, page 7, both Services have also provided significant support to partners throughout COVID-19 by undertaking a range of additional activities, including, but not limited to: the provision of personnel to support in hospital ICU settings; staff providing ambulance driver support to South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and Isle of Wight Ambulance Service (IWAS); repurposing part of Basingstoke Fire

Station as a vaccination centre, which in June issued its 100,000th vaccination, while maintaining its operational response capability; a significant number of personnel trained and operating as vaccinators at a number of different sites; additional medical response capability; and providing mask fitting support to both SCAS and Hampshire Constabulary. We have continued to support partners beyond 31st March 2021 with the vaccination-related activity, and engagement in other HIOW LRF groups and activity.

4. The Service has a wide range of assurance mechanisms in place to identify risks, areas for improvement, and good practice to disseminate. As the 2020/21 end of year performance report noted, number and types of incidents have varied throughout the year, reflecting the pandemic lockdowns and their impact on both commercial and domestic activity, and behaviour. However, overall the number of incidents decreased when compared to last year, as did the number of non-fatal casualties, and our on-call availability has improved. We have also made positive improvements in our prevention and protection activity (which had to be delivered differently for parts of the year), and in our learning from operational incidents. We continue to monitor, and develop our understanding of, the impact of COVID-19 on our services, as we move through into recovery.

BACKGROUND

5. The Fire and Rescue National Framework published in May 2018 sets out the reason for each Fire and Rescue Service to produce an Annual Statement:

“The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan (e.g. the Fire and Rescue Plan – see 4.10 below) prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.”

6. The Annual Statement is a retrospective review of the completed financial year and therefore, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services require two separate statements due to combination only taking effect in April 2021. **Appendix A and Appendix B** contains the detailed Annual Statement of Assurance which has been structured, for the reader’s benefit, to follow the Safety Plan priorities. Next year’s 2021/22 statement will be the first fully combined HIWFRA Annual Assurance Statement.

7. The format of the Annual Statement is not prescribed and therefore it is determined by the Fire and Rescue Service to demonstrate to local communities and partner organisations how it fulfils its statutory obligations and activities to make Hampshire a safer place to live, work and travel.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

8. The Annual Statement, through the Fire and Rescue Authority, provides assurance to the public on the Fire and Rescue Service's fulfilment of its duties and activities so *Together we make life safer*. Therefore, each of the headings within the Statements of Assurance are aligned to the Safety Plan priorities to demonstrate how we actively meet our statutory obligations using a robust Safety Plan.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no financial implications to the approval of the Annual Statements of Assurance as these are retrospectively looking back at the previous financial year rather than suggesting a future course of action.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

10. There are no impacts to assess as the Annual Statements are retrospectively looking back at the previous financial year rather than suggesting a future course of action.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11. The Annual Statement is a legal obligation in accordance with the National Framework for Fire and Rescue 2018.
12. As each Fire and Rescue Authority are required to approve the Statement, the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance is scheduled for approval at the Isle of Wight Council Audit Committee on 26th July 2021, as the year 2020/21 falls within their jurisdiction.

OPTIONS

13. OPTION 1 – approve the HFRS statement and agree to the content provided as is. To also note the contents of the IWFRS statement. This will mean a swift turn around for publication on the HIWFRS website, which will provide members, partners and our communities with assurances around our wide range of Service activities.

14. OPTION 2 – approve the statement with slight amendments before they can be published and to note the contents of the IWFRS statement.
15. OPTION 3 – further consideration is required and report back to the Authority for approval at a future meeting. This is not recommended as time frames maybe significantly impacted, which may present a reputational risk.

RISK ANALYSIS

16. The Annual Statement is a legal obligation in accordance with the National Framework for Fire and Rescue 2018. Therefore, failure to deliver a statement may result in litigation.
17. HMICFRS Inspection will be taking place commencing Spring 2022 and the Annual Statement is one of the documents required for their document review. Failure to deliver a statement may result in reputational damage following an area for improvement identified by the Inspectorate. Likewise, the Home Office routinely request and review these documents, so failure to produce and approve them may result in reputational damage.

EVALUATION

18. As there are no future changes because of the Statement, there is no requirement to undertake an evaluation. However, our statement is written in line with guidance published by the Department of Local Government in 2014 and aligned to the revised National Framework in 2018.

CONCLUSION

19. The Annual Statements of Assurance for 2020/21 provide stakeholders with oversight of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service's and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service's ability to deliver its core purpose that *Together we make life safer*, and therefore meet the requirements of the 2018 National Fire and Rescue Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. That the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance be approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

21. That the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance be noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

APPENDICES ATTACHED

22. Appendix A - Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2020/21
23. Appendix B – Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2020/21

BACKGROUND PAPERS

24. [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, May 2018](#)

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