



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Authority

Statement of Assurance 2022-23

OFFICIAL

Ownership: Corporate Services

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Introduction

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (WYFRA) is required to produce an annual Statement of Assurance as part of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#). The purpose of the statement is to provide independent assurance to communities and the Government that the service is being delivered efficiently and effectively. Whilst the Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England, it does not prescribe operational matters as these are determined locally by fire and rescue authorities.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) has published [Your Fire & Rescue Service 2022-25](#) which outlines the key priorities and builds upon the delivery and achievements of our previous Service Plan. A report on the programme of change is produced regularly to focus the work of WYFRS and to manage and monitor performance in order to achieve our ambition of 'Making West Yorkshire Safer'.

This Statement of Assurance provides assurance that WYFRA is providing an efficient, effective and value for money service to the community of West Yorkshire in its financial, governance and operational matters.

Financial

In accordance with the 2022/23 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) for 2022/23 and the Accounting Codes of Practice published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), WYFRA has produced the [Statement of Accounts 2022/23](#) (the accounts are subject to final audit by Deloitte). As the Authority is funded by public money, it has a responsibility to ensure this money is used lawfully, effectively, efficiently, and economically.

The [Annual Governance Statement](#), which is included within the Statement of Accounts, sets out the systems and procedures that are in place to ensure that the Authority's resources are used in accordance with the law and provide best value for the tax payer.

The Authority's governance framework comprises systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It enables the Authority to monitor the

achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

Each year, the external auditors, Deloitte LLP, issue an [audit opinion](#) on the Authority's financial statement (this is unavailable due to the delay in the external audit of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 final accounts). There is a new reporting requirement from 2021/22, which is a separate Value for Money report which is required to be completed three months after the audit of the Statement of Accounts is complete.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan which was approved by the Full Authority in February 2022 shows that the Authority has a balanced budget for 2022/23. The lowest quartile of precepting Standalone Fire Authorities in England, of which West Yorkshire is the fourth lowest, were given powers by the Secretary of State to increase the precept by £5 on a Band D property. This additional precept income enabled the Authority to increase its establishment of whole-time firefighters by thirty-four.

In terms of Central Government funding, the Authority received another one-year financial settlement in 2022/23. In addition the Authority received additional grants to fund the increase in National Insurance and the work relating to Building Safety Reform.

The Authority has healthy reserves that can be used to support the revenue budget with a general fund balance of £5m and earmarked reserves of £38m at the 1st of April 2022.

Internal Audit

The Authority's Chief Finance and Procurement Officer has a statutory duty to provide a continuous and effective internal audit. This internal audit service is provided under a service level agreement with Kirklees Council, which provides approximately 160 days of audit time each year.

Internal Audit assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management system and internal control environment against an annual audit plan. The plan targets areas of highest risk as determined by the Authority through its risk management process and the resulting risk management matrix. Auditing of these risks accounts for approximately half of the available audit resource, with the other half involving the review of key financial systems and processes. The internal audit plan also considers audit areas where most value can be added.

Internal audit 'opinions' based on the level of assurance concerning each risk, system or process control is reported to the Authority's Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. The Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 resulted in the majority of audits concluding with a 'substantial' or 'adequate assurance', which confirms a robust framework of all key controls exists, that are likely to ensure that objectives will be achieved. Internal Audit provides recommendations where it is thought that risks can be reduced, and the control environment improved.

The audit plan and subsequent audits ensure an independent review is conducted at least once in a year of the effectiveness of the Authority's systems of internal control, which assists with the formulation of the Annual Governance Statement.

Transparency

In accordance with the Local [Government's Transparency Code 2015](#), WYFRA is committed to greater openness and financial transparency through the publication, on the website, of information regarding local decision making and how public money is being spent. This includes payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £500, details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members, transactions made via Government Procurement Cards, tender and procurement information, details of land and assets owned by WYFRA and details relating to Trade Unions. We ensure that the publication of any data complies with the Data Protection Act. All data is as accurate as possible at time of publication.

The data is routinely published on either a quarterly or annual basis in accordance with the requirements of the Code. All published data can be viewed on the [Data Transparency](#) section of the website.

The Authority makes information publicly available and promotes a spirit of openness and accessibility adopting an approach of making information available and a commitment to sharing information whenever it is appropriate in line with legislation. This commitment is described in the [Access to Information Policy](#).

Governance

WYFRA has an approved [constitution](#) which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local citizens. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Authority to determine.

The Authority is composed of 22 members, all of whom are a Councillor elected to one of the five constituent district councils within West Yorkshire: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. The overriding duty of Members of the Authority is to the whole community of West Yorkshire.

To strengthen Government arrangements and provide greater transparency and accountability, WYFRA has appointed an Independent Member to the Audit Committee in line with CIPFA 'good practice'.

Members have an approved [Code of Conduct](#) designed to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties and are required to comply with the [Principles of Public Life](#).

- Codes of Conduct and Protocols included within the Constitution are:
- Code of Conduct for Members
- Officer Code of Conduct
- Member/Officer Relations and Procedural Protocol
- Officer Employment Procedure Rules
- Protocol regarding the use of Authority resources by Members
- [Compliments and Complaints Policy](#)
- [Whistle Blowing Policy](#)

In accordance with the Code of Corporate Governance and pursuant to the corporate performance monitoring processes an annual [Corporate Health Report](#) is submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority to enable Members to scrutinise and challenge performance. A [Performance Management Report](#) is also presented quarterly to the Full Authority meeting to enable ongoing performance monitoring, scrutiny and challenge.

Information Governance

The Authority has developed and implemented a robust information governance framework for the effective management and protection of information held by WYFRA.

WYFRA ensures that the Service has appropriate governance arrangements in place and that risk and performance are being effectively managed. There is an Information Governance Framework and an Information Risk Policy which sets out how this is achieved.

The Authority has a designated statutory Data Protection Officer (DPO) and a Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) who ensures legal compliance with data protection requirements.

Data Protection audits are carried out across the Service via departments self-assessing against relevant criteria as part of the Service Assurance process. This ensures appropriate arrangements are in place.

Information governance describes the approach within which accountability, standards, policies, and procedures are developed and implemented, to ensure that all information created, obtained, or received by WYFRA is held and used appropriately.

The Authority has an [Information Governance Strategy and Policy](#) which describes its commitment to ensuring effective information governance as a means to enable the service to ensure it can make the best use of its information and to provide a solid foundation to enable it to be open and transparent.

At the same time, it takes account of and supports WYFRA's operational objectives and ensures that a balance is struck between operational and compliance objectives.

The Authority has achieved excellent audit reports in respect of the handling and processing of information including the personal information relating to customers. This includes the achievement of the highest level of Compliance Plus within the annual [Customer Service Excellence report](#) for the strategic approach to Information Management particularly relating to our customers' privacy and confidentiality. This standard was first achieved in 2009 and has been maintained at this level since then.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on 25 May 2018, extending the privacy rights granted to EU individuals. The GDPR placed many new obligations upon

organisations that process personal data. The Data Protection Act 2018 incorporated the GDPR and brought it into UK law.

An audit of the Authority's data protection compliance was undertaken by Kirklees Internal Audit in December 2020/January 2021 which resulted in 'Substantial Assurance' for the arrangements in place.

Risk and Business Continuity

WYFRA has a [Risk Management Strategy and Policy](#) and [Business Continuity Management Strategy and Policy](#) which provide clear and defined strategies to be implemented, adhered to and developed to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Implement and maintain risk policy arrangements including a risk framework and processes, which will enable the organisation to identify, assess and manage strategic and corporate risks in an effective, systematic and consistent manner. This also assists in embedding a risk management culture.
- Implement and maintain a business continuity management system to ensure that key services can be maintained in the event of any disruption that threatens the delivery of services to the community of West Yorkshire.
- Protect the organisation from disruptive events and service interruptions and facilitate a co-ordinated recovery of organisational services and critical functions during and following such events.

Operational (Service Delivery)

WYFRA operates within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework and the key documents setting this out 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 Fire Safety Act 2021

At strategic level, Community Risk Management Planning (CRMP) is an integral part of the business planning process in West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS). The Service's strategic assessment of risk covers all foreseeable risk within the County and establishes baseline standards of service.

The [Your Fire & Rescue Service 2022-25](#) explains who we are, why we are here, what we do, how we identify, assess, and manage risk and provides information on how WYFRS services are delivered. This document also provides the overarching business case for delivering prevention, protection, response, and resilience, and sets out how we aim to use our resources to manage the risks we face in a proportionate manner. The Community Risk Management Plan provides the means to deliver excellent but cost-effective fire and rescue services to the communities across West Yorkshire. This latest Community Risk Management Plan continues to underpin a flexible approach to managing risk and deliver future efficiency savings.

In February 2022, Authority members approved a report submitted by the Director of Service Delivery presenting the draft Community Risk Management Plan for 2022-2025, which replaced the [Your Fire & Rescue Service 2020-23](#) document. The revised plan was updated to reflect the recent national fire standard for Community Risk Management Planning, the Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services, and our updated organisational priorities and programme of change.

Customer Service Excellence

Since 1998, WYFRA has consistently attained the Charter Mark standard; the Government's national standard of customer service excellence for organisations delivering public services. In August 2009 the Authority invited an assessment against the new Customer Service Excellence standard, which was being phased in and which has now fully replaced the Charter Mark standard. The Customer Service Excellence standard is derived from the core concepts of customer focus and the delivery of excellent customer service and assesses, in great detail, the following areas:

- Customer Insight
- The Culture of the Organisation
- Information and Access
- Delivery
- Timeliness and Quality of Service

WYFRA has an independent assessment against the standard annually and in 2022 was awarded full compliance against the 57 elements of the standard including 29 'Compliance Plus' awards, which are awarded for behaviours or practices that exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as an exemplar for others – either within the organisation or in the wider public service arena. The summary of the [Customer Service Excellence report](#) clearly demonstrates the continuous commitment of the Authority to provide an excellent service to customers.

Communication and Engagement

WYFRS follows the Government's Consultation Principles 2018 in delivery and promotions of its consultations. The principles can be found [here](#).

Service Delivery Performance

Service delivery standards are established in our Community Risk Management Plan Your Fire and Rescue Service 2022-25. Performance against targets are reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on a regular basis, with the latest annual [Performance Management Report](#) for 2022/23 submitted in June 2023.

[Your Fire & Rescue Service 2022-25](#) includes reference to Risk Based Planning Assumptions (RBPA) for responding to emergencies. These are used to ensure resources are in the best place relative to risk and demand, with life risk incidents being the priority. The RBPAs are monitored at the quarterly Fire Cover Review Group. The impact of any proposed changes can be measured and communicated by reference to the RBPA down to Lower Layer Super Output Area level data available through the Office of National Statistics. These were used in comprehensive consultation on changes to emergency cover in 2011; 2012; 2016; [2019](#), and during the more recent [2020](#) Cleckheaton Fire Station relocation proposal. These changes enable WYFRS to provide appropriate emergency cover and fire prevention activity whilst delivering significant financial savings.

WYFRA discharges its statutory duties in relation to community safety, fire prevention and fire protection, including enforcement of relevant statutory regulations in accordance with the [Safer Communities Prevention Strategy](#), [Safer Communities Protection Strategy](#), and [Response and Resilience Strategy](#) with firefighters and specialist staff being deployed across districts where most needed based on risk.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) carried out formal inspections to assess how we deliver our service in June 2019 and October and November 2021 following which we were rated 'Good' for all three pillars on both occasions. HMICFRS stated that they were pleased with the performance of WYFRS in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks and pleased with the progress made in most areas since their initial pilot inspection in 2018. Our third HMICFRS inspection is planned for January 2024.

The WYFRA's Service Assurance Framework details the high-level expectations of the service relating to:

- Compliance with the National Framework 2018.
- The assessment of performance via His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- The annual completion of the Service Assurance process.
- A comprehensive approach to the assurance of service delivery through our Reality Testing of incidents process.

This is summarised within the Service Improvement and Assurance Report and provides assurance that the organisation is performing effectively and efficiently.

Agreements and Mutual Aid Arrangements

Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provide clear instructions for fire and rescue services regarding mutual assistance and the discharge of functions by others. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority have Section 13 and 16 agreements with:

- Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority

These agreements are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary and are supplemented by specific agreements on specialist services, for example aerial appliances, and WYFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters

and terrorist attacks. We are the only service in the country to host every national resilience asset. In addition, we are one of the main providers of national resilience training under the national resilience distributed learning (NRDL) model.

Future Improvements

WYFRA's annual budget is £104.3million and despite cuts of £26.2 million since 2010, we believe that we are providing a high-quality affordable service for our communities. During this time, we have redesigned our Service, moving fire station locations, removing fire engines, and ensuring resources remain allocated appropriate to risk and demand. The Authority has received one-year financial settlements since 2020/21 and it is expected that a Comprehensive Spending Review in 2022 will result in a multi-year funding settlement from April 2023. As such we face financial uncertainty, and we continue to plan our future to deliver improvements in efficiency and productivity, whilst improving our effectiveness and safety.

Our Community Risk Management Plan, Medium-Term Financial Plan and Workforce Plan are now aligned, and a range of financial planning scenarios have been produced which ensures a joined-up approach to the analysis of risk and the deployment of resources. Following budget approval, we recently increased firefighter numbers to enable us to provide increased capacity within our operational response service.

All our people are fundamental to WYFRS delivering our ambition. We will continue to develop the culture of the organisation and ensure our service values and the Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services are used to guide our behaviour and decisions. Our cultural development will be supported by our leadership and development programme, and there will be a clear focus on diversity and inclusion within our recruitment processes.

We have embarked on a programme of change that will realise new, innovative, and more effective ways of working over the forthcoming years. Some of the initiatives that have been approved for 2023/24 that we are delivering include:

Birkenshaw Site Redevelopment

Modern, energy-efficient Headquarters, and Training Centre constructed on the existing site.

New Fire Engine Fleet

Introduction of a new fleet of modern fire appliances with provision to reduce firefighter exposure to contamination.

Keighley Fire Station New Build

The construction of a new fire station on the existing site to replace an oversized and outdated fire station.

Halifax Fire Station New Build

The construction of a new fire station on the existing site to replace an oversized and outdated fire station.

Huddersfield Fire Station

The construction of a new fire station on the existing site to replace an oversized and outdated fire station.

OneView

Performance management programme to provide a transparent, timely and flexible method of sharing performance data with our colleagues, partners, and the communities.

Fire Standards Programme

Implementation of nationally agreed fire standards across Fire and Rescue Service core functions.

Accessible Content Toolkit Project

Ensuring that digital content, including websites, mobile apps and documents that are shared electronically are accessible to all audiences.

Grenfell Project

We will continue to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report and await the outcomes and recommendations of the phase 2 report.

Command Support Software

The project will deploy a command support system including hardware and software that will improve situational awareness of our incident commanders at larger scale incidents.

Special Projects Implementation

Two new high reach Aerial Appliances will be deployed and work to improve the Fire Station Design will continue to reduce the levels of contamination for those staff working within them.

Office 365

Technical requirement to keep Microsoft office products up to date with the latest features and security.

Data Centre

The relocation of our backup data centre which is required for disaster recovery and business continuity purposes.

MDT software

Replacement of Lego MDT software to coincide with the go live of the replacement mobilising system.

Manchester Arena Inquiry Report

Implement the recommendations and learning from the Manchester Arena Inquiry.

The annual planning cycle encourages teams to plan and consider activities and initiatives a year in advance of implementation. This means that stakeholder engagement is carried out earlier, involving those who are impacted and enabling change within the organisation. This assists with capacity planning and benefits realisation from the programme of change.

Following the major incidents below, a review of foreseeable risks has taken place and is captured within the Community Risk Management Plan. As the risk from fire has reduced, an increase in other types of emergencies is evident. Work is being carried out to assess these risks to plan for them accordingly. Lessons are learnt from incidents that have occurred, such as:

- The Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017 and the inquiry into fire safety, building regulations and emergency response arrangements to fires in high rise buildings.
- The terror attack at Manchester Arena in 2017 and the review of the fire and rescue service role at such incidents.

- The heatwave of 2022 and the ability of the fire and rescue service to respond to multiple large moorland fires and fires that are impacting on the wildland/urban interface.
- COVID 19 Pandemic 2020/21 which has a huge impact on our service and resulted in significant changes in how large numbers of our employees are working.

In recent years the dedication and commitment of WYFRS staff has saved many lives within West Yorkshire. Working with our communities as part of an intelligence led approach, we aim to stop fires before they happen.

We model the risk of fire across our communities, utilising the very strong correlation between the likelihood of fire and deprivation. We have embedded this over the last three years and building on this, we have introduced new ways of identifying individuals who are at the greatest risk of fire and being injured by fire, wherever they live within West Yorkshire. This allows us to target assistance to those at greatest risk to ensure our valuable resources are having the greatest impact on community safety.

To build on this work, we are utilising national guidance that has been released through the Definition of Risk Programme to profile all risk, not just risk from fire, across West Yorkshire.

Reducing the impact of climate related incidents such as flooding, and wildfire continues to be a priority for the Service. We have worked collaboratively with local partners to proactively challenge irresponsible behaviour, provide safety advice and where necessary responded quickly and effectively to mitigate the impacts on our communities.

Within the building safety environment, the Authority continues to respond to the needs of business and strives to ensure the safety of relevant persons is maintained. Where we have evidence that this is not the case, we utilise our powers of enforcement to bring about a safe environment.

Since the tragic events of Grenfell, WYFRS has played a significant role in supporting the Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council in assessing and developing new ways of working to bring about much needed change in legislation through work we have carried out with the Protection Board.

The introduction of the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and the Gateway regime will provide a new mechanism to ensure new buildings are built correctly, and existing occupied

premises meet the same stringent safety standards. Our protection team are prepared to enable them to support the work of the new BSR on a regional basis.

The future of Fire Protection continues to change and WYFRS is committed to ensuring that our team is ready, willing, and able to pick up the challenges we face. Our commitment is demonstrated within our CRMP and to ensure we achieve this; we continue to invest and recruit into our fire protection team structure. This will ensure we have the right number of people in the teams to continue to successfully deliver our statutory duties.

We continue to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report and await the outcomes and recommendations of the Phase 2 report.

Since the release of the Manchester Arena Inquiry Report we have been working to understand how we will implement changes to meet the recommendations and learning from the inquiry.

Working with other organisations brings value to the service WYFRS provides. This was proven during the multi-agency response to COVID 19. There is an ongoing programme of collaboration to improve how we work with the police and ambulance service and evaluation is being carried out on a wide range of opportunities to make more efficient use of resources. This includes sharing buildings, training, and staff to enhance community safety work, improve planning for emergencies, and supporting emergency response. The focus of Tri-Service collaboration moving forwards will be reducing risk and demand through data sharing.

Working with local authorities, health teams, community groups and voluntary organisations to support the most vulnerable people in our communities continues.

WYFRS are also working more closely than ever with other fire and rescue service partners on projects such as the recent joint procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for firefighters and an upcoming procurement of multi-role PPE.

We are investing heavily in the health and safety of our firefighters by providing new PPE, appliances, and station upgrades to reduce the risks of contaminants from smoke on their health.

The importance of good health and wellbeing, as opposed to just safety can sometimes be overlooked, but plays a significant role in service delivery. The emphasis on improving mental health and wellbeing by improving our procedures and training, whilst developing a more robust framework of welfare support, continues to be a priority.

Whilst the traditional fire calls have reduced over the past 20 years, we are seeing a more diverse range of incident types leading to increased call volumes including helping multi-agency partners. The training priority continues to be to ensure that realistic training and shared learning continues to be developed to bridge this gap.

The Authority has a risk-based training strategy and continues to invest in a central training programme to make sure firefighter skills are kept at the highest level. We are planning to invest in training facilities at our Headquarters as well as training our firefighters at the Fire Service College to provide realistic training opportunities.

Our Firefighter Safety Team work to reduce the risk to firefighters and improve knowledge and understanding of tactical options and National Operational Guidance.

The [Digital and Data Strategy 2021-25](#) continues to deliver an ambitious programme of change to meet the needs of our Service's ambition. The Strategy maximises the use of electronic ways of working, simplifies systems and produces a consistent user experience reducing repetition and exploiting the value of the information held within a secure and resilient infrastructure. This strategy will be key to supporting our focus on performance management and smarter working for the year ahead.

This Statement of Assurance is signed on 29 September 2023 on behalf of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Darren O'Donovan', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Councillor Darren O'Donovan
Chair of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority