



SOUTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE
AUTHORITY

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022-23

Scope of Responsibility

The Authority has a responsibility to conduct its business and deliver its services within the laws that govern Fire and Rescue authorities. Putting in place proper arrangements for its governance is imperative.

The Authority has set out its arrangements for governance in its Constitution, and a copy of this can be found on our website.

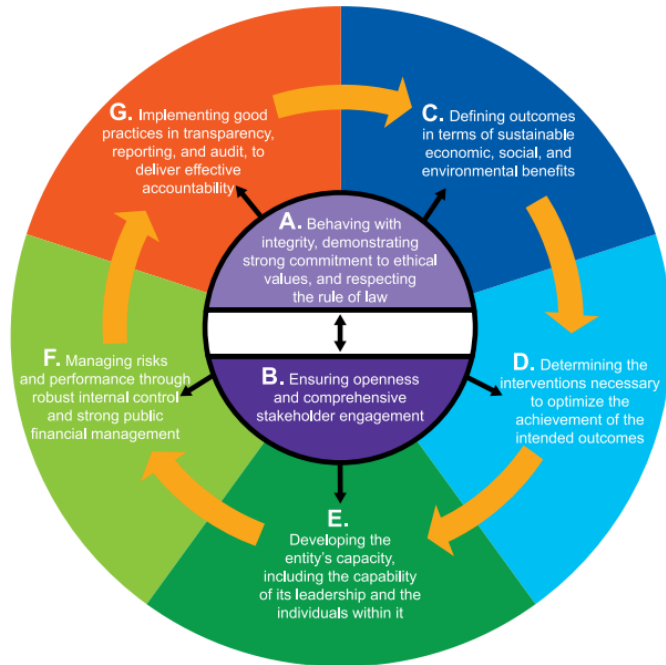
The Constitution includes a local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016 edition). Local Codes should reflect each Authority's own approach to governance to enable delivery of its objectives and priorities in a transparent and accountable way.

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with its local Code, meeting the requirements of regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which requires it to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). It also identifies areas for improvement, which are supported by a Governance Improvement Plan (GIP).

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises of the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and managed, and the activities through which it accounts to, and engages with the community.

It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of the correct services in a cost-effective manner.



The Governance Framework

As well as setting out how the Authority has complied with its own code of governance and governance framework, the Annual Governance Statement is an opportunity to formally review its 'system of internal control'.

The Service has adopted an additional process to capture, assess and review its key governance domains that make up the system of internal control. The Internal Control Management Assurance Framework (ICMAF) was developed by Internal Audit to provide assurance to the Service and its managers on key areas of governance within the Service. 12 domain areas # have been built into the Officer Assurance Statements (OAS), and therefore have been built into the wider Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The ICMAF process is a single annual update, in line with the Annual Governance Statement process and completion of the 12 domain areas in the Officer Assurance Statements. This is supported by the Governance Improvement Plan regular reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee.

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

A range of policies, procedures and strategies, which staff are made aware of and adhere to through awareness and training which supports “Our Story” which is available to be viewed on our website. Our personal review process facilitates discussions around expected behaviours and aspirations with individual members of staff. People Services staff are regularly trained and updated about changes in employment legislation. The Induction process includes policies and procedures relating to conduct and standards. The employee code of conduct is included in the LearnPro online induction process for new members of staff. The Service already has a set of behaviours and aspirations told through ‘Our Story’ and the Staff Code of ethics compliments this work. The Social Media Policy has recently been updated and covers areas, which relate to ethical standards and code of conduct.

Codes of Conduct and Register of Interests are in place for Fire Authority Members and all Service staff that set out the behaviours expected of all employees and reinforce its values and standards. The Appeals and Standards Committee is equipped to deal with any breaches of ethics / behaviour.

The Authority and Corporate Risk Register can be viewed on the Fire and Rescue Authority website. The risk trend, guidance and matrix are included within the documentation.

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and supporting documents include reference to the Bribery Act and aligns itself with the relevant policies and procedures. A Performance Management Policy is in place and regularly reviewed and updated.

Work is underway on the development of the next People Strategy for the period 2023 to 2026. This will be a consultative process, engaging with key stakeholders and the content will reflect local, regional and national priorities. The Workforce Development Strategy for 2022-25 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in June 2022.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee receives quarterly updates on EDI progress across the Service and receives specific updates on actions from across departments. The Service has participated in all EDI consultations with the NFC and has ensured compliance with the Gender Pay Gap reporting requirement. All new projects or initiatives are supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) where appropriate. An Equality Analysis LearnPro module is available for Service Managers. FRA Member sessions were held in November 2022, which provided general equality, diversity and inclusion within SYFR, together with equality analysis and LEARNPRO. FRA Members have been granted access to the Service’s e-learning (LEARNPRO) system online.

Monitoring

The Authority and Service have processes in place to receive and record compliments and complaints, and to report on the outcome of investigations to resolve complaints. The Audit and Governance Committee receives regular reports on Service Compliments and Complaints. The reports can be found under meetings and agendas on the Fire Authority’s website. SYFR has an effective whistleblowing policy in place. Further work is currently underway to

providing an external Crisis Line for staff to contact. This will be in place at the end of 2023.

In January 2022 a Deputy Monitoring Officer was appointed to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) to aid the provision of services.

The Authority and Audit and Governance meetings are webcast live and available online on the website afterwards. The webcasts are available for a period of six months following the date of the meeting.

The Service regularly reports on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) areas of improvement through the Service Improvement Plan and the Service Improvement Board, inviting staff into the Board to present on their actions. These reports can be found on the Authority website approximately every quarter.

The Service's Data Protection Officer (DPO) has undertaken a review in line with UK Data Protection laws, and the Service have no known issues. Regular Information Governance reports are presented to the FRA. Staff receive annual training via a GDPR LearnPro module and are aware of how to report breaches. There is regular contact with the DPO to ensure that any data protection issues are quickly identified and actioned.

The Core Code of Ethics was produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Core Code sets out five ethical principles providing a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.



NFCC Core Code of Ethics, May 2021

The Quarterly Performance report is available in Orca for all employees to view as well as being available for Fire Authority Members. Along with the Quarterly Performance report, the Response Standards report is available to both internal staff and Fire Authority. Orca provides an electronic and revised version of the Performance report for the Fire Authority Members to access. This has been supported with Member training and support.

Principle B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement

The Authority and Service have conducted an annual review of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2021-24. A refreshed CRMP was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in January 2023 and included reference to extreme weather events, the Wildfire Programme successes and consideration to the cost-of-living impact.

The Service Plan 2023-24 was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023. The Fire Authority receives regular updates on the progress of the Annual Service Plan, with the reports published on our website.

An updated 3-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023-26 was presented to the Authority for approval to the Fire Authority in November 2022. The Authority received and approved the 2022/23 Annual Revenue Budget and Council Tax setting at their meeting in February 2023. Financial Performance is reported to the Fire Authority on a quarterly basis and the Financial Outturn Report for year ended 31 March 2022 was presented at the June 2023 Fire and Rescue Authority meeting.

A Police and Fire Collaboration Board meets regularly involving senior officers from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR), South Yorkshire Police (SYP), Barnsley MBC as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Authority.

The Service has a Joint Community Safety Department to provide a collaborative educational facility, which delivers training with both the Prince's Trust and Cadets.

The joint collaboration with SYP on fleet has been recognised as best practice nationally and key achievements have included the establishment of a Strategic Fleet Committee and the tender awarded in September 2022 for a further 20 appliances from 2024-28. Fleet updates are periodically presented at the Fire and Rescue Authority meetings.

The Chief Fire Officer is the Co-Chair of the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and relationships with partners across the LRF are maintained with regular meetings, exercises and CPD sessions arranged throughout the year.

Regional Fire and Rescue collaboration has provided various efficiency and effectiveness benefits for SYFR and our regional partners. This regional

collaboration was tested during extreme weather in July 2022 and recent industrial action planning. SYFR has been instrumental in setting up the Yorkshire and Humber Fire and Rescue Services regional procurement group to support wider collaboration.

A Partnerships Committee is part of the Service internal governance meeting structure, which reports on the work to develop effective partnerships with other organisations. In 2022, an external evaluation was commissioned for the SYP SYFR collaborations, and it included positive Social Return on Investment (SROI) assessments.

The Service seeks feedback from the public on its work, via an annual resident's survey with a representative sample of local people. The results of this survey are reported to the Fire Authority via the Stakeholder Planning Board and are also used to help inform the Service's key strategies, including the annual review of its Community Risk Management Plan.

Transparency

The Authority webcasts its meetings of Authority and Audit and Governance Committee live. These are subsequently archived for a period of 6 months for ongoing reference and scrutiny. The reports and minutes of all meetings are placed on the Authority's website. The Authority and Service abides by the Government's Transparency Code. It also abides by the Freedom of Information and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation set out by the Information Commissioner's Office, and this is regularly monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee, reports of which can be found on the Authority's website.

Consultation, Engagement and Service User Feedback

The Service's core work is around campaigns to prevent emergency incidents and a campaign calendar is published internally each year, which outlines the issues it will focus upon. Public information for each individual campaign is published on the Service website and social media platforms. Where formal consultation is required, this is conducted in accordance with the consultation principles set out for local and national government bodies. Consultation with the public and staff is carried out where changes to its core services are planned, for example during the development of its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and Annual Plan. The CRMP 2023 refresh was presented at the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting in January 2023 which included focus groups, consultation and surveys with stakeholders and staff.

Following a Cabinet Office audit, the Service website has been updated to maintain compliance with public sector accessibility regulations.

The Service requests feedback from service users when they have attended an incident or undertaken a Home Safety Check.

A short staff 'pulse' survey takes place every two months to give staff an opportunity to provide feedback on their work life.

Evaluation of our external communications campaigns takes place on a regular basis to determine the impact of the Service's work. A summary of leading campaigns 'Campaign Highlights 2022' and measurable outcomes was provided at the Fire Authority Stakeholder Planning Board in March 2023.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The CRMP is developed based on extensive work to analyse local risk. The consideration of risk within the county includes risks to important heritage sites, environmental risks such as flooding and extreme weather events, and how our resources need to be matched to respond to the risks. Through our work with partners via the Local Resilience Forum, we put plans in place to respond to these risks to protect our communities.

The Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures form part of the Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution and were updated in May 2022. The Contract Standing Orders for the Authority, part of the FRA Constitution were reviewed in October 2021.

The Service has a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Approved Capital Programme.

Consider Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental benefit

The Green Plan was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in January 2023.

The Service's Procurement Strategy and Policy includes sustainable procurement, which ensures that at the planning stage social value is considered when procuring goods and services. At the quotation stage, we aim to invite two local suppliers to participate, and our contract specifications and operating procedures aim to safeguard the natural environment and avoid any adverse consequences. Under the Transparency code, the Authority publishes details of current contracts and framework agreements with a total value in excess of £5k on its website.

Equality assessments take place when changes are proposed to understand the impact they may have on different groups in the local community. Equality Assessments, site surveys and environmental surveys are also carried out for all new build projects. Post Implementation Reviews take place for projects to ensure those related to the delivery of our CRMP have delivered anticipated outcomes and benefits.

The Service's Performance Management Framework ensures that key performance measures and targets are regularly reported to senior managers and the Fire Authority Performance and Scrutiny Board, so they can measure progress in delivering outcomes.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Determining interventions

Members of the Authority are provided with briefings, contextual information and support information as required for meetings within the FRA governance structure.

The FRA report template has been updated to include a further standing item capturing service improvement information. This adds a level of governance information and will provide ongoing service improvement updates to the Authority.

The Corporate Advisory Group is an informal group that meets approximately every six weeks. Members consider key topics that affect the Service on both a local and national level and provide the Service with feedback on various policy proposals.

Business cases are written for key projects detailing options and benefits, and risks associated with those options. These are submitted to the relevant internal governance board for approval and regular monitoring, such as the Service's Corporate Management Board or Business Change Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings.

Planning interventions

A Forward Register (work programme) is in place for all FRA meetings, which is reviewed at the Service's Corporate Management Board meeting. Reports such as the Annual Statement of Accounts, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Budget Monitoring are submitted on a regular quarterly basis.

A Police / Fire Collaboration Board was established in January 2017. This Board involves senior officers from Fire, Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority and Chair of the FRA. The Board looks at all aspects and opportunities for joint collaboration between South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A joint Service and Authority Officer Governance Co-ordination Group meets quarterly prior to the Audit and Governance Committee and considers a range of governance and control issues.

Members are provided with annual Audit and Risk Management awareness sessions to increase their knowledge in this area. Members were also invited to attend Introduction to Risk Management training facilitated by the Head of Governance, Projects and Collaboration. The course provides an overview of how SYFR manages risk. This includes an overview of the risk register template, how to identify and monitor risks, and how risk is managed at corporate, project and station levels.

Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

Members attending the Corporate Advisory Group are consulted in advance, around future budget planning prior to the formal budget and Council tax setting. Regular reports to the Authority provide early identification of any variances to assist in budget preparations for future years.

Project and Programme Monitoring

The Project Framework Policy was approved in 2022, which provides clarity on roles and responsibilities, documentation, governance and decision-making. The service manages projects and programmes by assigning a subject matter expert to each project or programme at their initiation stage. This person becomes the Project or Programme Manager and holds responsibility for delivery the work. Recording and reviewing the delivery of outcomes takes place through project governance, such as post implementation reviews and lessons learnt reviews, regular reviews of partnerships, corporate risk management processes, and performance management arrangements.

An internal programme methodology was introduced in 2020 to effectively capture, monitor and support the progress of complex programmes at the appropriate level. Headline project programmes for 2022/23 have included Fit for the Future and the National Core Code of Ethics. The Projects, Governance and Collaboration Team recruited a Project and Evaluations Officer in September 2022 to conduct in house evaluation.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Developing capacity

The Authority maintains forward Work Programmes across all its Committees and Boards. Future strategy is co-ordinated by the Corporate Advisory Group along with the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk (or his/her representative).

A Member and Learning Development Strategy is in place, which can be found on our website. Member training includes bespoke inductions from both the Authority and Service. A new Audit and Governance Committee Member training package is being developed and will be implemented throughout 2023 including a bespoke Audit and Governance Committee Member induction. Annual Development discussions are offered to all Authority Members to identify learning and development needs. This results in a Learning and Development Schedule. There is ongoing monitoring of learning and development needs in response to individual requests. Member Learning and Development is supported by the Chair of the Authority. The Audit and Governance Committee have undertaken a self-assessment exercise in March 2023, which CIPFA states as best practice. Members reported good performance across all indicators, with areas for improvement including a skills audit of Members, which would be undertaken in the latter half of 2023. The self-assessment exercise will now be undertaken annually. Members have undertaken various types of learning and development including workshops facilitated by the

Service and BMBC officers, trips to Fire Stations, the LGA Annual Fire Conference and LGA Fire Leadership Essentials Programme.

The Service has a People Strategy, with the People Board meeting regularly. Periodic updates on the work of the People Board are presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Service, via the Leadership and Management Development Framework, continue to develop the senior management through a variety of behaviourally based programmes and core leadership and management qualifications including CMI Levels 3, 5 and higher-level qualifications for those at a more senior level.

A new executive post of Director of People and Culture was created and recruited to in 2023. Since the end of the 2022/23 financial year, recruitment has completed has taken place for a second new executive post, Director of Finance and Procurement.

Developing the capability of the Authority's leadership and other officers

The Authority's decision-making structures provide for increased challenge and overview. The Authority has in place a Performance and Scrutiny Board and a Stakeholder Planning Board, which afford greater opportunity for Members to discuss issues in more detail and provide support, leadership and challenge.

The Corporate Advisory Group provides scope to consider a range of issues relating to governance and service delivery, including agenda management, budget, service planning issues and future policy direction.

Role Profiles are in place for the FRA Chair, FRA Members and those involved in external bodies, e.g., Community Safety Partnerships.

The Authority's Performance and Scrutiny Board meets on a quarterly basis and has in place an agreed work programme, which is reviewed regularly by the Chair and Service Executive Lead. The Board provides additional capacity to the Authority and the opportunity for increased check and challenge on a range of strategic issues.

A Stakeholder Planning Board also meets quarterly with responsibility for monitoring consultation and communication with the public, businesses and other stakeholders including community groups and the voluntary sector. It considers the Authority's involvement in key strategic partnerships and quarterly performance for Prevention and Protection.

The Authority has a Local Pension Board, which was established as a result of the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 requiring all Authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, to establish such Boards. The Board acts in a monitoring and scrutiny capacity on behalf of the Scheme Manager (the FRA) in

respect of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes. The Board has an Independent Chair, representation on behalf of the employees and employer, an agreed Constitution and established work programme.

The Authority's Section 41 Members (under Part IV of the LG Act 1985) report back to their respective District Councils on FRA business.

The FRA Constitution contains a Scheme of Delegation, which was reviewed in December 2022 and sets out the decision-making powers and roles permitted to undertake these decisions. Reports submitted to the Authority have a section on delegated powers.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Managing risk

A number of internal audit recommendations have been implemented throughout 2022-23 to improve risk management preparedness. Corporate Risk is managed at all levels within the Service, and separately by the Authority. The Service Corporate Management Board reviews risk at least quarterly. The Authority's Governance Co-ordination Group (GCG), which meets approximately six times per year, also monitors both Authority and Service Risks. The combined Service and Authority Risk Register is reported quarterly to the Audit and Governance Committee.

- The Medium-Term Financial Plan is approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority and reviewed every year.
- Risks that sit on the Corporate Risk Register are reported to the FRA Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis with good internal risk management controls. As the risk of industrial action increased throughout 2022, the Service provided regular updates to senior managers and FRA Members on the mitigations being delivered to ensure the provision of contingency arrangements.

Managing Performance

Quarterly Corporate Performance Report (reported to the Corporate Management Board, Performance and Scrutiny Board and Annual Corporate Performance Report (reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority), are based upon the Service's suite of Performance Measures. These reports have been developed to include in-depth analysis and associated commentary, provided by District Managers, to show the actions they are taking in their areas to improve performance.

The Business Intelligence Team continues to work with local teams to provide Supporting / Diagnostic Measures, which sit below Corporate Performance Measures. The second phase of the review took place during 2022.

Performance reports have been made more dynamic and interactive for Managers and Fire Authority Members using Microsoft PowerBI reporting software. Performance management is also now devolved into the internal governance structure. Station personnel have access to Station Level Reports consisting of dashboards and maps within ORCA. Managers have open discussion about the previous quarter's performance and the proactive action that have been employed and the outcomes. These discussions take place with Heads of Function.

The CIPFA's Financial Management Code of Practice was introduced on the 1st April 2021. The Authority has assessed itself against the requirements code which shows that the current financial management arrangements in place meet its requirements. In addition, the Authority also undertook an assessment to gain assurance against the new Value for Money framework. The VFM external audit opinion was presented at the January 2023 for the 2020-21 audit, which found no significant weaknesses. Work is currently underway on the 2021-22 VFM external audit opinion.

Robust internal control

A Service Internal Control Management Assurance Framework has been developed and is used to measure the governance arrangements and identify any risks to achievement. One of the governance domains included in the framework is risk management and found no significant risks. A recent review of the Corporate Risk Management arrangements took place in 2021/22, with improvements being rolled out across the service.

The lead officer for Business Continuity is the Vice Chair of the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Business Continuity Group and Chair of the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum Business Continuity Group. All sections of the Service and Authority have Business Continuity Plans, which are regularly reviewed and tested. Business continuity plans are reviewed and tested in line with organisational requirements. The Service undertook Industrial Action business continuity planning from August 2022-March 2023, with the Service providing regular reporting to the HMICFRS and the Minister for Police, Crime and Fire on business continuity preparedness. A full review of the SYFR Industrial Action Business Continuity plan will take place in August 2023. A Community Risk Register for South Yorkshire is maintained by the Local Resilience Forum, of which the Service is a member. This is used to inform Corporate Risk management within the Service, alongside other sources of risk information both locally and nationally. Department managers attend the annual business continuity meetings and attend relevant training as appropriate. This year staff have completed a refreshed business continuity module in LearnPro.

New Virtual Server Infrastructure is in place, which allows increased speed of restoration in the event of a disaster.

The Industrial Action Planning risk register, which is supported by the Strategic Improvement Manager, is an example of an extremely detailed and complex register that multiple teams and stakeholders contributed to.

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) identified serious cultural issues within the organisation via an independent review that was published in late 2022. The review's author has been clear that the conduct and some staff at LFB will not be an isolated issue and that all fire and rescue services should take note of the findings and recommendations identified. The Service acknowledges that it should seek to continuously improve in this area and proposed several immediate actions in response to the LFB review, which were approved by the FRA at the January 2023 meeting.

The Authority receives its Legal Services from Barnsley MBC and, through the Monitoring Officer maintains a check on legality and ethical factors. The Clerk is required to report to the Authority any unlawful or potentially unlawful expenditure by Members or officers, and systems are in place for ensuring compliance with the Authority's Constitution and other accounting and financial standards.

RSM UK Ltd provide the Authority's internal audit services (from 1 April 2020). The annual Internal Audit Plan will continue to be developed in consultation with management and Members and be risk-based and provide for flexibility to incorporate changes in priority throughout the year.

Transparency data

The Authority has to comply with the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires public bodies to publish certain information. E.g., spending over £500. This information is available on the Service's website.

As previously mentioned, the Authority has a Corporate Advisory Group at which key corporate / strategic planning processes are considered in greater detail. All Members, the Service's Executive team and officers supporting the Authority, attend this Group. It has no decision-making powers.

To comply with UK data protection law, the Service have a dedicated Data Protection Officer. Information Governance updates, including FOI and GDPR is submitted to the Fire Authority Audit and Governance Committee on a six-monthly basis. The Service have an Information Governance Committee that meets internally each quarter with representatives from all relevant departments.

Strong public financial management

The Authority has a robust financial planning framework in place, which the Treasurer develops in conjunction with the Financial Services Manager and Chief Fire Officer. A revised MTFP for 2023-26 was approved in November 2022. Due to the extraordinary and challenging circumstances facing public service finances, SYFR has set a series of funding scenarios within this current MTFP. The financial position facing the Service will be an evolving and iterative picture as the outcomes and implications from a number of significant events emerge. Budget monitoring reports are submitted quarterly to the Authority and Members regularly monitor financial risk and levels of reserves.

The CIPFA Statement on The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) sets out five principles that define the core activities and

behaviours that belong to the role of the Chief Financial Officer and the governance arrangements needed to support them. The Authority had the following financial arrangements during the year which demonstrate compliance with the five principles:

- The Chief Executive of Barnsley MBC is the Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority.
- Barnsley's MBC Governance Unit, under the lead of Barnsley MBC's Executive Director (Core Services), provides strategic and governance support to the two Joint Authorities of Fire and the Police and Crime Panel, as well as other bodies.
- Barnsley MBC's Director of Finance provides the Authority's Treasurer (Section 151 Officer) role.
- The Service has created a new post of Director of Finance and Procurement, who will be a member of the Service's Executive Team and responsible for leading the finance function within the Service and works closely with the Treasurer to deliver sound financial management across both organisations.
- Finance staff across both organisations are suitably qualified and experienced and have regular training as required to ensure continuing professional development.
- The Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures (FRA Constitution) were reviewed in March 2021.
- The Authority's Pay Policy Statement is submitted to the Authority on an annual basis and published on the Authority's website.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency and audit to deliver effective accountability

Implementing good practice in transparency

The Authority has to comply with the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires public bodies to publish certain information, e.g., spending over £500. This information is available on the Service's website.

The Authority has a Constitution, which sets out how it operates, how decisions are made, roles and responsibilities and the procedures of the Authority. Some of these processes are required by law, whilst others are a matter for the Authority to determine. The Constitution can be found on our website.

There is an undertaking to review the Constitution every three years (or when individual Parts require updating due to a change in policy, legislation etc.), and this is monitored by officers from both the Service and Authority. Updates to all Parts have been ongoing during 2022-23, with further updates needed due to staffing changes.

The Authority and Audit and Governance Committee meetings are webcast live and archived for 6 months. Papers for these meetings are published on the Authority's website, along with Local Pension Board, Appointments Committee and Appeals and Standards Committee.

Freedom of Information (FOI) provides guidance on the release of information, and the Service regularly provides monitoring reports to the Audit and

Governance Committee on the FOI requests it has processed.

Staff are aware of the process for reporting data breaches, and Information and Governance staff work closely with the Data Protection Officer in their day-to-day work to ensure compliance with legislation, and consider the DP implications when responding to FOIs, and customer complaints.

Implementing good practices in reporting

The Authority has a separate Performance and Scrutiny Board. The Board is supported by a work programme, which is regularly reviewed by the Chair and Service Executive Lead. The Board is underpinned by a Scrutiny and Assurance Protocol, which was developed in consultation with the Centre for Governance and Public Scrutiny. This is reviewed on an annual basis to take account of any national policy or legislative changes, or any local amendments.

The Statement of Accounts is submitted to the Authority and available on the website.

Assurance and effective accountability

The Authority is also required to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. 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. In September 2023, the Authority published its 2022-23 Statement of Assurance and Annual Report. All Authority meetings have work programmes that ensure consideration of statutory and other reports in advance of meetings.

SYFR were inspected by HMICFRS in Summer 2022 as part of HMICFRS inspections to report on the efficiency and effectiveness of all Fire and Rescue Services for the second time. The inspection is based around three core pillars: effectiveness, efficiency and people, with the overall aim of driving a culture of continuous improvement throughout the sector. The categories of graded judgment are outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate. The Service was rated 'Requires Improvement' in the effectiveness and efficiency pillars and 'Good' in the people pillar. Seven out of eleven subcategories were rated as 'Good', with four rated as 'Requires Improvement'. HMICFRS intend on inspecting all Fire and Rescue Services in England for a third time. It is anticipated that we will be inspected in Spring 2024 in which they will expect to see significant progress on the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report.

Auditors are now required to consider whether Authority and Service has put in place 'proper arrangements' for securing VFM. An assessment has been made against three specified reporting criteria: Financial Sustainability, Governance and Improving Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. The VFM Opinion from the External Auditors for 2020/21 was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in January 2023 and stated that no significant weaknesses were found in the Authority's VFM arrangements, however raised some recommendations that would be implemented throughout the year.

The 2021/22 Audit VFM opinion is still awaited.

Areas for Improvement

The below table captures the areas for improvement identified in the Officer Assurance Statements. The areas of improvement are aligned to the CIPFA Local Code of Corporate Principles.

Principle	New Areas for Improvement
Principle A – Behaving with Integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of the law	a. The SYFRA Whistleblowing Policy needs to be better known across the Service. We are working across the Service and wider sector on the FRS cultural improvement journey.
Principle B – Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement	a. There are concerns around the compliance of sub-contractors and the Service needs to tighten its contractual arrangements around GDPR to assure itself that suitable controls are in place relating to all sub-contracted work. b. Arrangements with Barnsley MBC covered under a partnership Service Level Agreement are being reviewed to ensure value for money for all parties.
Principle C – Defining Outcomes in terms of Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits	a. The Service has set an ambitious programme of decarbonisation with a new Green Plan and Decarbonisation Strategy. This will be complimented by a programme of new build and renovations to the existing estate. b. There are plans to further update the new Green plan regarding EVs and EV charging infrastructure across the estate. c. The Service is looking to progress with a new fleet of fuel-efficient vehicles.
Principle D – Determining the Interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	a. Estates projects and programmes are not incorporated within the wider project support framework as they have dedicated project roles within the team but for some of the large estates projects it may benefit from wider awareness through the existing project governance structure. b. Reporting on project performance needs to be consistent and updated on a regular basis.
Principle E – Developing the Entity’s capacity, including the	a. Attendance management has been recognised as an area for Service Improvement by HMICFRS and work is underway to ensure this is progressed.

capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. The Service recognises the current recruitment challenges especially within Corporate Support roles and is working to raise the wider employer value proposition. c. Potential review of the Agile Working Policy. d. Slight improvements can be made to the SYFRA discipline and appeals procedures and process.
Principle F – Managing Risks and Performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A project is being planned to identify a risk management system, which will support the work of the governance team and all risk owners. b. The internal control over departmental level budget management and more scrutiny to justify carry forward budgets is still to see improvements. c. Improvement is needed on how we distribute performance data and transition this into intelligence and information to drive and improve performance. d. The introduction of Tricostar Case Management System will provide performance data to ensure performance in accordance with the SLA. e. Procurement BCP has not been tested. f. Property tested BCP and found gaps in knowledge and understanding procedures. A future workshop is planned to discuss similar scenarios.
Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency and audit to deliver effective accountability	Nothing identified.

Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has a responsibility for conducting regular reviews of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including its risk management arrangements and system of internal control.

Governance arrangements are ultimately the responsibility of the Authority itself and the Audit and Governance Committee has a specific role in co-ordinating the process and ensuring that any review of governance is timely, proportionate and linked to other key processes – such as the Statement of Accounts and the auditors’ reports.

To provide Members of the Authority with the necessary advice and guidance on governance, an officer Governance Co-ordination Group is in place. The testing and self-assessment processes have been co-ordinated by the Group and the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared by officers for approval.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the governance framework has been accomplished in several different ways:

Through the normal ongoing business of the Authority

- Meetings of the Authority and its committees
- Review and re-statement of objectives and performance targets
- Regular reporting of performance
- Budget monitoring and consideration of the Authority's Statement of Accounts
- Review of the Authority's role and involvement in external partnerships, including Community Safety Partnerships
- Formal approval of updates to financial regulations, standing orders and scheme of delegation
- Updating of the Members' Allowance Scheme
- Monitoring the performance of Chief Officers

Through formal processes of independent assurance

- The work of the internal audit team and the HoIA Annual Report (including assurance opinion)
- The external auditor's reports and studies
- The work of the Appeals and Standards Committee

By the adoption of the Internal Control Management Assurance Framework

- Self-assessment of compliance against the governance domains identified
- Identification of risks RAG rated and with mitigating actions and completion dates
- Regular review and monitoring of compliance and progress against the actions identified.

By the adoption of Risk Management

- Risk monitoring within the Service
- Maintenance of an Authority and Corporate risk register
- Joint reporting to Members
- Annual risk management learning and development for Members

By participating externally in processes which enhance the quality of governance

- Participation in national Fire Finance Network and regional meetings
- Participation in the HMICFRS inspection programme.
- Participation in the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA).
- Participation in the NFCC Information Governance Group
- Participation in the regional Yorkshire and Humber Information Governance Group
- The Authority has Member representation on the following bodies:
 - Local Government Association Fire Services Commission.
 - Yorkshire and Humberside Employers' Association.

Through other processes in support of the main review

- Officer assurance statements have been sought from within the Service and the Authority.
- Officer Governance Co-ordination Group.
- Various SYFR internal Boards and Groups
- A review of minutes
- A review of compliments and complaints received
- Monitoring the actions of other Authorities in establishing and strengthening good governance

Head of Internal Audit Opinion

The following has been provided by the Authority's Internal Auditor – RSM UK:

Based on the work we have undertaken on the organisation's system of internal control; we do not consider that within these areas there are any issues that need to be flagged as significant control issues within the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control.

However, our work has identified further enhancements to the framework of risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective.

RSM UK's full Annual Report 2022/23 was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 May 2023 and can be found on our website (see Item 10).

Significant Governance Issues

The review of effectiveness has generated a number of governance issues for strengthening and improvement during 2023-24.

These are summarised below:

HMICFRS Service Improvement Plan

Following the 2022 Inspection of SYFR, the Service were rated 'Requires Improvement' in the effectiveness and efficiency pillars and 'Good' in the people pillar. The SYFR inspection report identified 20 Areas of Improvement which have be properly considered and measures will be put in place to address all of these. These will be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority via the quarterly Service Improvement Board update report.

Fire Reform White paper – Governance

The Home office released the Fire Reform White Paper in May 2022. The paper was open for consultation until 26 July 2022 and included feedback from the FRA and SYFR. The resulting decisions and impact of the paper will affect SYFRA and will require change to governance procedures of the Authority. Next steps are expected in July 2023.

Embedding Sustainability

The Green Plan was approved by the Sustainability Committee in November 2022 and was then formally approved by the Corporate Management Board and the FRA in January 2023. The plan includes ambitious objectives in which progress will be reported via the Stakeholder Planning Board.

Culture

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue has a well-established set of staff behaviours and its values. However, the Service acknowledges that it should seek to continuously improve in this area and has proposed several actions in response to the independent LFB review. The FRA approved the Service's response to the LFB review in January 2023 and progress is reported to the FRA on a routine basis.

Estates and Facilities – Benefits Management

Estates projects and programmes are not incorporated within the wider project support framework as they have dedicated project roles within the team but for some of the large estates projects it would benefit from wider awareness through the existing project governance structure.

Strikes (Minimum Services Levels) Bill 2023 (For Fire and Rescue Services)

The current status of the bill is in the final stages and could be expected in early 2024. Any published bill will place legislation on Fire and Rescue Services to maintain a minimum service during any period of industrial strike action, this could be anywhere between 25-50% and utilising existing SYFR operational personnel.