



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

Scope of Responsibility

The Fire Authority (the Authority) has a statutory responsibility to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. To do this the Authority must ensure that proper arrangements exist for the governance of its affairs. This includes maintaining a sound system of internal control and ensuring that robust arrangements for the management of risk are in place.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

Governance is about how the Authority ensures that it is doing the right thing, in the right way for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, cultures and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to and engages with its communities.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level (rather than to eliminate all risk). The Authority maintains a sound system to protect against risks and mitigate their impact. The systems are regularly reviewed and updated.

Key Elements of the Governance Framework and Internal Control System

The Authority has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which sets out how the Authority promotes good governance. A copy of the code is available at hwfire.cmis.uk.com/hwfire/Documents/DocumentLibrary.aspx or may be obtained from Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority Headquarters, Hindlip Park, Worcester, WR3 8SP.

The Authority has the following protocols and processes in place which demonstrate the core principles as required by the CIPFA/ SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016:



Core Principles

Core Principle | A

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law is demonstrated through:

Members' Code of Conduct and Registers of Interests — a local Code of Conduct for all Members is in place and a Register of Financial Interests for each Member is published on the Authority's website.

Core Code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services — the Authority has adopted the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England, which was developed in partnership by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association and the Association of Police Crime Commissioners. Authority members and staff have received external training from IODA relating to organisational culture.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Plan — sets out the Authority's commitment to being an inclusive organisation which recognises the diverse backgrounds, beliefs and needs of our staff and the communities we serve.

Code of Conduct for Staff and Register of Staff Interests — requires employees to perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

Whistleblowing Policy — in place for receiving and investigating complaints from staff and/or contractors.

Independent Staff Reporting Line — The Authority has implemented an independent and confidential reporting line for staff concerns using 'Safecall' 0800 915 1571 / www.safecall.co.uk/hwfrs.

Complaints Systems — in place for receiving and investigating complaints from the public. Anyone who feels unable to raise their concern via use the complaints process can alternatively contact Safecall as above. A procedure is also in place for complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by Members.

Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy — the Authority has a zero tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption, whether it is attempted from inside or outside the organisation.

Monitoring Officer — provides advice on the scope of the powers and responsibilities of the Authority. The Monitoring Officer has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making and to receive allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct by Authority Members.



Core Principles

Continued

Core Principle | B

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement demonstrated through:

Public Participation at Authority Meetings — members of the public can register to speak and raise any topic at full Authority meetings if it is relevant to the duties and power of the Fire Authority.

Public Consultation — public consultation on the Community Risk Management Plan 2025-30 took place between 11th February 2025 and 6th April. This included public focus groups, social media advertising and an on-line questionnaire sent to key stakeholders and representative bodies. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the Authority when considering the plan for approval in October 2025.



Internal Engagement — the Authority is committed to ensuring effective engagement with its staff. In addition to consultation and negotiation with recognised trade union bodies, for example via the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC), staff groups such as Women@HWFire and the Neurodiverse Staff Network provide forums for engagement with staff. In 2023, the Service conducted a staff survey as well as commissioning an independent, external, Cultural Audit.

Active Engagement with Partners — the Authority is represented on Local Strategic Partnerships, the Safer Roads Partnership and local Community Safety Partnerships. The Authority has also worked closely with West Mercia Police with regards to sharing buildings and assets and has set up a strategic alliance with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.



Core Principles

Continued

Core Principle



Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits demonstrated through:

Annual Service Review 2024-25 — assesses the performance of the Service during the last year and how the Authority delivered against the CRMP (below).

Annual Service Plan 2025-26 — incorporates the outlook and objectives for the year.

Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2025 (CRMP) — sets out how we will deliver sustainable services for our communities. Consultation on the CRMP for the period 2025-2030 took place January – April 2025 and this will be considered for approval in October 2025.

Core Strategies — the Service has published core strategies for Prevention, Protection and Response showing how the commitments in the CRMP will be delivered. They are complimented by enabling strategies such as the People Strategy. These enabling strategies will be reviewed following the adoption of the 2025-2030 CRMP.

Resource Review — Following public consultation, the Authority approved the outcomes of a strategic resource review in June 2024.

Strategic Projects Programme — a programme of major projects identified as being critical to the success of the organisation because they ensure its on-going resilience in the coming years. The projects in the programme include new fire stations, the roll out of vital new technology upgrades as part of national projects, and pivotal work with local partner organisations.

Fleet Strategy — provides a structured approach to vehicle management that ensures the Authority continues to provide and maintain an effective fleet of vehicles to ensure that staff can undertake their jobs effectively.

Property Strategy — to ensure premises are sustainable, safe and meet operational need.

ICT Strategy — provides a comprehensive picture of how the Authority will use ICT to support the services it provides.

Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-2025 — sets out how we will continue to improve the ways in which we use our resources to ensure the least harm to our environment.

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Core Principle | D

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes demonstrated through:

Performance Management Framework — a comprehensive set of key performance indicators measures the quality of service for users. Performance is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Authority’s Policy & Resources Committee and Strategic Leadership Board to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with the Authority’s objectives and best use of resources.

Medium Term Financial Plan — sets out the resources needed to deliver services.

Strategic Risk Register — identifies controls to mitigate inherent identified risks and is monitored on an on-going basis with exception reporting to the Strategic Leadership Board and to the Audit & Standards Committee.

Departmental Risk Registers — reviewed by managers on a quarterly basis.



Core Principles

Continued

Core Principle | E

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

Constitution — defines the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers and the protocols to be followed. The Constitution has been reviewed and minor amendments have been recommended for approval by the Audit & Standards Committee.

Fire Authority Members — all new Members are provided with an induction and information is available for all Members to further develop fire-specific knowledge during their tenure.

Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) — involves all Principal Officers and Assistant Directors in supporting the Chief Fire Officer to lead the Service.

Statutory Officers Group (SOG) — involves the Principal Officers, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer who meet on a regular basis to review any matters arising from SLB relating to the governance of the organisation

People Strategy 2022 - 2025 — sets out how the Authority is supporting its workforce to become more resilient and diverse, to develop their skills and maximise their wellbeing at work.

Staff Development Process — Individual Appraisals are in place for all staff to enable personal objectives to be set which contribute to the overall aims of the Authority. This process has been reviewed and updated during 2022/23. Competency training records and a course management system are also in place.



Core Principles

Continued

Core Principle | F

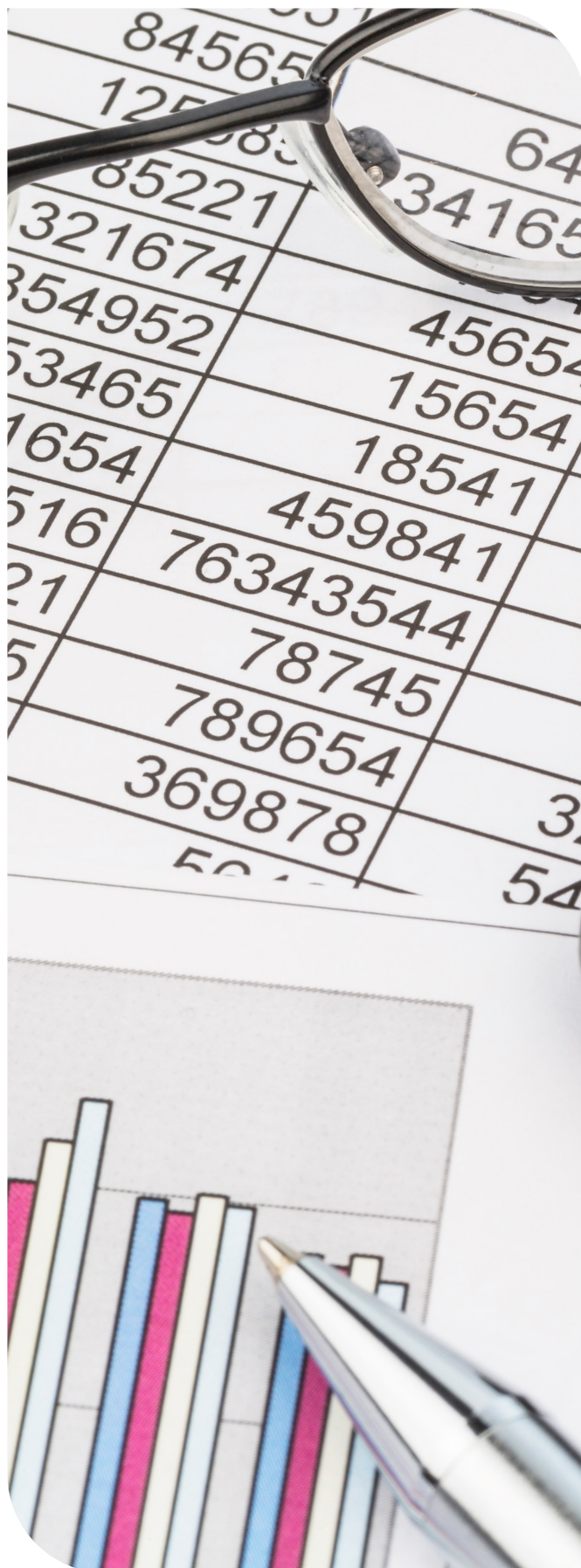
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management demonstrated through:

Audit & Standards Committee — reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority's business risks and the approval of policies in respect of the Authority's governance framework.

Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer) — ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority, as required by the statutory duties associated with s.151 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Chief Financial Officer is also governed by professional standards set by CIPFA.

Risk Management Strategy — ensures that the Authority identifies strategic risks and applies the most cost-effective control mechanisms to manage those risks.

Business Continuity Plans — these plans were most recently implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic and in readiness for possible industrial action by firefighters. They are kept under annual review to ensure the delivery of core functions.



Core Principles

Continued

Core Principle



Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability demonstrated through:

Transparency Information — published on the website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code to promote openness and accountability through reporting on local decision making, public spending and democratic processes.

Agendas, Minutes and Decisions — published on the Authority's website and includes the rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.

Internal Auditors — Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Audit Team provides the internal audit function for the Authority and reports quarterly to the Audit & Standards Committee.

External Auditors — Bishop Fleming provides the external audit services to the Authority and reports regularly to the Audit & Standards Committee.

Annual Statement of Assurance — provides staff, partners and local communities with an assurance that the Authority is doing everything it can to keep them safe and that it is providing value for money.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services — provides an additional external perspective on the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided.



Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has prepared the Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the “[Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016](#)” published by CIPFA/SOLACE. As part of the process the Authority will scrutinise the self-assessment review of its corporate governance arrangements against the CIPFA/SOLACE framework to ensure that the Authority’s governance arrangements are working correctly and are relevant to the current environment.

The Authority is satisfied that its financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. In addition, the key financial systems are continually reviewed by the Internal Auditor.

Budget Monitoring reports have been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee and have shown that the Authority’s finances continue to be well controlled. Budget pressures in the medium term are well understood and a report with options for future efficiencies will be brought forward for consideration at a future date.

The External Auditor made a statutory recommendation to the Authority in February 2025 under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in connection with the late publication of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts. The Authority formally accepted the recommendations at a meeting in March 2025. The 2023/24 Statement of Accounts are now formally approved and await the issue of the Audit Certificate before publication. The Authority expects to publish the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts before the required statutory deadline.

Date: 25th June 2025



Jonathon Pryce
Chief Fire Officer /
Chief Executive



Councillor Roger Phillips
Chairman of the
Fire Authority



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