County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.   The National Framework sets out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the requirements included in the Framework.

2.   The Statement of Assurance (SoA) for this Authority is based on the principles set out in the department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidance.

3.   This SOA complements the following documents:

- Annual Statement of Accounts 2015/16
- Annual Governance Statement 2015/16

FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

4.   The Authority places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body.

5.   The Authority produces accounts on an annual basis that set out details of its financial affairs. The Annual Statement of Accounts is produced taking account of Codes of Practice issued by professional accounting bodies.

6.   The Annual Statement of Accounts is considered and approved by the Authority's Audit and Risk Committee prior to being published.

7.   The Accounts are audited by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being "true and fair". The Auditor considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement.

GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE

8.   The Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

9.   Governance is concerned with how the Authority manages its affairs on a day to day basis including its business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

10.   The Authority publishes a separate Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that sets out its arrangements for ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

11.   Prior to approving the AGS, a review of the internal control framework is considered by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee also considers key governance risks, the assurances gained from internal audit work undertaken during the year and any instances of fraud and corruption that have been identified.

12.   A Corporate Governance Action Plan (CGAP) is reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee on a quarterly basis and key governance risks are monitored through this process. The CGAP review provides details of the key governance risks that are included in the CGAP for monitoring in the following financial year.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

13.   The Authority publishes an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that sets out details of its operational service provision and plans at a local, regional and national level.

14.   Whilst the Authority is primarily a locally based service, mutual aid arrangements are in place with other services to provide resilience for large scale or complex incidents where additional resources need to be called on. The Authority contributes to national resilience and can make a number of its assets available to support a national emergency.

15.   The Authority consults extensively on its IRMP proposals annually and reports the outcomes of consultation to the Combined Fire Authority prior to implementing any changes to service provision.

16.   The consultation process involves:

- website consultation questionnaire
- consultation with local Area Action Partnership (AAP) meetings in County Durham
- consultation with police and communities together (PACT) meetings in Darlington
- media releases and press interviews
- consultation with all town and parish councils
- consultation with partners and stakeholders

17.   Information to support the consultation process is provided in hard copy and electronic formats and is also available in alternative formats on request.

18.   To help secure a greater understanding of our own performance and areas for improvement, the Authority actively participates in the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge process, developed in partnership with the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers Association. We publish the outcome report from each peer challenge along with our action plan to address areas identified for improvement.

OVERALL ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

19. The assurance arrangements that the Authority has in place are considered to meet the requirements set out in the National Framework. Further information and evidence of the Authority's compliance with each of the requirements set out in the National framework is attached at Appendix A.

Signed: _Turnbull_   Signed: _SERGI_

Chairman   **Chief Fire Officer**

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Service

National Framework Compliance Document

Key	
   	Compliant
   	Working/making progress towards compliance
   	Not compliant

Chapter 1 Safer Communities:			
Identify and Assess			
		Notes/existing capability	Lead
1.3a Each fire and rescue authority **must** produce an integrated risk management plan that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.		3 year strategic plan incorporating the IRMP produced on a three year basis and updated annually. (https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans) Issue is definition of "foreseeable" which could potentially have post incident implications for the Authority. The Fire Lawyers Network are considering whether or not this materially changes the responsibilities of Fire Authorities. Identification of cross border, multi-authority risks needs to be included in risk assessment process at local and LRF level.	Head of Corporate Resources
1.3b The Plan **must** have regard to the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate.		(https://www.durham.police.uk/Information-and-advice/Pages/Local-Resilience-Forum.aspx) CRR is referenced in current IRMP document and this will be strengthened when IRMP is rewritten. At a local level each of the 5 Districts have risks identified and logged on a register based on the PESTELO assessment methodology. Risks with organisational impacts are also logged on the	AM Risk and Training

		Corporate Risk Register. These are reviewed regularly up to SLT level. The Service undertakes 7.2.d assessment and record this information. ORI information is contained on the MDT's on each appliance and is kept up to date.	
Prevent and Protect			
1.9 Fire and rescue authorities **must** work with communities to identify and protect them from risk and to prevent incidents from occurring.		Robust Partnership arrangements are in place with both DCC and DBC and the Service plays a full role in various partnerships to reduce risk e.g. Safe Durham Partnership, Darlington CSP, AAP's and MAIS. Expansion of partnership work and support into Health under S&W and EMR. The Service forms part of the Risk Assessment Working Group under the LRF Structure and considers the CRR during the compilation of the IRMP. The Service also is an integral part of the Community Resilience Task and Finish Group under the LRF. The Service uses a range of data sets, information sharing agreements and partner organisation referrals to identify members of the community who are at risk	AM Ops Delivery

		and target resource to intervention and prevention activity. The Service plays an active role in CFOA and the regional structures that underpin it. The Service has a legal agreement for Fire Safety with Essex and works closely on protection to support our business community.	
1.10a Each fire and rescue authority's integrated risk management plan **must** demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a cost effective way.		3 year strategic plan incorporating the IRMP sets out high level prevention, protection and response strategies. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans Prevention Strategy (targeting vulnerable groups, work with HA, School Visits, HFSC etc) Protection Strategy (Risk Based Approach, Ops Crews Targets, etc) Response Strategy – review of attendance times, appliance disposition, station locations, crewing arrangements, Sec 13 and 16 arrangements) Each of the strategies are being reviewed as standalone documents that will provide further granularity to support the strategic plan.	AM Ops Delivery
1.10b Each fire and rescue authority's integrated risk management plan **must** set out their management strategy and risk based programme for enforcing the		The IRMP sets out our strategy and further guidance is contained within the Protection Strategy.	AM Ops Delivery

provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the current Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators and Enforcement Concordat.		https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans The Service has a legal agreement for Fire Safety with Essex to provide professional legal advice and training to staff.	
Respond			
1.11 Fire and rescue authorities **must** make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic accidents and emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements and reflect this in their integrated risk management plans.		Response Strategy – attendance times, appliance disposition, station locations, crewing arrangements, Sec 13 and 16 arrangements, New Dimension Assets (local and regional), Water Rescue Policy, Wildfire Policy, https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans	AM Ops Delivery
1.12 Fire and rescue authorities are required to enter into reinforcement schemes, or mutual aid agreements, with other fire and rescue authorities for securing mutual assistance, so far as practicable.		The strategic plan references the Sec 13/16 mutual aid schemes both with neighbouring FRS and also the National Mutual Aid Protocol. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans	AM Ops Delivery
1.14 Fire and rescue authorities **must** have effective business continuity arrangements in place to meet the full range of service delivery risks. Business continuity plans should not be developed on the basis of Armed Forces assistance being available.		BC Resilience agreements are in place. All staff undertake specific CPD in relation to the agreements and the agreements are called off once per year to test and improve the arrangements. The capability to deploy the National Resilience Assets during Industrial Action needs remains a national consideration by the Strategic Resilience Board.	AM Risk and Training

		CDDFRS have Officers who are DIM trained who have signed the BC Resilience agreements mentioned above and have provided regional DIM capability during periods of IA. The BC Agreements have been tested and debriefed on several occasions	
1.15 Fire and rescue authorities **must** collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities to deliver intraoperability. (see 1.16 for definition of intraoperability)		SOP's are shared through ORRG. The recent replacement of the Mobilising System Project further enhanced intraoperability. The roll out of JESIP across the region has improved intraoperability Regional collaboration review ongoing. Joint working around ESMCP will ensure future intraoperability	AM Risk & Training
1.17 Fire and rescue authorities **must** collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities, other emergency services, wider Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums to ensure interoperability. (see 1.18 for definition of interoperability)		The LRF Business Plan contains specific objectives for the Telecoms and Interoperability T&F Group. A gap analysis was completed in 2012 and an action plan relating to interoperability developed and completed. Interoperability is tested on a regular basis as part of the Training and Exercising Work Programme. Joint Training delivered through the LRF	AM Risk & Training

		JESIP Programme being delivered regionally and being monitored through LRF	
		Shared Training Centre with Police	
		Shared stations with other blue light responders	
		Co-responding trial ongoing	
Resilience			
1.21 Fire and rescue authorities need to have the necessary capability in place to manage the majority of risks that may face their area, either individually or collectively through collaborative arrangements with other fire and rescue authorities and responders.		Response Strategy – attendance times, appliance disposition, station locations, crewing arrangements, Sec 13 and 16 arrangements, New Dimension Assets (local and regional), Water Rescue Policy, Wildfire Policy, Flexible duty system and recall to duty procedure. The Service operates to the JESIP principles and trains with other emergency responder organisations. LRF arrangements. The Service also has robust internal resilience arrangements to ensure operational cover in the event of business continuity disruptions e.g. industrial action.	AM Ops Delivery
1.25 In order to ensure continued resilience, fire and rescue authorities and the Government need to work in partnership to agree whether and/or how potential gaps in capability may be met.		Resilience arrangements for New Dimension Assets is a capability gap. Since the withdrawal of funding for Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG) there is a capability gap for	AM Operational Support

		shipping incidents off the coast. Whilst outside of the Authorities specific geographic area of responsibility could still impact on the LRF.	
Collective Engagement			
1.26 Fire and rescue authorities **must** engage with the Strategic Resilience Board in order to support discussions and decision making in relation to national resilience.		Strategic Resilience Board is now established and mechanisms exist to feed into it. CDDFRS staff attend a range of resilience capability groups.	AM Risk and Training
Gap Analysis			
1.29 Fire and rescue authorities' risk assessments **must** include an analysis of any gaps between their existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience.		The Service is subject to audit through the NRAT process for its national capability assets. HVP / DIM Recently successfully completed HVP audit	AM Risk and Training
1.30 Fire and rescue authorities are required to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning. To do this effectively, fire and rescue authorities are expected to assess their existing capability and identify any gaps as part of the integrated risk management planning process.		Whilst compliant the IRMP will be strengthened to specifically include a capability gap taking account of all of the operational preparedness, self-assessment and audit processes that exist. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans	AM Risk and Training

The gap analysis needs to be conducted by fire and rescue authorities individually and collectively to obtain an overall picture of their ability to meet the full range of their areas.			
1.31 As part of their analysis, fire and rescue authorities **must** highlight to the Department or the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board any capability gaps that they believe cannot be met even when taking into account mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action.		Strategic Resilience Board is now established and mechanisms exist to feed into it.	AM Risk and Training
Capability Building			
1.33 Fire and rescue authorities **must** work collectively, through Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board, to agree with the Department whether and/or how to address any capability gap, identified through the gap analysis.		Strategic Resilience Board is now established and mechanisms exist to feed into it.	AM Risk and Training
Working in Partnership			

1.38 In order to meet the requirements of this Framework, fire and rescue authorities **must** work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally.	Robust Partnership arrangements are in place with both DCC and DBC and the Service plays a full role in various partnerships to reduce risk e.g. Safe Durham Partnership, Darlington CSP, AAP's and MAIS. The Service maintains a partnership register which is reviewed annually. Expansion of partnership work and support into Health under S&W and EMR. The Service forms part of the Risk Assessment Working Group under the LRF Structure and considers the CRR during the compilation of the IRMP. The Service also is an integral part of the Community Resilience Task and Finish Group under the LRF. Collaborative work with PCVC, Police and Health. Consultation with communities on IRMP. The Service plays an active role in CFOA and the regional structures that underpin it.	AM Ops Delivery

Chapter 2 Accountable to Communities			
Communities Planning their Local Fire and Rescue Service			
2.3 Fire and rescue authorities integrated risk management plans **must**:			
• Be easily accessible and publicly available.		Published on website (https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans), Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel engagement (Safer Stronger Scrutiny Mtg5Jan16)	Head of Corporate Resources
• Reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies, and partners.		IRMP has a separate stakeholder consultation plan IRMP consultation plan IRMP consultation document 1617 Fire Authority Report - IRMP consultation results	Head of Corporate Resources
• Cover at least a three-year timespan and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework.		Compliant https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/service-plans	Head of Corporate Resources
• Reflect up to date risk analyses and the evaluation of service delivery outcomes.		Risk Management Policy and Procedure	AM Risk and Training

Scrutiny Arrangements			
2.4 The fire and rescue authority **must** hold their Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service.		CFA and Committee Structure, Appraisal System, https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/constitution	CFO
2.5 Fire and rescue authorities **must** have arrangements in place to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.		CFA Committee Structure (https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/committees), Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Safer Stronger Scrutiny Mtg5Jan16), transparency data, AAP engagement, Citizens Panel (annual meeting for non-domestic rate payers) , Minutes and actions published on the website (https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/meetings-agendas-and-papers). https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/constitution	Head of Corporate Resources
2.6 Opening up decision making to challenge enhances local governance and accountability. Fire and rescue authorities need to satisfy themselves that the arrangements they put in place provide the level of scrutiny their communities expect.		See above re CFA Committee Structure, Durham Partnership Arrangements, Darlington Partnership Arrangements, Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, transparency data, AAP engagement, Citizens Panel, performance data on the website.	Head of Corporate Resources

Transparent Data			
2.8 Fire and rescue authorities **must** make their communities aware of how they can access comparable data and information on their performance.		Transparency data - https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/transparency. Benchmarking data - the Service website includes links from the front page to relevant performance data which includes: i. Our own high level performance ii. Link to the fire statistics monitor (DCLG) iii. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/performance	Head of Corporate Resources
2.9 Meeting this requirement includes, but is not limited to:			
• Meeting the current code of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency		Service Website provides easy access to transparency Resources data. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/transparency Recent internal audit reported that the Authority operates a publication scheme in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code Internal Audit Report - Fire Ethics	Head of Corporate
• publishing pay policy statements (a duty under sections 38 and 39 of the Localism Act)		Pay Policy Published on Website https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/pay-policy-statement	Head of Corporate Resources

• raising awareness of sources of comparable data and how to access these e.g. linking to other government department websites and data returns to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy		Benchmarking data is available via website linking to the fire statistics monitor (DCLG) https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/performance LG Inform Tool	Head of Corporate Resources
• linking to tools provided by organisations such as the Local Government Group and the Chief Fire Officers' Association;		LG Inform Tool	Head of Corporate Resources
• acting in accordance with the Freedom Of Information Act and publication schemes set by the Information Commissioner		The Service has a FOI Policy and is fully compliant. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/freedom-information-foi FOI Policy , FOI Procedure In addition a recent internal audit on Ethics which included freedom of information requests reported a **substantial** level of assurance in this area. Internal Audit Report - Fire Ethics	Head of Corporate Resources
• publishing any action plans arising from peer reviews and self-assessments;		Op A Self-Assessment, peer review report and completed action plan published on website. https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/operational-assessment	AM Organisational Development
• publishing any other locally held data that fire and rescue authorities feel will aid transparency to their communities.		Equality and Diversity data (Annual Equality Data Report, E&D Strategy, Equal Pay Audit, Our equality objectives etc.) https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion	Head of Corporate Resources

		Information in relation to our fire authority members https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/membership , their declaration of interests https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/register-members-personal-interests and their allowances scheme/allowances paid https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/members-allowances-scheme-and-allowances-paid	

Chapter 3 Assurance

Assurance

3.2 Fire and rescue authorities **must** provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance.		Annual Assurance Statement now published on line https://www.ddfire.gov.uk/annual-governance-statement

Currently the Annual Governance Statement is signed by the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, agreed by Audit and Finance Committee and published on the website. | Head of Corporate Resources |

National Resilience Assurance

3.4 Fire and rescue authorities **must** work collectively, and with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board to provide assurance to Government, that:

• risks are assessed, plans are in place and any gaps between existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience are identified		Strategic Resilience Board is now established and mechanisms exist to feed into it.	AM Risk and Training

• existing specialist national resilience capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient;		Strategic Resilience Board is now established and mechanisms exist to feed into it. National arrangements were put in place during the strike dates.	AM Risk and Training
• Any new capabilities that fire and rescue authorities are commissioned to deliver by government are procured, maintained and managed in the most cost-effective manner that delivers value for money whilst ensuring capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient.		Addressed as and when any new capabilities are commissioned.	AM Risk and Training

Health and Fitness (Addendum Issued December 2014)			
Each Fire and Rescue Authority must:		**Notes/existing capability**	**Lead**
have a process of fitness assessment and development to ensure that operational personnel are enabled to maintain the standards of personal fitness required in order to perform their role safely;		HE/2/42 Fitness assessment and development procedures are in place and are covered in the Service Health and Fitness Procedure HE-2-42. All operational staff are required to pass a fitness test annually. Each station has been supplied with state of the art fitness equipment. Fitness training integrated into the work routine for Wholetime station based staff. Fitech health assessments are provided on a voluntary basis for all staff but for operational staff this is offered as part of the annual fitness assessment.	AM Organisational Development
ensure that no individual will automatically face dismissal if they fall below the standards required and cannot be deployed operationally;		Section 10.2 of HE/2/42 Individuals are allocated a fitness development programme with a timeframe to give them an opportunity to improve their fitness in order to achieve the necessary standard therefore do not automatically face dismissal.	AM Organisational Development

ensure that all operational personnel will be provided with support to maintain their levels of fitness for the duration of their career;		HE/2/42 The Service has state of the art gym facilities and equipment for all personnel to utilise. In addition to this the Health and Fitness Advisor is in place to support individuals not only with regards to fitness however in other relevant areas such as lifestyle, general health and wellbeing and diet and nutrition advice.	AM Organisational Development
consider where operational personnel have fallen below the fitness standards required whether an individual is able to continue on full operational duties or should be stood down, taking into account the advice provided by the authority's occupational health provider. In making this decision, the safety and well-being of the individual will be the key issue;		HE/2/42 The Service follows the guidance provided by FireFit with regards to fitness standards. Individuals are referred to the occupational health provider if any health concerns are identified during the pre-fitness assessment screening procedure and where there may be any health concerns that present themselves throughout the fitness assessment and development process. Consideration is given to removing personnel from operational duties until advice is sought from occupational health. All 'Grey Book' roles within the Service require personnel to be operationally fit to ensure resilience for frontline staff, however CDDFRS does consider redeployment opportunities for firefighters.	AM Organisational Development

commit to providing a minimum of 6 months of development and support to enable individuals who have fallen below the required fitness standards to regain the necessary levels of fitness;	HE/2/42 Section 10

Service Health and Fitness Procedure HE/2/42 Section 10 demonstrates CDDFRS commitment to providing a minimum of 6 months development and support for individuals who have fallen below the required fitness standards to regain the necessary levels of fitness. | AM Organisational Development |
| refer an individual to occupational health where underlying medical reasons are identified that restrict/prevent someone from achieving the necessary fitness and that individual must receive the necessary support to facilitate a return to operational duties; | HE/2/42

Individuals are referred to the occupational health provider if any health concerns are identified during the pre-fitness assessment screening procedure and where there may be any health concerns that present themselves throughout the fitness assessment and development process. Consideration is given to removing personnel from operational duties until advice is sought from occupational health.

Individuals are supported by the Health and fitness Advisor and occupational health where necessary, in addition, physiotherapy and mental health support is available. | AM Organisational Development |
| fully explore opportunities to enable the individual to remain in employment including through reasonable adjustment and redeployment in role where it appears the medical condition does not allow a return to operational duties." | HE/2/42 Section 11

All 'Grey Book' roles within the Service require personnel to be operationally fit to ensure resilience | AM Organisational Development |