

# Annual Governance Statement

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Andy Johnson, Head of Performance and Risk, on 01743 260287.

### 1 Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the process that will be put in place to ensure the Authority's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is ready for inclusion in the Final Accounts for 2007/08.

### 2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### 3 Background

The Fire Authority is required to ensure that financial management is adequate and effective, and that it has a sound system of internal control, which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority is also required to conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, and shall include a statement relating to the outcomes from that review within its published Statement of Accounts. This statement was previously known as the 'Statement on Internal Control' (the SIC). This year the statement will be known as the 'Annual Governance Statement' (AGS). Because of the wide-ranging reviews already incorporated in the Authority's current SIC process, this can be seen as a merely a name change for this Authority. Other Authorities, without such a broad SIC process, will need, however, to ensure they cover all aspects of governance in this year's statement.



As previously, in addition to the statement, the Authority is expected to publish an Improvement Plan, which looks to improve any areas of weakness identified during the review.

This report outlines the timetable of events that will lead to the signing of the AGS at the Authority's Annual Meeting in June.

#### **4 The AGS Process**

This is the fifth year that the Fire Authority has been required to develop a statement relating to its internal control environment in conjunction with its Statement of Accounts. The process can be summed up as follows:

1. The Fire Authority defines its objectives.
2. The risks to achieving those objectives are then identified.
3. The way those risks are controlled is identified.
4. Assurances are obtained about the effectiveness of the key controls.
5. Any weaknesses or gaps in the key controls are evaluated.
6. The action plan is then produced to address any gaps or weaknesses.
7. The Fire Authority can then produce a clear statement on its internal controls for 2007/08.

The process used by the Authority is based upon the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance document and requires officers to sign 'Assurance Statements' for those parts of the system of internal control for which they are responsible. In making these statements, each officer reports on any areas of weakness that have been identified in their processes and procedures, by either internal or external audit over the last twelve months. If these weaknesses have not yet been put right, they will be included in the AGS Improvement Plan for the coming year.

#### **5 The AGS timetable**

The timetable of events for the development of the Authority's AGS for 2007/08 and the resulting Improvement Plan for 2008/09 is given in table on the following page.



<b>When</b>	<b>Action</b>
March/April	Assurance Statements are completed by the responsible officers, in liaison with the Risk Manager.
Beginning of April	All Assurance Statements are collated by the Risk Manager.
End of April	The Risk Management Group meets to discuss the contents of the SIC 2007/08 and improvements required to the current system.
May	The proposed AGS 2007/08 and Improvement Plan 2008/09 are put to the Service's Policy Group for approval.
22 May	The approved AGS 2007/08 and Improvement Plan 2008/09 are brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.
11 June	The approved AGS 2007/08 and Improvement Plan 2008/09 are presented to the Fire Authority for signing.
26 June	The AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09 is presented to the Audit and Performance Management Committee to enable the monitoring of progress to start.

## **6 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **7 Legal Comment**

The AGS is a legal requirement under the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and must be included in the Fire Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts.

## **8 Equality Impact Assessment**

This report has been assessed against the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2). This has shown that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.



## 9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## 10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	*
Financial		Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

