

# Public Document Pack

## **Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Lancashire Combined Fire Authority**

**Monday, 22 April 2024 in Washington Hall, Service Training Centre, Euxton commencing at 10.30 am.**

If you have any queries regarding the agenda papers or require any further information, please initially contact Lynsey Barr on telephone number Preston (01772) 866908 and she will be pleased to assist.

## **Agenda**

### **Part 1 (open to press and public)**

#### **Chairman's Announcement – Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014**

Any persons present at the meeting may photograph, film or record the proceedings, during the public part of the agenda. Any member of the press and public who objects to being photographed, filmed or recorded should let it be known to the Chairman who will then instruct that those persons are not photographed, filmed or recorded.

1. **Chairman's Welcome and Introduction**

Standing item.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

3. **Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests**

Members are asked to consider any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the Agenda.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 18)**

5. **Annual Statement of Assurance (Pages 19 - 40)**

6. **Member Champion Activity Report (Pages 41 - 46)**

7. **Fire Protection Report (Pages 47 - 50)**

8. **Operational Incidents of Interest (Pages 51 - 56)**

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Authority will be held on **Monday 24 June 2024** at 10:00 hours at Washington Hall Training Centre, Euxton.

10. **Urgent Business**

An item of business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the Minutes, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Clerk should be given advance warning of any Member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.

**11. Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Authority is asked to consider whether, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, they consider that the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, indicated under the heading to the item.

**Part 2**

**12. Extension of Appointment of Independent Person (Pages 57 - 58)**

**13. Urgent Business (Part 2)**

An item of business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the Minutes, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Clerk should be given advance warning of any Member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.

## Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

**Monday, 19 February 2024, at 10.30 am in the Washington Hall, Service Training Centre, Euxton.**

### Minutes

<b>Present:</b>	
<b>Councillors</b>	
D O'Toole (Chair)	
J Shedwick (Vice-Chair)	
G Baker	
P Britcliffe	
S Clarke	
M Dad BEM	
N Hennessy	
D Howarth	
J Hugo	
F Jackson	
H Khan	
Z Khan MBE	
J Mein	
S Morris	
M Pattison	
J Rigby	
P Rigby	
M Salter	
S Serridge	
J Singleton	
D Smith	
R Woollam	
B Yates	

<b>Officers</b>
J Johnston, Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Healey, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) J Charters, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Brown, Director of Corporate Services (LFRS) B Warren, Director of People and Development (LFRS) T Powell, Group Manager, Corporate Programme and Intelligence (LFRS) E Sandiford, Head of Human Resources (LFRS) S Collinson, Head of Communications M Nolan, Clerk L Barr, Member Services Officer

<b>In attendance</b>	
K Wilkie, Fire Brigades Union	
59/23	<b>Chairman's Welcome and Introduction</b>
	<p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and announced that as they were considering the 2024/25 Council Tax Precept and Budget, any Member in arrears on their Council Tax could not vote or speak on that item.</p> <p>The Chair invited Members to a viewing of the Service's new Command Unit on the rise of the meeting.</p>
60/23	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>
	Apologies were received from County Councillors Lorraine Beavers and Terry Hurn.
61/23	<b>Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests</b>
	None received.
62/23	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>
	<b>Resolved:</b> - That the Minutes of the CFA held on 18 December 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.
63/23	<b>Minutes of meeting Wednesday 13 December 2023 of Performance Committee</b>
	<b>Resolved:</b> - That the proceedings of the Performance Committee held on 13 December 2023 be noted.
64/23	<b>Pay Policy Statement 2024/25</b>
	<p>The Director of People and Development presented the report. In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 a pay policy statement for 2024/25 was considered by Members.</p> <p>The pay policy published data on senior salaries and the structure of the workforce and it demonstrated the principles of transparency.</p> <p>The pay policy statement set out the Authority's policies for the financial year relating to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The remuneration of its chief officers;</li> <li>- The remuneration of its lowest paid employees;</li> <li>- The relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and that of other employees who were not chief officers.</li> </ul>

	<p>The statement included: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer;</li> <li>- Remuneration range for chief officers on recruitment;</li> <li>- Methodology for increases and additions to remuneration for each chief officer;</li> <li>- The use of performance-related pay for chief officers;</li> <li>- The use of bonuses for chief officers;</li> <li>- The approach to the payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office under, or be employed by, the authority, and</li> <li>- The publication of and access to information relating to the remuneration of chief officers.</li> </ul> <p>It also included the Authority's policies for the financial year relating to other terms and conditions applying to its chief officers.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> - That the Pay Policy Statement be approved.</p>
65/23	<p><b>Budget Report 2024/25</b></p>
	<p>The Director of Corporate Services / Treasurer advised that the 4 appendices in the Budget Report were linked, with changes in one impacting on the others: A) the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out the financial outlook and estimated borrowing over the next five years, B) the Capital Strategy set out major expenditure for investment for investment within the Service (including the ten-year capital programme), C) the Reserves Strategy set out savings and how they were planned to be used over the next 5 years, and D) the Treasury Management Strategy set out investment, borrowing, repayment and how money was set aside to repay borrowing.</p> <p>The Director of Corporate Services / Treasurer presented the report that set out the Council Tax Precept and Budget for 2024/25 along with the associated appended documents.</p> <p>The Authority was required to set a balanced budget and council tax precept for the next financial year by 1 March 2024. The Authority had to ensure it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered the link between capital investment decisions and the revenue implications.</li> <li>• Considered the Treasury Management implications of revenue and capital decisions.</li> <li>• Provided value for money.</li> <li>• Reflected best practice.</li> </ul> <p>The Budget and appended documents in the report formed the Service's financial strategies which were part of our strategic planning activity and governance framework which set out the direction of the Service and how it would achieve the aim of making Lancashire safer. These financial strategies were one of six core strategies that set out how Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS), would provide services in line with the following priorities in the five-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP):</p>

- Valuing our people.
- Preventing fires.
- Protecting people and property.
- Responding to fire and other emergencies.
- Delivering value for money.

### **Financial Context**

The economy in 2024 was expected to struggle as inflation was forecast to remain above the government set target of 2% until the end of 2025. According to the Bank of England, increased borrowing costs and weak Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth resulted in a 50-50 chance of recession in 2024.

The public sector continued to face substantial challenges, among them rising demands and reducing financial resilience. Nationally, Fire and Rescue Services continued to face inflationary pressures because of significant increases in running costs and demand pressures, such as responding to climate change emergencies.

### **Funding**

The funding for the fire sector had changed in the last 15 years. The 2008 banking crisis was followed by a period of austerity in the sector. During this period, government grants for the fire sector reduced; in cash terms the main grant, the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), for Lancashire reduced from £19m (35% of the funding) to £10m (14% of the funding).

Changes to the funding methodology during this period also meant that changes in the economy, which impacted on benefit claimant numbers or business rates, now impacted on funding levels. Council Tax and Business Rates represented 85% of the Service's funding and these changes had presented an additional risk.

Funding for capital schemes had also changed over this period with the sector now almost exclusively funding new capital schemes from local sources of funding such as revenue contributions, reserves, capital receipts and borrowing (this was repaid from revenue budgets).

On 5 February 2024, the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), released the final local government finance settlement for 2024/25. It was for one year only and based on the Spending Review 2021 (SR21) funding levels, updated for the 2023 Autumn Statement announcements. The main headlines for the 2024/25 budget were:

- The council tax referendum limit would be 2.99% The fire sector had lobbied for a £5 increase (equivalent to 6.1% for the Authority) that was consistent with 2023/24 and reflected current inflationary and demand pressures.
- The Fire Services Pension Grant of £3.3m had been included in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from 2024/25, it was previously included in the Service net budget. This had no overall impact, but it increased the Service's net budget and sources of income by £3.3m.
- The September CPI figure of 6.7% had been applied to increase business

- rates grants funding (£12.1m) and the Revenue Support Grant (£13.5m).
- The Services Grant reduced from £0.6m in 2023/24 to £0.1m in 2024/25.
- One year Funding Guarantee Grant received of £0.9m. The Service did not receive this in 2023/24 but it ensured that each authority's funding overall increased by at least 4%.

It was noted that it was disappointing not to have received the £5 council tax referendum limit lobbied for, alongside a reduced Services Grant of £0.5m; a £5 increase would have provided an additional £1.2m in 2024/25.

Long term planning was essential and whilst a one-year settlement was expected, as there would be a general election before 2025, the Service would continue to lobby for a longer-term planning horizon. However, the timing of the election could impact on whether there was time for a longer-term settlement from 2025/26. Together with the uncertainty on the timing and potential impact of policy changes that could affect the overall funding level, such as the Fair Funding Review and review of Business Rates Retention, there was uncertainty around future funding assumptions.

Council Tax income was based on the precept approved by the Authority and the estimated taxbase; this was the number of Band D equivalent properties in the area. Factors that influenced the taxbase included changes to property numbers, collection rates in each local authority, local authority discounts and changes in benefit claimants. The estimated taxbase for 2024/25 increased by 1.38% compared with 1.82% in 2023/24.

At the end of each year, an adjustment was made to the Council Tax to reflect the previous year's actual council tax collection; this could lead to a surplus or deficit. The total surplus for 2024/25 on the Council Tax and Business rates collection funds was £0.1m and £0.1m respectively; this was £0.2m less in total than in 2023/24.

### **Proposed Revenue Budget 2024/25**

The 2024/25 budget proposals were based on the latest funding assumption set out in the report. A maximum increase in the council tax precept allowed of 2.99% at D was assumed, which provided additional funding of £1.1m compared to 2023/24 which resulted in an overall net revenue budget of £75.2m. Based on the information and assumption, the following table set out the proposed 2024/25 budget:

#### **Budget Proposals 2024/25**

		<b>£'m</b>
<b>Budget</b>	Base Budget*	71.6
	Inflation	2.5
	Commitments	1.3
	Resourcing – permanent	0.7
	One-off items	0.5
	Contribution to Capital	(1.5)
	<b>Proposed Budget Requirement</b>	<b>75.2</b>

Funding	Council Tax	(39.4)
	Business Rates	(21.3)
	Revenue Support Grant	(13.5)
	Other Grants	(1.0)
	<b>Total Funding (Net Budget Requirement)</b>	<b>(75.2)</b>

Precept (Council Tax – Band D)

**£84.73**

Increase from 2023/24 Band D of £82.27

**£2.46**

\* Note: the base budget had been adjusted to reflect the transfer of the Pensions Grant to Revenue Support Grant.

The table demonstrated that the proposal delivered a balanced budget as required by law. If the precept was reduced, additional savings would be required, for example, a reduction of 1% would reduce funding by £0.4m.

The main elements that made up the Proposed Budget Requirement for 2024/25 were set out within the MTFS (Appendix A):

- Inflation – An allowance of 3% for pay awards in 2024/25 had been included with 2% thereafter. Specific increases in price inflation for known areas had been assumed. Other non-pay budgets had increased by the latest Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) CPI figures; 3% in 2024/25 and 2% thereafter. If pay awards were higher than assumed, they would need to be met from reserves or in year savings in 2024/25 with additional savings made in future years. Each 1% increase resulted in an additional £0.5m and £0.1m for Grey book and Green book staff, respectively.
- Commitments – These reflected the impact of previous decisions that had a financial consequence in 2024/25 or were due to policy, legal or regulatory changes. The commitments included:
  - The Authority reaffirmed their commitment to North West Fire Control in December 2023 which included an increased contribution to their costs due to changes in activity levels which resulted in an increase of £0.2m.
  - The reduction in interest rates had resulted in a loss of investment income of £0.4m in 2024/25.
  - Vacancy levels across the organisation were forecast to be lower in 2024/25 along with more staff expected to reach Competency which resulted in an increase establishment cost of £0.4m in 2024/25.
  - The Emergency Cover Review (ECR) approved by the Authority in 2022 had resulted in an overall increase of 8 Wholetime Firefighters across the Service. In 2024/25, there was a resourcing commitment of £0.2m as previously agreed, to fund these posts.
- Resourcing – permanent – Several growth proposals were included in the budget for 2024/25 which included:
  - As reported in the budget monitoring reports to the Resources Committee, there was a need to rebase the apprenticeship levy income budget by £0.3m to reflect the expected income profile because more new recruits had prior learning which did not attract a levy.
  - Additional costs of £0.4m were necessary to meet the Service’s digital ambitions to enable developments that improved our resilience,



productivity, and efficiency.

- One off items included:
  - Opportunities for four non-operational apprentices for two years had been identified that resulted in a one off item of £0.1m.
  - Additional short term funding of £0.4m was provided to meet resourcing pressures in support services.
- Contribution to Capital – A reduction in the Contribution to Capital of £1.5m was proposed which resulted in a revenue contribution of £2.5m in 2024/25; this was consistent with the average contribution made over the previous 10 years.

### Council Tax Precept

Council Tax funding was based on the estimated taxbase (band D equivalents) provided by each local authority. Compared to 2023/24. The overall taxbase had increased by 1.38% (6,319 properties), last year the increase was 1.82%. The table showed the number of Band D equivalents and proposed precept for each local authority based on the precept increase of 2.99%

Table 3 – Proposed Precepts 2024/25

	Number of Band D Equivalents	Precept on Collection Fund
Burnley Borough Council	23,844	2,020,299
Chorley Borough Council	38,641	3,274,030
Fylde Borough Council	32,208	2,728,980
Hyndburn Borough Council	22,095	1,872,107
Lancaster City Council	42,583	3,608,052
Pendle Borough Council	24,957	2,114,586
Preston City Council	42,650	3,613,721
Ribble Valley Borough Council	25,321	2,145,445
Rosendale Borough Council	20,891	1,770,092
South Ribble Borough Council	37,758	3,199,206
West Lancashire District Council	38,357	3,249,946
Wyre Borough Council	39,138	3,316,198
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	37,070	3,140,915
Blackpool Council	38,756	3,283,791
<b>Total</b>	<b>464,268</b>	<b>39,337,368</b>

Band	Proposed 2024/25 £	Actual 2023/24 £	Change per year £	Change per week £p
A	56.49	54.85	1.64	0.03
B	65.90	63.99	1.91	0.04
C	75.32	73.13	2.19	0.04
D	84.73	82.27	2.46	0.05

E	103.56	100.55	3.01	0.06
F	122.39	118.83	3.56	0.07
G	141.22	137.12	4.10	0.08
H	169.46	164.54	4.92	0.09

The increase for a Band D property per year was £2.46; which was 5 pence per week.

It was noted that LFRS was in the bottom third of Fire and Rescue Services in terms of the value of its precept which represented value for money for tax payers.

### Medium Term Financial Strategy

The purpose of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was to provide the Authority, staff, the public and other stakeholders with information on the financial outlook and the estimated available funding over the next five years. It took into account future estimates on funding and potential high-level revenue and capital expenditure over the period.

#### Revenue MTFS

	24/25 £m	25/26 £m	26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m
Base Budget	71.6	75.2	76.5	78.7	81.0
Inflation	2.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
Commitments	1.3	(0.0)	0.5	0.1	(0.3)
Resourcing – permanent	0.7	0.6	1.4	0.4	0.5
One-off items	0.5	(0.3)	0.2	(0.3)	0.1
Savings	(1.5)	(0.5)	(1.5)	0.5	0.5
<b>Net Budget</b>	<b>75.2</b>	<b>76.5</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>81.0</b>	<b>83.5</b>
Council Tax	(39.4)	(40.8)	(42.4)	(44.0)	(45.7)
Business Rates	(21.3)	(21.7)	(22.1)	(22.6)	(23.0)
Revenue Support Grant	(13.5)	(13.9)	(14.1)	(14.4)	(14.7)
Other Grants	(1.0)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.1)
<b>Funding</b>	<b>(75.2)</b>	<b>(76.5)</b>	<b>(78.7)</b>	<b>(81.0)</b>	<b>(83.5)</b>

Note that Council Tax increases were assumed at 2.99% per annum.

Some of the key financial assumptions and estimates were:

- Inflation – The pay awards for 2024/25 were estimated at 3% then 2% thereafter. Non-pay budgets had increased by the latest Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) CPI figures; 3% in 2024/25 and 2% thereafter.
- Permanent Resourcing – These included:
  - An allowance was made in future years for replacement Personal Protective Equipment based on recommended lifespan.

- A reduction was forecast at the next valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme surplus which resulted in a pressure in 2026/27 of £0.5m.
- Additional borrowing was required to meet the planned capital programme from 2025/26. This resulted in an overall increase in borrowing costs (repayment and interest) from 2025/26 of £0.3m, that would rise to £2.1m by 2028/29.
- Identified savings – These included:
  - The revenue contribution in the proposed capital programme each year from 2024/25 was £2.5m, £2m, £3m, £3m then £4m from 2028/29. The resulting change from the 2023/24 MTF5 was (£1.5m), (£0.5m), £1m, £0m then £1m.
  - From 2026/27, efficiencies of £2.5m were required to be delivered and were included in the MTF5.
- Funding – Detailed assumptions were included in the MTF5, in broad terms the funding increased between 2% and 3%.

The key variables within the budget were inflation assumptions, in particular, pay awards, and funding levels. The MTF5 considered a range of risks and scenarios that impacted on the MTF5.

### Capital Strategy

In addition to the revenue budgets, a programme of capital investment was proposed from 2024/25, this was set out in detail in the Capital Strategy. The purpose of the Strategy was to provide the Authority, staff, the public, and other stakeholders with information on the Capital plans. Capital plans needed to be affordable, prudent, and sustainable, and treasury management decisions taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved.

### Capital Programme and Funding

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Vehicles	3.2	1.6	1.6	1.6	2.1
Operational Equipment	1.3	1.0	0.9	0.4	0.6
Buildings	3.5	15.4	15.4	7.9	10.8
ICT	2.2	2.3	0.6	0.2	0.5
	<b>10.2</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>13.9</b>
<b>Funding</b>					
Revenue Contributions	2.5	2.0	3.0	3.5	4.0
Capital Reserve	7.7	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Capital Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0
Grants	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Borrowing	0.0	6.2	15.5	1.5	9.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>13.9</b>

The current 2023/24 five-year capital programme approved by the Authority in February 2023 included three major projects; Headquarters relocation (£15m), Training Centre Props (£5m) and Preston replacement station (£10m). Together with the Member Capital Project Working Group, officers had been reviewing the scope of the projects and updating costings to reflect changes in prices and timings for these three major capital projects. The key changes considered by the working group was reflected by in the 2024/25 capital programme proposed which included:

- Headquarters relocation – The business case for the relocation of Headquarters recommended the value for money option of building a new Headquarters at the Training Centre. Alongside this, the working group also considered the future of Lancaster House at the Training Centre given the age and maintenance liabilities. The updated project was for a combined Headquarters and Training Facility at the Training Centre that replaced the current Headquarters at Fulwood and office / teaching space in Lancaster House. This would provide modern office and training facilities that met current environmental and design requirements and would also ensure that staff had the best facilities to support health and wellbeing by providing a safe and positive work environment. The costings were updated during the year to reflect the latest inflation forecast and an estimate of £18m was included in the programme between 2024/25 and 2026/27.
  - The relocation of Headquarters necessitated the need to invest in a new station to replace Fulwood either on the existing site or at an alternative location. This formed part of the Preston review but was included in the programme at an estimate of £7m in 2027/28 that was part funded by a capital receipt from the sale of the land at the Fulwood site.
- Training Centre Props – A modern and progressive service required high quality facilities to help in the initial training and ongoing maintenance of competency requirements across a broad spectrum of operational activities. The existing facilities were reviewed alongside more modern facilities in the region. The review identified that greater investment was required to meet the Services requirements and an estimate of £10m was included in the programme between 2024/25 and 2026/27.
- Preston replacement station – A review of emergency cover in Preston had commenced. The aim of the review was to create a new, modern station either in the same place or another location that served both staff and the local community well. To date, 25 sites had been considered and further work was ongoing, however many of the sites had been discounted due to unavailability. The budget remained at £10m and was programmed for the final year of the five-year programme, nonetheless, work was required in the short term on the current station, particularly on the welfare facilities and training area, and this had been included in the capital programme. The budget for the replacement remained at £10m and was programmed for 2028/29.

Whilst the projects had been sequenced, the Authority needed to remain flexible as the years that the projects were delivered could change due to opportunities of land and other matters, details of which would be discussed with the Working Group and approvals sought as required.

In the past, general capital grant funding had been received each year from the

Government which helped to fund annual replacement of vehicles, IT and operational equipment and capital maintenance of buildings. This general grant funding ended in 2014/15. As a result, all capital investment since then had been funded from the Authority's own resources unless specific funding was available. No further government capital grant funding was anticipated going forward. The level of reserves currently held would not be sufficient to fund the proposed capital works over the medium term and borrowing would therefore be required going forward to meet the capital programme. Borrowing incurred on-going costs of interest payments and the funding that was set aside to repay the loan in due course.

The Authority had not utilised borrowing to fund its capital programme and thus had one of the lowest levels of borrowing of all fire services in the country. However, the necessary investment in the estate could not be delivered without borrowing.

To fund the Capital Programme, in addition to utilising the Capital Reserve and revenue contributions, £31m of additional borrowing was required. The long-term revenue costs of this borrowing, based on the latest borrowing forecasts, was approximately £2.5m per annum which was included in the MTFs, and from 2026/27 would need to be met from efficiencies within the revenue budget.

Following the capital investment, the Authority's reserves and borrowing levels would be commensurate with similar sized fire services based on current levels across services.

### **Reserves Strategy**

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 placed a requirement on the Section 151 Officer to formally report on the adequacy of the reserves. The Director of Corporate Services assessed this in the context of the strategic operational, and financial risks and opportunities facing the Authority.

While holding reserves was a recognised and recommended financial management tool, the levels of such reserves had to remain prudent, appropriate to the level of risk and opportunity and not excessive. This was set out within the Reserves Strategy which included details of the reserves held and their proposed usage over the next 5 years.

It was good practice to review reserves on a regular basis and during the year, a review of all reserves had been undertaken which had resulted in a number of changes.

The General Reserve exists to cover unforeseen risks and expenditure that could be incurred outside of planned budgets. The minimum level of General Reserve advised by the Treasurer for the 2023/24 budget was £3.75m. A generally accepted level was one that was equivalent to 5% of the net revenue budget but that must be considered alongside specific Authority risks; the previously advised level of £3.75m was about 5%. Considering the risks facing the Authority, the Treasurer recommended maintaining this minimum level for 2024/25. Following the review of reserves and forecast 2023/24 outturn, the level of the General Reserve at 1 April 2024 was estimated at £4.9m, this was above the minimum level of

General Reserve recommended.

### **Treasury Management**

Treasury Management covered the cashflow, investment and borrowing activities together with the impacts of budgetary decisions on such activities. The Treasury Management Strategy comprised of four main elements:

- Capital Expenditure Plans and Prudential Indicators.
- Borrowing Strategy and Prudential Limits.
- Annual Investment Strategy.
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.

The Strategy reflected the revenue and capital estimates contained in the MTFS and Capital Strategy. Treasury Management in the public sector was heavily regulated and transparency with the Authority on its activities was paramount. The Resource Committee oversaw Treasury activities, but it was a legal requirement that the Authority approved the Strategy.

### **Statement of Robustness of Estimates**

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 placed a requirement on the “Chief Finance Officer” of an Authority to report on the robustness of the estimates used in preparing the budget. There was then a requirement for the Authority to have regard to the report of the Chief Finance Officer when making decisions on its budget. At Lancashire Fire Authority, the Chief Finance Officer was the Director of Corporate Services.

The statutory requirement was reinforced by the Prudential Code, which required authorities to have regard to affordability when considering recommendations about future capital programmes.

The Authority had a medium term planning process that took account of service demands and the financial scenario covering a 5-year period to 2029. The aim of the Medium Term Financial Strategy was to provide a realistic and sustainable plan that reflected the Authority’s priorities and anticipated the future impact of current decisions. Alongside this, future capital programmes were planned and took into account forecast Government funding, borrowing limits and council tax.

For 2024/25, full consideration of these issues had led to:

- Policy and expenditure proposals that reflected the Local Government Finance.
- Settlement together with the ongoing revenue impact of new capital projects, whilst recognising the outstanding issues and uncertainties.
- A proposed capital financing budget based on the 2024/25 capital programme.

In assessing the robustness of the 2024/25 proposals and the estimates on which they are based, the Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) had been assured that:

- The budget proposals were based on the advice of service managers (supported by finance staff) or were based upon or supported by information that the DoCS considered reasonable to accept.
- The budget proposals had been fully reviewed and endorsed by the executive Board and the implications on performance, if any, had been identified and assessed.
- The proposed budget provided for all known future developments either within the revenue budget itself or as part of the Reserves Strategy.

When using estimates in preparing the budget, every effort was taken to ensure that they took into account the most up-to-date data. There was, however, always the potential for the actual impact to vary from the estimates used in setting the budget, particularly as a result of:

- Variations in the rate of price inflation, pay awards and pension increases;
- Service financial performance (i.e. variances on budgets);
- Ability to deliver policy proposals and/or achieve projected savings; and
- Unforeseen additional operational demands and activities.

The potential for unanticipated events to occur that could impact on the budget reinforced the importance of prudent financial management which included:

- The promotion of a robust approach to financial management that required budget holders to monitor expenditure against budget and to take early action in reporting and responding to projected variances;
- Regular reporting of the projected budgetary outturn supplemented by exception reports to prompt remedial action if necessary; and
- The maintenance is an appropriate and proportionate contingency, as part of the General Reserve, to cushion the impact of unexpected events and emergencies.

Based on the advice and assurances set out above, and the process by which the budget had been constructed, the DoCS was satisfied that the estimates were robust and could be relied upon for approval as part of the proposed budget.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Singleton regarding council tax precept collection by district councils and how the proposed precept may not be reflective of the actual amount collected, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that each district council provided an estimate of the level of council tax arrears expected over the coming year which was built into the council tax base. However, when the council tax base was set, district councils had a statutory responsibility to pay the amounts that had been agreed to be met and the Service remained in contact with Section 151 Officers concerning arrears. County Councillor Mein commented that she did not agree with County Councillor Singleton's comments as they did not reflect the correction position and should not be recorded in detail.

County Councillor Hennessy thanked the Director of Corporate Services and the Finance Team for the budget and commented that she understood that borrowing

was essential for investment.

County Councillor Mein asked, and it was confirmed by the Director of Corporate Services that the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant from £19m to £10m had occurred since 2010.

County Councillor Mein commented that she was disappointed that the Service had not received the council tax precept of £5, particularly considering that LFRS was in the lowest quartile in terms of value for its precept, and yet were one of the highest performing Fire Services. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that no Fire and Rescue Service had been allowed the £5 precept. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service, including the Chair of the Authority, had lobbied significantly for the £5 precept, and had also followed this up with a letter of disappointment. It was hoped that this would be acknowledged by the government when setting council tax referendum limits in future.

County Councillor Morris asked if the larger increases in pension costs was directly linked to the significant changes to retirement profiles, as listed in the MTFs Risks and Scenarios. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the risks listed were based on assumptions in relation to recruitment, retention, and retirement levels within the Service. The Director of People and Development added that the increases in pension costs were due to the McCloud remedy, specifically changes to the pension scheme which would increase the pension entitlement upon retirement. Some staff had delayed retirement while awaiting the remedy which, therefore, could lead to more people retiring in the upcoming year.

In response to a question from County Councillor Singleton, the Chief Fire Officer informed that TOR stood for Training and Operational Review which effectively, was the Training Centre.

The proposals were **MOVED** by County Councillor D O'Toole and **SECONDED** by County Councillor Hennessy. The Authority voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations by a named vote.

The motion was therefore **CARRIED** and it was:

**Resolved:** - That the Authority: -

- Agreed the 2024/25 budget which included the Net Budget Requirement of £75.2m (as set out in Table 2 paragraph 13 on page 48 of the agenda pack), which took account of adjustments set out and detailed in Appendix A.
- Agreed the proposed Council Tax increase of £2.99% and the setting of a Band D Council tax precept of £84.73 for 2024/25.
- Agreed the levels of Council Tax precept set out in Table 3, paragraph 16 on page 49 of the agenda pack.
- Approved the capital programme and associated funding for 2024/25 set out in table 5, paragraph 21 on page 51 of the agenda pack;
- Approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Appendix A;
- Approved the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix B;
- Approved the Reserves Strategy set out in Appendix C;
- Approved the Treasury Management Strategy in Appendix D which included



	<p>the Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision as set out in the Appendix; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted the Statement of Robustness of Estimates set out in paragraph 34 on page 54 of the agenda pack.</li> </ul>
66/23	<p><b>Member Champion Activity Report</b></p>
	<p>The concept of Member Champions was introduced in December 2007. A review of the areas of focus for Member Champions was considered at the Authority meeting held in June 2017 where new areas of responsibility were agreed. The current Member Champions and their areas of responsibility were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Safety – Councillor Jean Rigby;</li> <li>• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Zamir Khan;</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing – County Councillor John Singleton;</li> <li>• Road Safety – County Councillor Ron Woollam.</li> </ul> <p>Reports relating to the activity of the Member Champions were provided on a regular basis to the Authority. This report related to activity for the period up to February 2024. During this period all had undertaken their respective role in accordance with the defined terms of reference.</p> <p>County Councillor Singleton commented that volunteers were sought for the second workshop of 'Climate Fresh' to be held on 22 March 2024. A quiz would be held over Easter in SHQ canteen which he encouraged everyone to attend.</p> <p>Councillors thanked staff within the Service for their work to help them within their respective roles.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> - That the Authority noted the report and acknowledged the work of the respective Champions.</p>
67/23	<p><b>Fire Protection Reports</b></p>
	<p>The report summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. There were currently four cases in the judicial system for offences with one set for trial in July 2024, one due for sentencing in January 2024, however, it had been adjourned awaiting a new date, and two were set for plea hearings in February 2024.</p> <p>Protection teams continued to investigate and build files in relation to further cases where offences were believed to have been committed, which involved a number of types of premises as outlined in the report. It was highlighted that LFRS Protection Department was also supporting a joint enforcement case with a local authority, Health &amp; Safety Executive and Lancashire Constabulary regarding a complex converted mill.</p> <p>Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support was also provided, detailing how the Service</p>

was adapting delivery whilst developing its workforce, to ensure that it kept pace with the changes and improved public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

Members noted during the 23/24 performance year to end December 2023, there had been 2,517 business fire safety checks delivered. Around 349 had led to unsatisfactory outcomes and were triaged by Fire Protection teams during the period with both informal and formal enforcement taken.

LFRS continued to embed legislative changes which came into force from 1 October 2023 amendments of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which had been introduced under Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022. These amendments required that all responsible persons must record the fire risk assessment in full (including the findings) along with the fire safety arrangements for premises in all circumstances.

In October 2023, the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR), a new regulatory body within the Health and Safety Executive, came into effect. The focus of the regulator was high-risk residential buildings, which were:

- at least 7 floors or at least 18 metres in height.
- at least 2 residential units.
- care homes and hospitals during their design and construction phase.

As a statutory partner of the new BSR, LFRS had appointed a dedicated BSR Fire Safety Officer who would work as part of a north-west regional BSR team, comprising a Regional BSR Manager, 2 Fire Safety Engineers and 7 Fire Safety Inspecting Officers.

Members also noted arson risk reduction included one case with one defendant, who was also the occupier, following a guilty plea to 'arson with reckless' was sentenced to 32 months imprisonment.

**Resolved** - that the Authority noted the report.

68/23

**Operational Incidents of Interest**

The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As the operational period had been very busy, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. As a result, some incidents that Members had been made aware of locally, may not have formed part of the report. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:

- Waste fire within former power station in Lancaster.
- Fatal road traffic collision in Down Holland.
- Person rescued from Blackpool building fire.
- Explosion involving domestic properties in Blackburn.
- Road traffic collision with car on fire in Lytham.
- Male trapped under wagon in Altham.
- Firefighters rescue casualties from Blackpool domestic building fire.

	<p>County Councillor Pattison thanked the staff within the Service for their work dealing with the incident at the Supaskips site in Lancaster.</p> <p>County Councillor Singleton thanked the staff for their attendance at the incident in St Annes involving a McClaren supercar that had crashed into two houses.</p> <p>Councillor Hugo expressed appreciation for the Services work in dealing with the incident in Blackpool which could have been significantly worse.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> that the Authority noted the report.</p>
69/23	<b>Member Complaints</b>
	<p>The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there had been no complaints since the last meeting.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> - That the current position be noted.</p>
70/23	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>
	<p>The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Monday 22 April 2024 at 10:30am at the Training Centre, Euxton.</p>

**M Nolan**  
**Clerk to CFA**

**LFRS HQ**  
**Fulwood**

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## Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 22 April 2024

### Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-2023

(Appendix 1 refers)

Contact for further information – Justin Johnston – Chief Fire Officer  
Tel: 01772 866800

#### **Executive Summary**

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) sets out the Government's high-level expectations, priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in England. Included within the framework is the requirement that all FRAs must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.

The attached Annual Statement of Assurance (Appendix 1) aims to provide the required accountability and transparency to our communities and the Government that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) continues to deliver efficient, effective, value for money services.

This statement sits alongside our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, the Annual Service Plan and Annual Service Report. It details what measures are in place to assure that the Combined Fire Authority's performance is efficient, economic, and effective and provides further evidence that LFRS continues to deliver under the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and our own Risk Management Plan.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

The Authority is asked to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-2023 as presented and approve the signing of this by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer.

#### **Information**

The attached Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-2023 provides assurance in three core areas:

- Financial Assurance
- Assurance on Governance
- Operational Assurance

*"The statement sets out how we demonstrate assurance in these areas, culminating in the following declaration: -*

*The Chair of Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance and*

*operational assurance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework.”*

**Business risk**

None arising from this report.

**Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

None arising from this report.

**Equality and Diversity Implications**

None arising from this report.

**Data Protection (GDPR)**

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? No

**HR implications**

None arising from this report.

**Financial implications**

None arising from this report.

**Legal implications**

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) sets out a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish Statements of Assurance annually. The Statement of Assurance will be used as a source of information on which to base the Secretary of State’s biennial report under section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

**List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Insert Exemption Clause



# **Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23**

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## **Introduction**

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) provides overall strategic direction to English Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA). It sets out the Government's priorities and objectives and places a requirement on all FRAs to provide assurance to their communities and to Government on financial, governance and operational matters.

This Statement of Assurance aims to provide the necessary accountability and transparency to the people of Lancashire and evidence that their Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver under the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and our own Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

This statement sits alongside our CRMP, Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Service Plan and Annual Service Report. It details what measures are in place to assure that the Combined Fire Authority's performance is efficient, economic, and effective.

## **The County of Lancashire**

Lancashire comprises of 14 districts, 12 of which are within the Lancashire County Council area (Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire, and Wyre) and 2 unitary authorities of Blackpool and Blackburn-with-Darwen. The area is home to a resident population of circa 1.53 million people (Census 2021) and is one of the most populated and urbanised shire counties within Great Britain, with a legacy of historical, industrial heritage.

Lancashire covers just over 3,000 square kilometres including 123 kilometres of coastline stretching from Morecambe Bay in the north of the county, down to the sands of West Lancashire in the south. The County has an extensive motorway network, port facilities, nuclear installations and airports and is home to a diverse demographic, with just over 20% of our population being over retirement age and 10% representing Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

The County is bordered by Cumbria to the north and North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside moving from east to south. The

major conurbations are Lancaster, Preston, Burnley, Blackburn, Accrington, Chorley, and the seasonal town of Blackpool which receives around 18 million visitors per year.

## **Governance**

### **Lancashire Combined Fire Authority**

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (CFA) is made up of 25 elected councillors drawn from Lancashire County Council (19) and the unitary authorities of Blackburn-with-Darwen (3) and Blackpool (3). The CFA is responsible under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for providing a Fire and Rescue Service in Lancashire. This involves the provision, training and equipping of our staff to undertake firefighting operations, fire safety work, rescue of persons from road traffic collisions and preparing for our response to other emergency situations. The CFA is the body legally responsible for enforcing the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and is a designated Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The CFA ensures that the work of the Fire and Rescue Service is efficient, effective and provides value for money. To achieve this, they operate under a framework of five full meetings each year which are supplemented by a number of smaller committees focusing upon Planning, Performance, Resources, Audit and Appeals.

Further information on the afore-mentioned committees is accessible via our website at <https://cfa.lancsfirerescue.org.uk/>

### **Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS)**

LFRS is the service provider on behalf of the CFA. We currently operate from 39 locations (with 58 front-line fire engines and a fleet of specialist vehicles), a specialist Urban Search and Rescue unit, Service Headquarters in Fulwood and our Service Training Centre in Euxton, Chorley. LFRS staff deliver an extensive range of prevention, protection, and emergency response services throughout Lancashire.

To deliver these services, we employ circa 900 operational staff in a wide variety of roles using a variety of shift systems; Whole-time, On-Call, Flexible Day Crewed, Day Crewing Plus and Day Duty.

Our Mobilising and Control Centre moved to North West Fire Control (NWFC), Warrington in 2014. We work collaboratively with Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Services.



Figure 1 - Service Delivery Areas and Fire Station locations

## Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is a public facing document covering the period 2022-27. This plan is in place to provide the opportunity for LFRS to demonstrate how, we as an organisation, identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and challenges that could affect our communities over the 5-year period and how we plan to mitigate such risks or reduce their potential impact.

Key to the successful identification and management of risk is our ability to maintain a clear and current understanding of the present and future threats to Lancashire's communities. Risk in Lancashire remains dynamic, constantly changing and differs between districts, which requires varying preventative activities. As a result, no single activity to reduce risk is adequate in all circumstances and a mix of prevention, protection and response activities delivered by a range of organisations is needed to reduce the likelihood of the risk event occurring or to lessen its consequences. This depth of understanding underpins everything we do, driving our governance and planning arrangements; our findings are published within the [Strategic Assessment of Risk](#).

## **Planning and Performance**

To meet the requirements of the CRMP, the Service reviews its priorities and targets annually, this supports continual improvement and provides the opportunity to ensure that we undertake activities dependent on the requirements of our environment. Our corporate planning process has been developed to provide a rigorous yet flexible process that allows the Service to assess and respond to opportunities and threats as and when they emerge. Whilst the CRMP is in place to set out the strategic direction of the Service in the medium term, the Service also has in place a forward-looking [Annual Service Plan](#) which clearly sets out what we will deliver over the coming 12 months, this is complemented by the [Annual Service Report](#) which reflects our achievement against those objectives at the year end.

In addition to this on a quarterly basis, we produce a performance management report known as '[Measuring Progress](#)'. The content of this report is considered at Senior Management Team meetings and by the Performance Committee of the CFA. LFRS is open and transparent and ensures performance information is routinely made available on its website for any stakeholders, including communities, to scrutinise.

## **Consultation**

External and internal consultation is an essential part of the development of the CRMP and subsequent reviews, and as such we have a clearly defined [Consultation Strategy](#). We use a variety of methods for engaging with community

members and for every consultation exercise completed, a summary report is provided to the relevant committee of the CFA. This process ensures that key stakeholders are consulted, involved, and informed of the proposals to ensure that their input is considered within the final plans.

## **HMICFRS Inspection**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) assessment examines the service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it looks after its people. It is designed to give the public information about how their local fire and rescue service is performing in several important areas, in a way that is comparable with other services across England.

LFRS was in the first tranche of fire and rescue services to be inspected by HMICFRS in 2018. LFRS was rated as 'outstanding' for promoting its values and culture. In all other areas, the Service was rated as 'good' with no areas that 'require improvement' in any of the 11 categories that were assessed.

The 2018 inspection was followed by another in 2020, which was based around LFRS's response to the COVID pandemic. The report concluded that the service worked closely with the Lancashire Resilience Forum to help keep people in Lancashire safer from COVID-19 whilst ensuring that the service maintained its emergency response service.

Since 2018 LFRS has worked hard to reinforce those areas it was found to be good in and in the most recent inspection, carried out in 2021/2022, LFRS was again rated 'outstanding' for culture and values, and rated as 'good' in the other 10 categories with no areas that 'require improvement.' The results mirror those of the service's first full inspection in 2018, with the new report highlighting that the service has improved in almost all areas since then.

LFRS is next due to be inspected again during 2025. A full copy of the most recent HMICFRS inspection report can be found on our [website](#).

## Assurance on Governance

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the CFA to publish an Annual Governance Statement along with the Authority's financial statements, following a review of the effectiveness of the internal controls in place. It sets out the key elements of the Authority's governance framework, how these have been evaluated, the outcome of the assessment of effectiveness and any areas for improvement.

The Audit Committee has previously approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, in line with guidance produced jointly by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants) and SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives). The Code defines corporate governance as the way an authority ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest, and accountable manner.

Included within the Code are the following core principles: -

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The code also sets out the principles which support each of these core elements, as well as how the Authority will address each of these.

The Audit Committee also receives regular reports from Internal Audit, work which is undertaken by Lancashire County Council. The Internal Audit Service is an assurance function designed to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require the Head of Internal Audit to provide an opinion on the frameworks of governance, risk management and control of Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and a written report to those charged with governance, timed to support the annual governance statement. On the basis of the programme of work for the year, the Head of Internal Audit provided substantial assurance regarding the adequacy of design and effectiveness in operation of the organisation's frameworks of governance, risk management and control.

The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The 2022/23 review was supported and informed by the work of both internal and external audit. This self-assessment formed the basis of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 which concluded that Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has in place an adequate system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk, and that no significant governance issues were identified.

## **Financial Assurance**

All local authority accounts are required to adopt 'proper accounting practice' based on either statutory requirements or the code of practice on local authority accounting. These specify the principles and practices of accounting required to prepare a Statement of Accounts that 'present a true and fair view'.

The Treasurer to the CFA provides publicly available annual accounts which are approved by the Audit Committee.

An independent audit of the accounts is undertaken by an external auditing body, Grant Thornton. The external auditor undertakes a review of the accounts and forms an overall opinion which is published each year. The audit for 2022/23 was

conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing and applicable law and provided the following opinions –

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2023 and of its expenditure and income for the year ended;
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority in the United Kingdom 2022/23; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Under the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice, the external auditor considers whether the Service has put in place arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The external auditor has made a number of improvement recommendations and identified a significant weakness in relation to the Authority's level and use of reserves to manage its financial position and made one key recommendation. The 2023/24 financial monitoring and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identified a budget gap with no plans built into the MTFS to replenish the general reserve. This has now been addressed as part of setting the 2024/25 MTFS; the general reserve remains at c£1m above the minimum level of reserves for the duration of the five-year period of the MTFS.

A copy of the Auditor's Audit Findings Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2023 is available on our website.

## **Operational Assurance**

The National Framework outlines the requirement placed upon FRAs to provide assurance on operational matters which are determined locally by them in partnership with their local communities, citizens, businesses, and others.

FRA's function within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework of which the key legislative documents defining these responsibilities are:



- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

This section aims to provide assurance that our service is delivered in line with our statutory responsibilities and with due regard to the expectations set out in our CRMP including cross-border, multi-authority, and national incident arrangements. The key components, known as pillars, for operational assurance are as follows:

1. **Operational Preparedness Assurance** - This is the '*before*' aspect of the assurance framework. It is conducted by the Operational Assurance Team delivered through station-based assurance visits and attending exercises. The focus is on core work that is aligned to reducing risk and our capability to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently when the need arises.
2. **Operational Response Assurance** - This is the '*during*' aspect of the assurance framework, which is delivered through assurance monitoring during the response phase of an incident or exercise.
3. **Operational Learning** - This is the '*after*' aspect of the assurance framework, which is delivered through our debrief systems and by learning from safety events in LFRS, other Fire and Rescue Services, National Operational Learning (NOL), and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL).

The data and findings from these are analysed with key learning provided for staff on a quarterly report to support improvement, and items meeting the criteria are reported to NOL and/or JOL. Additionally, themes are considered for inclusion in training programmes.

## Community Risk Management

Our approach to integrated risk management is supported by the use of modelling. The Office of National Statistics categorises every part of the UK into a small neighbourhood called a Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA). There are 941 LSOA's in Lancashire, each containing an average of 1,500 people. We use information about where fires have taken place in the past and combine this with various social deprivation data to give each area a risk grade.

The information is then used to identify geographic areas at higher risk where a combination of Prevention, Protection and Response activities can have the greatest impact.

This is utilised alongside the provision of tailored Safe and Well visits or Home Fire Safety Check service (HFSC) which is geared towards occupant risk and importantly, to those in greatest need and at greatest risk of fire.

We update the risk model on a regular basis and use the outcomes to direct and re-prioritise our activities. Risk reduction progress over the last 13 years is depicted in the table below.

-	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Overall Score</b>
Year	<b>SOA Count</b>	<b>SOA Count</b>	<b>SOA Count</b>	<b>SOA Count</b>	<b>Risk Score Change</b>
2010	60	118	310	452	36,532
2011	60	114	303	463	36,238
2012	53	100	313	474	35,558
2013	40	93	301	507	34,228
2014	32	95	306	508	33,648
2015	41	86	281	533	33,268
2016	32	76	314	519	32,990
2017	25	74	321	521	32,398
2018	22	74	321	524	32,114
2019	21	68	310	542	31,816
2020	23	74	324	520	32,448
2021	21	61	338	521	31,862
2022	25	47	333	536	31,576
2023	15	59	331	536	31,170
-	<b>-75%</b>	<b>-50%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>-15%</b>
Overall change	Overall reduction in very high risk SOAs	Overall reduction on high risk SOAs	Overall increase in medium SOAs	Overall increase in low risk SOAs	Overall reduction in risk score

Figure 2 - Changes in Fire Risk 2010-2023

## **Prevention and Protection**

Our Prevention and Protection strategies set out how we will continue to evolve and improve the way we educate, support and, where appropriate, enforce to stop incidents occurring and protect life. Our interventions continue to evolve in line with changing societal risk, and are shaped by data, intelligence, and equality impact assessment.

Our person-centred Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) service continues to include Safe and Well interventions including, where appropriate, falls risk assessments, alcohol, and mental health advice. LFRS remains focussed on identifying those most at risk from fire and continues to refine thematic campaigns and referral generation approaches to achieve this. In addition to delivering our role within Community Safety Partnerships our District based teams work with multi-disciplinary teams to ensure that the fire risk component of complex cases is recognised.

Education continues to be a priority and the Service has fire, water and road safety packages tailored for all Key Stages of education. The Service runs and supports a wide range of campaigns for all road users based on the National Police Chiefs Council campaign calendar whilst also taking an active role in the Lancashire Water Safety Partnership.

We continue to provide the Princes Trust Team program and have Fire Cadet Units at a range of locations across Lancashire, complemented by a range of other youth engagement activities tailored to local need.

Our Incident Intelligence Team continues to investigate fires, gathering evidence to assist arson investigations, and intelligence to drive the continual development of prevention activities which keep pace with the perpetually evolving nature of risk in our society.

The Grenfell Tragedy in 2017, and the resultant public enquiries and technical reviews, has initiated the most far reaching and fundamental changes to Building Regulations and Fire Safety legislation seen in decades. To support change LFRS has invested in a Protection Transformation Team to ensure it is well placed to

meet future challenges. 2023 saw the Service become a joint regulator with the Health and Safety Executive and Building Controls at all stages of the design, construction, occupation, and operation of Higher Risk Residential Buildings.

Whilst this increased focus on the safety of residential buildings is welcome, such buildings make up only a proportion of Lancashire's built environment. The Service will continue to utilise a risk-based approach to identify the wider range of premises at risk from fire and undertake fire safety interventions to assure compliance. Support to business and commerce continues to remain a priority and we will maintain the ability to enforce and indeed prosecute where fire safety law has been ignored or flouted. Business support will continue to be provided by our Business Safety Advisors, campaign activity and website support, and we will continue to contribute to the principles of better regulation through our Primary Authority Schemes.

Whilst specialist and highly skilled Fire Safety Inspectors will undertake 'audits' we have increased our ability to 'check' compliance through our Business Fire Safety Check services which is undertaken by our Operational Crews. These visits evaluate simple measures linked to effective fire safety management and provide an opportunity to collect risk information and provide arson risk reduction advice.

## **Mutual Aid Agreements**

The National Framework states that Fire and Rescue Authorities must make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with mutual aid agreements. LFRS maintain mutual agreements for reinforcements with our five bordering Fire and Rescue Authorities - Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, North Yorkshire, and West Yorkshire. These agreements are periodically reviewed to maintain currency and provide optimal response arrangements.

## **National Resilience**

For the purposes of this document, National Resilience (NR) is defined as the capacity and capability of Fire and Rescue Authorities to work together and with other Category 1 and 2 responders to deliver a sustained, effective response to

major incidents, emergencies, and disruptive challenges, such as (but not limited to) those identified in the National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies. It refers to risks that need to be planned for on a strategic, national basis because their impacts and consequences would be of such scale and / or complexity that local resources would be insufficient, even when considering mutual aid arrangements.

LFRS is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid protocol and has deployed assets to major incidents outside the region. The costs of such mobilisations are borne by the FRA within whose area the incident occurs and are therefore re-claimed by LFRS.

We remain subject to the NR audit processes which test the various aspects of our NR capabilities. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service assumed the lead authority role for National Resilience on behalf of the Home Office in 2016. This includes taking responsibility for assurance, training, long-term capability management and Fire Control with regard to National resilience.

## **Business Continuity**

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is an integral part of our corporate risk management process. In relation to BCM processes and procedures, all FRA's must satisfy the requirements of both the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

We are required to 'write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority is able to continue its functions'. This includes periods of industrial action.

In order to ensure that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service comply with both pieces of legislation, our BCM complies with the Business Continuity Institutes' Good Practice Guidelines and ISO 22301. This provides a framework through which:

- Critical processes are identified
- Assessments of both internal and external risks which may impact on business continuity are made

- Strategic, Tactical, and Operational Plans have been produced to ensure an acceptable level of service can be maintained following disruption
- Procedures are developed to invoke the BCP
- Arrangements are made to test the BCP
- All key personnel are trained to understand their role within the plan
- Responsibilities are clearly identified and assigned.

Each year the plans are reviewed and tested at predefined intervals or after significant change to ensure our plans are fit for purpose. The protracted Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated the Service's ability to deal with a Major Incident, whilst at the same time responding to other emergencies in a timely manner and continuing with business as usual, as much as reasonably practicable.

## **Safety, Health, and Environment**

The Combined Fire Authority meets regularly to provide strategic political leadership to the Service. The Authority has overall responsibility for the effective governance of Safety, Health, and Environment (SHE), including:

- Agreeing the SHE Policy which outlines their commitments and ensuring adequate resources are available for the establishment, ongoing implementation and control of a Safety, Health & Environment (SHE) Management System.
- Providing a clear direction for the Executive Board and Senior Management Team to establish policies and manage safety, health and environmental responsibilities effectively.
- Consideration of local and national issues which impact on Safety, Health, and Environment within the Service.
- Monitoring performance through receipt of the Annual SHE Report, to provide governance and assurance that an effective SHE Management System is operational within LFRS.

Our health and safety arrangements are based on the model Plan, Do, Check, Act laid down in the Health and Safety Executive publication HS(G)65 – Successful Health and Safety Management and written and implemented to the International

Standard for Health and Safety Management Systems, ISO 45001:2018. The environmental aspects of the management system are written and implemented to the International Standard ISO 14001:2015.

External Certification for both standards has been in place since 2011/12 with re-certification taking place every 3 years followed by annual surveillance audits. The last successful audit took place in 2023, where certification was extended with no non-conformances identified by the external audit team. As part of the audit process, the auditors visit a range of stations and departments and examined the 'Full provision of fire, rescue and supporting services across Lancashire' delivered by the Combined Fire Authority from a health and safety and environmental perspective.

We have procedures in place to report and investigate safety events, both events which have resulted in an injury to an individual or 'near miss' events which had the potential to cause harm. These processes allow us to identify areas where improvements to our arrangements can be made.

Each year a performance review of Safety, Health and Environment is carried out and reported to the Combined Fire Authority in the Annual SHE Report. Part of business-as-usual is the review of policies, procedures, support for staff wellbeing and guidance to ensure that we continue to meet our legal obligations in respect of safety, health and environment and we validate this by a system of internal and external audits. To ensure continuous improvement is made in the SHE Management System, we have developed an aspirational 5-year delivery plan, supported by objectives and actions each year to assist in delivering future improvements.

## **Training and Development**

As defined in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, FRAs have a duty to secure the provision of training for personnel in relation to fighting fires, road traffic collisions (RTCs) and emergencies other than fires and RTCs.

To comply with the elements of fighting fires and RTCs, the Service provides training in:

- Breathing apparatus and fire behaviour
- Incident command
- Blue light driving
- RTC
- Trauma care
- Firefighter core skills.

In relation to emergencies other than fires and RTCs, our CRMP identifies emergency special services to include flooding and water rescue incidents, wildfires, animal rescue, rope rescue, hazardous materials/spills and assisting other agencies.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Training and Operational Review policy is designed to provide training and development to personnel to enable the organisation to fulfil its vision of 'Making Lancashire Safer'. Training is based on the needs of the organisation with a strong focus on ensuring that personnel are safe and competent in the delivery of the prevention, protection, and response services we provide.

The training programme considers learning identified through our own operational review processes, as well as from reports describing learning from events of national significance. The Training and Operational Review department supports continual learning and organisational development through a wide range of programmes tailored to role and responsibility, as well as managing the selection processes which identify managers for advancement. Ongoing development and maintenance of competence is a key focus, and this is facilitated through a robust maintenance of skills programme linked to an e-learning system which is continually updated.

Trainers are selected and developed across an extremely diverse variety of specialisms, ranging from the intricacies of boat handling and rope rescue, through to the complexities of mounting a successful fire safety prosecution. Where necessary, support is commissioned from specialist providers.

The Training and Operational Review Department work in conjunction with other Departments within the Service, such as Human Resources and the Safety, Health,



and Environment Department, to provide training and development for all members of the Service. There is a particular focus on Leadership Development across the Service.

## **Assurance Declaration**

The Chairman of Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and meet the requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

Justin Johnston - Chief Fire Officer

David O'Toole – CFA Chairman

Date:

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## Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 22 April 2024

### Member Champion Activity Report

Contact for further information – DCFO Steve Healey  
Tel: 01772 866801

#### **Executive Summary**

This paper provides a report on the work of the Member Champions for the period up to 21 April 2024.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

The Authority is requested to note and endorse the report and acknowledge the work of the respective Champions.

#### **Information**

The concept of Member Champions was introduced in December 2007 with a review of the roles in 2017.

The Authority appoints its Member Champions at its Annual Meeting in June, and the current Member Champions are:

- Community Safety – Councillor Jean Rigby
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Zamir Khan
- Health and Wellbeing – County Councillor John Singleton JP
- Road Safety – County Councillor Ron Woollam

Reports relating to the activity of the Member Champions are provided on a regular basis to the Authority. During this period, all have undertaken their respective role in accordance with the defined terms of reference. Their activity to date is as follows:

#### **Community Safety – Councillor Jean Rigby**

Staff across the service have been engaging with communities to promote fire and road safety during Ramadan and participated once again in the award-winning initiative 'I'm not a Muslim but I will fast (for one day)' by One Voice Blackburn. Colleagues also took part in the collective fast on 19 March and joined members of the community in an Iftar meal at the Charters Restaurant in Preston Royal Hospital to break the fast.

Community safety and operational staff from Pennine area attended a community Iftar event at Burnley Football Club to honour the breaking of the fast. This was an opportunity for people of all faiths, and none, to come together and enjoy an evening of dialogue, networking, and learning.

The Central team engaged with Mosques and Madrassas (night schools) in the area and delivered talks that focused on cooking hazards, including loose clothing and hot oil

cooking in mass during this time of celebration. They also focused on distractions during this period due to the times of eating and the fact that people may become lethargic with the lack of food.

Western community safety team were invited to the Central Blackpool Mosque where they delivered presentations about keeping safe during Ramadan including a Childsafe / Road Sense talk to 180 children who attended the Mosque in the evening. Further aims of the visit were to continue building relationships with the community and offer support.

Prevention Support and Community Safety staff from Eastern area delivered fire safety and 999Reunite awareness training to Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) in Clitheroe and Hyndburn. The training covered recognising vulnerability factors and how this links to increased fire risk in the home. Police staff were also shown how to programme the 999ReUnite devices and a trial is in place where they can issue one if a person goes missing from home and follow this up with a referral for a home fire safety check through the partner portal on the Lancashire Fire and Rescue (LFRS) website.

Northern area completed a successful Operation Chesney in the rural community of Over Kellet. This initiative is designed to offer direction for Community Fire Safety (CFS) / Operational staff in reducing fire risk through intelligence led targeting. The Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS) is interrogated to identify areas with low levels of prevention activity, and this is used in conjunction with demographic risk profiling and local knowledge. The aim of the operation is to reduce injuries and fatalities arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF) in rural communities by increasing the uptake of the home fire safety check service and promoting fire safety with partners and community groups.

Fire Cadets from Burnley and Fleetwood attended the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) launch of the Fire Cadet Voice Forum at the Fire Service College. They were joined by cadets from 7 other services from across the country and took part in several workshops and teambuilding exercises, sharing experiences of their journey so far and how units operate in their area. The aim of the forum is to give the young people the opportunity to voice their ideas on future development of the Fire Cadet programme and how this can be consistent across all units.

Southern area Community Safety staff and Fire Protection have collaborated with three sheltered housing schemes which are responsible for a high level of incident activity in the Derby ward in Ormskirk. The team worked with the scheme managers to address the high number of Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) and delivered several fire safety talks to residents followed by Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) in individual flats.

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – County Councillor Zamir Khan MBE**

Over the last quarter, representatives from the Service have been actively engaging with employees and communities in various ways.

During March, the Women and Families Employee Voice Group hosted at Service Training Centre an International Women's Day event to showcase the family friendly and diverse opportunities LFRS has to offer, over 70 members of the public attended and were given talks on roles within LFRS, the maternity/ paternity policy, the recruitment process and met representatives from all our employee voice groups. This

was followed by a live Road Traffic Collision (RTC) and fire extinguisher demonstration, attendees were then invited to take part in a 'have a go' exercise to test their current fitness against what is required by the Service. An evaluation has taken place and feedback was overwhelmingly positive and a podcast has also been produced which included interviews with female firefighters talking about their experiences of being a firefighter.

Representatives from the LGBT+ Employee Voice Group have been attending various community, and engagement events including support colleagues from Nelson Fire Station at an Industry Day at Nelson and Colne college and the On Call Support officer in recruitment initiatives across the Service.

The newly established disability group is working on the development of a reasonable adjustment guide for members of staff.

The Neurodiversity Employee Voice Group has developed an internal communications bulletin for Neurodiversity Celebration Week, which included brief stories from six serving members of staff, highlighting their own experiences and raising awareness for colleagues across LFRS.

During Ramadan colleagues from across the Service fasted for a day and joined members of the Race and Religion Group at the Iftar event at Burnley Football Club, to break the fast with colleagues from different organisations. This is a great opportunity to promote understanding about different cultures and an opportunity to develop relationships with a wider network of people and with different organisations.

## **Health, Wellbeing & Climate Change – County Councillor John Singleton JP**

### **Climate Change and Environment**

The Environment and Sustainability Promotional Calendar for 2024/25 has been launched and communicated to LFRS Environmental Champions. It has also been uploaded to the Engine House to show the quarterly environmental promotions the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Department will be facilitating. Environmental Champions are encouraged to promote the calendar events locally.

Uniform Repair kits have been distributed to all stations over the last month. The message to support the issue of these repair kits is that minor repairs to duty rig (such as sewing a button on a shirt etc.) is a more sustainable approach than replacing. This promotes the wider message of reducing unnecessary waste.



Two members of the SHE Team visited the Renew Hub in Manchester to learn more about the work that is done there to reduce unnecessary waste. The Hub is set up and run by LFRS's waste contractor, Suez, where items that can be used again are put in the Renew container, rather than one of the recycling containers. All items from the Renew container are taken to the Renew Hub. The items are cleaned up, mended if necessary, or upcycled before being sent on to one of the three Renew shops. In this way, hundreds of tonnes of pre-loved items which would have otherwise gone to waste are made available at affordable prices. Money raised via Renew goes back to the local community through the Greater Manchester Mayor's Charity and the R4GM Community Fund, meaning this project not only helps support a more sustainable future for our planet, but also for the local community. A great example from Manchester of what can be achieved and one we are exploring to see if we can introduce a similar system.

## Health and Wellbeing

The Wellness Events Calendar for 2024/25 has been launched to include events and promotions covering lifestyle, mental health and physical health. The SHE Department will co-ordinate the events in the calendar with the support of members of our peer support network. The first event is in April and will consist of a 'roadshow' style event where we will be sharing details of all wellbeing support resources available to our staff during visits to each area.

To support the Wellness Events Calendar, we have arranged with the Fire Fighters Charity to facilitate 15 wellbeing workshops throughout April 2024 – March 2025. These workshops include subjects such as Improving Communications, Developing Resilience, Nutrition and Healthy Eating, Understanding Back Pain and Promoting Relaxation.

Over the next six months we are planning to increase the number of Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) Practitioners and Wellbeing Support Dog (WSD) Handlers to bolster our peer support network as we have seen retirements/transfers etc. meaning our numbers have declined whilst requests for Trauma Support interventions and WSD visits are still being received. During this process we will be considering geographical location for Expressions of Interest to ensure we have appropriate coverage for all areas of the Service.

## Road Safety – County Councillor Ron Woollam

Road Sense is a Year 6 Road Safety Education Package delivered by LFRS and offered to all primary schools in Lancashire. 11,100 pupils have received the package, so we are on track to deliver to all schools by end of the summer term. Feedback from teachers remains very positive, please see example below:

*“Lots of useful information given to children that really needed the information. Children were engaged fully throughout. Many thanks”.*

The QR code which allows the children to feedback following the delivery of a Road Sense session continues to be completed. All the responses in the free text box have been positive and nearly 100% of respondents answer all the questions correctly. An example below:

*“Never walk out on to a road without looking and always wear a helmet when you are riding a bike”.*

Biker Down course dates have just been released for April and social media engagement is planned to highlight important safety messages as we move towards the start of the biking season. In March, another large course took place at Bowker Motorrad for South Lancs Advanced Motorcyclists which had 34 attendees. Additionally, a course for Morecambe Bay Estuaries Advanced Motorcyclists was delivered from Morecambe Fire Station which saw 18 attendees. Feedback from both groups was very favourable, something the BD Team are very proud of given the knowledge the riders already have.

*“Very professional and good solid information”.*

Recently the Biker Down Team have started to visit Fire Cadet Units to deliver a bespoke session to these groups. They have received a slightly shorter version of the course, making sure all 3 modules were relevant to their age group. Some of the older cadets are already riding scooters and mopeds but many regularly use a bicycle to travel around so the information around the ‘Science of Being Seen’ was very relevant.



Wasted Lives the pre and new driver education package is seeing an increase in bookings in the last quarter with some new high schools accepting our offer of the package for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in many years. In February, a session was delivered from Burnley Fire Station for Child and Youth Justice service for a group of young people who have been involved in vehicle related crime. This forms part of the work we are doing around the Serious Violence Duty. The session utilised the ‘crashed car’ and

fortunately a member of the crew who had attended the incident was on duty and was able to share first-hand the impact of this collision. This made a noticeable impact on the group, all of which were not currently in education. Following completion of the session they were able to complete an AQA qualification.

### **Business risk**

Whilst no formal obligation is placed on the Authority to have Champions, effective utilisation of such roles offers a number of benefits.

### **Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

The Member Champion role provides leadership on environmental issues and assists in engaging Authority members in strategic objectives relating to protecting the environment.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The Member Champion role provides leadership on equality and diversity issues and assists in engaging Authority members in strategic objectives relating to equality and diversity.

### **Data Protection (GDPR)**

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? N

If the answer is yes, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team to assist with the appropriate exemption clause for confidential consideration under part 2 of the agenda.

### **HR implications**

Some Member and Officer time commitments.

### **Financial implications**

Activities are within budget.

### **Legal implications**

None arising from this report.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

### **List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact: DCFO Steve Healey

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: N/A



## Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 22 April 2024

### Fire Protection Report

Contact for further information: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Steve Healey  
Tel: 01772 866801

#### Executive Summary

This report summarises Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences, in addition to convictions resulting from arson incidents which have been progressed via the criminal justice process.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support is also provided, detailing how the Service is adapting delivery whilst developing our workforce, to ensure that we keep pace with the changes and improve public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

#### Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note the report.

### FIRE SAFETY CONVICTIONS

#### Prosecutions

One case has now been concluded, and the landlord, Ms. Angela Chang, pleaded guilty to six breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, at the Great Fortune House, 120 Victoria Rd West and 16 St Georges Lane Thornton-Cleveleys.

The six offences to which Ms. Angela Chang pleaded guilty were:

- Failure to take such general fire safety precautions, so as to ensure the safety of tenants;
- Failure to make a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment;
- Failure to ensure that the premises were equipped with appropriate fire detectors and alarms;
- Failure to ensure that people could evacuate the premises as quickly and safely as possible;
- Failure to properly maintain an appropriate fire evacuation procedure for the premises; and
- Failure to safeguard the safety of relevant persons by ensuring that any facilities, equipment, and devices were provided.

On Tuesday 19 March 2024, sentencing took place at Preston Crown Court, where Ms. Angela Chang was sentenced to three months imprisonment for failure to comply with the above articles of the Fire Safety Order and ordered to pay £10,414.51 in costs to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

Three cases currently sit within the court system. Of these three cases, one is provisionally set for trial starting 24 April 2024, one is set for trial starting 1 July 2024 and the third is set for trial starting 30 June 2025.

Protection teams continue to investigate and build files in relation to eleven further cases wherein offences are believed to have been committed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, involving the following types of premises:

- Care and Nursing Home x2
- House in Multiple Occupation x2
- Residential Flats x2
- Mixed commercial and residential x1
- Commercial car repair garage x1
- Nightclub x1
- Health care setting x1
- Hotel x1

Protection leads are also supporting a joint enforcement case with a local authority, Health and Safety Executive and Lancashire Constabulary regarding a complex mill converted to residential accommodation.

## **FIRE PROTECTION & BUSINESS SUPPORT INFORMATION**

### **Business Fire Safety Checks (BFSC)**

The BFSC continues to offer greater business support with 3112 undertaken in total during the 23/24 performance year to end of Feb 2024.

86% (2684) have been deemed satisfactory with 428 deemed unsatisfactory and triaged by protection teams during this period with both informal and formal enforcement taken.

### **Legislation Changes Update**

LFRS continues to embed legislative changes coming about from the 1 October 2023 amendments of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which introduced Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022. These amendments will require that all responsible persons must now record the fire risk assessment in full (including all the findings) and the fire safety arrangements for premises in all circumstances.

The new Building Safety Act and Building Safety Regulator (BSR) continues to be developed. Following a competitive interview process, a new Northwest Regional Building Safety Manager has been appointed and will be hosted by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) and will work directly with LFRS newly appointed BSR lead.

LFRS built environment officers continue to pursue the principle accountable persons for tall buildings that have failed to meet their new legislative requirements by the 28 February 2024.

To date only 25% of Lancashire's 48 residential tall buildings have submitted all of the mandatory building information they are now legally required to provide both to the BSR and the local Fire and Rescue Service. Of the 75% remaining a vast majority have

submitted parts of the information but have failed to provide it all despite several requests. Following several engagements with responsible persons, LFRS will seek to formally request the provision of this information through proportionate use of the Fire Safety Order.

## **ARSON RISK REDUCTION**

### **R v David SCHOLES**

Macauley Avenue, Blackpool, FY4 4AG.

Date and Time of Call – 22/01/2022, 00:47hrs.

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of wheelie bins in a rear alleyway.

The fire caused severe damage to three wheelie bins, two fence panels and a children's trampoline.

Following a guilty plea to Arson, the defendant was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

### **R v Kenneth ROYALE**

Buchanan Street, Blackpool, FY1 3BN.

Date and Time of Call – 10/08/2023, 05:08hrs.

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of a wheelie bin, garden furniture, clothing and other items in the rear yard of a domestic property. The wheelie bin had been positioned directly in front of a set of patio doors which was the only available exit from the property. The fire had started to affect the house and the occupier, an elderly lady, made her escape through a ground floor window.

The fire caused severe damage to a wheelie bin, children's toys, clothing, garden furniture and a timber canopy structure attached to the building. Internally there was moderate damage by smoke to the rooms and contents.

The defendant pleaded guilty to Arson with intent to endanger life and was sentenced at Preston Crown Court to 12 years imprisonment.

### **R v restricted due to age (x2)**

Wrea Green Pre-School, Wrea Crescent, Wrea Green, PR4 2WA.

Date and Time of Call – 18/04/2022, 17:49hrs.

This incident involved a fire in an outdoor timber play area at a Pre-School Nursery.

The fire caused severe damage to a wooden play bus, a large section of Astro turf, perimeter fencing, children's toys and a canoe. Radiated heat caused damage to the window frames of the main building and a storage box.

The defendants received youth cautions.

**Business risk**

Moderate – Members are made aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and / or arson within Lancashire, to satisfy themselves that the required robust approach is being pursued.

**Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

None

**Equality and Diversity Implications**

None

**Data Protection (GDPR)**

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data?

No

**HR implications**

None

**Financial implications**

None

**Legal implications**

Failure of Responsible Persons to meet new legislative requirements placed upon them, may result in LFRS undertaking additional prosecution cases in future.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985****List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Insert Exemption Clause

## Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 22 April 2024

### Operational Incidents of Interest

Contact for further information – Deputy Chief Fire Officer Steve Healey  
Tel: 01772 866802

#### Executive Summary

This report provides Members with information relating to operational incidents of interest since the last report to the Authority.

#### Recommendation(s)

The Authority is asked to note the report.

#### Information

This report provides Members with information relating to operational incidents of interest. This has been a busy operational period, therefore the report details only the larger deployments or more complex incidents attended. As a result, some incidents that Members have been made aware of locally, may not form part of the report.

The following summarises the incidents with further detail provided within the body of the paper:

- Firefighters attend a road traffic collision (RTC) in Tarleton, in which 2 people lost their lives
- 6 fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Lytham St Anne's
- Fire crews attend a suspected chemical leak with multiple casualties in Clitheroe
- 8 fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackburn
- 8 fire engines attend a large fire in Clayton le Dale, Ribble Valley
- 8 fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackpool
- 8 fire engines attend derelict building fire in Chorley
- 6 fire engines attend a church on fire in Padiham

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>S58 Tarleton</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>4 February 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>08:27</b>

Fire crews from Tarleton and Leyland attended an RTC on Hesketh Lane in Tarleton. The incident involved a Land Rover Discovery, which had collided with a Mini and then hit a tree. The Land Rover had two occupants, an adult male and an eighteen-month-old child, who were both unconscious. The Mini had a female driver suffering with neck pain. Unfortunately, the two occupants of the Land Rover were confirmed deceased at the scene. Fire crews used cutting equipment to release the driver of the Mini, so that she could be transferred to hospital.

As the Mini was electrically powered and had received a considerable impact, there was the added risk of thermal runaway within the battery cells and subsequently, a fire, which fortunately did not happen on this occasion. Crews made the scene safe and the fire service drone assisted police with their investigation. This incident was declared a major incident by the police and the road was closed for a protracted period. Fire crews were in attendance for approximately seven hours.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>W35 Lytham</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>6 February 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>02:34</b>

Six fire engines from St Annes, Wesham, South Shore and Blackpool attended a fire at Lytham Skip Hire on Boundary Road, Lytham St Annes. They were supported by the Command Unit from Fulwood. The fire involved large quantities of wood in storage units at the rear of the main building. The fire was prevented from spreading to the main building by removing a number of sandwich panels that had been affected by the radiated heat.

Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus and water jets tackled the fire. They were assisted by site staff who moved waste using excavating machinery. The cause of the fire is unknown due to the lack of CCTV being made available for the investigation team. Fire crews were on scene for over twenty-four hours.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>E91 Clitheroe</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>9 February 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>09:14</b>

Four fire engines from Clitheroe and Blackburn, along with the Command Unit from Fulwood and Hazardous Material Unit from South Shore, attended an incident on Lincoln Way in Clitheroe. The report was of a number of staff being subjected to an unknown chemical, which has caused sickness and dizziness to twenty-four staff.

Ambulance service, Police and fire teams worked to identify the cause of the exposure and what impact this would have on the casualties. Fire crews wearing breathing apparatus entered the building so that they could check for further casualties and to establish a potential cause. The chemical was identified as a strong cleaning agent, which had not been used as per manufacturers guidance. This had caused a chemical reaction and had created a harmful atmosphere within the warehouse.

There were no serious injuries with all persons being checked over at the scene, except for one who was taken to hospital for further observations. Fire crews were in attendance for approximately two hours.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>E71 Blackburn</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>17 February 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>01:34</b>

Eight fire engines were called to a commercial building fire on Chadwick Street in Blackburn. Two water towers and the command unit supported them. On arrival the fire already involved three industrial units. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus used several firefighting water jets and the two water towers to fight the fire. Water was pumped directly from the Leeds to Liverpool canal using several light portable pumps.

The cause of the fire has not been determined due to demolition work required to allow access to the fire. Fire crews were on scene for several days, damping down as the building was dismantled.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>E71 Blackburn</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>11 March 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>22:16</b>

Eight fire engines from Preston, Blackburn, Hyndburn, Great Harwood, Leyland, Bamber Bridge, Fulwood, and the Aerial Ladder Platform, Command Unit and Water Bowser attended a fire at Mrs Dowson’s Farm on Longsight Road, Clayton le Dale. The fire involved a large barn used to store hay, which was also home to a number of goats and sheep. Approximately forty tonnes of hay were alight, which risked fire spread into the rest of the adjoining buildings.

Firefighters used firefighting water jets to tackle the fire, with the assistance of onsite staff using farm machinery. A number of cows, sheep and goats were evacuated in the initial stages of the fire. The cause of the fire has been recorded as accidental, but how it started is undetermined due to the debris being disrupted from farm machinery when assisting with firefighting.

The owners have publicly thanked Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) in the press, being impressed with the response to the incident. The farm, apart from the barn is back fully operational and no injuries to persons on site were reported. The Service was in attendance for approximately twelve hours, damping down and conducting the fire investigation.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>W30 Blackpool</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 March 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>00:59</b>

Eight fire engines from Blackpool, St Annes, Bispham, South Shore, Fleetwood and Fulwood, the drone unit, the aerial ladder platform from Blackpool and Command Unit from Fulwood, attended a building fire at the Shazron Hotel, Havelock Street in Blackpool. On arrival, crews found the building to be well alight. The building was a hotel of three floors, with an area measuring approximately ten meters by thirty metres. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus, using firefighting jets, tackled the fire internally. This incident created a large smoke plume across the town, so residents were warned by our media team to keep doors and windows closed. Whilst firefighting, crews identified a cannabis farm, which was reported to police colleagues. The cause of the fire was undetermined due to the unstable structure following the fire, however the entrance door was insecure when fire crews arrived.

LFRS were in attendance for over twelve hours, whilst the scene was made safe, and the investigation took place.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>S54 Chorley</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>16 March 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>22:39</b>

Eight fire engines from Chorley, Leyland, Bamber Bridge, Blackburn and Preston, the Stinger from Blackburn, the Water Bowser from Leyland, the Aerial Ladder Platform from Preston, the drone, Command Unit from Fulwood and one fire engine from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service were mobilised to a derelict former college building on Southport Road in Chorley. On arrival, firefighters found the single-storey derelict building to be well alight. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus tackled the fire with firefighting jets. The Stinger was also used to apply water through the roof.

LFRS were at the scene for over twenty hours, damping down and conducting the fire investigation. The investigation led to the cause being recorded as deliberate.

<b>LFRS station area:</b>	<b>P92 Padiham</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>18 March 2024</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>08:05</b>

Six fire engines and an Aerial Ladder Platform, drone and Command Unit attended reports of a fire at St Johns the Baptist church on St John's Road in Padiham.

The fire was in the main church building, with ten metres of wooden wall panelling, and approximately ten metres of carpet and wall furnishing involved in the fire, with the church heavily smoke logged. Firefighters wearing breathing apparatus entered the church to fight the fire.

Crews were at the scene for over three hours, damping down and conducting a fire investigation. The cause of the fire was recorded as accidental, starting from a fault in the electrical supply. It is believed that the fire had started over twelve hours earlier and slowly developed overnight.

### **Business risk**

None

### **Sustainability or Environmental Impact**

Potential impact on local environment in relation to operational incidents. Significant incidents benefit from the attendance of specialist water towers (stingers) and the hazardous materials unit both of which have positive impacts on firefighting operations and reduce environmental impacts.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None



## **Data Protection (GDPR)**

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? No

If the answer is yes, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team to assist with the appropriate exemption clause for confidential consideration under part 2 of the agenda.

## **HR implications**

None

## **Financial implications**

None

## **Legal implications**

None

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

### **List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Insert Exemption Clause

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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