

# ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

APRIL 2025– MARCH 2026



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



## Introduction

Corporate Governance is about creating structures, processes, values and behaviours that **help an organisation to understand what it wants to achieve.**

Governance **sets clear expectations and responsibilities, enables good decision making, manages risks, monitors performance, and helps an organisation learn and improve.** The Authority's governance framework contains the internal systems and processes by which the organisation is directed and controlled.

The Authority is accountable to the public and other stakeholders and therefore has a **duty to ensure that arrangements are in place** to ensure a sound system of good governance.

Good governance should follow the principles within the **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016** and, the **Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).**

The **Good Governance principles** are:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rules of law.
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.



## Responsibilities

Good governance for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) **enables the establishment of a strategic plan** to meet the needs of communities and facilitates the discharge of its statutory responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

All **local authorities are required to publish annually**, an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The Authority has delegated to the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC), as per its terms of reference, to consider and approve the AGS, and once approved, the AGS will be signed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority (HIWFRA) Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer for inclusion within the Accounts and publishing on the website.





## Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

This Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a **retrospective statement for the previous financial year.**

It **self-assesses the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements** and looks forward to areas where focus should be given in relation to governance over the coming year.

This publishing of an AGS demonstrates that the Authority meets the **requirements of The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015** and **complies with the seven principles of good governance** within the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 edition.

The AGS **provides assurance on the Authority's effectiveness to comply with the seven principles of good governance and identifies areas for improvement.**

The AGS is a key piece of evidence that the Authority complies with the CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Code. The review process illustrates that the Service has undertaken an assessment of its compliance with principles of good governance and the financial management standards in the FM Code.

The Authority acknowledges that it can never eliminate risk entirely from its operations and this statement explains the systems used to manage this risk to a reasonable level.





## Local Code of Governance

CIPFA and Solace recommend that authorities adopt a **Local Code of governance to accompany and compliment the AGS.**

The Local Code of Governance sets out the governance arrangements the Authority have in place and shows how the good governance principles are put into practice.

Following CIPFA guidance, the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance has been established for the first time this year, 2026-2027, and should be read in conjunction with the AGS.

The Local Code of Governance **explains the specific internal controls that are in place across the organisation which support the principles of good governance.**

In turn, the AGS **summarises the internal controls and provides an internal assessment on the effectiveness.**





## Summary of key conclusions

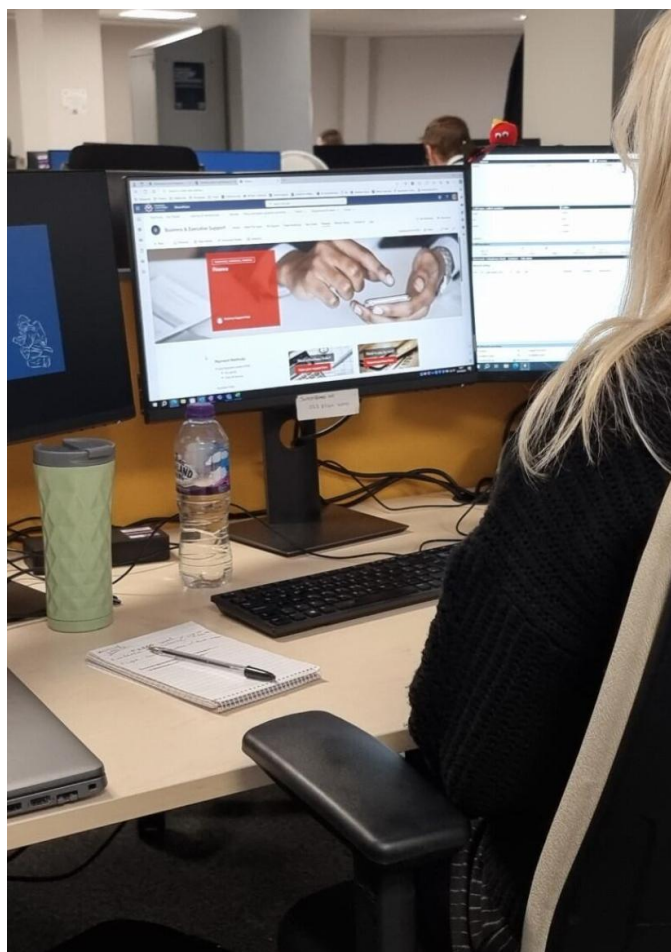
The authority's governance arrangements are deemed **fit for purpose for the year 2025-2026**.

This conclusion can be reached based on the core areas identified within the Authority's Local Code of Governance and the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 edition being met.

The AGS demonstrates that governance arrangements are **operating effectively and support the achievement of the Authority's objectives**.

The Authority remain committed to ensuring effective robust governance arrangements are in place which comply with the requirements of The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the seven principles contained in the CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 edition.

Over the next year (2026-2027), there are six actions, relating to areas of improvement, to be addressed. The delivery of these actions will further strengthen existing governance arrangements.





## **The Governance Framework**

Outlined on the following pages is a summary of the key elements of the governance framework which are aligned to the principles of good governance.

This section of the AGS should be read alongside the Authority's Local Code of Governance which provides more detail and evidence.



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

For Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority (HIWFRA) good governance is carried out through the Service **implementing the Authority's Safety Plan** alongside other key activity. The **Authority sets strategic direction, monitors, scrutinises and ensures delivery of services**, whilst accountability for the achievement of the Authority's objectives sits with the Service.

The Authority has a **Constitution**, the purpose of which is to set out in a single place and in clear language how Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority ("the Authority") works and how it makes decisions. The Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, its committees and Members. The scope of responsibilities for Members and delegation to officers are detailed within the Scheme of Delegation, Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Members and officers are aware of their responsibilities within these key documents. The Authority reviews and approves amendments to the Constitution at their Annual General Meeting (AGM) and as needed throughout the year. The Authority is committed to the highest ethical standards. There is a system in place for any complaint received that a Member, or Co-opted Member of the Authority, has failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members.

The Authority has established its **Policy Framework**. The Policy Framework defines the principles which act as the Authority's commitment to our communities and sets expectations for delivery of service activity.

The Authority's Policy Framework includes the following policies all of which are published on the website: Health and Safety, Operational Response, Prevention, Protection, People and Organisational Development, Corporate Governance, Financial Management, Environmental and Asset Management. Underpinning the Authority's Policy Framework is the **Service's Policy, Procedure and Guidance (PPG) framework**. The PPG framework contains the detailed policies and procedures that the Service are expected to follow to ensure the principles stated within the Authority Policies are met.

The Service's **Corporate Governance Framework** includes the systems, processes, and values by which the Service is directed and controlled. It provides the mechanism to enable the Authority and Service to make decisions, monitor the achievement of its objectives and to consider whether they have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective and efficient services. The Corporate Governance Framework provides a robust governance process; it streamlines decision making and supports efficient and effective operations for the Service. The effectiveness of the framework is evaluated throughout the year, with changes made as appropriate. The Corporate Governance Framework is transparent and is designed to demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical values, ensuring decision makers behave with integrity and respect the rule of law. Underpinning the Service's Corporate Governance is an **Officer's Scheme of Authorisation** which clarifies decision making levels across the organisation.



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

The Corporate Governance Framework includes the **Executive Group (EG)** which is Chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and operates with clear Terms of Reference (ToR). To underpin the EG, there are **Directorate Boards** to oversee key areas of the organisation, all of which have ToR and whose aim is to ensure clear routes of governance, scrutiny, and decision making. Furthermore, the Directorate Boards are supported by other forums and groups to support good governance.

The Service has four **values** (Supporting Others, Showing Respect, Everyone Playing Their Part, and Reaching Further) which are integral to everything we do. These values are underpinned by five **behaviours** (Dedicated, Openness, Caring, Empowering and Inclusive) which align to the Fire Standard Code of Ethics. These are **embedded in the organisation's recruitment and promotion processes, personal development review discussions, and staff recognition scheme.**

Furthermore, these values are underpinned by a range of policies and procedures including the **Member's Code of Conduct**, the **registers of interests and disclosure of pecuniary interests, gifts and hospitality and protocol for Member and officer relations** which are all included within the Constitution.

The Service expects staff to comply with the **Staff Code of Conduct** which includes the requirement for them to declare interests and register the offer and acceptance of gifts and hospitality. **Whistleblowing, Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment, Grievance, Prevention of Theft, Fraud, Bribery, Corruption, and Money Laundering, Complaint procedures and Say So** (a confidential reporting line for staff) are in place, enabling staff and members of the public to raise issues if they believe that appropriate standards have not been met. The Prevention of Theft, Fraud, Bribery, Corruption, and Money Laundering Procedure has been updated to take into account the new 'failure to prevent fraud offence.'





## Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Every Fire Authority must have a **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)** as required by the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. For HIWFRA, this is locally called the **Safety Plan**. The Authority approved the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Safety Plan 2025-2030 at the Authority meeting on 5 February 2025. The Safety Plan 2025-2030 is a live document which is updated annually. This approach to managing risk in our communities will ensure the organisation is able to report on how effective its risk reduction activities are and adapt as necessary.

The [Safety Plan](#) is on the website and available to stakeholders electronically and in paper format (upon request). The CRMP process which led to the approval of the Safety Plan 2025-2030 included **consulting with staff, partners and the public** on the nature of the proposals. Public consultation enables the Service to listen to and understand the needs of our communities to inform our decision making. In line with the national fire standard on producing Community Risk Management Plans, consultation was an important element in the production of our Safety Plan covering 2025-2030.

To ensure we designed a robust and comprehensive consultation process, we worked with The Consultation Institute who ensured our approach was comprehensive, met national standards and our equality obligations. All of our consultation engagement was specifically designed and appropriately accessible. The Service will continue to consult on specific work packages as part of our Safety Plan 2025-2030 over the coming five years, as required. Consultation will be tailored to each work package. For major changes such as any changes to fire stations, a full publication consultation will be carried out.

The Authority operates in an open and transparent way. It complies with **The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014**. The Authority's meetings are open to the public and its papers and decisions are available through the website (save for individual items of a sensitive nature properly considered in confidential session). In addition, Authority meetings are live streamed, and the recording published to enable staff and the public better access to view decision making.



## Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Clear **guidance and procedures on decision making** including templates for reports are available. There are effective arrangements in place for the approval of exempt reports to ensure that the Authority takes decisions in public when appropriate and after full consideration of relevant information.

The Authority, through the Service, enjoys a **constructive relationship with the trade unions** and associations representing staff groups across the organisation, through which meaningful consultation and negotiation on Service issues takes place. The Service regularly monitors Trades Union Facilities Time and publishes information in line with reporting requirements for public sector organisations outlines in The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017.

The Authority complies with the **Local Government Transparency code 2015** ensuring that Authority spend and procurement information is published. There are also processes in place to ensure that the **Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004** are complied with and that data is published and made available.

The Authority has a long history of collaborative **working with partner agencies**. In particular, with Hampshire County Council as part of the Shared Services Partnership and blue light collaboration with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) which continues as business as usual. The Service also continues to work closely with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), Local Authorities, and the National Health Service (NHS) as well as our blue light partners, to ensure good governance and robust frameworks in the collaborative environment.

The Authority, through the Service, provides a **comprehensive programme of communications and engagement activity**, to keep communities and other stakeholders informed, safe and involved. This includes 24/7 updates about incidents; the Your Service, Your Say people's panel; community safety campaigns focused on the most vulnerable people and the areas of greatest risk; the provision of information and services online; and face-to-face engagement events.



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

Our Safety Plan is underpinned by our **internal strategic assessment of risk** and the published **Identification and analysis of risk** to inform the 2025-30 Safety Plan. Our ongoing and live internal strategic assessment of risk provides the understanding for us to set out our services and priorities to manage, control and mitigate risk. We use this and other intelligence – such as from performance reporting, service learning, the progress of change activities, and assurance reporting – to support our refreshed approach to organisational planning, ensuring our decisions are data-led. We also consider the learning from significant events locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally to inform our planning. Whilst also, gaining information about best practice from inspections by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), as well as from other internal and external assurance activity.

The Service operate an **Annual Planning Cycle**. The Annual Planning Cycle which all Directorates follow, provides consistency across Directorate's and creates clarity. It takes into account the strategic assessment of risk outcomes alongside considering a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat analysis (SWOT) and a Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environment and Organisational analysis (PESTLEO). The combined assessments of risk contribute to our economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

The Safety Plan is underpinned by **Directorate plans**. Progress against these plans is monitored through regular performance updates to assess the deliverables reporting to the Executive Group and the Authority on an exceptions basis when required. The Directorate Plans provide the link from the Safety Plan through to an individual's objectives and goals and enables everyone to see how the work they do contributes to the bigger picture and the Safety Plan.

**People Impact Assessments (PIAs)** are used to identify any significant impact on people and those who share a characteristic which is protected under equality law. Impact Assessments also identify any environmental, economic, and legislative risks. A screening tool is used to help our people understand when supplementary (Stage two) impact assessments are required. A PIA is a stage two impact assessment.





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

The Service's **Change Management Framework** and its supporting procedure has a core focus on the outcomes and benefits achieved by change activity. – with these being considered throughout the lifecycle of change activity. The framework aims to streamline the process, remove unnecessary bureaucracy and to align to the Service's Corporate Governance Framework.

The Service **uses internal audit** and our **risk-based internal audit plan** as a core part of our annual assurance programme, as a 'third line of defence'. There is regular reporting into the Audit & Governance Committee on progress of audit management actions with internal reporting and monitoring including into Executive Group and Directorate Boards.





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

There are **clear guidance and protocols for decision making**. The involvement of legal and finance officers in all significant decisions of the Authority ensures that decisions are only made after relevant options have been weighed and associated risks assessed.

The **Organisational Risk Register captures current operational and organisational risks that could affect delivery of the Safety Plan**. The Organisational Risk Register is continually reviewed and submitted to Executive Group every quarter for review. The Authority has delegated to the Audit and Governance committee, regular monitoring of the Organisational Risk Register through formal reporting.

The Authority's **performance management arrangements** continue to be aligned to its objectives. The Authority receive an annual performance report and a mid-year performance report, both which illustrate performance directly related to its objectives.

The Service's **Change Management Framework and Annual Planning Cycle ensures that Service Activity (projects) have a clear correlation to the Authority's objectives**.

The Authority ensures intended outcomes are achieved through the **continued adoption of Fire Standards**. The progress of adopting Fire Standards throughout the Service alongside the Fire Standard assurance rating is reported bi-annually to the Audit and Governance Committee





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

The relationship between Members and officers is established on a professional culture of mutual respect, trust and cooperation. Within the Constitution, the **Member officer Protocol** is included providing clarification around the two roles. The role of scrutiny by Members to holding officers to account is central to exercising effective governance. Members provide constructive challenge to officers to assure themselves of the reliability and consistency of advice, information and ensure quality decision making.

A **Member's Champion scheme** is operated in support of an effective and professional relationship between Members and officers in which both understand each other's role. This scheme supports Members to better understand the context within which the organisation is operating and make robust judgements about performance. The current focus areas for Member Champions are Governance, Effectiveness & Performance, People, Community Safety, Carbon reduction and Fire Cadets and Children and Young People.

Members' knowledge and understanding is developed through the delivery of an **induction programme and periodic training and awareness sessions**. During 2025-2026, Members received various training and awareness sessions including refresher training, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and Audit and Governance Committee topic specific training.

Both Members and officers enjoy **Local Government Association (LGA) membership** that entitles them to attendance at training and conferences, targeted at raising awareness of national themes and in development of their leadership and scrutiny roles.

Members attend the Authority Policy Advisory Group (APAG) meetings which are delivered during the year. The meetings are chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and facilitate the **two-way exchange and update of information between Members and officers**. It is a forum providing the opportunity for Members and officers to informally discuss and shape policy.

To ensure capability of leadership, the **Executive Group have been enrolled on to the Institute of Directors (IOD) Certificate in Company Direction**, with professional membership to the IOD included.

Our People and Organisational Development Directorate (POD) includes a Learning and Development function, which delivers operational training including incident command, leadership, and management as well as commissioning technical and professional development provision such as health and safety qualifications and apprenticeship programmes. **Our POD Directorate plan identifies leadership and management development as a strategic priority**. Delivery of leadership and management training is aligned with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework and the Fire Standards Code of Ethics, as well as our own Service Values.



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

We use **insights from our wellbeing survey, internal and external data analysis, HMICFRS inspections, internal audits, and peer reviews alongside feedback from our staff network groups and management forums to inform our POD Directorate plan.** This seeks to make our organisation a great place to work for everyone whilst delivering excellent services to our communities through a professional, well equipped, and agile workforce.

The Authority's objectives are captured within the Safety Plan and include the importance that our staff at all levels are **skilled and feel equipped to undertake their responsibilities.** Our Leadership Development Framework supports the growth of our staff in their capacities as both leaders and managers.

HIWFRS regularly reviews the shape of its workforce against the context of its capacity and capability requirements to meet the needs of communities. **This then informs a range of strategies such as recruitment, retention and people development in order to provide effective leadership and deploy appropriate resources to meet the needs of the Service.**

HIWFRS has developed a **Workforce Plan** to further support the development and capability of leadership within the organisation.

HIWFRS promotes a culture of on-going coaching style conversations which focus upon high performance in all aspects of our work. **Staff take personal responsibility for their own performance and how this contributes to the overall performance of their team.** They are encouraged to use the range of learning opportunities that are available across the organisation.

The Service is committed to driving high performance by unlocking the potential of all employees. There is a revised **Personal Development Review (PDR) system**, with personal goals and objectives to link back to the objectives within directorate plans, priorities within the Safety Plan and behaviours linked to the organisational values. This focus on performance will ensure we deliver the best possible service to the communities we serve.

The Service has adopted the Fire Standards Board **Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People Fire Standards** with both standards receiving a reasonable self assurance rating.



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

The Fire Authority has a **Corporate Governance Policy** which sets the principles for a 'commitment to following good governance practices through openness, accountability, promoting informed decision making, managing risks and ensuring legislative compliance'. Risks associated with the delivery of the Safety Plan, as well as the work of each directorate, are recorded in the Service's Risk Management System. The Service's **Risk Management procedure** details how risks should be managed, mitigated, monitored, and reported.

**Performance management** is in place to measure progress against objectives. The Directorate Boards are supported by other forums and Groups, to **support good performance management and scrutiny** across the Service. The Service has interactive performance dashboards to support staff and directorates in understanding and interpreting their performance in key areas. These dashboards have been developed to **simplify reporting, make information more accessible** and ensure there is improved clarity on what areas of performance are most important across the Service. The Authority holds the Chief Fire Officer to account and receives regular performance reports at its public meetings. The Authority regularly monitors its performance with timely and relevant information through the **Mid-Year and Annual Performance reports**. The Executive Group reviews key performance indicators (KPIs) on a regular basis and the Chief Fire Officer holds Directors to account for performance of their areas across the organisation.

We compare our performance to that of other fire and rescue services. This continues to show that we are performing well in many areas when compared with other similar fire and rescue services. Where applicable, we also utilise external data and research to supplement our performance insights.

The **Internal Audit Plan** is developed to operate at a strategic level, providing a value-adding and proportionate level of assurance aligned to the Authority's key risks and priorities. The Internal Audit Plan incorporates provision for both proactive and reactive counter fraud and corruption work, which is underpinned by an **Anti-Theft, Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy**. The Service's approach to its Audit Plan is to identify areas that could present greatest risk or where managers have identified indicators that improvement is needed.

The Authority's Audit and Governance Committee has a clear terms of reference to align to **CIPFA best practice** to, provide an effective source of scrutiny, challenge, and assurance regarding the arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment. The Committee considers the delivery and outcomes of the Internal Audit Plan, along with scrutinising the Service's performance in delivering against agreed actions. The Committee have also adopted CIPFA best practice and recruited a co-opted independent member to the Committee.



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

The budget setting process is well established and prioritises budgets and spending to achieve intended outcomes. Budget setting and medium-term financial planning follow the principles set out in the **Authority's financial management policy**.

The Authority prepares its revenue budget on an annual basis, supported by periodic updates to its **Medium-Term Financial Plan** and annual updates to its multi-year capital programme. This is supported by the **Authority's Reserves Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy, Capital & Investment Strategy, and Efficiency and Productivity Plan**. The Authority Financial resources are focused to deliver its aims and objectives over the short and medium term, with financial planning and management fully integrated with (and driven by) the corporate planning and monitoring process.

The Authority has strong financial management arrangements at both the strategic and operational level. The external audit of the accounts has been impacted by the national audit backlog. This is the reason for the disclaimed audit opinions for 2022/23 and 2023/24 rather than any issues identified by the auditors with the accounts. Progress was made in rebuilding assurance to move to a qualified opinion for 2024/25. The auditor has provided a positive assessment of arrangements to deliver value for money and prior to the audit backlog, the Authority consistently obtained unqualified opinions for its annual accounts.

The **Section 151 Officer** is the Chief Financial Officer and all formal significant financial decision making has the benefit of advice and review from this officer or the wider finance team.

**Day to day financial management** is conducted in line with the Authority's constitution and the delegated responsibilities set out within the corporate governance policies, procedures and structure. Financial reporting happens both at a subjective level (i.e. income and expenditure types) and by directorate, meaning it is aligned to the Service's operational structure and its roles and responsibilities. **Capital programme expenditure and forecasts** are also regularly monitored. Treasury management activity is conducted, monitored, and reported on by an appropriately qualified team.

**Training is provided** to new budget managers to enable them to effectively use the suite of financial reports made available through the shared services portal and to ensure roles and responsibilities are understood. This is supported by access to online guidance and advice from the finance team. Further support and training can be arranged as appropriate.

At its February 2026 budget setting meeting the Authority also considered an updated **Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)**. The MTFP covers the period to the end of the three-year settlement in 2028/29. The MTFP clearly sets out risks/uncertainty within the forecasts and mitigation. The MTFP and in-year financial position are monitored by our Executive Group and are regularly formally reported to the Authority at its public meetings.



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

**The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial Management (FM) Code** was formally adopted across local government from the 2021/22 financial year. The FM Code sets out the six principles of good financial management, which it then translates into a list of financial management standards which local authorities should test their conformity against. The Service has undertaken an assessment of its compliance with all the financial management standards in the Code. Based on this, the Authority has ascertained that it is compliant with the Code with opportunities for enhancements as part of continuously improving.

The Service have implemented a robust process to embed and assure Fire Standards. The **Internal Governance and Assurance** Fire Standard which received reasonable self assessment rating closely aligns to the management of risk, planning, change management and governance processes.

The Service maintains robust arrangements for **cyber security, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and information management**, underpinned by a suite of assurance processes. We hold **Cyber Essentials accreditation**, demonstrating compliance with government-backed certification standards. Regular activities include the completion of annual audits and Code of Connection (CoCo) statement returns for emergency communications. Annual penetration tests by authorised third-party companies ensure conformity with Public Sector Network and Emergency Services Network accreditation requirements.

Cyber Security mandatory training is in place for all staff. The Home Office conducts assessments of our Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF), evaluating our cyber resilience. Additionally, the Service is beginning to utilise Artificial Intelligence (AI) where there are clear benefits, with further work planned to strengthen AI governance arrangements and safeguard both the organisation and its people. As part of our commitment to excellence, our Data Management Fire Standard and Digital and Cyber Fire Standard have been subject to self assessment assurance processes, which received reasonable rating.

The **UK's Procurement Act 2023** came into force in February 2025. The Act introduced additional compliance responsibilities for the Authority with the aim of creating a simpler, more transparent, flexible way of working. The Authority are part of the Shared Services Partnership and have access to **procurement professionals** on a daily basis. It is through this partnership that the majority of procurement activity takes place, all of which follows robust compliant processes.

There are areas of procurement and contract management that fall outside of the scope of the Shared Services Partnership, and which as a result of the new Act, means additional activities are required to be completed by Officers within the Service. Work has already started to ensure robust processes are in place to comply with the Act and it is an area that will be strengthened over the next year.



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

The Authority meetings are **open to the public** and reports are written in an understandable style appropriate to the audience and published on the website ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.

The Authority publishes data in line with the **Local Government Transparency Code 2015** to provide open data sources ensuring transparency and accountability.

We use **social media to demonstrate and highlight our response to incidents** to the public, as well as **raise awareness** of safety messages, calls to actions and fire and rescue service campaigns.

The '**Internal Audit Charter**' is presented annually for approval by the Audit and Governance Committee. The purpose of the Internal Audit Charter is to formally define its purpose, authority, and responsibility. The Chief Internal Auditor has direct access to elected Members of the Authority and those who serve on the Audit and Governance Committee. The on-going work of Internal Audit is presented routinely through the progress reports to the Committee, providing an overview of Service performance. It considers delivery against the plan and the progress made by the Service in the implementation of management actions that have been agreed to mitigate risks identified through internal audit work.

Representatives of **External Audit** routinely attend Audit and Governance Committee meetings and present external audit reports. Any recommendations for corrective action detailed within internal or external audit reports are highlighted to Members.

**Financial reporting complies with relevant statute, codes and good practice guidance.** Financial and performance information are reported consistently throughout the year. Where relevant and appropriate, performance comparisons are made to other organisations.

Our **Pay Policy Statement is approved annually** by the Authority and published on the Service's website.

Governance of our **internal safeguarding arrangements** are provided through various safeguarding audit activity work which is generated from both the local Adults Safeguarding Boards and the Local Children's Safeguarding Partnership.



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

## **The effectiveness of the Governance Framework**

## Assessment of Effectiveness

In maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the Authority's governance arrangements, the following have been considered:

- **A review of the content within the AGS 2024-2025** to identify the starting point for the previous year.
- **A review of the content of the new Local Code of Governance.**
- **Internal Audits External Quality Assessment against the CIPFA code:** CIPFA require that the AGS include a statement that internal audit arrangements conform with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK public sector (GIAS and the Application Note) and the CIPFA Code of Practice on the Governance of Internal Audit. In November 2025, the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) conducted an External Quality Assessment against the CIPFA code. The assessment outcome confirmed full compliance with the CIPFA code.
- **Acknowledgement of the Annual Internal Audit Opinion** for 2025-2026. The annual audit opinion for 2025-2026 is TBC
- **The Audit and Governance Committee Chairman's Annual Performance Report** has been taken into consideration when completing the AGS.

- **Acknowledgement and consideration of key projects and business as usual work** completed throughout the 2025-2026 year. Some of these include:

- review of PPG framework to align to Authority Policy Framework, amendments to the governance framework as a result of structure changes within the organisation,
- review of the members allowance scheme
- recruitment of the Co-opted Independent member onto the A&G Committee
- recruitment of Independent Person for the Authority
- creation of Local Code of Governance to align to CIPFA best practice
- Further embedded a new Change Management Framework and Annual Planning Cycle
- continued adoption of Fire Standards
- progression of improvements highlighted during the HMICFRS inspection.

Taking into account the points listed, it is considered that the **Authority's arrangements are adequately aligned to support delivery of the Authority's objectives**, meet planned outcomes and meets its responsibility for delivering value for money.

The governance arrangements in place are considered to be **operating effectively** in support of each of the principles of good governance and in alignment to the Local Code of Governance.



## Where our governance needs to improve

**During the 2025-2026 year, no significant governance failures were identified.**

Whilst significant failures in governance arrangements have not been identified, **there are areas where the core arrangements can be strengthened** to ensure they are operating as effectively as possible.

All of the actions listed are captured as a Service Activity (project) to be delivered within the 2026-2027 year, with progress monitored at Directorate Boards.

1. **Establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy** and strengthening governance arrangements in relation to the use of AI across the Service.
2. Ensure arrangements are in place to facilitate **compliance with the Procurement Act 2023.**
3. Establish mandatory training for the requirements of our duty **under Anti-Theft, Fraud, Bribery and Corruption.**
4. Improve confidence and understanding across the Service by raising awareness of the corporate governance structures and **how decisions are made.**
5. Establish a **Transition Plan, aligned to the transfer of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) functions into the new Combined County Authority.**



## How we have improved our governance arrangements in 2025-2026

Within the AGS 2024–2025, commitments were set to deliver activities to further enhance and strengthen governance controls. **All actions have now been completed**, as detailed below:

- 1. Review the Service's Corporate Governance Framework incorporating the Authority's Policy Framework:** a review and update of the Service's Corporate Governance Framework has been completed alongside the action below.
- 2. Maintain oversight of the progression of Devolution to ensure direct impacts to the Authority are understood:** a Service Devolution Transition Board has been set up to maintain oversight of the progression of Devolution and the impacts this will have on the Authority.
- 3. Complete an internal review of Financial Management using CIPFA tools and the CIPFA approach:** a review of financial management has been completed in line with the CIPFA approach.
- 4. Review the Service's Policy, Procedure and Guidance (PPG) framework including establishing a revised overarching procedure and ensuring alignment with the Authority's Policy Framework:** the Service's PPG framework has had a complete review to ensure policies, procedures and guidance are fit for purpose, provide clarity for staff and to remove any duplications and unnecessary information. The PPG framework is now published on the Service's intranet pages along with a refreshed 'Governance and Policy' Policy and Procedure which contains the Corporate Governance Framework stated in the action one above.
- 5. Produce an annual performance report of the Audit and Governance Committee aligned to CIPFA guidance:** the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, has produced the first Annual Performance Report which will be presented to the Committee on 22 July 2026.



## Forward look on governance

The English Devolution White Paper was published on the 16 December 2024 by the Deputy Prime Minister.

The White Paper sets out the government's ambitions for devolution and local government reorganisation and proposes significant changes to local government arrangements and transfers of power from Westminster to England's regions. Following the conclusion of the consultation, it is anticipated that the White Paper will become legislated as the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, during 2026.

It is expected that changes to HIWFRA governance will take place on 1 April 2028. The impact to the Authority will be that a Hampshire and Solent Mayor would become accountable as the Fire Authority and the governance arrangements with the present Fire Authority will no longer exist and therefore future governance arrangements will be reviewed and updated as required.





## Declaration

We have been advised on the outcomes of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Cohen-Hatton'.

HIWFRS Chief Fire Officer  
Dr Sabrina Cohen-Hatton KFSM

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Prad Bains'.

HIWFRA Chair  
Councillor Prad Bains



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY