



**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

# Fire and Rescue Declaration

Annual Statement of Assurance 2022/23

June 2023

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# 1 Introduction

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (the Framework) mandates each English Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA), through the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance (ASoA).

The statement outlines the way in which the authority and its Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has regard, in the period covered by the document, to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to relevant strategic plans.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), produces an independent Declaration, supporting the revised arrangements whereby our Annual Governance Statement (AGS) forms part of the governance reporting of the GMCA. The Declaration has been produced in line with the requirements and guidance contained in the revised National Framework, published by the Home Office in May 2018.

This statement will identify the measures of assurance in place for operational activities (response, prevention, and protection), finance, governance and workforce and finishes with a statement from the Mayor for the GMCA and the Chief Fire Officer as to the adequacy of assurance measures.

The published guidance sets out compliance requirements under five broad headings:

- Operational Assurance
- Prevention & Protection
- Finance
- Governance
- Workforce

## 1.1 Service Area Overview

GMFRS is one of the largest fire and rescue service in England, covering an area of 493 square miles and serving a population of 2.87 million residents, with many other people working or visiting the region.

Of that population of 2.87 million there are:

- 451,000 over 65s (set to increase 31% by 2043)
- 55,000 over 85s (set to increase 70% by 2043)
- 100,000 people receiving disability allowance
- 551,000 people living with long-term health conditions
- More than 200 different languages spoken, making Greater Manchester one of the most linguistically diverse cities in Europe

GMFRS protects 1.22million households, a quarter of which are in areas that are in the 10% most deprived nationally. We attend thousands of incidents every year including fires, road traffic collisions, flooding and rescues. Greater Manchester is linked by a complex transport infrastructure; including roads, rail and trams, with the centre surrounded by the M60, one of three orbital motorways in the UK, and an international airport.

GMFRS has to plan for and mitigate numerous and complex risks including:

- 953 high-rise buildings (residential and commercial)
- 39 Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites
- 130 miles of railways, 62 miles of Metrolink tracks, 105 miles of canals, ten motorways, Manchester Airport (MA)
- 57 town and city centres
- 1000s of acres of moorland
- Businesses, universities, and internationally renowned research facilities.

## 1.2 GMFRS Overview

The Service is spread across 45 sites including a Training and Safety Centre in Bury, the old Training and Development Centre (TDC) in Manchester city centre currently being utilised by the GMCA, Technical Services Centre in Leigh, our headquarters in Swinton, and 41 fire stations aligned to the ten local authorities that fall within the GMFRS boundary, split into five area teams, shown in Figure 2.

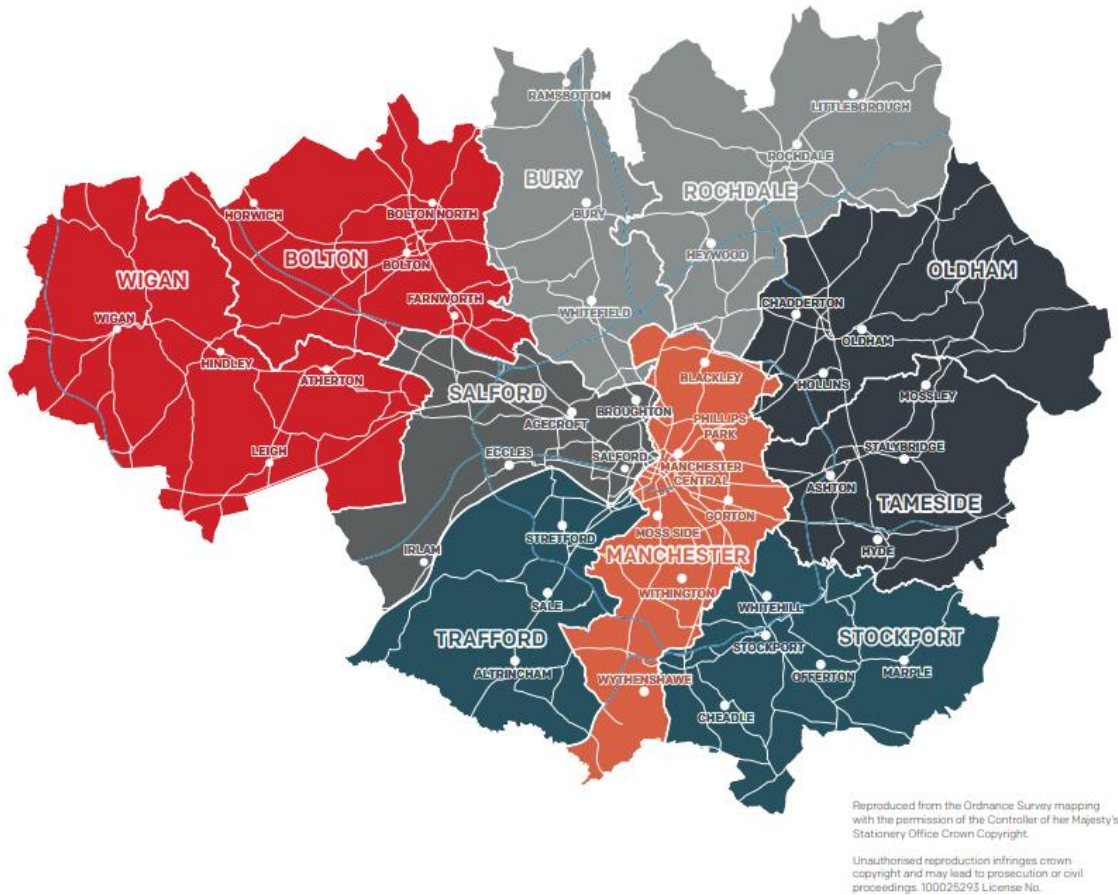


Figure 2: Overview of GMFRS stations and areas



Figure 3: GMFRS overview 2021/22

## 2 Operational Assurance

The National Framework requires Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to provide assurance on operational matters but does not specify how. It suggests that FRAs collaborate with local communities, local citizens, businesses, civil society organisations, etc.

FRAs operate within a statutory and policy framework defined by several legislative documents, including

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies)(England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Fire and Rescue Functions) Order 2017
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018)
- Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The purpose of this section is to ensure that the service is delivered as per statutory responsibilities and local strategies, including cross-border, multi-authority, and national arrangements, in line with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

### 2.1 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

We use integrated risk management planning to identify and understand the risks in our communities and find safe and efficient ways to respond to them. The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 requires that GMFRS has a legal obligation to identify and evaluate community risks and continually improve our ability to respond effectively.

Our Annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) examines all potential and foreseeable risks, and helps us focus on mitigating them through planning, policies, and decision-making. This report analyses a vast amount of information, supporting our decision-making process, enabling us to allocate resources efficiently, and guiding the development of our Fire Plan and Annual Delivery Plan.

The Fire Plan sets out our strategic priorities for the next four years, of which there are six.

## Strategic Priorities

1. Provide a fast, safe and effective response
2. Help people reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies
3. Help protect the built environment
4. Use resources more sustainably and deliver the most value
5. Develop a culture of excellence, quality and inclusivity
6. Integrate our services in every locality with those of partner agencies

The plan details our commitments to our residents, businesses, and partners under each priority. It explains how we will continue to prevent, protect, and respond to the requirements of our communities and also facilitate the implementation of the broader Greater Manchester Strategy.

Our Annual Delivery Plan is developed to support the delivery of the Mayor's six strategic priorities. It details our Mission, Vision and Values, the challenges and opportunities the Service faces, and how we assess risk. It also sets out our delivery roadmap for the year, detailing where we will focus our resources and efforts. Over the course of the Fire Plan 2021-25, we will produce a total of four Annual Delivery Plans.

The Fire Plan, alongside the Annual Delivery Plan, combine to form our CRMP, which is underpinned by our annual Strategic Assessment of Risk, and copies of these documents can be found via the links below:

- Fire Plan / ADP - [Fire Plan - Greater Manchester Fire Rescue Service](#)
- [Annual Strategic Assessment of Risk](#)

At GMFRS we have historically incorporated Integrated Risk Management within our Strategic Plan and combined Corporate and Integrated Risk Management to ensure we deliver our core purpose in the most effective way.

Greater Manchester's economic importance, diversity and infrastructure makes for a complex picture in terms of the risks that GMFRS has to plan for, help prevent and look for opportunities to improve. Risk is an inherent part of being an emergency service and we manage risk in two broad ways

**Integrated Risk Management** is supported by the use of risk modelling, this is a process by which data is used to assess the likelihood of Fire and Rescue related incidents within Greater Manchester. We produce an annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) document, which enables us to create an accurate and up-to-date picture of the potential threats facing our communities and how these are considered in the production of our plans. This information is used to identify geographic areas at higher risk where a combination of prevention, protection and response activities have the greatest impact.

**Corporate Risk Management** is a wider process, used to identify all the significant opportunities and threats that might affect our ability to meet the Service's priorities and commitments. All potential risks are continuously identified, assessed, and managed through a range of mitigating actions. The Corporate Risk Register (CRR) is utilised to capture information relating to these risks, and how these are prioritised and managed. The register is regularly reviewed and presented monthly to Performance Board. Directorates each have their own risk register monitored through functional boards, and where appropriate, risks can be escalated onto the CRR and the GMCA Risk Register.

**Consultation and engagement** is an essential part of the development of a CRMP, and for each one produced, the Service uses stakeholder analysis to develop a proportionate consultation plan and engagement opportunities. This analysis enables potential stakeholders to be consulted / engaged with, on proposals to ensure where appropriate, their input is incorporated into the final version.

An internal and external consultation plan was developed to support consultation and engagement activities undertaken on the Fire Cover Proposals. Internal consultation was undertaken over a period of ten weeks commencing two weeks ahead of the launch of the six week external consultation activities. Individual consultation exercises are undertaken on key projects that will impact on communities to gather feedback ahead of any final decisions.



## 2.2 Operational Assurance

Operational Assurance (OA) as part of an overall GMFRS Service Assurance function adheres to both Legislation and National Operational Guidance. We define these responsibilities as:

- A service assurance function that provides an effective balance of support and ‘independent check and challenge’, that is aligned to the expected service standards; and ensures all systems and internal controls are fit for purpose.
- Embedding a learning culture in the Service that supports and encourages both individuals and the Service to increase knowledge, competence, and performance levels on an ongoing basis to promote continuous improvement.
- A new assurance approach to focus on self-assessment and validation that encourages self-awareness, and ensures high standards are met and maintained.

By maintaining an effective provision of Operational Assurance, GMFRS aims to;

- Identify good operational practice, using it to improve safety and efficiency.
- Recognise the implications of significant single high consequence events or high potential events that could impact service delivery or safety.
- Recognise trends and multiple events that identify potential issues that should be addressed.
- Assure the continued effectiveness of internal controls.
- Guide investment in equipment, research, and development.
- Change practice in relation to customer welfare and support customer journey mapping

## **2.3 Active Monitoring System (AMS)**

Active Monitoring is a fundamental element to support organisational learning and service improvement. It is used to consider the widest possible evidence base to capture notable practice and highlight where improvement or change is needed at a local level. The output of active monitoring informs action within GMFRS to drive continual improvement in the quality of service delivered to our communities. This is also supported by formal governance arrangements following the introduction of the Organisation Learning Group (OLG), that will provide an overview of internal and external operational learning, and identify, allocate and track progress of areas for improvement and notable practice within GMFRS.

## **2.4 Mutual Aid Agreements**

GMFRS holds formal, mutual agreements for reinforcements with all its surrounding fire and rescue authority areas (Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside, West Yorkshire, and Derbyshire). In addition, we have an agreement with Manchester International Airport to provide initial operational response to domestic incidents at the airport. All of these agreements are reviewed on a regular basis as part of our corporate planning cycle.

## **2.5 National Resilience**

A national protocol provides support and resilience to GMFRS. The protocol sets out the terms under which FRSs may expect to request assistance from or provide assistance to each other, in the event of a serious incident such as a terrorist attack. It is aimed at the deployment of specialist resources hosted by FRSs across the country. The support provided by GMFRS for National Resilience is comprehensive and widespread and includes the provision of specialist teams and equipment to support the response to a wide range of incident types.

## **2.6 Response to Terrorist Attacks / Marauding Terrorist Attack**

GMFRS is prepared and has the ability to respond to a Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA). Working in partnership with staff and the FBU we have designed and implemented a new MTA capability which went live in May 2023. The new capability replaced the MTA specialist response teams (SRT) at Leigh, Ashton, Irlam and Heywood.

All our frontline firefighters have received enhanced training, and specialist equipment which is available on every fire engine so they are ready to respond quickly and effectively should a terrorist attack or mass casualty incident occur. This new approach is in line with the findings of the Manchester Arena Inquiry, training is aligned with the police and ambulance services.

The GMFRS MTA capability undertakes regular training with partner agencies and includes joint JESIP training (Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles), to ensure an effective response is achieved during an unfolding dynamic incident, as detailed within the MTA Joint Operating Principles (JOPs).

## **2.7 Joint Operational Learning (JOL)**

JOL has been established as a key part of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) to provide a consistent national system to address common multi-agency learning areas.

Through collaboration with Greater Manchester Resilience Forum, GMFRS has developed a multi-agency training strategy as a framework to ensure an appropriate level of delivery and support is provided in the commissioning and delivery of training and exercising linked to partnership activities. The strategy assists the Local Resilience Forum to deliver the statutory requirements under the CCA 2004 for the provision of exercising and training of staff.

Adoption of the Multi-Agency Training Strategy and utilisation of the debrief process supports the requirement within the National Resilience Standards with regard to Interoperability between all emergency responder and partner organisations or more specifically, the extent to which Greater Manchester Partners work together coherently as a matter of routine.

## 2.8 National Operational Guidance (NOG) and Learning (NOL)

NOG was set up to replace the FRS National Generic Risk Assessments. We use NOG as the basis for our own operational procedures and guidance as stated in our NOG and NOL Policy.

NOL forms part of the maintenance process for the NOG products, the aim of NOL is to capture operational learning from UK FRSs and the wider International Fire and Rescue Sector and share the learning across UK FRSs.

GMFRS utilises the NOL process by receiving information and action notes and comparing them against GMFRS operational procedures and guidance, making changes where necessary. We contribute to the NOL process by sharing our own learning and gather and act upon learning from other FRS through the NOL process.

## 2.9 Business Continuity

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is an integral part of our Corporate Risk Management process. In relation to the BCM processes and procedures, all FRAs have to satisfy the requirements of both the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 and Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) 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 Service is able to continue its core functions.

In order to ensure that GMFRS complies with the CCA and the FRS Act, our BCM aligns to the Business Continuity Institute Good Practice Guidelines (BCI GPG) and includes:

- Identify prioritised processes through business impact analysis.
- Assess and embed internal and external risks which may impact GMFRS.
- Produce a Business Impact Analysis which will form the overarching risks and prioritised functions of GMFRS.
- Strategic, Tactical Plans and Policies are produced in line with the BCM and Degradation Policy
- Arrangements are made to test the BC plans including audits, exercises, and assurance.

- All key personnel are trained to understand their role within the plan and each Department/Borough has a BCM reference holder.
- BCM responsibilities are clearly identified and assigned.

Each year or following significant changes the plans are reviewed and tested to ensure they are current and fit for purpose. The Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated GMFRS's ability to deal with a Major BCM Incident, whilst at the same time maintaining the ability to respond to other emergencies.

As part of our BCM activities we regularly test our plans across a range of planned and no notice exercises, ensuring any opportunities to improve are identified and implemented.

# 3 Prevention and Protection

## 3.1 Prevention

GMFRS Prevention Strategy focuses on preventing fire and emergencies through education and community engagement. Our approach includes a person-centred approach to prevention, targeted risk assessment and engagement with at-risk groups of all ages. These approaches support a range of activities are designed to reduce the risk and harm of fire and other emergencies to the residents and visitors to Greater Manchester.

GMFRS operates a network of teams across the ten metropolitan areas of Greater Manchester and integrates with locality teams to share information and support community cohesion, with the aim of reducing the incidents of fire and other emergencies.

To enable general safety and advice, communications with the public and visitors GMFRS maintains a website, delivering advice and information to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies. Additionally, throughout the year, we conduct several prevention campaigns, such as press releases, video content, and events, aligned with national and local themes to promote behavioural changes and prevent injuries and harm.

GMFRS introduced an online home fire safety check. This is an online tool which will enable any resident of Greater Manchester to undertake a simple and intuitive assessment of the fire risk in their own home (or for someone else). If the outcome shows low risk the resident will receive personalised online advice and guidance. Anyone recording higher levels of risk having completed the online check will be entered into the GMFRS systems to be referred for a Home Fire Safety Assessment (HFSA) where a physical visit will be undertaken by fire fighters or prevention staff.

During a HFSA, a firefighter or member of the prevention team will visit the property and identify any potential fire hazards and provide advice on how to make their home safer. They will also check that smoke alarms are installed and in working order and provide free smoke alarms to those who do not have them. This intervention process is targeted at those most at risk, person-centred and aligned to a nationally recognised standard that has been specifically designed to reduce the risk from and impact of fire in the home.

It will ensure households where the risk of fire is deemed to be lower are able to access important safety advice, whereas those identified as higher risk will receive a physical visit.

Education continues to be a priority in GMFRS, and we looking to introduce Cadet Units across the Service, in prioritised areas. Utilising the Fire and Rescue Service 'brand' to recruit young people between 14 and 18 years in a disciplined and structured programme designed to provide personal development and engender societal responsibility, while creating community ambassadors for GMFRS values.

GMFRS operates a facility at Bury Training and Safety Centre, where young people and other age groups can undertake a structured visit to increase awareness of fire and other emergencies, within an immersive environment designed to induce behavioural change.

As a delivery partner for the Prince's Trust, GMFRS also supports community cohesion and resilience by supporting young people between the ages of 16 and 25, who are not in education, employment, or education (NEET) on a 12-week personal development programme designed to increase qualifications and employment.

GMFRS provides monitoring and assurance against attendance, retention, achievement, and completion rate in respect of educational programmes. Quality assurance on accredited work is submitted to external partners as required.

As a member of the Safer Roads Greater Manchester Partnership, GMFRS actively supports the wider campaigns and specifically the coordination of Safe Drive Stay Alive GM, a performance-based road safety intervention aimed a school and college aged young people, designed to positively influence the attitudes and behaviours of learner and novice drivers, to reduce the risk of road traffic collisions.

In September 2022 GMFRS delivered a Water Safety Summit. The summit brought together partners from across the City Region to discuss ways to reduce deaths by drowning, and other water safety related issues, with a view to the implementation of a GM Water Safety Strategic Partnership and Water Safety Strategy. The initial meeting of the partnership is scheduled for June 2023. As well as general and localised campaigns designed to reduce the risk of drowning, GMFRS staff also participate in localised safety groups designed to increase water safety awareness and reduce the number of water-based emergencies GMFRS attends.

Early in 2023 GMFRS engaged with GM Probation Service and other key partners to develop a pilot programme which was named the 'Atlas project'. The programme was designed to deliver a proof of concept in supporting rehabilitation and behaviour change in adult fire setters.

In May 2023 the pilot was delivered and subsequently evaluated with positive outcomes. A further engagement period with partners is planned to identify key learning and to pave the way for further programmes to be run over the forthcoming year. These partnership programmes, along with other similar activities, will aim to support our drive to reduce deliberate fire setting and arson related activity.

## **3.2 Protection**

FRAs must make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme in place for enforcing compliance with provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies.

The core purpose of our Protection teams is to ensure the safety of the public and firefighters by identifying, investigating, and reducing risk. We work with others to identify risks and develop solutions to improve safety through engagement, advice, and enforcement and this underpins the delivery of our services.

GMFRS is committed to developing a highly skilled Protection workforce to ensure we are equipped to deal with the challenges we face in relation to the Built Environment in Greater Manchester and is investing significantly in training of our Fire Safety Regulators in line with the Competency Framework

We are committed to supporting businesses to comply and are working hard to increase the information available to businesses through a variety of media. GMFRS actively participates in the Primary Authority Scheme through the Greater Manchester Centre of Regulatory Excellence and provides extensive support to our Primary Authority Partners to give tailored fire safety advice including the provision of assured advice. In this way we contribute to a consistent and coordinated regulatory environment.

We have changed our Protection Delivery Model and moved away from geographical team to a functional based approach providing greater agility to effectively target risk and undertake priority work including consultations, audits and inspections and investigations into non-compliance. Our Risk Based Inspection Programme is agile and links premises risk to compliance history allowing us to more effectively target risk. We audit premises in line with national guidance using appropriately qualified fire-safety officers for the premises type.



Our officers provide advice on compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and will take enforcement action where this is necessary to protect the public.

We are committed to ensuring the safety of buildings from design through to occupation and have improved our systems for recording statutory consultations to ensure we can monitor our response times and take action to ensure we are able to respond in a timely manner.

Following the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, GMFRS played a key role in the GM High Rise and Building Safety Task Force to inspect buildings, take action to ensure the safety of residents and support stakeholders to respond to emerging evidence about the risks in buildings and changing Government advice. Our Higher Risk Team continues to lead on this work and liaises with housing providers, managing agents and our Local Authority partners.

Our specialist Petroleum and Explosives Officers oversee the licensing of premises storing explosives and the issue of petroleum storage certificates. Inspections are undertaken by qualified fire safety inspectors who have received additional training and been appointed under the Health and Safety at Work Act to carry out these functions. We have developed and implemented a Risk Based Inspection Programme for the inspections of these sites.

Fire investigation is an integral part of the Service's Prevention and Protection activities. The main purpose of fire investigation is to determine the origin, cause, and development of a fire and to contribute to organisational learning. All fires attended will be investigated to establish the cause of fire, with front line officers trained to investigate fires and a dedicated team to lead on the more complex investigations.

Investigation outcomes will be used increasingly to inform future prevention and protection activities and we actively support Greater Manchester Police to contribute to the prevention and detection of crime.

We have a dedicated Water Team who work to ensure that we have adequate water supplies for firefighting for new and existing buildings to ensure the safety of the public and our firefighters.

# 4 Financial Assurance

## 4.1 Financial Reporting and Audit

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'.

All Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority (GMFRA) assets were transferred to the GMCA with effect from 8th May 2017. The accounts relating to the fire and rescue service for the year ending 31st March 2021 form part of the accounting arrangements for the GMCA.

The Treasurer to the GMCA provides publicly available annual accounts which are approved by the GMCA Audit Committee. A copy of the latest GMCA statement of accounts for 2021/22 can be found at the link below:

An independent audit of the accounts is undertaken by an external auditing body, Mazars. The external auditor undertakes a review of the accounts and forms an overall opinion which is published in annually – [Audit Opinion](#). A copy of the Statement of Accounts is available on our website – [2021/22 Statement of Accounts](#).

## 4.2 Medium Term Financial Strategy

The GMCA published a medium-term financial strategy which includes funding and spending plans for revenue and capital, the requirements for GMFRS are included within the Mayoral General budget. The strategy considers multiple years, the inter-dependencies of revenue budgets and capital investments, the role of reserves and the consideration of risks and is aligned with the integrated risk management plan.

## 4.3 Reserves

The medium-term financial strategy considers the planned role of reserves and is aligned with the IRMP. The details of current and future planned reserve levels are published, setting out a total amount of reserves and the amount of each specific reserve that is held for each year, with reasons and justification for the amounts held.

- [Medium Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\)](#)

## 4.4 Collaboration

GMFRS works collaboratively with other regional FRSs, namely Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Cumbria, Northern Ireland, and the Isle of Man, to aggregate procurement demand and standardise specification requirements wherever possible, to ensure that we continually strive to deliver and evidence value for money.

We participate in national collaborative procurement opportunities. Within Greater Manchester we work with other partners and agencies, e.g., Greater Manchester Resilience Unit (GMRU), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Transport for Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Waste (also part of GMCA), North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), and others, to review and evaluate collaborative opportunities to achieve efficiencies.

Our Protection Department works closely with other NW FRS through the NFCC NW Protection Group which is chaired by GMFRS and works to an annual delivery plan. Our collaboration through this group has seen the development of joint CPD events for Fire Safety Regulators which are now delivered on an annual basis. In 2022/23 we agreed a standardised methodology for the Competency Assessments which are required under the NFCC Competency Framework and consistent standards for auditing behaviours.

GMFRS committed to supporting Operation Vulcan which is an innovative GMP led multi-agency operation to tackle entrenched criminality in the Cheetham Hill area and has and continues to play an active role in this partnership.

GMFRS is a key contributor and collaborator with the Greater Manchester High Rise and Building Safety Task Force and pro-actively engages with Housing Providers and Managing Agents. Supported by GMFRS, the Task Force has overseen the response within Greater Manchester, to ensure preparedness in the event of a similar incident to the fire at Grenfell Tower. It has taken action to ensure safety of premises and provides reassurance to residents in high rise accommodation. In 2022 GMFRS co-ordinated a Task Force response to the Home Office consultation on Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing proposals which drew in views of a range of stakeholders and put the safety of residents at the heart of the response.

GMFRS undertook significant engagement with Housing Providers and Managing Agents in relation to the implementation of the Fire Safety England Regulations and utilised this to shape the proposals. As part of the implementation arrangements GMFRS has produced

fact sheets and guidance including for residents which draws in Prevention information and can be used to discharge the legal obligation to provide information to residents.

At a national level, GMFRS is collaboratively engaged in responding to the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. The NFCC Lead for Fires in Tall Buildings is a GMFRS senior officer and GMFRS is coordinating the NFCC's response with particular respect to the theme of 'evacuation' and is directly informing the Government's own responses to the recommendations placed upon it.

GMFRS works collaboratively with bordering FRSs and in particular those served by North West Fire Control in order to achieve convergence of operational service delivery where possible / practicable.

GMFRS and GMP have collaborated to position a GMFRS Officer within GMP's Force Operations Centre. This provides the benefit of rapid information sharing, being in a position to share current situational reports to the Incident Commander to support any JESIP liaison whilst on scene. Additionally, GMFRS work in close collaboration with the GM Local Resilience Forum, leading on the commissioning of exercise and training, and supporting the review and coordination of Multi-Agency Response Plans.

To support the improvements made to the MTA capability, GMP and NWS supported the delivery of the training throughout 2022/23, this has been extremely successful and the feedback from our crews has been positive. This has seen a further commitment from both GMP and NWS to continue this approach for the future, with the aim to deliver a Multi-Agency training theme year on year.

## **4.5 Research and Development**

GMFRS is actively looking forward with regards to emerging and future operational risks, to ensure our operational crews are able to deal with the risks they face. For example, this currently includes trialling of additional equipment, and collaboration with regional partners in order to deal with the threat of electrical vehicle fires and other hazards posed by lithium-ion batteries.

GMFRS is directly involved on behalf of the NFCC with the Joint Home Office (HO) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Technical Steering Group, set up to support a research project which aims to review means of escape provisions in blocks of flats including the use of the 'stay put' strategy and evacuation.

Furthermore, GMFRS is the FRS sector lead with respect to the research and development of operational evacuation strategies.

The Training Function are exploring a trial to introduce some Virtual Reality Training Sets, this method of training for Fire and Rescue Services is in its infancy, so a trial will allow us to fully understand what it can offer. Some early advantages identified are Health and Safety, less impact on the environment and financial savings on consumables.

## **4.6 Shared Interest**

GMFRS has a shared interest in North West Fire Control (NWFC) Limited, a public sector company set up to jointly handle all 999 emergency calls with responsibility for mobilising fire engines to incidents in Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, and Cheshire. North West Fire Control Ltd is a local authority controlled company governed by a Board of Directors made up of representatives from each respective FRA.

# 5 Governance

## 5.1 Governance Arrangements

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Fire and Rescue Functions) Order 2017 (the Fire Order), which came into force on 8th May 2017 transferred overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the FRS in Manchester to the Mayor of Greater Manchester. The Combined Authority is the FRA for the area and the fire and rescue functions of the Authority are exercisable by the elected Mayor with all staff, properties, rights, and liabilities transferring to the GMCA.

Under Article 6, of the Fire Order, the Mayor is required to exercise certain functions personally and those function are:

- a. The power to enter into arrangements under sections 13, 15 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (reinforcement schemes etc.)
- b. Appointing, suspending, or dismissing the person responsible for managing the FRS i.e., the Chief Fire Officer, approving the terms of appointment of the Chief Fire Officer, and holding the Chief Fire Officer to account for managing the FRS.
- c. Approving the local risk plan – CRMP
- d. Approving the fire and rescue declaration – Annual Assurance Statement
- e. Approving Business Continuity Management plans
- f. Approving any arrangements with Category 1 and Category 2, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Fire and Rescue Functions) (Amendment) Order 2020 (the Amendment Order) came into force on the 26th June 2020. The Amendment Order allowed the Mayor to make arrangements for fire and rescue functions to be exercised by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

The Mayor has delegated all fire and rescue functions to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, with the exception of those functions that cannot be delegated (set out in Article 6 and referred to above) and the functions delegated to Chief Officers under the Scheme of Delegation to Chief Officers.

The Deputy Mayor is responsible for ensuring Fire and Rescue Services in Greater Manchester are efficient and effective and prepares the local risk plan (CRMP) and the Annual Declaration for approval by the Mayor.

The Amendment Order also amended the remit of the now Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Crime Panel to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken in connection with the discharge of fire and rescue functions. In addition to the general review and scrutiny of decisions, the Panel has the following specific functions:

- a. Scrutiny of the local risk plan
- b. Scrutiny of the fire and rescue declaration
- c. Scrutiny of the proposed allocation of budget for fire and rescue functions
- d. Scrutiny of the appointment of the Chief Fire Officer
- e. Scrutiny of suspension and dismissal of the Chief Fire Officer

Decisions relating to the Service are otherwise subject to the governance arrangements of the GMCA with reporting and scrutiny on financial, performance, operational and other matters. The GMCA's Code of Corporate Governance sets out how the GMCA operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people. Each year the GMCA publishes an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) to accompany the Statement of Accounts. It provides an overall assessment of the GMCA's corporate governance arrangements.

It also describes how it meets the requirements of regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Annual Accounts. It is a document which looks back retrospectively over the past year and identifies where the GMCA has demonstrated good governance and looks forward as to areas where focus should be given in relation to governance over the coming year. The GMCA's corporate governance framework is structured around the seven good governance principles set out in the 2016 CIPFA guidance.

The Annual Governance Statement demonstrates how the GMCA is delivering its services in the right way in a timely, inclusive, and accountable manner and will be certified by the GMCA Chief Executive and the Mayor, after consideration of the draft by the GMCA Audit Committee.

GMCA's external auditor reviews the Annual Governance Statement as part of the assessment of their value for money conclusion. A copy of the latest Annual Governance Statement can be found via the link below:

- Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 - [Annual Statement of Accounts \(GMCA\)](#)

## **5.2 Assurance, Scrutiny and Accountability**

The assurance and scrutiny arrangements for GMFRS now form part of the GMCA governance and reporting structure, notwithstanding these arrangements the Service retains robust assurance arrangements in compliance with the National Framework, which include:

- Strategic aims and values embedded in the Service Planning, Delivery, Risk Management, and Performance Management Frameworks.
- A Monitoring Officer responsible for ensuring the legality of Service actions.
- A management structure governed by the Executive Board and Service Leadership Team responsible for overseeing the running of GMFRS.
- The Fire Executive Board report into the GMCA Chief Executive's Management Team (CEMT) via the Chief Fire Officer who is a member of the CEMT, and is also accountable to the Deputy Mayor, who holds officers to account through regular Deputy Mayor Executive (DME) meetings.
- Further scrutiny of the Service is provided by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel. Decisions agreed at the DME are then considered by the Panel and like the DME, the Panel is able to request updates and analysis of ongoing work programmes and performance, as well as respond to emerging themes. The Panel holds to account the police and fire services, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
- The provision of a robust and credible Operational Assurance function to assist in achieving the aims identified within the Mayoral Fire Plan and seeks to ensure that: -
  - a) the service delivery elements of the organisation are working effectively to fulfil the detailed requirements of the Annual Delivery Plan
  - b) the service has a safe, well-trained, and competent workforce.
- A comprehensive budget setting and monitoring framework with clearly defined guidelines and responsibilities with frequent budget management reporting.



- Support and ability to call on Local, Regional and National Resilience Arrangements.
- An Internal Audit function that meets all professional standards, supports the Service in the achievement of its improvement agenda and has responsibility for the continual review of major financial controls and the wider internal control environment.
- A GMFRS Corporate Risk Register is approved and monitored by SLT and the Deputy Mayor. This is supplemented by a GMCA wide Corporate Risk Review Group, which reviews strategic risks across the GMCA. The group meets quarterly to provide ongoing assurance over the management of high-level risks facing the GMCA, as well as all of its key functions, including Fire and Rescue Service.
- Published Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Whistleblowing Policy, and Fraud Prosecution Policy to ensure correct reporting and investigation of suspected fraudulent activities. [Report fraud and corruption - GMCA](#)
- A comprehensive Performance Management framework with clearly defined performance management targets, that measures financial and other performance data linked to the Service strategic priorities and outcomes.

### 5.3 Transparency

The GMCA publishes senior salaries, register of interests, staffing, income and expenditure, property, rights and liabilities, and decisions of significant public interest.

- [Gender Pay Gap - GMCA](#)
- [Ethnicity Pay Gap](#)
- [Transparency Reports – GMCA](#)
- [Procurement Transparency Reports – GMCA](#)

### 5.4 Performance Management

As part of the annual Corporate Planning Process the Service sets out the Corporate Key Performance Indicators, which measure the delivery of its strategic priorities and provides business intelligence, to help target prevention and protection activities.

Targets are set where appropriate to support continuous improvement and learning. Progress against these indicators is monitored monthly through Performance Management Working Group and Performance Board and scrutinised quarterly by SLT and at the Deputy Mayor's Fire Executive meeting.

## 5.5 Internal Audit arrangements

Internal Audit undertake a key role in assessing our assurance related activities, a significant proportion of the Annual Audit Plan is focused on providing assurance that operational and strategic risks are effectively managed to ensure the Service's core purpose and aims are achieved and quality services provided. Internal Audit report directly into the GMCA Audit Committee who approve the internal audit work plan, oversee audit activity, and review outcomes from the work undertaken.

The Head of Internal Audit has provided an opinion of moderate assurance in relation the arrangements in place for governance, risk management and internal control in 2021/22. This is an improvement from the previous year when a limited assurance opinion was given.

The latest reports are available via the following link: - [Annual Assurance Documentation](#).

## 5.6 Inspection

Following the introduction of the mandate for all English FRSs to be inspected, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) has carried out two full inspection of GMFRS.

The inspections are designed to promote improvement and identify all aspects of the work undertaken by FRSs. Using experts from across the sector to deliver the inspections, the methodology considers three broad pillars, namely:

- **Efficiency** – How efficient are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- **Effectiveness** – How effective are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- **Leadership** – How well do we look after our people?

Since our first inspection we have been working to deliver improvements, with progress reported and monitored through our governance arrangements. Our most recent inspection confirmed we are an evolving and improving Service and inspectors reported a positive shift in the Leadership and Culture of GMFRS.

Our activities to address the areas of improvement identified in our inspection report will be delivered as part of our improvement programme.

Alongside this is the review of our level of compliance against the new Fire Standards, published by the Fire Standards Board, to ensure any gaps identified are addressed and compliance levels met.

All our inspection reports can be found on the HMICFRS website, with links below to the most recent:

- [GMFRS Inspection Report 2021/22](#)
- [GMFRS COVID Thematic Inspection 2020](#)
- [Fire Standards Board](#)

# 6 Workforce

## 6.1 People Strategy

The GMCA People Strategy will replace the historical GMFRS People and Organisational Development Strategy. The People Strategy is a key document that brings together the strategic workforce objectives for GMCA (including GMFRS), establishing a clear link to the Greater Manchester Strategy, Fire Plan and Annual Delivery Plan and setting out how we seek to attract, retain, support, and reward our people in order to achieve excellence in providing services to the residents of Greater Manchester.

The strategy has been co-developed through consultation with our workforce and will have inclusivity and health and well-being of our workforce at its heart. We will continually measure progress against the GMCA People Strategy's objectives using a variety of means, including our staff surveys and a dashboard of KPIs.

We recognise that our workforce is one of our greatest assets and in order to meet the new challenges and opportunities ahead it is vital that we have the right people, in the right jobs with the right skills at the right time. One of the key pillars supporting our People Strategy is the way we attract and recruit organisationally, especially our operational staff comprising the largest component of our workforce. In 2022/23 we will refresh our four-year Firefighter Recruitment and Attraction Strategy, which supports the development of a progressive, diverse, and well qualified operational workforce. This four-year strategy sets out how we will meet both current and future workforce requirements including how we maximise overall efficiency in a cost-effective way.

Our Learning and Development Strategy sets out a transparent and coherent learning offer for all our staff, to ensure staff understand and acquire the skills they need to successfully do their job, including the importance of creating an inclusive culture and working environment.

Further talent management initiatives include development of an organisational Recruitment and Selection Framework that embraces overall recruitment and selection to all staff groups. A modern and progressive promotion process for operational staff, aligned to the establishment of a 4-year Leadership Development Programme has already been implemented. Considerable work is underway to support the organisation in creating a culture based on our mission and values and supporting the national Code of Ethics.

## **6.2 Operational Training**

GMFRS's Operational Training Strategy (OTS) outlines the approach to ensuring that its operational staff are trained and competent in order to fulfil the various operational demands placed upon them. It demonstrates the commitment of the Service to deliver corporate operational training.

The OTS also involves demonstrating the ability to work with others in a coherent and uncomplicated way, with other emergency services in accordance with the principles of JESIP.

The OTS does not sit in isolation, and when the Service plans and prepares annually to meet its operational training demands, it considers and analyses a wide range of internal and external influences and drivers ensuring that these are all fed into the decision-making process when the annual operational training planning cycle commences.

The delivery of the OTS establishes a mechanism, to ensure that the Service has in place Incident Command and operational training programmes being delivered by competent Instructors to its operational staff. These programmes are then reviewed in order to confirm their continued effectiveness, quality, and relevance.

The Training Team work in conjunction with other Departments within the Service, such as the Operational Assurance Team, Operational Information Team and the Safety, Health, and Wellbeing Team to provide training, development, and assessment for all members of the Service.

## **6.3 Safety, Health & Wellbeing**

The GMCA has overall accountability for the safety, health, welfare and wellbeing of its workforce; the Chief Fire Officer is responsible for delivering this within GMFRS.

Health, Safety and fitness performance is regularly reviewed to improve organisational learning and a safe working environment and is regularly shared with representatives from our trade unions.

Health and Safety, Audits and Inspections measure the compliance and quality within the Service, with the aim of continuous improvement, to establish:

- Appropriate management arrangements are in place

- Adequate risk control systems exist, are implemented, and consistent with the hazard profile of the Service
- Appropriate workplace precautions are in place.

Workplace inspections are regularly scheduled, and these are undertaken with the aid of a checklist and recognised as an active monitoring tool intended to:

- Identify existing and potential hazards
- Recommend corrective actions
- Monitor effectiveness of hazard controls
- Provide an opportunity for the employer and workers to communicate
- Maintain a safe and healthy workplace

These audits and inspections inform our working practices. All health and safety documents and any proposed changes that impact on the health, safety, welfare and wellbeing of our employees are presented for consultation and/or engagement via the Joint Health and Safety Committee. To further support a proactive health and safety culture, we have launched a new adverse safety event reporting system which allows managers to access real time accident information relating to their work areas; this allows the opportunity for early intervention of emerging themes which is also reviewed and monitored centrally by the health and safety team.

The Service approved a Wellbeing and Occupational Health Strategy and Framework with the commitment that we will support both the organisation's and the individual's needs, by promotion, prevention, detection and treatment of health and well-being risks. This is being supported by the development of a number of guidance documents for mental health, wellbeing, neurodiversity, occupational health and trauma.

The Service has introduced a peer led and peer supported wellbeing programme, that will contribute to effectively supporting colleagues exposed to trauma. Where required, colleagues are also offered access to qualified talking therapists through our Occupational Health provider and can independently contact the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is a confidential support line for all employees across the organisation. The EAP offers impartial and confidential advice and support on a range of work, personal and family issues. The service is available 24/7, 365 days of the year and there is no limit to the number of issues employees can gain support on.

During the pandemic additional control measures were put in place to support staff, whilst adapting to the changing situation and new working arrangements. A hybrid working model is now in place which supports the wellbeing of employees whilst delivering the objectives of the organisation. Where staff have been affected by Long COVID support mechanisms are in place for their physical and mental health.

## 6.4 Environment

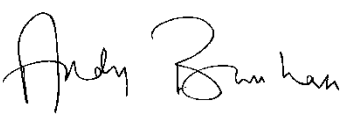
Overall governance of sustainability comes via an ISO 14001 certified environmental management system (EMS). The EMS ensures that GMFRS identify and manage the most important environmental aspects, helps improve efficiency, ensures compliance with environmental legislation and other requirements as well as ensuring that we continually improve environmental performance. ISO 14001 certification requires a number of clauses to be met in order for a system to be deemed effective with leadership being one of the clauses. GMFRS comply with this clause through leadership resource assigned to oversee the EMS, as well as an annual management review process that takes place with Senior Leaders.

GMFRS have also embedded environment and sustainability via the Sustainability Strategy that details our priority areas for activity in respect of improving our sustainability and environmental performance.

- [Environmental Sustainability Policy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)


# Assurance Opinion & Declaration

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

Signed: 

**Andy Burnham, Mayor for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Signed: 

**Dave Russel, Chief Fire Officer**

Date: 11th July 2023