

Item Number	Item 5 – Paper 1
Title of Paper	Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard – for Approval
Decision or Information	For decision
Date of Meeting	10 th June 2024
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	Appendix A – Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to present the following Fire Standard for approval for publication:

1. Internal Governance and Assurance

Recommendations and decisions required

The Board is asked to:

- Confirm that they are content with the findings and recommendations presented in the Quality Assurance report on the Standard, which was circulated to all members separately to this Board meeting; and
- Confirm that they are content to publish the Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard (Appendix A).

Development

- The Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard is a ‘Resource’ Standard under the ‘Enabling’ category of the Activity Framework, which the Board gave approval to develop in June 2023.
- The original scope included finance management, which the Board later agreed to remove at its meeting in September 2023, on the advice from subject matter experts (SMEs). There was no NFCC lead officer for assurance at the time development of the Standard commenced.
- Drafting and cross-sector SME workshops took place during Summer and Autumn of 2023, with approval for the draft Standard to open for consultation granted by the Board in November 2023.

- The Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard consultation closed on 15th January 2024 having received 32 responses.
- The Fire Standards Team (FST) hosted two online comment review sessions with the cross-sector SME group at the beginning of March 2024.
- Following comment resolution, the final draft of the Fire Standard, along with the consultation feedback report, was shared with the Fire Standards Board via email on 2nd April, with a request for approval to proceed with external quality assurance (QA) review.
- Approval to commence QA was received from all Board members, with some additional feedback from the Home Office which will be factored into supporting guidance or the first periodic review of this Fire Standard.
- The QA report was received on 10th May 2024 and is scheduled for discussion by the Board at this FSB meeting.
- The QA report states that there is evidence to provide the Board with assurance that the Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard broadly followed the proper process and thus agree to its publication.
- Subject to approval by the Board, publication is expected to be end of June 2024.

APPENDIX A

Title of Standard	Internal Governance and Assurance
Business Area/Capability	Enabling
Sponsoring NFCC Committee	Improvement Committee
Desired Outcome	
<p>A fire and rescue service whose communities have confidence in its ability to deliver its core objectives, identifies its strategic risks and publishes these in its community risk management plan. These objectives are clear, realistic and understood by all within the service, which is accountable to the relevant governing body.</p> <p>The service recognises that internal governance and assurance supports it in managing transformational change. It achieves this via effective processes to support continued organisational development and evaluation of internal controls.</p> <p>There is a recognised independent internal governance structure which enables senior leaders to promote comprehensive oversight of internal activities to assure them that the service is operating effectively. It has the necessary and appropriate levels of delegated authority to make evidence-based ethical decisions in a structured way.</p> <p>The service has a learning culture which considers the value of internal and external feedback, inspection outcomes, new innovations or developments, internal and external assurance activities, and changes in risk in its community. It reviews and regularly evaluates what it does to provide a better service to the public, while identifying and managing corporate risk.</p> <p>It ensures effective performance management and accountability against its plans and provides assurance that these are being delivered. It conducts its activity in accordance with the law and governance arrangements and demonstrates this by consistently reporting progress. Reports are published and shared in a clear and accessible manner to all stakeholders.</p> <p>Its internal change and improvement are managed through robust development, approval and initiation processes that are aligned to the vision and strategic objectives of the service. Work is coordinated and successfully executed because the service recognises the value, where appropriate, of utilising specialist skills and following industry standards to lead and manage them.</p>	
What is required to achieve the Fire Standard	
<p>A fire and rescue service must:</p>	

1. Provide strategic oversight and accountability for internal governance and assurance, which enables it to:
 - a. develop and monitor relevant functional delivery plans in line with the vision and strategic objectives of the service, agreed by its governing body and senior leadership;
 - b. identify those who are responsible and accountable for strategic priorities and the business planning process across the service;
 - c. co-ordinate all work designed to drive change, and which contributes to organisational development including managing and mitigating associated risks;
 - d. remain agile and able to adapt plans in response to changing demands;
 - e. continuously evaluate its performance through internal audit or self-assessment;
 - f. consider all forms of feedback to measure progress and inform forward plans and new projects or initiatives, to ensure they remain efficient, effective and compliant with legislation;
 - g. appropriately consider business cases for new work, projects or initiatives ensuring that any associated costs and resources have been forecast accurately and remain monitored, if agreed; and
 - h. identify and coordinate the management of risks associated with delivering its activities.
2. Have a clear internal structure with appropriate governance arrangements that ensure:
 - a. a framework is in place that identifies who can make decisions and has the authority to act on behalf of the service with accountability for how its people behave and perform;
 - b. all internal decision-making boards, groups, or regular meetings have clear terms of reference which are regularly reviewed and include agreed levels of delegated authority to enable effective decision making;
 - c. progress against deliverables is monitored, scrutinised and challenged to ensure objectives are being achieved within agreed timescales and budgets, and, if necessary, pausing work; and
 - d. the service can provide its annual statement of assurance evidencing its compliance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework, providing information about its performance against its strategic plan, community risk management plan, finance, governance and operational matters.
 - e. internal assurance activities are provided with an appropriate level of independence to provide objective insight into the activities of the service.
3. Ensure that organisational decisions and the measures implemented support equality, diversity, and inclusivity, are non-discriminatory and that appropriate impact assessments are undertaken.
4. Utilise good communication and engagement to build trusting relationships with both internal and external stakeholders.

5. Have arrangements in place to enable it to receive and act on feedback about its processes through proactive staff and stakeholder engagement.

A fire and rescue service **should**:

6. Utilise recognised processes, controls and change management methodologies to ensure impact of actions are understood, intended outcomes are delivered, and benefits are realised. This incorporates, but is not limited to, managing the following aspects:
 - a. risks, issues, and dependencies;
 - b. finance and budgets;
 - c. post-deliverable lessons learnt and evaluation of results.
7. Support organisational development using identified learning to tailor and improve what it delivers to the community by:
 - a. identifying, capturing, evaluating, and sharing learning which could benefit the service and others, engaging with national learning arrangements where they exist; and
 - b. collaborating with, and learning from, other services to benchmark performance.
8. Recognise when it may need support and draw on the appropriate networks, national guidance, and tools to support its own organisational development.
9. Maximise opportunities gained from supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) network by sharing learning and experiences, collaborating with others, and contributing to the continual improvement of the service.

Expected benefits of the achieving the Fire Standard

1. Improved quality of service provided to the public.
2. Effective leadership and management of the service evidenced by transparent ways of working and increased accountability.
3. Improved governance and internal culture of the organisation.
4. Increased clarity in decision making resulting in more efficient and transparent use of resources.
5. A diverse workforce that feels confident in the workplace.

Legal Requirements or mandatory duties

This Fire Standard reflects only the most appropriate legislation to this topic. We recognise that fire and rescue services must comply with a broader list of legislation to undertake their duties, which would be applicable to all standards. [View the legislation which applies to all Fire Standards.](#)

[Policing and Crime Act](#)

[Statutory Auditors Regulations](#)

[The Accounts and Audits Regulations](#)

[The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order](#)

[Local Government Finance Act](#)

Linked qualifications, accreditations or Fire Standards

[Code of Ethics](#)

[Community Risk Management Planning](#)

[Communication And Engagement](#)

[Data Management](#)

[Emergency Planning and Resilience](#)

[Leading The Service](#)

[Leading and Developing People](#)

[Procurement and Commercial](#)

Guidance and supporting information

- [NFCC Organisational Learning](#)
- [NFCC Learning Tools](#)
- [CIPFA Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#)
- [CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework](#)
- [ISO 31000:2018 Risk management Guidelines](#)
- [ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems](#)
- [Statements of assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Leading the fire sector – Governance Support](#)
- [Leading the Fire Sector: oversight of fire and rescue service performance](#)
 - [Fire Authority Members' Guide](#)
 - [The Role of Fire and Rescue Authority Members](#)
- [Political Oversight of Fire and Rescue Service Performance](#)
 - [Effective FRA Governance in Times of Crisis](#)
- [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities](#)
 - [The Good Scrutiny Guide](#)
 - [A Councillor's Workbook on Scrutiny](#)
 - [Diverse by Design Guide](#)
- [Orange Book Management of risk – Principles and Concepts \(HMG\)](#)