



**South Yorkshire
FIRE & RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

ANNUAL

GOVERNANCE

STATEMENT 2024-25

Scope of Responsibility

The Authority has set out its arrangements for governance in its Constitution, and a copy of this can be found on our website.

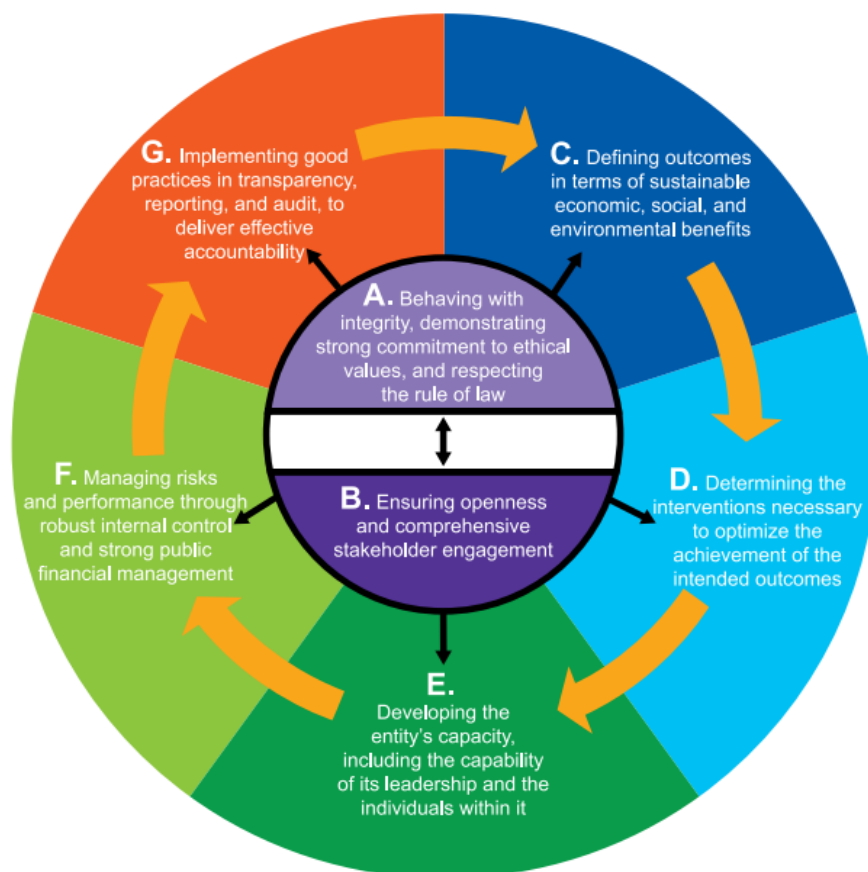
The Constitution includes a local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016 edition). Local Codes should reflect each Authority's own approach to governance to enable delivery of its objectives and priorities in a transparent and accountable way.

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with its local Code, meeting the requirements of regulation four of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which requires it to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). No significant governance issues have been found throughout the year, however areas for improvement have been identified, which are supported by a Governance Improvement Plan (GIP).

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises of the systems, processes, culture, and values by which the Authority is directed and managed, and the activities through which it accounts to, and engages with the community.

It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of the correct services in a cost-effective manner.



The Governance Framework

As well as setting out how the Authority has complied with its own code of governance and governance framework, the Authority is required to review the effectiveness of its arrangements each year to ensure that there is a sound system of governance.

The Authority has the aim of seeking compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE guidelines and recognises that these constitute good practice for local

authority organisations.

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

The Service has a range of policies, procedures and strategies including the employee code of conduct, which staff are made aware of in their Induction and adhere to through awareness and training. People Function staff receive regular training and updates to changes in employment legislation. The Service already has a set of behaviours and aspirations told through “Our Story” and the Staff Code of ethics compliments this work.

The Service continued to focus on culture throughout 2024-25, with regular updates being presented to Members at Fire and Rescue Authority meetings.

The Culture Survey Action Plan is the result of quantitative and qualitative analysis. It is divided into six themes, each led by a member of the Executive Team and containing several actions with baseline measures and targets where appropriate. A quarterly review is produced, including a narrative update, RAG rating and percentage complete.

Codes of Conduct and Register of Interests are in place for Fire Authority Members and all Service staff that set out the behaviours expected of all employees and reinforce its values and standards. The Appeals and Standards Committee is convened to deal with any breaches of ethics.

The Authority and Corporate Risk Register can be viewed on the Fire and Rescue Authority website including the risk trend, guidance and matrix.

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and supporting documents include reference to the Bribery Act and aligns itself with the relevant policies and procedures.

A key development within the Health and Safety Team, post Workforce Planning 2024 event is the removal of the Station Manager who was primarily focused on claims and legal liaison. Via the Service Improvement Board, a fixed term position has been created that will work to address the business need.

The new People Strategy 2024-27 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in January 2024. The themes of the previous strategy were deemed still relevant and have been retained and the strategic priorities and objectives have been reviewed.

The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee receives quarterly updates on EDI progress across the Service and receives specific updates on actions from across departments. The Service has participated in all EDI consultations with the NFC and has ensured compliance with the Gender Pay Gap reporting requirement. An Equality Analysis LearnPro module is available for Service Managers.

Monitoring

The Authority and Service have processes in place to receive and record compliments and complaints, and to report on the outcome of investigations to resolve complaints. The Audit and Governance Committee receives regular reports on Service Compliments and Complaints. The reports can be found under meetings and agendas on the Fire Authority's website.

SYFR has an effective Whistleblowing Policy in place which has been reviewed and was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in June 2024.

The Authority and Audit and Governance meetings are webcast live and

available online on the website afterwards. The webcasts are available for a period of six months following the date of the meeting.

The Service regularly reports on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) areas of improvement through the Service Improvement Plan and the Service Improvement Board. These reports can be found on the Authority website approximately every quarter.

The Service's Data Protection Officer (DPO) has undertaken a review in line with UK Data Protection laws, and the Service have no known issues. Regular Information Governance reports are presented to the FRA. Staff receive annual training via a GDPR LearnPro module and are aware of how to report breaches. There is regular contact with the DPO to ensure that any data protection issues are quickly identified and actioned.

SYFR have a Service Level Agreement (TriParty Agreement) for DPO support with Derbyshire FRS and Nottinghamshire FRS. In the event of absence/annual leave/bank holidays where a DPO is out of the office for more than 2 days, cover is provided through this mutual cost neutral arrangement.

The Core Code of Ethics was produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Core Code sets out five ethical principles providing a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.



NFCC Core Code of Ethics

The Quarterly Performance report is available in Orca for all employees to

view as well as being available for Fire Authority Members, with the report presented at the Performance and Scrutiny Board as a standing item. Along with the Quarterly Performance report, the Response Standards report is available to both internal staff and Fire Authority. This has been supported with Member training and support.

Principle B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement

The new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-28 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority on 17 February 2025. The Service engaged extensively with public, staff and other stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

The Service Plan 2024-25 was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2024. The Fire Authority receives regular updates on the progress of the Annual Service Plan, with the reports published on our website.

An updated 3-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025-28 was presented to the Authority for approval to the Fire Authority in November 2024. The Authority received and approved the 2025/26 Annual Revenue Budget and Council Tax setting at their meeting in February 2025. Financial Performance is reported to the Fire Authority on a quarterly basis and the Financial Outturn Report for year ended 31 March 2024 was presented at the June 2025 Fire and Rescue Authority meeting.

A Police and Fire Collaboration Board meets regularly involving senior officers from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR), South Yorkshire Police (SYP) as well as the Chair of the Authority.

The Service has a Joint Community Safety Department to provide a collaborative educational facility, which delivers training with both the Prince's Trust and Cadets.

The Chief Fire Officer is the Co-Chair of the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and relationships with partners across the LRF are maintained with regular meetings, exercises and CPD sessions arranged throughout the year.

A Partnerships Committee is part of the Service internal governance meeting structure, which reports on the work to develop effective partnerships with other organisations.

The Procurement Strategy and Policy 2024-27 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in June 2024. The documents provide a link between the SYFR's Service Plan, Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and national regulations such as the Procurement Act 2023.

Management of service contracts are regularly reviewed, recorded and discussed with the Procurement Manager.

The Service seeks feedback from the public on its work, via an annual resident's survey with a representative sample of local people. The results of this survey are reported to the Fire Authority via the Stakeholder Planning Board and are also used to help inform the Service's key strategies, including the annual review of its Community Risk Management Plan.

Transparency

The Authority webcasts its meetings of Authority and Audit and Governance Committee live. These are subsequently archived for a period of 6 months for ongoing reference and scrutiny. The reports and minutes of all meetings are placed on the Authority's website. The Authority and Service abides by the Government's Transparency Code. It also abides by the Freedom of Information and General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR) legislation set out by the Information Commissioner's Office, and this is regularly monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee, reports of which can be found on the Authority's website.

Consultation, Engagement and Service User Feedback

The Service's core work is around campaigns to prevent emergency incidents. Public information for each individual campaign is published on the Service website and social media platforms. Where formal consultation is required, this is conducted in accordance with the consultation principles set out for local and national government bodies. Consultation with the public and staff is conducted where changes to its core services are planned, for example during the development of its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and Annual Plan.

The Service provides information in different languages and formats to ensure the public can access information suitable to their needs.

The Service requests feedback from service users when they have attended an incident or undertaken a Home Safety Check.

A short staff 'pulse' survey takes place every two months to give staff an opportunity to provide feedback on their work life.

Evaluation of external communications campaigns takes place on a regular basis to determine the impact of the Service's work. A summary of leading campaigns 'Campaign Highlights 2024' and measurable outcomes was provided at the Fire Authority Stakeholder Planning Board in March 2025.

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

The CRMP is developed based on extensive work to analyse local risk. The consideration of risk within the county includes risks to important heritage sites, environmental risks such as flooding and extreme weather events, and how the Services resources need to be matched to respond to the risks. Through work with partners via the Local Resilience Forum, plans are in place to respond to these risks to protect communities of South Yorkshire.

The Fire and Rescue Authority receives six-monthly updates on Estates and the Green Plan. The Service had undertaken projects in 2024-25 including the Training and Development Centre (TDC) instructor shower room refurbishment. This allowed for the resolution to a number of ongoing issues within this area, but also to improve the facilities as part of the commitment to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.

The Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures form part of the Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution have been updated. The Contract Standing Orders for the Authority, part of the FRA Constitution was reviewed in 2024.

The Service has a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Approved Capital Programme.

Consider Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental benefit

The Financial Systems Manager has implemented the online expense portal this year which has been a significant change for the organisation and will reduce paper forms immensely. This has been achieved alongside Business as Usual with an extensive programme of training. All corporate staff are now using the system and the roll out continues for

Operational Staff.

The Service's Procurement Strategy and Policy includes sustainable procurement, which ensures that at the planning stage, social value is considered when procuring goods and services. At the quotation stage, we aim to invite two local suppliers to participate, and our contract specifications and operating procedures aim to safeguard the natural environment.

Under the Transparency Code, the Authority publishes details of current contracts and framework agreements with a total value in excess of £5k on its website.

Recycling has been improved across the estate, whilst behaviour change measures included an energy saving competition for staff. The Service has reduced energy consumption by 9% in 2022/23 and produced a heat decarbonisation plan to help understand opportunities for making buildings greener. The FRA received a Green Plan updated in January 2025 with planned 6 monthly updates.

Equality assessments take place when changes are proposed to understand the impact they may have on different groups in the local community. Equality Assessments, site surveys and environmental surveys are also conducted for all new build projects. Post Implementation Reviews take place for projects to ensure those related to the delivery of our CRMP have delivered anticipated outcomes and benefits.

SYFR has significantly improved the management and risk to health from fire contaminants. This has seen the implementation of a new policy with a series of procedures and accompanying instructional videos to maintain firefighter safety on the incident ground.

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

Determining interventions

The FRA report template includes a standing item capturing service improvement information. This adds a level of governance information and provides ongoing service improvement updates to the Authority.

The Corporate Advisory Group is an informal group that meets approximately every six weeks. Members consider key topics that affect the Service on both a local and national level and provide the Service with feedback on various policy proposals.

Business cases are written for key projects detailing options and benefits, and risks associated with those options. These are submitted to the relevant internal governance board for approval and regular monitoring, such as the Service's Corporate Management Board or Business Change Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings.

Planning interventions

A Forward Register (work programme) is in place for all FRA meetings, which is reviewed at the Service's Corporate Management Board meeting. Reports such as the Annual Statement of Accounts, Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Budget Monitoring are submitted on a regular quarterly basis.

A Police / Fire Collaboration Board was established in January 2017. This Board involves senior officers from Fire, Police, and Chair of the FRA. The Board looks at all aspects and opportunities for joint collaboration between South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A joint Service and Authority Officer Governance Co-ordination Group meets quarterly prior to the Audit and Governance Committee and considers a range of governance and control issues.

Members are provided with annual Audit and Risk Management awareness sessions to increase their knowledge in this area.

Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

Members attending the Corporate Advisory Group are consulted in advance, around future budget planning prior to the formal budget and Council tax setting. Regular reports to the Authority provide early identification of any variances to assist in budget preparations for future years.

Project and Programme Monitoring

The Service manages projects and programmes by assigning a subject matter expert to each project or programme at their initiation stage. This person becomes the Project or Programme Manager and holds responsibility for delivery of the work. Recording and reviewing the delivery of outcomes takes place through project governance, such as post implementation reviews and lessons learnt reviews, regular reviews of partnerships, corporate risk management processes, and performance management arrangements.

A project to review all leadership training and development has been established, with crew and watch manager development the first priority- though progress has been affected by other priority work around our culture. The Service has introduced a 360 feedback process for all leadership levels and are supporting national sector programmes where possible.

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

Developing capacity

The Authority maintains forward Work Programmes across all its Committees and Boards. Future strategy is co-ordinated by the Corporate Advisory Group along with the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk (or their representative).

A Member and Learning Development Strategy is in place, which can be found on our website. Member training includes bespoke inductions from both the Authority and Service. A new Audit and Governance Member induction was introduced in 2024. Member Learning and Development is supported by the Chair of the Authority. Members have undertaken various types of learning and development including workshops facilitated by the Service and BMBC officers, the LGA Annual Fire Conference and LGA Fire Leadership Essentials Programme.

The Audit and Governance Committee have undertaken a self-assessment exercise in March 2025, which CIPFA states as best practice. Members reported good performance across all indicators, with areas for improvement including the development of an action plan to identify weaknesses which would be developed throughout 2025 including the need for further member training. The Audit and Governance Committee

agreed to undertake the assessment bi-annually.

The Service has a People Strategy, with the People Board meeting regularly. Periodic updates on the work of the People Board are presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Service, via the Leadership and Management Development Framework, continue to develop the senior management through a variety of behaviourally based programmes and core leadership and management qualifications including CMI Levels 3, 5 and higher-level qualifications for those at a more senior level.

The post of Director of Finance and Procurement has provided a significant amount of further assurance.

Developing the capability of the Authority's leadership and other officers

The Authority's decision-making structures provide for increased challenge and overview. The Authority has in place a Performance and Scrutiny Board and a Stakeholder Planning Board, which afford greater opportunity for Members to discuss issues in more detail and provide support, leadership, and challenge.

The Corporate Advisory Group provides scope to consider a range of issues relating to governance and service delivery, including agenda management, budget, service planning issues and future policy direction.

Role Profiles are in place for the FRA Chair, FRA Members and those involved in external bodies, e.g., Community Safety Partnerships.

The Authority's Performance and Scrutiny Board meets on a quarterly basis and has in place an agreed work programme, which is reviewed

regularly by the Chair and Service Executive Lead. The Board provides additional capacity to the Authority and the opportunity for increased check and challenge on a range of strategic issues.

A Stakeholder Planning Board also meets quarterly with responsibility for monitoring consultation and communication with the public, businesses and other stakeholders including community groups and the voluntary sector. It considers the Authority's involvement in key strategic partnerships and quarterly performance for Prevention and Protection.

The Authority has a Local Pension Board, which was established as a result of the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 requiring all Authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, to establish such Boards. The Board acts in a monitoring and scrutiny capacity on behalf of the Scheme Manager (the FRA) in respect of the Firefighters' Pensions Schemes. The Board has an Independent Chair, representation on behalf of the employees and employer, an agreed Constitution and established work programme.

The Authority's Section 41 Members (under Part IV of the LG Act 1985) report back to their respective District Councils on FRA business.

The FRA Constitution contains a Scheme of Delegation, which was reviewed in December 2022 and sets out the decision-making powers and roles permitted to undertake these decisions. Reports submitted to the Authority have a section on delegated powers.

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

Managing risk

Corporate Risk is managed at all levels within the Service, and separately by the Authority. The Service Corporate Management Board reviews risk at least quarterly. The combined Service and Authority Risk Register is reported quarterly to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan is approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority and reviewed every year.

Budgets are monitored monthly, this has been strengthened with improvements to Integra, whereby budget manager's login and review and approve their budgets online.

Internal Audit reviewed budget monitoring during the year with no recommendations and a substantial rating.

Risks that sit on the Corporate Risk Register are reported to the FRA Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis with good internal risk management controls.

Managing Performance

Quarterly Corporate Performance Report (reported to the Corporate Management Board), Performance and Scrutiny Board and Annual Corporate Performance Report (reported to Corporate Management Board and the Fire and Rescue Authority), are based upon the Service's suite of Performance Measures. These reports have been developed to include in-depth analysis and associated commentary, provided by District Managers; to show the actions they are taking in their areas to improve performance.

Performance reports have been made more dynamic and interactive for Managers and Fire Authority Members using Microsoft PowerBI reporting software. Performance management is also now devolved into the internal governance structure. Station personnel have access to Station Level Reports consisting of dashboards and maps within ORCA. Managers have open discussions about the previous quarter's performance and the proactive action that have been employed and the outcomes. These discussions take place with Heads of Function.

The CIPFA's Financial Management Code of Practice was introduced on the 1st April 2021. The Authority has assessed itself against the requirements code which shows that the current financial management arrangements in place meet its requirements. In addition, the Authority also undertook an assessment to gain assurance against the new Value for Money framework. The VFM external audit opinion was presented at the January 2025 Audit and Governance Committee for the 2023-24 audit, which found no significant weaknesses. Work is currently underway on the 2024-25 and VFM external audit opinion.

Robust internal control

A Service Internal Control Management Assurance Framework has been developed and is used to measure the governance arrangements and identify any risks to achievement.

The Corporate Management Board (CMB) functions as a strategic board meeting to make high level decisions for the service, within the Scheme of Delegation. It also operates as an assurance process for reports that are due to be presented at Fire and Rescue Authority meetings.

All sections of the Service and Authority have Business Continuity Plans, which are regularly reviewed and evaluated. Business continuity plans are reviewed and assessed in line with organisational requirements. The Service undertook Industrial Action business continuity planning last year, with the Service providing regular reporting to the HMICFRS and the Minister for Police, Crime and Fire on business continuity preparedness.

A Community Risk Register for South Yorkshire is maintained by the Local Resilience Forum, of which the Service is a member. This is used to inform Corporate Risk management within the Service, alongside other sources of risk information both locally and nationally. Department managers attend the annual business continuity meetings and attend relevant training as appropriate.

Virtual Server Infrastructure is in place, which allows increased speed of restoration in the event of a disaster.

The Industrial Action Planning risk register, which is supported by the Strategic Improvement Manager, is an example of an extremely detailed and complex register that multiple teams and stakeholders contributed to.

The Monitoring Officer maintains a check on legality and ethical factors.

The Clerk is required to report to the Authority any unlawful or potentially unlawful expenditure by Members or officers, and systems are in place for ensuring compliance with the Authority's Constitution and other accounting and financial standards.

RSM UK Ltd provide the Authority's internal audit services. The annual Internal Audit Plan will continue to be developed in consultation with management and Members and be risk-based and provide for flexibility to incorporate changes in priority throughout the year. Going forward new Auditors TIAA will be continuing this work.

Transparency data

The Authority has to comply with the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires public bodies to publish certain information such as spending over £500. This information is available on the Service's website.

To comply with UK data protection law, the Service have a dedicated Data Protection Officer. Information Governance updates, including FOI and GDPR are submitted to the Fire Authority Audit and Governance Committee on a six-monthly basis. The Service have an Information Governance and Protective Security Committee that meets internally each quarter with representatives from all relevant departments.

Strong public financial management

The Authority has a robust financial planning framework in place, which the Treasurer develops in conjunction with the Financial Services Manager and Chief Fire Officer. The Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-28 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in November 2024. As part of this, efficiency ideas are being developed and explored as another way to mitigate potential funding pressures and to ensure best use of resources in the medium term.

The Service published an Efficiency and Productivity Plan, as required by the Home Office. The Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025-26 and

2024/25 Review was approved by the FRA in June 2025.

There is a dedicated section within the Service's Community Risk Management Plan on Money and Resources in addition to a section covering Efficiencies and Investments.

The CIPFA Statement on The Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) sets out five principles that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role of the Chief Financial Officer and the governance arrangements needed to support them. The Authority had the following financial arrangements during the year which demonstrate compliance with the five principles:

- The Chief Executive of Barnsley MBC is the Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority.
- Barnsley's MBC Governance Unit, under the lead of Barnsley MBC's Executive Director (Core Services), provides strategic and governance support to the two Joint Authorities of Fire and the Police and Crime Panel, as well as other bodies.
- Barnsley MBC's Director of Finance provides the Authority's Treasurer (Section 151 Officer) role.
- The Service has the post of Director of Finance and Procurement, who is a member of the Service's Executive Team and responsible for leading the finance function within the Service. The Director of Finance and Procurement collaborates closely with the Treasurer to deliver sound financial management across both organisations.
- Finance staff across both organisations are suitably qualified and experienced and have regular training as required to ensure continuing professional development.
- The Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures (FRA Constitution) are reviewed periodically.
- The Authority's Pay Policy Statement is submitted to the Authority

on an annual basis and published on the Authority's website.

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

Implementing good practice in transparency

The Authority has to comply with the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires public bodies to publish certain information such as spending over £500. This information is available on the Service's website.

The Authority and Audit and Governance Committee meetings are webcast live and archived for 6 months. Papers for these meetings are published on the Authority's website, along with Local Pension Board, Appointments Committee and Appeals and Standards Committee.

Freedom of Information (FOI) provides guidance on the release of information, and the Service regularly provides monitoring reports to the Audit and Governance Committee on the FOI requests it has processed.

Staff are aware of the process for reporting data breaches, and Information and Governance staff work closely with the Data Protection Officer in their day-to-day work to ensure compliance with legislation, and consider the DP implications when responding to FOIs, and customer complaints.

Implementing good practices in reporting

The Authority has a separate Performance and Scrutiny Board. The Board is supported by a work programme, which is regularly reviewed by the Chair and Service Executive Lead. The Board is underpinned by a Scrutiny and Assurance Protocol, which was developed in consultation with the Centre for Governance and Public Scrutiny. This is reviewed on

an annual basis to take account of any national policy or legislative changes, or any local amendments.

The Statement of Accounts is submitted to the Authority and available on the website.

Assurance and effective accountability

The Authority is also required to produce an Annual Statement of Assurance as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. Whilst the Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England, it does not prescribe operational matters as these are determined locally by fire and rescue authorities. In September 2025, the Authority published its 2024-25 Statement of Assurance and Annual Report.

HMICFRS are currently inspecting all Fire and Rescue Services in England for a third time, this time using a different assessment framework; a five-tier system of graded judgments instead of four. These changes mean it is not possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of Fire and Rescue Service inspections with those from previous years. The Service previously received two 'requires improvements' across three graded judgements.

The Service was inspected in early 2025 and the Report was published on the 16th July 2025 with the Service rated 'good' in five diagnostic areas and 'adequate' in the remaining six. The inspection team also identified some enduring areas for improvement, which the Service must address. However, there were notable improvements in On-Call availability to operational preparedness and strengthened organisational values and culture, to the efficient use of resources, commitment to staff wellbeing and effectiveness of our prevention work.

Auditors are now required to consider whether Authority and Service has put in place 'proper arrangements' for securing Value For Money (VFM).

Areas for Improvement

The below table captures the areas for improvement identified in the Officer Assurance Statements. The areas of improvement are aligned to the CIPFA Local Code of Corporate Principles.

Principle	New Areas for Improvement
Principle A – Behaving with Integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of the law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. For 25/26, SYFR will work in line with the Building Safety Act in having Business Safety Inspectors who can carry out work on behalf of the BSR in buildings that are in scope. b. DPIA will be undertaken for new BFS office to ensure correct level of security is provided to the office space for the types of documents and information held on site.
Principle B – Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The response rate for FOI/EIR requests is decreasing, and this has been highlighted as a risk, funding options in this area are being considered.
Principle C – Defining Outcomes in terms of Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. New LPI's for Health and Wellbeing are being developed. b. Closer alignment of CRMP and Service plans and priorities has been agreed from 2025 onwards.

Principle D – Determining the Interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review of BFS Investigation Policy was started in 23/24 with view to finalise in 2025. b. BFS continue to work with the BI Team to look at ways of developing and having full data sets in order to identify risk more accurately. c. A data cleansing exercise is currently underway in the Fleet department. Once this is completed this system can link to Power BI to enable full performance management and tracking of progress.
Principle E – Developing the Entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recruitment of qualified Technicians has continued to be difficult and vacancies have still not been filled. b. Recruitment in the Health and Safety team is currently taking place and the full team is expected to be in place by the end of May 2025. c. Occupational Health policies are being refreshed and updated. d. Current transition arrangements are being prepared as the organisation is moving away from the long-standing service level agreement with BMBC as of April 2025.
Principle F – Managing Risks and Performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BFS Business Continuity Plans needs to be assessed in March 2025. b. The Service will review and report back on the Efficiency & Productivity Plan.

Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency and audit to deliver effective accountability	<p>a. Estates team were recently audited by RSM in Programme and Project management and are developing project management systems. 3 key areas for development were provided and will be concluded in Q1 of 2025.</p> <p>b. RSM Internal Audit of risk management provided Reasonable Assurance. Improvement areas were identified for controls to become further embedded to take the risk maturity of the Service to the next level.</p>
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Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has a responsibility for conducting regular reviews of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including its risk management arrangements and system of internal control.

Governance arrangements are ultimately the responsibility of the Authority itself, and the Audit and Governance Committee has a specific role in co-ordinating the process and ensuring that any review of governance is timely, proportionate, and linked to other key processes – such as the Statement of Accounts and the auditors' reports.

To provide Members of the Authority with the necessary advice and guidance on governance, an officer Governance Co-ordination Group is in place. The testing and self-assessment processes have been co-ordinated by the Group and the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared by officers for approval.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the governance framework has been accomplished in several different ways:

Through the normal ongoing business of the Authority

- Meetings of the Authority and its committees.
- Review and re-statement of objectives and performance targets.
- Regular reporting of performance.
- Budget monitoring and consideration of the Authority's Statement of Accounts.
- Review of the Authority's role and involvement in external partnerships, including Community Safety Partnerships.
- Formal approval of updates to financial regulations, standing orders and scheme of delegation.
- Updating of the Members' Allowance Scheme.

- Monitoring the performance of Chief Officers.

Through formal processes of independent assurance

- The work of the internal audit team and the Head of Internal Audit Annual Report (including assurance opinion).
- The external auditor's reports and studies.
- The work of the Appeals and Standards Committee.

By the adoption of the Internal Control Management Assurance Framework

- Self-assessment of compliance against the governance domains identified.
- Identification of risks RAG rated and with mitigating actions and completion dates.
- Regular review and monitoring of compliance and progress against the actions identified.

By the adoption of Risk Management

- Risk monitoring within the Service.
- Maintenance of an Authority and Corporate risk register.
- Joint reporting to Members.
- Annual risk management learning and development for Members.

By participating externally in processes which enhance the quality of governance

- Participation in national Fire Finance Network and regional meetings.
- Participation in the HMICFRS inspection programme.
- Participation in the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA).
- Participation in the NFCC Information Governance Group.
- Participation in the regional Yorkshire and Humber Information Governance Group.
- The Authority has Member representation on the following bodies:

- Local Government Association Fire Services Commission.
- Yorkshire and Humberside Employers' Association.

Through other processes in support of the main review

- Officer assurance statements have been sought from within the Service and the Authority.
- Officer Governance Co-ordination Group.
- Various SYFR internal Boards and Groups.
- A review of minutes.
- A review of compliments and complaints received.
- Monitoring the actions of other Authorities in establishing and strengthening good governance.

Summary of internal audit work completed in 2024/25

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Executive Lead</u>	<u>Status/Opinion Issued</u>	<u>Actions Agreed</u>
Internal Service Governance	Head of Governance, Project and Collaboration Team	Substantial Assurance	2 Low
Organisational Development/Training	Head of Service Training	Substantial Assurance	1 Low
Estates Project Management	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Reasonable Assurance	4 Medium
Equality, diversity and creation of an inclusive workplace	Senior People Partner – Culture Programme Lead	Reasonable Assurance	4 Low 3 Medium
Specialism Review	Head of Service Training	Substantial Assurance	1 Low
Follow Up	Area Manager Service Improvement	Reasonable Assurance	14 Low 2 Medium
Performance Data	Business Intelligence Manager	Partial Assurance	1 Low 6 Medium 1 High
Digital Transformation	ICT and Digital Services Manager	Reasonable Assurance	5 Medium
Risk Management	Head of	Reasonable	4 low

	Governance, Project and Collaboration Team	Assurance	2 Medium
Core Financial Systems	Financial Services Manager	Substantial Assurance	3 Low

Head of Internal Audit Opinion

The following has been provided by the Authority's Internal Auditor – RSM UK:

The opinion for the 12 months ended 31 March 2025, the Head of Internal Audit opinion for South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is as follows:

The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance, and internal control. However, our work has identified further enhancements to the framework of risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective.

Significant Governance Issues

No significant governance issues have been reported throughout the year. However, the review of effectiveness has generated several governance issues for strengthening and improvement during 2025-26.

These are summarised below:

English Devolution White Paper

The English Devolution White Paper was published in December 2024. The government state they are committed to increasing the number of Mayors who take on Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority responsibilities. Alignment with police and fire services

boundaries will therefore be a key consideration in the negotiation of new Strategic Authorities. The government is committed to increasing the number of Mayors who take on Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority responsibilities.

This is already on the Corporate Risk register. South Yorkshire does have geographical alignment and so the expected direction of travel is for South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to assume the functions of the SYFRA in future. As yet, no timescales have been set out. The Service and FRA are now in contact with SYMCA with a representative of the Mayor attending FRA meetings (currently the Interim Director of Policing).

The English Devolution Bill is expected to be brought to parliament in the coming months and is expected to pass through Parliament in May 2026.

End of SLA Agreement with BMBC

The Service transitioned from long-standing arrangements with BMBC on 1 April 2025. The Service recruited into the various finance, governance and People roles required and has filled statutory roles such as Section 151 Officer, which will be undertaken by the Director of Finance and Procurement. An Interim Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer have been recruited with legal support provided by external partners. New Governance Officers were appointed in February 2025 to deliver services to the Fire and Rescue Authority and review current processes / procedures to ensure an effective and efficient service to Members. The Fire Authority and Executive Team have received regular updates on the transition and all major elements of handover have been completed and went live from 1st April 2025.

Performance Data

Internal audit reviewed the Service's controls and has identified that the

Service have a Performance Management Framework in place alongside a variety of Local Performance Indicators (LPI), although they identified that the Framework required updating. In addition, they were able to confirm that the LPIs link with the key strategic objectives outlined within the Service's Community Risk Management Plan. However, testing of compliance against the controls has highlighted seven findings which have resulted in the agreement of one high, six medium and one low priority management action. The high action relates to the provision of data required to recalculate reported figures. All the actions captured have completion dates in 2025/26.

HMICFRS Inspection Report – Areas for Improvement (AFIs)

The Report published in July 2025 identified the following nine AFIs for the Service:

- **Understanding risk:** The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.
- **Prevention:** The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out home fire safety visits to an appropriate standard.
- **Protection:** The service should assure itself that its risk-based audit programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.
- **Responding to fires:** The service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.
- **Responding to major incidents:** The service should arrange a programme of cross-border exercises, sharing the learning from these exercises.
- **Responding to major incidents:** The service should make sure it has an effective method for sharing fire survival guidance with multiple callers, and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.
- **Workforce Skills:** The service should assure itself that control staff receive the right training for their roles.
- **Workforce Skills:** The service should address the high number of staff in temporary promotion positions.
- **Leadership Development:** The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

Culture

Since the Independent LFB review, the Service has responded by proposing several actions in response to the review and has provided

updates to the FRA on a routine basis. The Service set up a Culture Programme in 2023 to co-ordinate work being delivered to implement cultural improvements. The Service plans to implement the revised equality, diversity and inclusion strategy by the end of 2026 and deliver on actions arising from a staff culture survey by the end of 2025.

Stocks and Stores Review

From an audit of central stores in February 2024, Internal auditors have made recommendations regarding control of stock levels, removal of obsolete stocks and oversight of the assets held in stock. These recommendations have been reviewed and included for action in the Procurement Strategy 2024 to 2027, with delivery and oversight being provided by the Asset Management Board. Members of the Procurement Department were given specific objectives during 2024/25 for delivery of these recommendations as specific actions. Some of these actions remain outstanding and work will be completed no later than Quarter 2 of 2025/26. Improvements will be reported to the Asset Management Board. Write offs are in process for excess stock to be reported in the Q4 Finance Report due in Summer 2025.

Embedding Sustainability

The Green Plan was approved by the Sustainability Committee in November 2022 and was then formally approved by the Corporate Management Board and the FRA in January 2023. The Service plans to continue embedding sustainability with projects such as the rolling programme of estates renovations and refurbishments linked to the Green Plan and EDI objectives. The internal Sustainability Committee has been resumed as of February 2025 and seven EV charging points are due to be installed at Headquarters as part of the Green Plan. Recruitment for a Sustainability Officer commenced in May 2025.

Possible strike to minimum service levels

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill provides a power for the

Secretary of State to specify in regulations the relevant services, which are subject to minimum service regulations. The list of relevant services specified in the Bill includes Fire and Rescue Services. The Service has undergone extensive consultation with the Home Office and continues to provide regular updates to Fire and Rescue Authority Members. The bill was passed in July 2023 and further updates are expected via the Home Office in due course.