



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

# Fire and Rescue Declaration

Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24

May 2024

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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.

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 forms part of the governance reporting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). This 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 2.91 million residents, with many other people working or visiting the region.

Of that population of 2.91 million there are:

- 460,000 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:

- 960 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 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 six area teams, shown in Figure 2.

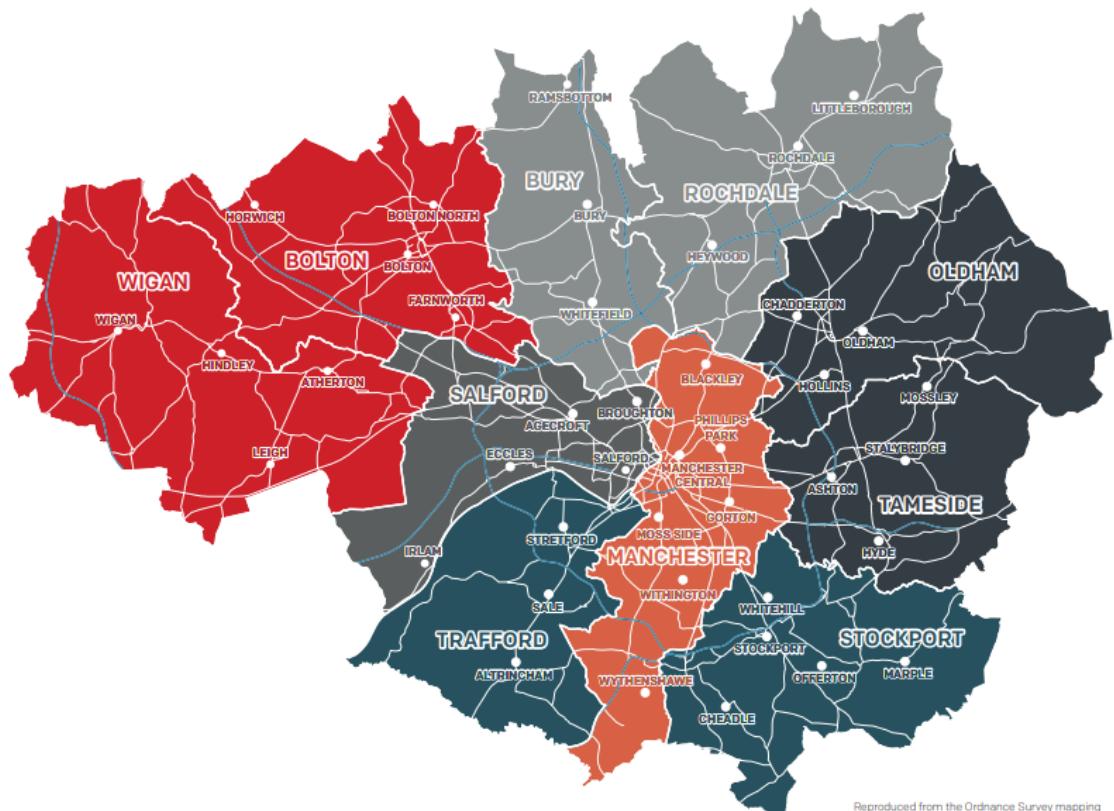


Figure 2: Overview of GMFRS stations and areas



Figure 3: GMFRS overview 2023/24

# **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.

## **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 SAoR, and copies of these documents can be found via the links below:

- Fire Plan / ADPs - [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. Our an annual SAoR document, 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 (Fire Plan) 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 fire cover proposals. Internal consultation was undertaken over a period of eleven weeks commencing four weeks ahead of the launch of the seven 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.
- An assurance approach that focuses on self-assessment and validation to encourage self-awareness, and ensure 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 crucial for supporting organisational learning and service improvement. By capturing notable practices and identifying areas for improvement, it enables us to consider a wide range of evidence and take actions at the local level to enhance service quality. Through our AMS, we review existing practices, document relevant information, and produce action plans to address identified areas for improvement. The outputs of active monitoring inform our continual efforts to provide high-quality services to our communities. The Organisation Learning Group (OLG) is responsible for governance arrangements that track and monitor progress in implementing improvements and capturing internal and external operational learning. The OLG plays a critical role in identifying and allocating resources to support areas of notable practice and improvement throughout 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 fire and rescue services (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 capability and capacity to respond to a Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA). Working in partnership with staff and the FBU, GMFRS 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.

To enhance our readiness and response capabilities, a detailed action plan was created in response to the Manchester Arena Inquiry. All our frontline firefighters have received extensive training, and our fire engines are equipped to respond to and deal with MTAs and mass casualty incidents with enhanced PPE and trauma equipment. The training is aligned and delivered in conjunction 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 Civil Contingencies Act (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, review and revision 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 NFCC 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 CCA 2004 and 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. Learnings from this have been captured and where appropriate incorporated into our plans.

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 and 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 share safety advice, communications with the public and visitors, GMFRS maintains a website, delivering information to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies.

Additionally, throughout the year, we conduct various 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 have established four Cadet Units across the Service, in prioritised areas. We utilise the FRS '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 at 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 addition, we are contributing to the implementation of the GM Vision Zero Strategy by supporting development of action plans and reviewing our road safety provision.

We aim to target our prevention work at those most at risk. Our data informs us that motorcyclists in UK make up 2% of road users, but the risk of motorcyclists being involved in an accident is 40%. In 2024 we are launching a new road safety intervention aimed at increasing education for Motorcyclists. We will be working with Greater Manchester Police to support the '*Bike Safe*' programme as well as piloting a '*Biker Down*' programme and delivering targeted interventions at motorcycle related events and groups.

Following the GM Water Safety Summit, held in 2022, we have been instrumental in initiating and facilitating the GM Water Safety Strategic Partnership and Water Safety Strategy. GMFRS staff participate in localised water safety groups designed to increase water safety in our communities and reduce the number of water-based emergencies GMFRS attends.

We utilise national guidance and resources, supported by the NFCC, to enhance our current Prevention activities, and to support partners for road and water safety risk reduction programmes and initiatives. We utilise a data and evidence-based approach to reducing the risk on our roads and waterways and provide targeted interventions to those most at risk.

We are continuing to deliver our '*Atlas project*' in collaboration with GM Probation Service. The programme is supported by a clinical psychologist and university research aims to change behaviour of adults with a history or increased likelihood of deliberately starting fires.

Additionally, within our prevention '*Safer Communities and Interventions team*' we have developed and now delivering a range of targeted intervention programmes aimed at reducing risk in our communities. Themes within the programmes vary, and we are aiming to change behaviours and build resilience with our cohorts whilst working with partners such as HM Prison Service, Youth Justice Service and the Probation Service.

## **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 target risk more effectively. 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 produces an Annual report, the most recent being for the year ended 2021/22 - [Annual Report 2021/22](#). All our Statement of Accounts can be found on our website – [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 2023/24 we have established the NW Regional Team to support the Building Safety Regulator and participated in Safety Case Trials as well as undertaking preliminary process mapping through team familiarisation sessions.

We have collaborated significantly on Business Engagement in two key areas. We have produced joint videos to support Housing Providers and Managing Agents to meet their obligations under the Fire Safety England Regulations through resident videos incorporating evacuation information and a series of instructional videos for monthly checks. These have been shared with local and national bodies as well as promoted through a co-ordinated social media campaign. A regional approach has been taken to supporting Take Away owners to better understand their fire safety responsibilities. This has seen the production of a regional leaflet and a series of short videos - these were launched through a co-ordinated campaign in January 2023. GMFRS has used this as a foundation for a longer campaign working with the GM Centre of Regulatory Excellence to deliver online advice sessions on fire and food safety with targeted inspections working with Local Authority partners.

GMFRS continues to support Operation Vulcan which is an innovative GMP led multi-agency operation to tackle entrenched criminality in the Cheetham Hill area and work with other agencies on a regular basis.

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.

GMFRS has continues to support Housing Providers and Managing Agents in relation to the implementation of the Fire Safety England Regulations. We have further developed the information and guidance developed last year into a dedicated leaflets for blocks of flats which can be utilised in blocks of flats of all heights and the videos produced as part of NW collaboration.

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 NWAS supported the delivery of this training which has been extremely successful and the feedback from our crews has been positive. This has seen a further commitment from both GMP and NWAS 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 actively assesses emerging and future operational risks, to ensure our operational crews are able to effectively deal with the risks they face. We research innovative and technological solutions and trial new and additional equipment to improve our ways of working. We collaborate with regional partners, taking learnings and best practice, with recent research assessing how to effectively 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.

## **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 (CFO), approving the terms of appointment of the CFO, and holding the CFO 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 CFO
- e. Scrutiny of suspension and dismissal of the CFO

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.

- [Annual Governance Statement](#)

## **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 forms part of the wider GMCA Risk Management Framework and feeds into the GMCA Corporate Risk Register, where strategic and operational risks are regularly reviewed by the Chief Executive's Management Team and Senior Leadership Team and are reported quarterly to the GMCA Audit Committee.
- Published Whistleblowing Policy and anti-fraud policies are in place 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.

The Performance Improvement Team undertakes an annual review with KPI owners and key stakeholders from Directorates to discuss proposed KPIs for the year ahead, to ensure that the measures are fit for purpose and forecasts and targets are realistic. Consideration is given to the Fire Plan, Annual Delivery Plan, and internal strategies to ensure KPIs demonstrate we are delivering on our commitments and are aligned to our six priorities. Formal approval is agreed through our governance process.

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**

The Internal Audit team delivers an annual programme of audit work designed to raise standards of governance, risk management and internal control across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), including GMFRS. A risk-based internal audit plan is developed to provide assurance that key strategic and operational risks are being effectively managed to ensure the Service's core purpose and aims are achieved. 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 culmination of the work undertaken is an annual Opinion from the Head of Internal Audit on the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control arrangements. In 2022/23, the Head of Internal Audit provided an opinion of reasonable assurance in relation the arrangements in place for governance, risk management and internal control. The most recent report and opinion can be found here - [Head of Internal Audit Opinion 2022/23.](#)

## **5.6 Inspection**

Following the introduction of the mandate for all English FRSs to be inspected, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) has carried out two full inspections 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 inspectorate assess against 11 key areas that can be categorised into Effectiveness, Efficiency and People.

Since our first inspection we have been working to deliver improvements, with progress reported and monitored through our governance arrangements. GMFRS was first inspected in 2019 and again in 2021.

In our most recent inspection in Autumn 2023, GMFRS was graded as ‘Good’ in 10 of the 11 areas and ‘Adequate’ in one. This demonstrated the significant improvements the Service has made, with four of the 11 areas moving from a ‘Requires Improvement’ grading to a ‘Good’ grading and one from ‘Requires Improvement’ to ‘Adequate’. GMFRS is currently the most improved fire and rescue service in England.

Two ‘Areas for Improvement’ were identified by the inspectors, one of which we have already addressed and closed. Our activities to address these areas are being delivered alongside our improvement programme.

Additionally, HMICFRS recognised four areas of Positive Practice and two areas of Innovative Practice, which together, is the most any fire and rescue service has received in this round of inspections.

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 2023/25](#)
- [GMFRS Inspection Report 2021/22](#)
- [GMFRS COVID Thematic Inspection 2020](#)
- [Fire Standards Board](#)

# 6 Workforce

## 6.1 People Strategy

In 2023 the GMCA People Strategy replaced 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 has 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 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 who comprise the largest component of our workforce. Our new strategic workforce development plan was launched in 2023 and highlights the key areas of focus for operational and non-operational recruitment, selection and attraction over the next 5years. The GMFRS Attraction Strategy is a key pillar in this plan, which focuses on using positive action to attract more diverse applicants into the role of a Firefighter and also for promotion (which is a new focus for 2022 – 2025).

In 2024, the impact of the leaver and retirement profiles has also expanded to focus on the impact of promotion pathways, and the volume of recruitment, selection and training that will be required over the next five years. Combined these profiles show high volume recruitment and training activity will continue between 2024-2029, seeing approx. 386 new recruits joining as firefighters, alongside 417 promotions which also include inter-service transfers.

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. The GMCA (and GMFRS) continue to fully invest and embed in meaningful Equality Impact Assessments (EIA), which includes a new EIA working group that supports the robust governance model that is in place for equality, diversity and inclusion – that is set out in the 2022 EDI Strategy.

In addition, GMFRS and the GMCA have an established staff network programme in place that sees ongoing support and investment to ensure that it's 5 staff networks; Women's, Armed Forces, LGBTQIA+, Race and Faith & Enable; are available and prioritised within the organisation. This includes allocation of senior sponsors from GMFRS. We are going further to strengthen the inclusive culture commitment, which includes our next phase of face-to-face 'inclusive cultures' training for all staff within the service, alongside a tailored inclusivity training framework, approved in 2024.

The Recruitment and Selection Framework, alongside Managing Disclosures in Employment Frameworks are now fully embedded into the organisation, with a review of DBS requirements underway with the Service Leadership Team.

After over twelve months of being established within the organisation, the GMFRS Promotions Pathway programme of work, is now at evaluation stages, which will seek feedback from staff at all levels to inform a review and refinement of the process for the future. In addition, the Pathway, Leadership Development Framework and the identification of high potential talent was recognised as promising practice within the 2023 HMICFRS inspection.

We work to develop staff at all levels in leadership development, including supporting colleagues from under-represented groups to access development opportunities that seek to support and learn from lived experiences to better both themselves and the organisation, through initiatives such as our Developing Diverse Leaders Programme and our Mutual Mentoring Programme.

We engage with the workforce on a regular basis through a variety of forums including our annual b-Heard survey, Frontline Engagement sessions, our Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and Staff Networks. We actively encourage feedback from staff across the organisation, at all levels and in all teams to make changes and improvements across the organisation.

## **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 including, Organisational Learning from previous incidents, training and exercising events as well as National Learning outcomes, 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.

Operational Training programmes are complemented by self-managed training for operational crews on stations and for all levels of commander up to and including Principal Officer through annual Maintenance of Competence curriculums.

## **6.3 Health, Safety & Fitness**

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 identify trends, ensure learning, with the intention to improve the health and safety culture and working environment. Health, safety and fitness performance and is regularly shared with

representatives from our trade unions, where we seek to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcomes.

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. The adverse safety reporting system was introduced last year and offers Managers access to 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.

Physical fitness plays a crucial role in ensuring firefighter safety when responding to fire and rescue service activities. Firefighters who are physically fit are better equipped to handle the demanding challenges of the role. Their enhanced strength, endurance, and agility enable them to move swiftly and effectively in high-stress situations, reducing the risk of injuries and exhaustion. Additionally, physically fit firefighters are better prepared to handle the physical demands of firefighting tasks, such as operating equipment, extinguishing fires, and conducting search and rescue operations. Overall, maintaining optimal physical fitness not only enhances firefighter safety but also improves their overall performance and effectiveness in responding to fires in the built environment, ensuring the protection of both lives and properties within Greater Manchester.

The upgraded equipment being introduced into our premises, includes state-of-the-art machines, weights, and other equipment that are designed to improve strength, agility, and endurance. By investing in upgraded gym equipment on stations, GMFRS demonstrates its commitment to proactively promote firefighter health, safety and effectiveness in responding to emergency situations. Physical and mental fitness are crucial for firefighters as they age, and with a diverse workforce, helping firefighters maintain their strength, agility, and sharp decision making, allows for a greater ability to be injury free with positive mental wellness for the duration of their careers.

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, which 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.

## 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 GMFRS Service Leadership Team.

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

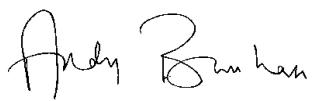
and environmental performance. The delivery of the Sustainability Strategy is classed as a Priority Improvement Project (PIP) within the Annual Delivery Plan and is reported within the ADP reporting process.

- [Environmental Sustainability Policy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

# 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: 15.05.2024

Signed:



**Dave Russell, Chief Fire Officer**

Date: 09.05.2024