

Article 18 – Northumberland County Fire and Rescue Authority

18.01 Fire and Rescue Authority

The County Council is the designated Fire and Rescue Authority for the County of Northumberland with the primary responsibility to make Northumberland a safer place to live and work through Prevention, Protection and Response.

All 67 Councillors are members of the Fire and Rescue Authority with overall responsibility for the resilience of the service, including the setting of the annual budget within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and approving the Fire and Rescue Plan 2017 -21 (which is the Council's Integrated Risk Management Plan) as part of the **Councils Policy Framework** (see Article 4)

18.02 Cabinet Member for Community Services

The Cabinet Member for Community Services is the lead member and is delegated to act as the Fire Authority Chair with specific responsibility for Fire and Rescue within the remit of their Cabinet portfolio.

The Cabinet Member's responsibilities include;

- To provide assurance on behalf of the Fire Authority on the performance of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
- To receive reports from the Chief Fire Officer on the development and delivery of NFRS strategy, budgets and policy
- To develop expertise and knowledge in their portfolio area
- To be the Council's lead spokesperson for their portfolio
- To attend the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee as requested, to discuss decisions taken and to assist the scrutiny and policy development process
- To respond to questions relating to their portfolio arising at Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings

18.03 Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the Fire and Rescue function and acting as a critical friend.

The Chief Fire Officer reports into the Committee providing key performance information to ensure members can hold the Portfolio holder to account and ensuring all statutory responsibilities placed on the service are discharged and performance against agreed targets and objectives are met.

18. 04 The Statutory Framework

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 sets out those core functions which all Fire Authorities must make provision for, including;

- Promoting Fire safety
- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property when fires do occur including:
 - the provision of resources necessary to meet normal requirements
 - appropriate training for firefighters
 - ensuring 999 calls for assistance can be dealt with effectively
 - minimising damage to property arising from firefighting operations
- Rescuing people involved in road traffic collisions
- Rescuing and protecting people in the event of other emergencies

The 2004 Act also introduced the Fire and Rescue National Framework which Fire Authorities must have regard to when carrying out their functions.

The five national priorities set out in the Framework require Fire Authorities to:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities
- Identify and assess the foreseeable range of fire and rescue related risks which their areas face
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Be accountable to communities for their service
- Develop and maintain a workforce which is professional, resilient, skilled flexible and diverse

These national priorities are addressed through three main mechanisms:

- Integrated Risk Management Planning (currently the County Council's Fire and Rescue Plan 2017- 21)
- An Annual Statement of Assurance
- Effective Financial Planning

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Fire Authorities are required to collaborate with other responsible authorities (police, probation, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities) to reduce crime and disorder in their area and are designated as Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 with a duty to work with other organisations to plan for major emergencies.

A list of other relevant legislation is available in the Fire and Rescue Service Statement 2019 – 21.

18.05 The Chief Fire Officer and Operational Arrangements

The Chief Officer is the Fire Authority's principal adviser on the discharge of the Northumberland's Fire and Rescue Services (NFRS) functions and is accountable to the Fire Authority. The Chief Fire Officer's role is to provide operational leadership to NFRS, and ensure that the strategic aims and objectives of the fire authority are met, its functions are delivered and performance targets met through effective and properly controlled executive action.

The Chief Fire Officer's role and responsibilities are set out in Part 4 under the **Delegation Scheme to Officers.**

18.06 Firefighters' Pension Scheme for Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service Local Pension Board

In accordance with section 5 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, a local Pension Board assists the County Council in its capacity as the Fire and Rescue Authority in the governance and administration of the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS).

Under regulation 4A (1) of the Firefighters Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 the role of the Board is to assist the County Council as Scheme Manager:

- To secure compliance with the Regulations and any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme, and requirements imposed in relation to the FPS by the Pensions Regulator
- To ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the FPS

The Membership of the Board is constituted as follows:

- Two elected members as employer representatives
- Two scheme member representatives
- An Independent Member (optional appointment)

The FPS Scheme Manager function, as set out and defined in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, is the responsibility of the FRA, namely the County Council. The Council has delegated to the section 151 Officer the exercise of the Scheme Manager function for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer.

NB. The FPS Local Pension Board is not a local authority committee. Detailed guidance on recruitment, terms of office and working arrangements are set out in the FPS Local Pension Board Terms of Reference (held separately from this Constitution)

18.07 Disputes Panel

Disputes Panel (Fire and Rescue Service)

The Panel hears and determines disputes in accordance with provisions in the Scheme of Conditions of Service of Local Authority Fire Brigades (see Part 3)