



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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About the Auditor General for Wales

The Auditor General is independent of government and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. He leads the Wales Audit Office and is held accountable by the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly for the Wales Audit Office's work.

The Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales. He also appoints the external auditors of Welsh local government bodies, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. The Auditor General's appointed auditors are responsible for the annual audit of the majority of public money spent in Wales, including the £15 billion of funds that are voted to Wales annually by the Westminster Parliament. Nearly £5.5 billion of this funding is passed by the Welsh Government to local government in the form of general and specific grants. Local government, in turn, raises a further £2.1 billion through council tax and business rates.

As well as carrying out financial audit, the Auditor General's role is to examine how public bodies manage and spend public money, including achieving value in the delivery of public services. The Wales Audit Office aims to make public money count, by promoting improvement, so that people in Wales benefit from accountable, well-managed public services that offer the best possible value for money. It is also committed to identifying and spreading good practice across the Welsh public sector.

Huw Vaughan Thomas, Auditor General for Wales, was supported by Lisa Williams, Jackie Joyce and colleagues under the direction of Alan Morris in conducting the Improvement Assessment and producing this report.

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Summary report

- 1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the Wales Audit Office and relevant Welsh Inspectorates, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report is in three main sections, which cover the planning, delivery and evaluation of improvement by Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority).
- 2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority has put arrangements in place to deliver improvement and does well in the areas it focuses on but planning, evaluation and reporting of performance is not robust although steps are being taken to strengthen these areas.
- 3 We found that the Authority is further developing its approach to planning and has arrangements in place to deliver improvement. We have concluded this because the Authority:
 - is strengthening its planning arrangements and is responding to previous proposals for improvement;
 - has a sound approach to financial management but given the scale of change necessary continued clear leadership is required;
 - information management does not positively support improvement and has a number of significant weaknesses;
 - current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are unlikely to support continuous improvement without significant changes, which the Authority is beginning to make; and
- it is meeting its statutory obligations with regard to the Welsh Language Act.
- 4 We also found that the Authority has undertaken many of its planned actions and initiatives but very general Improvement Objectives make it difficult to assess progress. We came to this conclusion because:
 - many actions and initiatives have been undertaken in support of its areas of focus but a lack of clarity about planned activities and how achievement will be measured makes assessment and evaluation of progress difficult;
 - the Authority is helping to prevent road traffic collisions but attended more fires, although fatalities remain low and injuries are decreasing; and
 - the Authority is actively developing more innovative and efficient ways to respond to a wide range of incidents but increased sickness absence remains a concern.
- 5 Finally, the report sets out our views on the Authority's own assessment of its performance and arrangements. We have concluded that the Authority has mechanisms for monitoring performance but needs to further develop and report appropriate performance measures which will enable it to assess if improvement objectives have been achieved.
- 6 There are no formal recommendations but the following proposals for improvement are made to the Authority to support improvement:

Proposals for improvement

Proposals for improvement	
P1	Continue to implement previous proposals for improvement including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop performance management arrangements in respect of buildings management.• Review the range of data and information systems so that:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– better information is available to support operational service delivery and decision making eg, community profiles;– sharing of information with partners is easier eg, in respect of non domestic property databases and Home Fire Safety Check work; and– monitoring performance is enhanced so that the Authority knows how it performs against its improvement objectives and how it compares with other fire and rescue authorities.• Develop the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures that enables it to identify the impact of its activity for its community.
P2	Implement areas for improvement identified in our Information Management review.
P3	Implement areas for improvement identified in our Technology review.
P4	Address the accuracy and completeness of data issues arising from our performance indicator audit, particularly in respect of accurate address data, more robust year end procedures for closure of the incident recording system, and in order to improve the efficiency of the audit, documentation and evidence should be readily available for audit.

Proposals for improvement

- P5** In order to be able to effectively monitor delivery of Improvement Objectives and community outcomes:
- further develop performance management arrangements to ensure that management information and performance measures are collected against each improvement objective so that the Authority has the evidence to both monitor delivery of actions but also assess if improved outcomes for citizens/the public have been delivered; and
 - implement appropriate reporting procedures, in particular, the timing and structure of performance reporting to ensure that Members have timely information about performance against improvement objectives which will enable them to take corrective action quickly if necessary to get performance back on track.
- P6** Publish improvement information in accordance with Welsh Government guidance, in particular:
- ensure that reporting of performance includes a critical appraisal of how the Authority thinks it has done overall and for each of its improvement objectives in a balanced evaluation;
 - describe what it will do differently as a result of under performance against its expected improvements; and
 - publish all national and relevant local performance indicators in line with current guidance.

Detailed report



Introduction

- 7 This report was prepared by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General. On [page 2](#) you can find a brief explanation of what the Auditor General does.
- 8 Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Auditor General must report each year on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. [Appendix 1](#) provides more information about the Auditor General's powers and duties under the Measure. *The Annual Improvement Report* provides a picture of what each council or authority in Wales is trying to achieve and how it is going about it, drawing on the work of other inspectorates, including the Fire and Rescue Peer Assessment Team¹, where appropriate. This report also sets out the progress the Authority has made since the Auditor General published his last *Annual Improvement Report*, taking account of the Authority's own self-assessment.
- 9 Throughout the Report, we set out what the Authority needs to do to improve its services. Given the range of services provided and the challenges facing the Authority it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
 - recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way;
 - conduct a special inspection and publish the report with detailed recommendations;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made the Authority must respond to that recommendation publicly within 30 days; and
 - make proposals for improvement – if we make proposals to the Authority, we would expect them to do something about them and we will follow up what happens.
- 10 We want to find out if this report gives you the information you need and whether it is easy to understand. You can let us know your views by emailing us at info@wao.gov.uk or writing to us at 24, Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ.

¹ The Welsh Government introduced new arrangements for the assessment of fire and rescue authorities' operational performance in November 2006. The assessment process involves carrying out a self assessment against a centrally provided framework combined with a review by a peer assessment team comprising officers from other fire and rescue authorities.

The Authority has put arrangements in place to deliver improvement and does well in the areas it focuses on but planning, evaluation and reporting of performance is not robust although steps are being taken to strengthen these areas

- 11 This report sets out the Auditor General's view of the performance of the Authority in discharging its statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. This view has been informed by the work of the Wales Audit Office, KPMG LLP and the Fire and Rescue Peer Assessment Team.
- 12 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all authority arrangements or services. Our work has focused on the main objectives that the Authority has set itself for the financial audit year 2010-11. It builds upon earlier audit feedback and reports issued to the Authority and tracks the progress made by the Authority in responding to earlier audit findings. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings from work undertaken this year.
- 13 Our overall conclusion reflects the Authority's progress in making arrangements to secure continuous improvement and the progress it has made in delivering against its key improvement areas and Improvement Objectives.
- 14 It is important that the Authority has good, effective planning arrangements and understands the extent of progress and improvement it is making. We found that the Authority is strengthening planning arrangements and although it has mechanisms for monitoring performance it needs to further develop and report appropriate measures which will enable it to assess if improvement objectives have been delivered.
- 15 The Auditor General has determined that the Authority has discharged all of its duties in relation to publishing improvement information. However the Authority should ensure that it acts more in accordance with Welsh Government guidance; specifically to:
 - ensure that reporting of performance includes a critical appraisal of how the Authority thinks it has done overall and for each of its improvement objectives;
 - describe what it will do differently as a result of under performance against its expected improvements; and
 - publish all national performance indicators and relevant local indicators in line with current guidance.

The Authority is further developing its approach to planning and has arrangements in place to deliver improvement

16 This section of the report sets out our assessment of the Authority's key improvement areas for 2010-11 which are listed in [Appendix 4](#) and how the Authority is both planning and managing its business to maintain and improve services. This section of the report also highlights the Authority's response to issues raised in previous reports.

The Authority is strengthening its planning arrangements and is responding to previous proposals for improvement

17 *The Corporate Assessment Update letter* issued by the Auditor General to the Authority in July 2011 reported that the Authority's leadership was continuing to drive change and was making progress in addressing areas for improvement. The letter also indicated that the Authority's priorities for the coming period should be to develop and implement appropriate asset management planning arrangements and further develop its performance management framework so that improvement objectives are measurable.

18 In our *Preliminary Corporate Assessment* (August 2010) we proposed that the Authority should develop an Asset Management Plan. Members will consider the Authority's first Corporate Asset Management Plan early in 2012. The Corporate Asset Management Plan is set within the context of other strategic plans including the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Corporate Five Year Plan. Annual updates are anticipated for the Corporate Asset Management Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Corporate Asset Management Plan describes the

planning process for the optimum use of land, buildings, transport, ICT and operational assets. In addition, more detailed asset management plans for each of these areas are currently being developed. A computerised asset management system to assist in managing the Authority's assets more effectively is planned for early in 2012.

19 The Service Improvement Forum, is responsible for identifying potential performance improvements for the service and the community as well as policy development. This group considers progress monitoring reports before they are considered by the newly created Service Improvement Implementation Group, Policy Board and the Performance Review and Audit Committee.

20 The Authority introduced the Service Improvement Implementation Group during 2011 in order to:

- monitor implementation of the Authority's improvement proposals identified in the Service Review Programme;
- ensure the financial savings associated with the improvement proposals are also delivered; and
- strengthen business planning and monitoring arrangements.

21 The Service Improvement Implementation Group meets fortnightly and officers have told us it provides a focus for delivering identified efficiencies through regular monitoring and taking corrective action where needed. Members are advised of progress and the latest update on actions planned for 2011-12 was provided in October 2011. We will follow

up the work undertaken by the Service Improvement Implementation Group as part of the next corporate assessment (Spring 2012).

22 The Authority also implemented a new performance management system (Ffynnon) in April 2011 and has begun to look at its information requirements and how it will:

- make it clear to citizens what outcomes it is seeking by its actions;
- specify the measures it intends to use to assess achievement of its improvement objectives;
- regularly monitor and report achievement against improvement objectives to ensure corrective action can be taken quickly if needed; and.
- use the Ffynnon system to record and monitor progress against all of the focus areas included in Command and Departmental plans.

23 The Authority is moving to a more outcome focused approach to its planning, which is clearer about what benefits citizens can expect to see. As in many other organisations, this fundamental change in focus is a challenge and there is a need to ensure the change in approach is embedded across the Authority.

24 The Authority is starting to change the way it does things with the aim of improving its efficiency, and examples include:

- implementing the efficiencies identified in the Service Review;
- improving training needs analysis and delivery of risk critical training including use of breathing apparatus, driving skills,

incident command and provided additional training for the retained duty system officers;

- changing crewing arrangements including introducing self-crewing at Pontardawe;
- adopting new ways of communicating with vulnerable groups;
- implementing control room resilience; and
- introducing a new organisational structure from April 2011 which saw changes to county command structures and day crewed stations.

25 The Auditor General has identified a number of areas for improvement for the Authority in his reports over the last two years. The Authority has arrangements to monitor the progress being made against Wales Audit Office proposals for improvement and the Performance Review and Audit Committee received its first formal monitoring report in January 2012. *The Corporate Assessment Update letter* (July 2011) noted that the Authority is working to address the previously identified areas for improvement. The table below provides an update on actions taken to address all previous proposals for improvement:

Proposal for improvement	Update 2012
Preliminary corporate assessment (August 2010)	
<p>Develop an asset management plan and performance management arrangements in respect of buildings management.</p>	<p>Members to consider draft plans early 2012. Corporate Asset Management Plan drafted that links with the Medium Term Financial Plan and the Corporate Five Year Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Asset management plans drafted for property, ICT, transport and operational equipment with annual updates planned.</p> <p>Currently there are draft plans for all aspects of asset management and the Authority expects to finalise them by the end of the year.</p>
<p>Develop a detailed training needs analysis to underpin its training and development activities.</p>	<p>The Authority has made good progress in addressing weaknesses in identifying its risk-critical training needs. It has developed Terian as the basis for identifying its training needs; information is now more timely and reliable. The Authority has prioritised risk-critical skills to ensure that all staff are competent and is developing a three-year training and development plan.</p>

Proposal for improvement	Update 2012
Annual improvement report (January 2011)	
<p>Review the range data and information systems so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better information is available to support operational service delivery and decision making eg, community profiles; • sharing of information with partners is easier eg, in respect of non domestic property databases and Home Fire Safety Check work; and • monitoring performance is enhanced so that the Authority knows how it performs against its improvement objectives and how it compares with other fire and rescue authorities. 	<p>The Authority is looking at its information requirements and how it manages its data but more work is needed to progress the issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Data Interoperability Group is looking to identify improvements in the accessibility and sharing of data between systems; • Risk Profiling priorities are being identified with Community Risk Reduction; and • hazardous sites register is being developed with partners and Welsh Government. <p>Mobile data terminals are now updated more frequently providing crews with more up to date information.</p> <p>Ffynnon is being used but needs further development.</p> <p>Local performance information is being developed but performance monitoring is performance indicator driven and does not focus on achievement of improvement objectives and is unchanged for 2011-12.</p>
<p>Develop the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures that enables it to identify the impact of its activity for its community.</p>	<p>The Authority is beginning to use Results Based Accounting to develop its improvement objectives but more work is needed to develop associated performance and outcome measures for 2012-13.</p> <p>Evaluation Officer role created for 2012-13.</p>
<p>Review how it undertakes consultation and engagement so that stakeholders and citizens have appropriate opportunities to influence and shape priorities for improvement in the future.</p>	<p>Strategy for consultation and communication of the Draft Annual Action Plan 2012-13 was reviewed and approved by the Risk Reduction Planning Member Working Group.</p> <p>The Authority has approved a Consultation and Communication Strategy (2011-15) and has undertaken a range of activities to gather the public's views including visiting events such as the Royal Welsh show and other local events.</p>

The Authority has a sound approach to financial management but given the scale of change necessary continued clear leadership is required

- 26 The Authority has recently completed the medium term financial plan (2012-2015) ensuring it is better placed to address its financial challenges. It has been aware for some time of the need to make sure it uses its resources as effectively as possible and continues to make sensible preparations. The Service Review (undertaken in 2010-11) considered all aspects of service provision in order to identify efficiencies and a number of actions designed to achieve savings for future years.
- 27 The Authority has a good track record of delivering services within the resources that it has available and this places it on a sound footing going forward. During 2010-11 the Authority under-spent its budget by £2.49 million and in September 2011 it agreed to return £1 million of this to its constituent authorities. The under-spend was largely achieved by not recruiting to vacant posts and managing the residual workload through short-term reorganisation of rotas, secondments and acting up as well as extended retained contracts; having less officers retire on ill health and additional grant from the Welsh Government.
- 28 The Authority is making good progress towards achieving the efficiency savings of £1.23 million planned for 2011-12. As noted above, the Service Improvement Implementation Group began monitoring progress of the identified efficiencies during 2011-12. In addition, to the efficiency savings, the latest financial forecast anticipates further under-spends of around £0.5 million for the current financial year primarily due to early achievement of planned savings and increased income.
- 29 The Authority has recently approved its budget for the year period 2012-13 and has identified estimates of efficiency savings needed for the three year period up to 2014-15. Although there is still some uncertainty about the precise phasing and magnitude of the efficiency savings required current estimates are £279,000 in 2012-13, £657,000 in 2013-14 and just over £1 million in 2014-15. The Authority has identified that early planning is essential if it is to achieve these future efficiencies as many have long lead in times and require significant changes to be implemented.
- 30 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2010-11 accounts confirming that money had been spent in a proper way. **Appendix 3** gives more detail.

The Authority's information management does not positively support improvement and has a number of significant weaknesses

31 Due to the increasing financial pressure on the public sector there is a need to maximise and exploit the information held to deliver and plan for quality services effectively. Our review of the way the Authority manages information concluded that:

- There are weaknesses in governance. For example, the Authority does not have a developed Information Strategy or formalised management forum tasked with responsibility for information management. Staff are not fully trained on information issues including information security.
- The Authority has a level of information security in place but this needs to be extended to reflect good practice (international standard), and to cover paper as well as electronic information. Its approach to managing information and managing email is not robust.
- The key areas for improvement are to:
 - develop and implement an Information Strategy;
 - clarify roles and responsibilities of the Senior Information Risk Owner;
 - ensure that the ICT Steering Group delivers the function of an Information Security Forum;
 - review the roles and responsibilities of the ICT Steering Group and the Policy Board regarding information security and governance;

- review Information Security Officer's work plan;
- establish robust arrangements for whole life cycle management of electronic information; and
- increase the speed of delivery of officer training programmes covering all information management issues.

The Authority's current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are unlikely to support continuous improvement without significant changes, which the Authority is beginning to make

32 Effective use of technology is essential for transforming the delivery of public services, improving outcomes for citizens and delivering efficiency savings.

33 Our review found the Authority's current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are unlikely to support continuous improvement without significant changes. The Authority is aware that it needs to take action to improve arrangements if it is to secure efficient, effective and economical use of technology and is currently considering how best to do this. The key areas for improvement are to:

- develop a new five-year ICT Strategy;
- strengthen ICT Governance arrangements;
- review ICT funding arrangements;
- review the ICT Service to ensure that it has the ICT skills and capacity to support and develop the use of new technology;

- use technology to optimise and standardise business processes and procedures; and
- undertake post project reviews for all ICT projects.

34 A member scrutiny exercise in November 2011 considered an Implementation Plan, developed to identify actions to address proposals for improvement in the Wales Audit Office's Technology and Information Management reviews. The Service Improvement Implementation Group is monitoring implementation of improvement actions. Progress to date has included: drafting a revised ICT Strategy; acquiring 'Sharepoint' software; appointment of a Sharepoint development officer; developing remote access capability; and implementing new arrangements for updating mobile data terminals in vehicles.

The Authority is meeting its statutory obligations with regard to the Welsh Language Act

35 The Welsh Language Board (the Board) praised the Authority for recognising and taking steps through its training strategy to rectify the shortfall in the number of bilingual staff in two of its county command centres. The Board has also welcomed the financial commitment toward Welsh language services that has been allocated for 2011-12 and the setting up of a Language Promoters forum to discuss Welsh language issues. However, the Authority has not yet addressed the recommendations of the website review of 2010. The Board expects the Authority to complete the work as soon as possible in order to fully comply with its Welsh Language Scheme.

The Authority has undertaken many of its planned actions and initiatives but very general Improvement Objectives make it difficult to assess progress

36 This section of the report sets out our assessment of the Authority's performance in:

- achieving the improvement objectives it set for itself for 2010-11;
- helping to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires and road traffic collisions through its prevention and protection activities; and
- responding to fires and other threats to safety.

Many actions and initiatives have been undertaken in support of its areas of focus but a lack of clarity about planned activities and how achievement will be measured makes assessment and evaluation of progress difficult

37 Fire and rescue authorities did not set Improvement Objectives under the Local Government Measure (2009) (the Measure) for 2010-11 but rather restated existing corporate objectives (as this was the first interim year prior to full implementation of the Measure). The Welsh Government requires all fire and rescue authorities to publish their plans for improving their services by the end of October prior to the year that they relate to. In October 2009 the Authority had published its plan for the year 2010-11² and has subsequently also published Improvement Objectives for 2011-12 and 2012-13 within the required timescales.

38 2010-11 was a 'planning year' for the Authority and the comprehensive Service Review to identify future efficiencies and improvements was a key focus area. The Authority identified six Improvement Objectives within the Managing Risk theme but did not identify the specific actions it was

planning, nor the measures it would use to assess achievement. Appendix 4 provides information about the improvement objectives for 2010-11 and 2011-12.

39 Assessing achievement has therefore been difficult, but what we can say is that overall the Authority can demonstrate many actions and initiatives that contribute towards improvements in these areas as summarised in the table below:

² Annual Action Plan 2010-2011 and Improvement Plan 2009-2010 – Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

2010-11 Improvement Objective/Key Improvement Area	Progress
<p>Improving the way we reach vulnerable members of society</p> <p>Community safety work is targeted at the most vulnerable members within communities, but we know that we do not reach everyone.</p> <p>Strengthening links with partner organisations that have regular contact with vulnerable people and targeting venues where they meet, such as day centres.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the range of services we can provide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority categorises certain vulnerable groups as high risk and prioritises them for community safety awareness. These groups include the elderly, some single parents, those with mental health problems, substance addiction and smokers. • The Authority has identified agencies that provide access to such vulnerable individuals and a number of Service Level Agreements/partnership arrangements with voluntary sector organisations including Age Concern, Care and Repair, the British Red Cross and Youth Support Teams exist. • Welsh Government funding has been used to employ a Third Sector Co-ordinator to strengthen links with these agencies. • Of the 23,000 Home Fire Safety Checks carried out during 2010-11 some 2,000 (9%) were undertaken by voluntary sector partners compared with 'a small number' previously. • Projects have been promoted in a number of ways including, e-mail, publications, seminars and health days. • Trial partnership with Air Products (provider of Oxygen to domestic properties) to identify and access vulnerable people for prioritised home fire safety checks. This arrangement also provides information for crews attending fires at properties where oxygen is held.

2010-11 Improvement Objective/Key Improvement Area	Progress
<p>Sharing our facilities with our communities</p> <p>We want our fire stations to be open and accessible to the public, but this requires us to develop our premises in order to make them suitable for shared use.</p> <p>The Authority's work in this area will allow us to further develop our links with other services and extend our range of community facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 29, free of charge, meeting rooms available across the area for community use. • There is evidence of community groups using the facilities, including Police and Communities Together meetings (PACT), Bike Safe events and an elderly persons group in Welshpool. But the full extent of community use as a means of promoting fire safety activities is not known. • The Authority invested in improving premises to ensure that they were suitable for public use.
<p>Engaging with communities</p> <p>To promote community safety activities and raise public awareness of all aspects of our work.</p> <p>Improve engagement with communities by direct contact with the public such as Young Firefighter schemes, attendance at schools, community events and local and community council meetings were promoted as well as working with other partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnerships Officer has continued to develop links with voluntary organisations including Cyrenians, the Wallich, Swansea Drugs Project and sub contracted care agencies used by councils. • Twelve Young Firefighter Units have continued as well as the completion of Pheonix courses. • Community Safety teams and local stations have continued to undertake a wide range of activity including chip pan demonstrations, road safety advice and taking home fire safety check referrals. • Developed a Communication and Consultation Strategy for 2011-2015.

2010-11 Improvement Objective/Key Improvement Area	Progress
<p>Improving Road Safety</p> <p>We are already working with our partners to make people more aware of the dangers on our roads and to improve safety.</p> <p>Improve the way we equip our staff to deal with road traffic collisions.</p> <p>Education work with young people and other risk groups; work with partners and improved information sharing.</p> <p>The range of joint working and awareness raising initiatives will be taken forward to the forums that the Service plays a part in, both locally and nationally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority undertook a number of initiatives in partnership with the Police and local council road safety teams. Target groups were young drivers and motorcyclists and initiatives include Pass Plus Cymru, Crash Scene Incident, Too Much Punch for Judy, Bike Safe and Operation Darwen Biker Engagement Events. • Road Safety information is also included in education programmes for schools, Pheonix courses and Young Firefighter activities. • The Authority has visited other fire and rescue authorities to identify best practice. • There were fewer road traffic collisions attended during 2010-11. The latest statistics indicate that there were fewer fatalities, serious accidents and casualties in the Authority's area compared with the previous year.
<p>Delivering Home Fire Safety Checks</p> <p>Currently home fire safety checks are carried out by firefighters, partner agencies and dedicated community safety staff. We believe that there may be opportunities for improvement in this area - stakeholders felt that we could improve the delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks, using our partners to publicise, identify and undertake the checks on our behalf.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23,000 Home Fire Safety Checks were carried out which was just under the target of 24,000 and some 28,000 smoke alarms were fitted. • Home Fire Safety Check Co-ordinator role established to quality assure smoke alarms fitted in line with best practice and to ensure staff and partners are providing a quality service. • Trial 'call-centre' approach used to manage Home Fire Safety Checks in hard to reach areas has subsequently been adopted corporately. • The Authority has completed a fundamental review of home fire safety procedures including how home fire safety checks are generated and delivered, how risks are targeted and how information is both stored and shared. Policy Board are considering a new policy for introduction in April 2011.

2010-11 Improvement Objective/Key Improvement Area	Progress
<p>Reducing deliberate grassland fires</p> <p>Deliberate grassland and forestry fires are a drain on our resources, a danger to our fire fighters and damaging to the environment.</p> <p>The work already undertaken by the Authority and their partners in reducing grassland fires was acknowledged, and continuing with education strategies and working with other agencies was supported as the best way forward.</p> <p>Greater emphasis should be placed on treating grassland fires more seriously, including the penalties for arson, in order to change attitudes to fire setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the Authority implemented initiatives to reduce grassland fires, there was an increase of some 25% during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 1,072 to 1,438). The Authority attributes this primarily to an increase in deliberately set fires and the weather conditions. The Authority recognises that some of its initiatives need more than one year to influence behaviours. • There was an increase in the level of landowner notifications of controlled burning. Welsh Government funding has been used to purchase Global Positioning Systems to accurately locate controlled burning sites. • The Gower Initiative sought to improve relationships and resolve conflict with Commoners burning heathland which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest. • Patrols undertaken of 'hot-spots' by the RaFT.

- 40 The Authority improved its performance (compared with the previous year) in eight of the 12 National Strategic Indicators it is required to produce. These performance indicators relate to fires attended, fire deaths and injuries and fires in non domestic premises.
- 41 Despite the Authority attending some 10 per cent more fires in 2010-11 than in the previous year (5,077 to 5,607, primarily due to grassland fires) performance indicators relating to fire deaths and injuries show either no change or a reduction. However, the Authority did see an increase of some six per cent in the number of fires in non domestic properties compared with the previous year but the long term trend is a reducing one.

The Authority is helping to prevent road traffic collisions but attended more fires although fatalities remain low and injuries are decreasing

There were slightly more dwelling fires attended than the previous year but the number of fatalities and injuries remained the same

- 42 The Authority undertakes a range of activities designed to prevent fires happening and to minimise the impact when they do. In 2010-11 the Authority put in place arrangements to further develop a more targeted approach to its Home Fire Safety Checks programme and has a number of service level agreements in place with partner agencies to deliver checks. It is not possible to assess whether Home Fire Safety Checks undertaken are actually targeted at the most vulnerable as this data is not collected. However, the Authority has recently completed a review of its approach to
- Home Fire Safety Checks and is developing a new policy for use from April 2012.
- 43 The number of dwelling fires attended increased slightly by two per cent during 2010- 11 compared with the previous year (from 661 to 674) which is inconsistent with the trend across Wales where there was a four per cent reduction in dwelling fires attended:
- dwelling fires started accidentally increased by three per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 584 to 604), in contrast with the trend across Wales where there was a reduction of two per cent; and
 - the number of dwelling fires started deliberately reduced by nine per cent (from 77 to 70), which is below the Welsh average reduction of 13 per cent for the same period.
- 44 Although the Authority attended two per cent more dwelling fires the number of people dying or getting injured in dwelling fires did not change from 2009-10 (seven people died and 42 people were injured). This is different from the trend nationally which saw an increase in deaths of 11 per cent and an increase of 23 per cent in injuries.
- 45 There is evidence to suggest that free smoke alarms provided as part of its Home Fire Safety Checks work are reaching those at risk:
- there were fewer dwelling fires attended in properties that had no smoke alarm fitted (from 44 to 42 per cent in 2010-11), although this proportion is still higher than the Welsh average of 38 per cent for 2010-11;

- there was no change in the proportion of dwelling fires attended where fire detection equipment had been actuated (44 per cent) although this proportion is lower than the Welsh average of 48 per cent across Wales for 2010-11; and
- there were slightly more dwelling fires attended that had detection equipment fitted which did not actuate (from 12 to 14 per cent) and this compares well with the Welsh average of 15 per cent for 2010-11.

There were more non domestic premises fires attended than the previous year but deaths and injuries decreased

- 46 The number of non domestic premises fires attended increased by six per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 315 to 333) compared with a reduction of 10 per cent across Wales for the same period.
- 47 There were no deaths in non domestic premises fires during 2010-11 (there was one death in 2009-10). The number of injuries sustained in non domestic fires reduced by 71 per cent (from seven to two), which is significantly better than the increase of 41 per cent across Wales for the same period.
- 48 The Authority has adopted the Chief Fire Officers Association's (CFOA) national guidance on the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. The number of false alarms attended reduced by 14 per cent during 2010-11, to 1,977 compared with 2,302 in 2009-10. This is higher than the Welsh average reduction of nine per cent for the same period.

There were more deliberate fires attended during 2010-11 than the previous year and there was one fatality but the number of injuries decreased

- 49 The number of deliberate fires attended increased by 16 per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 2,832 to 3,278) which is above the Welsh average increase of 11 per cent for the same period.
- 50 Some 58 per cent of all fires attended were started deliberately during 2010-11, which is an increase on 2009-10 (56 per cent) but is lower than the Welsh average of 69 per cent for the same period. Across Wales between 2009-10 and 2010-11 there was an increase in the number of fires attended that were deliberately started.
- 51 One person died in a deliberate dwelling fire during 2010-11. The number of injuries sustained in deliberate fires decreased by 75 per cent from eight to two.
- 52 The Welsh Government funds the Arson Reduction Team and a number of projects within community safety have been undertaken to specifically tackle deliberate fire setting. The multiagency Rural and Forestry Team (RaFT) patrols high risk grassfire areas and this is combined with visits to schools to educate children on the dangers of deliberately setting fires.

Road Safety initiatives have contributed to reductions in the number of road traffic collisions attended, fatal and serious accidents, and casualties

53 Road safety is not a statutory duty for the Authority but it works in collaboration with the police and others to make people more aware of the dangers on the roads and to improve safety. Although there have been improvements regarding road safety within Mid and West Wales (as demonstrated by the figures below) the Authority's performance when compared with the rest of Wales is not always improving at the same rate:

- The number of road traffic collisions attended has decreased by 15 per cent during 2010-11 from 1,266 to 1,078, which is lower than the 20 per cent reduction across Wales for the same period.
- Fatal and serious accidents have reduced by six per cent between 2009 when 403 accidents occurred and in 2010 when 377 accidents occurred. This is lower than the reduction across Wales of 10 per cent.
- The number of people who died in road traffic collisions reduced significantly from 55 in 2009 to 37 in 2010.
- The number of casualties did not change between 2009 and 2010 when there were 3,513 casualties in both years, compared with a four per cent reduction across Wales for the same period.

54 The Authority targeted two particular groups, young people and motorcyclists, for its road safety campaigns and the following statistics demonstrate its performance:

- 1,039 drivers aged 25 and under were involved in accidents in 2009, compared with 1,110 in 2010. This is a reduction of six per cent compared with a reduction of 14 per cent across Wales.
- There were 284 motorcyclist casualties in 2009 compared with 260 in 2010, a reduction of eight per cent, which compares well with the less than one per cent reduction seen across Wales for the same period.

The Authority is actively developing more innovative and efficient ways to respond to a wide range of events and incidents but increased sickness absence remains a concern

55 The Authority recognises the need to be ready to respond to a wide range of incidents from fires and road traffic collisions to flooding, other natural disasters and acts of terrorism. During 2010-11, some 27,280 calls were received by Fire Control resulting in approximately 15,168 incidents attended which included 5,607 fires and 4,287 special service incidents (including road traffic collisions, rescuing people and animals).

56 In 2010-11 the Authority undertook a fundamental review of its service and the resulting Service Review Programme identified different ways the service could be improved without compromising safety arrangements for operational crews or the public and at less cost. Changes have been made to County Command structures, officer cover arrangements and new staffing levels have been introduced at Day Crewed Stations. The Authority is also continuing to

- review other aspects of its service provision including the location and utilisation of emergency tenders, the introduction of Rural Response Vehicles and enhancing its line safety capability.
- 57 The Fire and Rescue Peer Assessment Team has recently reviewed response and call handling arrangements and will be reporting in early 2012.
- 58 During 2010-11, there were 59 personnel injured which is a slight increase on the previous year when there were 57. Personnel injured whilst training and 'on-duty' reduced during 2010-11 but there was an increase in personnel injured during routine activities from 12 in 2009-10 to 20 in 2010-11.
- 59 Sickness absence increased significantly across all staff groups in 2010-11 compared with 2009-10. The total number of days/shifts lost increased by some 1,000 days on the previous year from 3,871 to 4,847 days which is an increase of 25 per cent on the previous year. The sickness absence trends for each staff group are:
- whole time operational staff sickness absences in 2010-11 were 3,139 days/shifts, which equates to 7.2 days per FTE member of staff and is an increase on the previous year of 23 per cent;
 - control staff sickness absences in 2010-11 were 336 days/shifts, which equates to 11.2 days per FTE member of staff and is an increase on the previous year of five per cent; and
 - non-operational staff sickness absences in 2010-11 were 1,372 days/shifts, which equates to 8.7 days per FTE member of staff and is an increase on the previous year of 32 per cent.
- 60 The Authority believes the increased levels of sickness absence during 2010-11 were partly due to the organisational changes implemented during the year. The Authority is seeking to address the issue by focusing on local targets and undertaking a review of occupational health arrangements.
- 61 The number of malicious calls that the Authority received decreased by 13 per cent during 2010-11 to 609 from 701 in 2009-10, which is better than the Welsh average reduction of eight per cent for the same period. As well as the reduction in the number of malicious calls received the number of malicious calls attended also reduced over the same period by 20 per cent from 230 to 183, which is again better than the Welsh average of 13 per cent for the same period.

The Authority has mechanisms for monitoring performance but needs to further develop and report appropriate performance measures which will enable it to assess if improvement objectives have been achieved

- 62 This section of the report sets out our conclusion on how good the Authority's self assessment of its performance is. Fire and rescue authorities are not formally required to produce a performance assessment under the Measure for 2010-11 but they are expected to provide an assessment of how well they delivered their planned improvements for that year. The assessment draws on findings from our Performance Indicator audit, the audit of the Improvement Plan³ and the review of improvement objectives.
- 63 Accurate self assessment is critical to the Authority's ability to:
- recognise the progress it is making;
 - take remedial action when performance is not reaching anticipated levels; and
 - report its performance to local citizens in a balanced way.
- 64 We found from our audit work looking at the latest performance indicators and data that the quality and accuracy of reported information needs to be improved. Of the 12 National Strategic Indicators the Authority is required to collect and report to the Welsh Government, we identified three that needed correction and one which required qualifying. We proposed the Authority considers taking action to:
- ensure Incident Recording System data is input in a timely way during the year;
 - implement appropriate year-end procedures to ensure timely and complete data;
- ensure that full and accurate address data is entered into Incident Recording System; and
 - improve the efficiency of the audit by having documentation and evidence readily available for audit.
- 65 The Authority recognises the need to move towards a more outcome focussed approach and that some of its improvement objectives are difficult to measure. We suggested last year that performance measures and indicators should include both qualitative and quantitative measures so that community outcomes can be identified and evaluated. The Authority is continuing to develop a suite of local performance information, to be captured within Ffynnon, that will allow it to demonstrate whether it has achieved its objectives and delivered improvements for the public. The Authority is working towards having a suite of measures in place for 2012-13.
- 66 During 2011-12 arrangements for monitoring and reporting changed and there are now three separate reports to Members covering performance issues. In October 2011 performance relating to Quarter 1 (April to June 2011) was reported to the Performance Review and Audit Committee and comprised the following reports:
- *Performance Indicator Report* – this is based on the Welsh Government's National Strategic and Core Indicators and one local indicator (which was previously a Core Indicator) and is not structured around the Authority's Improvement Objectives.

³ Annual Action Plan 2012-13 Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

- *Business Report* - this reports progress made against objectives in individual business plans and is not structured around the Authority's Improvement Objectives.
- *Annual Action Progress Report* – this is a narrative only report but is structured around the Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2011-12.

is not clear from the document whether the Authority thinks it has performed well during the year 2010-11 and, importantly, where it has not performed well or as expected and what it proposes do about it. The Authority plans to make future Improvement Plans more interactive with links to more detailed performance information.

67 Reporting performance measures, indicators and updates separately makes it difficult to have a robust and transparent assessment of whether key improvement areas and improvement objectives are being delivered. The data is currently reported to Members some three months following the period to which it relates and this may impact on the Authority's ability to intervene to get performance back on track. The officer monitoring structure in place through the Service Improvement Forum, Service Improvement Implementation Group and Policy Board reduces the likelihood of this delay in taking action. However, the Authority needs to consider the timing and structure of performance reporting to ensure up to date information is available and corrective action can be taken if required.

68 The most important means of reporting performance to local citizens is through the improvement plan. In October 2011 the Authority published its improvement plan (called *Annual Action Plan 2012-13*) which included a section on the Authority's performance for 2010-11. The Authority's assessment of its performance is very brief and only provides an update on what actions have been undertaken during 2010-11 within the managing risk theme (as all six of its improvement objectives were in this area). It

Appendices



Appendix 1

Status of this report

This report has been produced by the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure). The report also discharges duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether, as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17, he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

Improvement authorities are under a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'. Improvement authorities are defined as local councils, national parks and, fire and rescue authorities.

The main piece of work for the Wales Audit Office, to enable the Auditor General to fulfil his duties, is an annual Improvement Assessment.

This will be informed by a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It will also include a retrospective assessment of whether an authority has achieved its planned improvements in order to inform a view as to the authority's track record of improvement.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), in respect of which he will provide a report to the relevant authorities and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22).

The Auditor General will summarise audit and assessment reports in this published Annual Improvement Report (under section 24). This will also summarise any reports of special inspections.

An important ancillary activity for the Wales Audit Office is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments, and this report describes the extent to which he has done so.

This report also summarises the Auditor General's conclusions on the Authority's self assessment of its performance.

Appendix 2

Useful information about Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The Authority has to perform all the duties and responsibilities in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations. There are three important pieces of law relating to fire authorities:

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

The Act requires all fire authorities to make provision for fire fighting, which means not only putting out fires but also protecting life and property in case of fire. It also makes provision for attending road traffic collisions and other emergencies as well as community safety activities.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO)

The Order came into force on 1 October 2006, and replaced over 70 separate pieces of fire safety legislation. The requirement for businesses to have fire certificates was abolished. The FSO applies to all non-domestic premises in England and Wales, including the common parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation. It gives responsibility to those who are best placed to address fire safety and ensure that risks are kept under review. Under the Order the Responsible Person⁴ is required to carry out a fire risk assessment and put in place appropriate fire safety measures to minimise the risk to life from fire; and to keep the assessment up to date. The Order is enforced by Fire and Rescue Authorities who are expected to develop appropriate risk based inspection regimes.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Act delivers a single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Act is divided into two parts; Part 1 which defines the obligations of certain organisations to prepare for various types of emergencies and Part 2 which provides additional powers for the Government to use in the event of a large scale emergency.

Under the Act fire and rescue services are defined as Category 1 Responders and as such have six specific duties to deliver:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
- put in place emergency plans;
- put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements;
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination; and
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

⁴ Communities and Local Government Fire Safety Law and Guidance documents for business states that the law applies if you are: responsible for business premises, an employer or self-employed with business premises, responsible for a part of a dwelling where that part is solely used for business purposes, a charity or voluntary organisation, a contractor with a degree of control over any premises, providing accommodation for paying guests.

There is an additional duty placed on local authorities to:

- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management. Local fire and rescue services can be called upon to assist in this role.

Category 2 organisations include organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies. Category 1 and 2 organisations form Local Resilience Forums (which are co-terminus with police areas) which will help co-ordination and co operation between responders at the local level.

The Authority is funded directly by its constituent local authorities based on the registered electorate in each area. It comprises 25 councillors from the six constituent authorities.

The number of representatives from each constituent authority is determined by the number of registered local government electors in each area.

The current Chair of the Fire Authority is Councillor Cheryl Philpott.

The Authority acts as the main policy making body and governs the adoption of various working practices in line with statutory guidelines laid down by the Welsh Government. It meets on a quarterly basis and its work is supported by three main committees namely, Resources, Personnel, and Performance Review and Audit. All of these groups meet regularly to consider issues within their areas of responsibility. Meetings are open to the public, and records of the Authority's transactions are available from the Authority's website.

The Service is led and managed by R Smith the Chief Fire Officer supported by the Executive Board that consists of the Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officers who lead operational directorates.

For more information see the Authority's website at www.mawwfire.gov.uk or contact the Authority at Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Authority Headquarters, Lime Grove Avenue, Carmarthen, SA31 1SP.

Appendix 3

Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter to the Members of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The auditor appointed by the Auditor General issued the following auditor's report on 30 November 2011.

As you will be aware the Auditor General will be issuing an *Annual Improvement Report* to each local authority by the end of January 2012 and some of the issues that were traditionally reported in the Appointed Auditor's *Annual Audit Letter* will be included in that report. Therefore I have taken the opportunity to summarise the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities into this short letter which forms the *Annual Audit Letter*. The letter is designed to be a standalone document, but will also be presented to the Authority and the public as part of the *Annual Improvement Report* and therefore discharges my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority complied with reporting requirements relating to its financial performance and use of resources

It is the Authority's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

On 30 September 2011 I issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Authority's and the Pension Fund's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. A number of matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members in my Audit of Financial Statements report.

From 2010/11 local authorities in Wales are required to produce their accounts on the basis of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The introduction of these new standards imposed significant additional demands on the Authority's finance staff. Despite these additional pressures, the accounts were prepared by the statutory deadline. However there were a number of revisions to the draft accounts which put undue pressure on the timetable.

The following issues were identified regarding the accounts:

- The *Annual Audit Letter* for 2009-10 stressed the importance of producing an opening balance sheet and a draft set of IFRS accounts as soon as possible. The number of missing disclosures and revisions to the Statement of Accounts indicates that the project timetable had slipped and there had been under-estimation in the amount of work involved. However, all deadlines were met due to the close collaboration between the finance team and the audit team.
- The delays in production of the Statement of Accounts impacted the audit of the Whole of Government Account's (WGA) return, a revised WGA pack incorporating the amendments to the final statements was not received until 20 September due to difficulties in sending the information electronically. The Welsh Government's deadline for submission of audited returns, 30 September, was not met as there was insufficient time to complete the audit.

My review of the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts as well as placing reliance on the work completed as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government Measure (2009). The main findings from this latter work will be set out in the Annual Improvement Report. In addition I also bring the following issues to your attention:

- The Authority has continued to develop its arrangements for medium term financial planning ensuring it is better placed to address its financial challenges.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 30 September 2011. The financial audit fee for 2010/11 is currently expected to be in line with those set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Stevens

For and on Behalf of the Appointed Auditor

Appendix 4

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's improvement objectives

What we will do in 2010-11 ⁵	Improvement Objectives 2011-12 ⁶
<p>1 Improving the way we reach vulnerable members of society</p> <p>Our Community Safety work is targeted at the most vulnerable members within communities, but we know that we do not reach everyone. We asked for views on how we could improve the way we reach vulnerable members of society.</p> <p>Respondents were very supportive of our efforts to improve in this area of work and the comments received regarding identifying vulnerable people confirmed that the Service's strategy in this area was generally what was expected of us. Strengthening links with partner organisations that have regular contact with vulnerable people and targeting venues where they meet, such as day centres, was proposed. Raising awareness of the range of services we can provide was also recommended.</p>	<p>1 Value for Money:</p> <p>Implement the key outcomes of the 2010/11 Service Review Programme to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of service delivery.</p>
<p>2 Improving the way we reach vulnerable members of society</p> <p>We have buildings throughout Mid and West Wales and already share some of these facilities with the local community and other emergency services. This allows us to work collaboratively and maximise the available resources. These buildings are a valuable resource within the community and help promote our services, safety awareness programmes and the work of others. We want our fire stations to be open and accessible to the public, but this requires us to develop our premises in order to make them suitable for shared use. We asked for views on extending and further developing the shared use of our facilities. There was overwhelming support for the Authority's policy of sharing our facilities with communities and with other emergency services. It was emphasised that joint working should further develop our links with others but should not impact on the day to day running of the Service. This confirmed that the Authority's work in this area meets approval and will allow us to further develop our links with other services and extend our range of community facilities.</p>	<p>2 Emergency Response:</p> <p>Effective employee safety and welfare helps us meet the challenges faced at emergency incidents and robust training and response arrangements will help achieve this.</p>

⁵ Annual Action Plan 2010-11 Improvement Plan 2009-10 - Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

⁶ Annual Action Plan 2011-12 - Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

What we will do in 2010-11	Improvement Objectives 2011-12
<p>3 Engaging with communities</p> <p>We already engage with communities to ensure our services are accountable and form part of the local decision making process. We are active in promoting community safety and in raising public awareness of all aspects of our work. We asked for views on how we could improve on our engagement, in order to strengthen links with communities, place our citizens at the heart of our planning process and increase the voice they have in shaping the services we provide.</p> <p>There was considerable support for the Service's intention to improve engagement with communities and a number of suggestions were made on how this could be achieved. Direct contact with the public such as Young Firefighter schemes, attendance at schools, community events and local and community council meetings were promoted as well as working with other partners. Many of the activities suggested, such as children and young persons partnerships are already part of our core work, but this demonstrated the willingness of our communities to become more engaged with the Service.</p>	<p>3 Community Wide Resilience:</p> <p>Continue to develop our ability to respond to exceptional events that impact upon our communities and the Service by working with partner agencies to develop and practice emergency plans.</p>
<p>4 Improving Road Safety</p> <p>We are already working with our partners to make people more aware of the dangers on our roads and to improve safety. We have also provided improved equipment on all of our front line fire appliances. We asked for feedback from our stakeholders on what more we could do.</p> <p>There was considerable support for the work that the Authority is already undertaking in improving the way we equip our staff to deal with road traffic collisions. Our education work with young people and other risk groups; our work with partners and improved information sharing also met approval. The range of joint working and awareness raising initiatives will be taken forward to the forums that the Service plays a part in, both locally and nationally.</p>	<p>4 Sustainability and the Environment:</p> <p>We published our Sustainability and Environmental Strategy in June 2009 setting out our vision of how we will contribute to this agenda.</p>

What we will do in 2010-11	Improvement Objectives 2011-12
<p>5 Delivering Home Fire Safety Checks</p> <p>Currently home fire safety checks are carried out by firefighters, partner agencies and dedicated community safety staff. We believe that there may be opportunities for improvement in this area and asked our stakeholders for their comments.</p> <p>Valuable comments were provided on how our stakeholders felt that we could improve the delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks. Using our partners to publicise, identify and undertake the checks on our behalf was also suggested. The benefits of providing Home Fire Safety Checks was emphasised, as was the need to continue our investment in this area.</p> <p>The responses confirmed that the Authority's strategy in this area has the support of our stakeholders and that we should continue to invest and work closely with partners to achieve even more in terms of home safety.</p>	<p>5 Partnership Working:</p> <p>To progress our strategic partnership working to ensure our community safety goals are fulfilled.</p>
<p>6 Reducing deliberate grassland fires</p> <p>Deliberate grassland and forestry fires are a drain on our resources, a danger to our fire fighters and damaging to the environment. We already work with communities and other agencies, but asked our stakeholders for their views on what more we could do to reduce these fires.</p> <p>The work already undertaken by the Authority and their partners in reducing grassland fires was acknowledged, and continuing with education strategies and working with other agencies was supported as the best way forward. This was recognised as being a problem that had a detrimental impact on some communities. Greater emphasis should be placed on treating grassland fires more seriously, including the penalties for arson, in order to change attitudes to fire setting.</p>	

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