



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

January 2011



Annual Improvement Report by the Auditor General for Wales

This report is written by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales. (An explanation of what the Auditor General does is at Appendix 1). It is a new report that he is required to publish about how well Welsh councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities are improving their services. With help from other inspectors we have brought together a picture of what each council or authority in Wales is trying to achieve and how it is going about it. We have also used the outputs from the peer assessment team (PAT) process¹ operating within the fire and rescue authorities.

This Annual Improvement Report sets out that picture and each year we will produce a report to let you know what progress North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) has made. We have not covered all the services the Authority provides. We have focused on a small number of things, especially those things that the Authority has said are its priorities for improvement.

We want to find out what you think of the services the Authority is providing in your area and will be giving you an opportunity to comment in the future. In the meantime we would like to know whether 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.

The Wales Audit Office study team that assisted in preparing this report comprised Lisa Williams and Jackie Joyce under the direction of Alan Morris.

This report has been prepared by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Auditor General for Wales assesses the compliance of Welsh improvement authorities (county councils, county borough councils, national park authorities and fire and rescue authorities) with the improvement requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Auditor General for Wales and his staff together comprise the Wales Audit Office. For further information about the Wales Audit Office please write to the Auditor General at 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ. Telephone 029 2032 0500, email: info@wao.gov.uk, or see website www.wao.gov.uk.

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¹ The Welsh Assembly 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.

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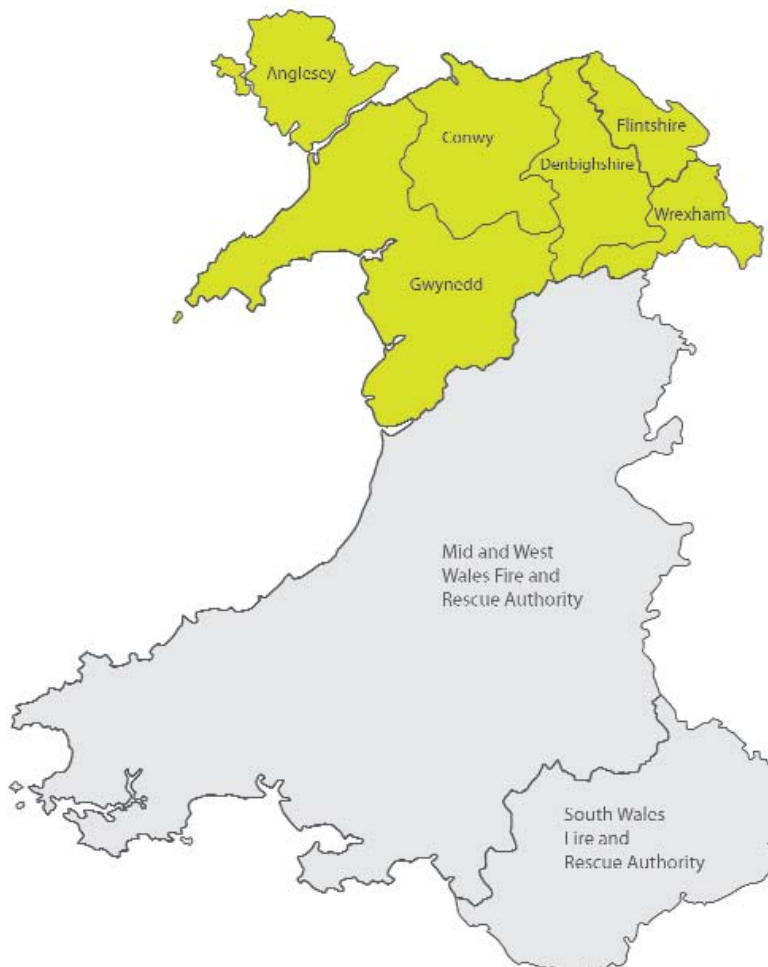
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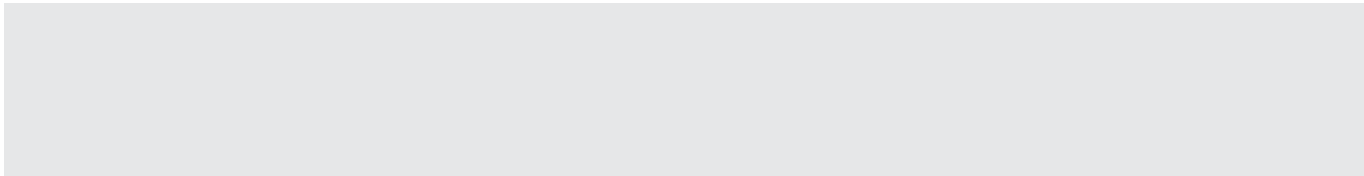
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What kind of area does North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority cover?

- 1 In this report we have used the term 'Authority' to collectively refer to members and staff who are responsible for the leadership, management and delivery of the services provided by North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority is made up of six constituent unitary authorities of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham (see [Exhibit 1](#)).
- 2 The area covered by the Authority is approximately 2,400 square miles (6,173 square kilometres). As you would expect with such a large area to cover there are a wide variety of risks associated with the populated towns of Rhyl, Llandudno and Wrexham. There are also large areas with rural farming communities and large numbers of tourists visit North Wales each year. The Authority also has an extensive coastline and inland waterways within its operational area.

Exhibit 1: Composition of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority





- 3 Based on the latest available estimates 679,000 people live within the Authority's area in 384,000 households of which 95,000 are occupied by people who live alone. This means that some 25 per cent of all households are people living alone.
- 4 In 2007 there were some 9,700 kilometres of roads in the Authority's area. The volume of traffic on the major roads in the Authority's area totals some 6.6 billion vehicle kilometres with the highest rates occurring in Flintshire and Gwynedd. To put this figure in context, there are just over 28 billion vehicle kilometres in the whole of Wales.
- 5 The Welsh Health Survey found that the percentage of adults who responded to the survey in the six unitary authority areas and identified themselves as being current smokers ranged from 22 to 26 per cent compared with the Welsh average of 24 per cent.
- 6 The age profile of the Authority's population taken from the latest estimates shows the number of children (aged 0 to 15) to be 18 per cent in 2009 whilst the number of people aged over 65 is 20 per cent. Both figures are close to the Welsh averages of 18 per cent and 19 per cent respectively, which you might expect given the size of the Authority's area.
- 7 Further information about the Authority is included in [Appendix 2](#).

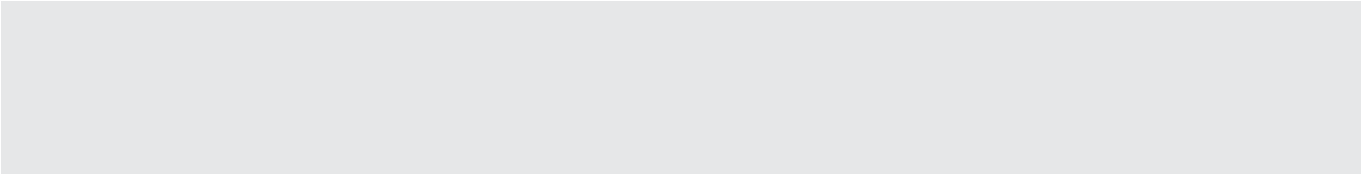
geographic area
6,173 km²
//////////

population
679,000
//////////

18% 0-15
20% >65
//////////

Is the Authority well managed?

- 8 In August 2010 the Wales Audit Office produced a report, called the Preliminary Corporate Assessment, which gives some detail on how the Authority is organised and managed. Our findings are set out in [Appendix 3](#). If you want to read the whole Corporate Assessment Report you can find it on the Authority's website or on the Wales Audit Office's website at www.wao.gov.uk.
- 9 The overall conclusion of that report was that: 'stable leadership and improvements to corporate governance are likely to support improvement in the future'. In other words, the Authority is likely to improve things for the people who live in its area because it has stable leadership and is improving how it is managed.
- 10 The key messages from the report were that:
- the Authority is generally well run in terms of leadership, governance, policy development and resource and people management;
 - it is working well with others in partnership; and
 - there are weaknesses in performance management and business processes need to be further developed.
- 11 Since our report the Authority has started to work on these areas.
- 12 Since we produced the Preliminary Corporate Assessment the pressure has grown on all public services to make the very best use of all their resources. In 2009-10 the Authority's gross revenue spending was £31.3 million, equating to £46 per resident. In that year the Authority also spent £2.6 million on capital items. The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave his opinion on the Authority's accounts; his view was that the financial statements were generally satisfactory and that money had been spent in a proper way. [Appendix 4](#) gives more detail.
- 13 The Authority's budget has been well managed in recent years and it is currently forecasting an underspend of £105,123 for the current financial year (2010-11). This places it on a sound footing going forward into a period of significant change and financial cuts as it has a track record of making sure its services are delivered within the resources it has available.
- 14 The Authority has been aware for some time that it needs to make sure it uses the resources it has as effectively as possible. The Authority made sensible preparations and established a Budget Working Group which considered all possible financial and service options. Its Budget for 2011-12 is designed to achieve cash savings of £0.8 million through a range of activities that have been developed through the Budget Working Group and agreed by the Authority. Indicative Assembly Government figures show further real term reductions in the Authority's revenue funding for 2012-13 and 2013-14 which will have a consequential impact for fire service funding.
- 15 In 2009, 39 per cent of the population within the Authority's area could speak Welsh compared with just under 26 per cent of the total population of Wales. The Welsh Language Board (the Board) works with fire and rescue authorities to help them develop their statutory Welsh language schemes that outline the way in which they provide services to the public in Welsh. The primary responsibility for the range and standard of services rests with the authorities which provide them, working in accordance with the statutory framework and guidelines of the Board. Every fire and rescue authority is expected to provide the Board with an Annual Monitoring Report that explains how its scheme has been implemented. This allows the Board to offer advice as to how the Authority might improve its local arrangements. The Board also undertakes its own reviews to assess the provision of Welsh language services and to promote improvement.

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- 16 The Board praised the Authority for the work done in ensuring an amended Welsh Language Scheme was in place for 2010-2013, and also for the Bilingual Work Place project implemented during 2009-10. The Board also praised the Authority for including a staff Welsh Language skills question into each member of staff's Annual Review of Personal Development form. The Board has found that the Authority's website complies with the Welsh Language Scheme. There was one issue relating to e-mail addresses that the Board has asked Authority to address. The Authority has been gradually improving the information it holds on the linguistic skills of its staff within its personnel database. As this issue plays a crucial role in the delivery of the Authority's Welsh Language Skills Strategy it plans to make further improvements in 2011-12.

Does the Authority know what it needs to do to improve?

- 17 The Assembly Government requires all fire and rescue authorities to publish their plans for improving their services and how they will go about doing so.
- 18 The mission for the Authority is to make North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit. The Authority has five corporate aims which were adopted in 2001, which are generally consistent with the Assembly Government's national strategic priorities for fire and rescue authorities, and seek to:
- prevent accidental and malicious fires;
 - protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards;
 - protect the community, businesses and the environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards;
 - find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the community; and
 - operate as effectively and efficiently, making the best use of the resources we have available.
- 19 The Authority must publish its improvement objectives by the end of October prior to the year that they relate to and this year it published its first set of improvement objectives for the year commencing April 2011. The Authority has identified seven specific improvement objectives and these are detailed in its Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 (the Plan). They are summarised below with more information in [Appendix 5](#):
- to help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation;
 - to help minimise the risk of fires starting accidentally in non-domestic properties, so that normal activities can continue and the lives of people visiting and working are not put at risk;
 - to help to minimise the danger and damage caused by non-fire emergencies, such as flooding, road traffic conditions, and chemical incidents;
 - to help to tackle problems of deliberate fire setting so that people, communities, businesses, the environment and the area's heritage are not put at risk;
 - to focus on improving the sustainable development of the Authority by finding the right balance between the environmental, economic and social impact of providing a fire and rescue service;
 - to become better at identifying and engaging with people who could find themselves socially and/or economically disadvantaged, so that we can enhance a sense of well-being and reduce the level of risk to their personal safety; and
 - to ensure that the service's Business Continuity Planning and Management arrangements are as comprehensive and secure as they can be.
- 20 We wanted to be sure the Authority is clear how people will be better off if it improves in the ways it intends to. The improvement objectives are clear and many have defined measures of success. The Authority recognises that some of its improvement objectives will be difficult to measure and has indicated in its Plan that further local performance indicators will be developed and introduced. Such indicators should include both qualitative and quantitative measures so that community outcomes can be identified and evaluated. We will, in the coming months, look at the arrangements for monitoring delivery of the improvement objectives.

- 21 We also looked at how well the Authority involved local people and those that work with and for it, in deciding what it should make a priority. We found that the priorities were developed by a member working group and were then consulted upon over a 12 week period during the summer using a range of methods to obtain views. This included attending local agricultural shows, distributing some 3,500 bilingual copies of the plan and using its website and facebook site. Despite only 22 written responses being received to the formal consultation the Authority does engage with stakeholders throughout the development of its risk reduction plan. The Peer Assessment Team (PAT) report states 'there was evidence of extensive informal engagement with partners in the development of the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP). This was as a result of general feedback and engagement throughout the year rather than being specific to the RRP process'. More information on PAT reports can be found in [Appendix 6](#).
- 22 Finally we asked how well the Authority's plans will support its efforts to do better and if it could afford to pay for these improvements. The Authority has, and is continuing to, undertake a number of actions including:
- a Budget Working Group established to identify possible financial and service options in order to meet reduction in its finances;
 - a Standard Internal Planning Template (SIPT) has been used by departmental heads to set out their planned actions and budget allocations for each quarter; and
 - a simplified Departmental Plan template to be introduced for the year commencing April 2011 which will draw budget monitoring and action plan monitoring information together for quarterly monitoring purposes.
- 23 It is too early to say whether this new approach will deliver the Authority's improvement objectives and we will look at this in greater detail in the next year.
- 24 Every fire and rescue authority needs to have good information and use it well if it is to provide good services and make them even better. The recent PAT report noted that whilst a wide range of data is collected, for example on fires, fatalities, road traffic collisions and arson, there was no evidence of this data being systematically brought together in a central point. From our work we also know that changes are being made to the systems as new local indicators are being developed to measure the impact of the improvement objectives.
- 25 We found from our audit work looking at the latest performance indicators and data that the quality and accuracy of reported information are satisfactory. All National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) the Authority is required to collect and report to the Assembly Government were correctly stated.
- 26 It is too early for us to say whether or not plans will be delivered. We will look at the plans over the coming months, but we can say is that the approach taken by the Authority is sensible and if decisions taken about service delivery options are implemented successfully it is likely to reduce costs and achieve its improvement objectives.

Is the Authority serving people well?

- 27 Through the Auditor General's Improvement Assessment we hope to gradually build a picture of how well the Authority is serving local people. In order to do that, each year we will examine the services provided by the Authority and some of their objectives for improvement as they relate to the statutory duties placed upon it by legislation and the vision set by the Assembly Government's National Framework. We think that together, the following aspects cover the main things that fire and rescue authorities do:
- Is the Authority helping to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires and road traffic collisions through its prevention and protection activities?
 - Is the Authority responding well to fires and other threats to safety?
- 28 In this year's assessment we have looked at both the new improvement objectives for 2011-12 and the 2010-11 focus areas. We will look at improvement objectives in greater detail next year to assess if a performance baseline has been established and, if possible, how far performance has improved.

Is the Authority helping to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires and road traffic collisions through its prevention and protection activities?

- 29 In December 2010 the Assembly Government launched a new strategy to educate children and young people on fire safety and prevention. The strategy sets out how the authorities will educate youngsters on the dangers of fire and fire-related incidents. It also aims to discourage fire-related anti-social behaviour and crime carried out by children and young people, such as hoax calls or arson. This supports the priority set for the Authority by the Assembly Government to save lives and protect communities and to help them to do this they provided funding of £1.1 million to the Authority in 2009-10 for preventative work.
- 30 The Authority undertakes a range of activities designed to prevent fires happening and to minimise the impact when they do. The Authority has a number of Focus Areas for 2010-11 which directly relate to this aspect:
- to reduce the number of accidental and deliberate fires and associated deaths and injuries by providing timely and targeted support and advice (including through social networking and mobile phone messaging) in conjunction with other public sector organisations, voluntary agencies and Atal Tân (a Welsh fire safety charity) as appropriate;
 - to support other agencies in reducing the number of road traffic collisions and associated deaths and injuries; and
 - to pay particular attention to reducing the number of fires overall, and specifically to outdoor fires that cause damage to the countryside.
- 31 As a result of a sudden rise in accidental dwelling fire deaths in 2006-07, the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group (CFOTG) was formed in October 2006 to examine the reasons for the sudden and unexpected increase. The CFOTG report in 2007 identified contributory factors that were common to the accidental dwelling fire deaths in North Wales and made people in North Wales more vulnerable to the threat of fire; these were:
- Age (very young or elderly)
 - Having a disability (mental or physical)
 - Living alone
 - Drug or alcohol dependent
 - Property owned by another party
 - No working smoke detection equipment
 - Fire Interaction (such as smoking in bed and cooking under the influence of alcohol)
- 32 In addition to the seven contributory factors, two lifestyle issues were also identified:
- Smokers
 - In contact with another supporting agency
- 33 The Authority's approach to its prevention activities is based around an understanding of the identified contributory factors that tend to make some people more likely than others to have a fire in their home. The Authority has described how it will contribute to saving lives and protecting people in its Three Year Community Risk Reduction Strategy 2009-2012. The Strategy states that community safety delivery is divided into the following areas:
- Home Fire Safety Checks
 - Community Safety – through collaboration
 - Sharing information among agencies
 - Working with Children and Young People
 - Prevention and raising awareness
 - Protecting the Rural environment
 - Arson Reduction
 - Reducing Road Traffic Collisions

34 We have looked at the core areas of domestic fire reduction, non-domestic fire reduction, arson/crime reduction, youth work and road traffic collisions in more detail below. In addition the PAT reviewed the Authority's community safety activities during the autumn of 2010 and [Appendix 6](#) contains a summary of their findings.

Domestic fire reduction

35 Across Wales the number of people who have lost their life in a house fire is small and has remained so for the last few years; from a low of 14 in 2006-07 to a high of 22 in 2007-08, 18 people died in 2009-10. Similarly the number of injuries sustained during domestic fires has reduced in Wales from 358 in 2004-05 to 185 in 2009-10.

36 In order to reduce fires in the home free Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) are available for all householders to identify risks and give advice and suggestions on how to make homes safer. The Authority tries to target those individuals who are most at risk of a fire in the home but recognises that there is room for improvement and this is a Focus Area for 2010-11. Working arrangements have been put in place with some key partners to identify those most at risk and also to carry out HFSCs. Last year (2009-10) some 32,802 HFSCs were carried out against an annual target of 30,000. The target equates to some eight per cent of the total households in the Authority's area. The Authority is developing the use of its Record Management System as a means of monitoring the delivery of high risk HFSC referrals; although the PAT identified that the system could be more robust in monitoring the delivery of high risk HFSCs. Information on the number of HFSCs undertaken for the Authority as a whole is collected and reported to members of the Executive Panel, the Executive Group and Authority.

37 These measures are contributing to success as since 2004-05:

- There has been a significant reduction in the number of injuries sustained in dwelling fires from 128 in 2004-05 to 38 in 2009-10.
- Dwelling fires attended have reduced by approximately seven per cent since 2004-05 when there were 583 attendances to 545 in 2009-10.
- Accidental dwelling fires attended have reduced by approximately five per cent in 2009-10 compared with 2004-05 (from 502 to 479 fires).
- Since 2004-05 there has been a reduction of some 19 per cent in fires started deliberately in homes. Despite this longer term reduction there has been a significant increase of 32 per cent between 2008-09 when there were 50 deliberate fires in homes compared with 66 in 2009-10.
- It has the lowest rate of house fires attended that did not have a smoke alarm fitted at 25 per cent which is better than the Welsh average of 43 per cent and has improved since 2004-05 (37 per cent).

38 However, despite the measures above indicating that there has been some success there are also still challenges faced by the Authority to reduce fire deaths in homes. Whilst the Authority has seen a steady reduction in the total number of dwelling fires attended in the last six years (from 583 to 545) the number of deaths per year in dwelling fires has ranged from three to 10.

39 The Authority, together with the other two Welsh fire and rescue authorities, has been playing a key part in the current debate about the benefits of sprinklers. They have lobbied since 2007 for a change in legislation requiring the installation of residential sprinkler systems in domestic properties. A Private Members Measure known as

the Proposed Domestic Fire Safety (Wales) Measure was issued for public consultation in July 2010 and the Assembly's Legislation Committee is currently undertaking scrutiny of the proposed Measure.

Non-domestic fire reduction

- 40 Across Wales two people have lost their life in accidental non-domestic premise fires the last six years. The number of people injured in non-domestic fires has also decreased from 59 in 2004-05 to 22 in 2009-10.
- 41 The Authority is required to enforce the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which it generally does by auditing business premises to ensure that adequate fire safety measures are in place. They can also provide advice and take enforcement action when considered necessary for example if a serious risk exists and is not being managed.
- 42 There are some 27,300 non-domestic premises in the Authority's area. Some 806 fire safety audits of non domestic premises were carried out in 2009-10, which equates to approximately three per cent of total business premises. Details about the premises gathered during audits are used to provide information to crews who may be called to an emergency at the site (and so help to minimise the risks to firefighters).
- 43 The Authority has adopted the Chief Fire Officers Association's (CFOA) national guidance on the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. It is trying to reduce false alarms from premises fitted with automatic fire detection systems because sending a fire engine/appliance when there is no emergency is a waste of resources and may also encourage people to

ignore alarms and not evacuate buildings. The number of false alarms attended has steadily decreased over the last six years and was 1,646 in 2009-10.

- 44 The Authority is a statutory consultee for a number of issues including housing, licensing and buildings. For example, it is consulted on Building Regulations², which are concerned with ensuring buildings are safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable for current and future generations.
- 45 These measures are contributing to success as:
- during the last six years there have been no deaths in non domestic property fires;
 - the number of people injured has decreased from 20 in 2004-05 to four in 2009-10; and
 - there has been a gradual reduction in the number of non-domestic fires attended between 2004-05 (345) and 2009-10 (256) of 26 per cent although the rate of attendance in recent years is relatively stable at around 250 non-domestic fires per year.

Arson and crime reduction

- 46 The number of deliberate fires in Wales has reduced by a third since 2004-05 from 19,709 to 12,902 in 2009-10. During 2009-10, over two-thirds of all the fires attended across Wales were started deliberately.
- 47 Within this Authority 56 per cent of fires in 2004-05 were started deliberately compared with 46 per cent during 2009-10. These figures are significantly below the rate for the whole of Wales which was 75 per cent in 2004-05 and 67 per cent in 2009-10.
- 48 The Authority's arson and fire crime work is delivered by the Assembly Government funded

² Building Regulations set standards for design and construction which apply to most new buildings and many alterations to existing buildings in England and Wales.

Arson Reduction Team. There are a number of initiatives aimed at tackling arson including:

- visiting schools and giving presentations about the impact of deliberate fire setting as part of the national curriculum at Key Stage 1 to 3; and
- links with Youth Offending Teams in the Authority's area to allow young people access to various youth schemes such as Phoenix, a youth inclusion programme aimed at young people aged 13 to 17 who are at risk of offending and engage and intervene with offenders to prevent re-offending (19 Phoenix courses were run during 2009-10 engaging with 241 young people).

49 These measures are contributing to success as:

- the number of deaths resulting from deliberate fires over the last six years is very small (four) and has ranged from zero to two with two deaths occurring in 2009-10;
- the numbers of injuries sustained in deliberate fires is small and shows a significant reduction from 12 injuries in 2004-05 to one in 2009-10; and
- there has been an improvement in the number of deliberate fires attended, which have reduced by 37 per cent from 2,454 in 2004-05 to 1,536 in 2009-10.

Youth work

- 50 There are a number of programmes targeted at children and young people in respect of fire prevention and road safety. Programmes include: working with DangerPoint to provide safety advice to young people, safety advice delivered to all secondary schools via Crucial Crew, the development of workbooks and DVDs for Key Stages 1 to 4, educationalists visiting primary schools in North Wales at Key Stages 1 and 2, and the Motor Education Scheme aimed at young drivers who have anti-social or dangerous driving habits.
- 51 There are eight Young Firefighter groups across the area.
- 52 An education programme is operational and has elements which link to the national curriculum. Specific programmes such as Fire Awareness Child Education (FACE) and Firesafe are aimed at young firesetters and 672 school visits were undertaken during 2009-10 reaching around 28,000 children.
- 53 The Authority runs two work experience courses each year where year 10 pupils from selected secondary schools spend a week with the Authority - in March 2010 three young people commenced the nine-month special work placement scheme.

Road Safety

- 54 Whilst the total number of fires attended across Wales has decreased by 27 per cent since 2004-05, over the same period the number of road traffic collisions attended has increased by six per cent.
- 55 In 2008 there were 1,190 fatalities and serious accidents on Welsh roads which is a nine per cent reduction since 2003 (1,302). In 2009 there were 10,354 casualties on Welsh roads compared with 13,687 in 2004, a reduction of 24 per cent.
- 56 Road safety is not a statutory duty for the Authority but it works in collaboration with the police and others to improve safety on the roads through the Road Safety Wales Group.
- 57 The Authority undertakes a number of initiatives designed to reduce the level of road traffic collisions including:
- Pass Plus Cymru Driving Scheme which is a scheme aimed at young drivers aged 18 to 25.
 - Bikesafe initiative – 25 Bikesafe events have happened during 2010.
 - Motor Education Scheme is a partnership initiative involving the police and local authorities – six events have been held during 2009-10.
- 58 Whilst the total number of fires attended by the Authority has decreased since 2004-05 by 24 per cent the number of road traffic collisions attended has increased by 35 per cent over the same period (significantly more than the Welsh average of six per cent). In order to rescue people from road traffic collisions and protect them from serious
- harm the Authority bases its response decision on information known at the time the 999 call is received rather than waiting for other emergency services to attend the incident, assess the situation and then decide to call the fire service out. This can mean that it attends more incidents but it sees the benefit to trapped casualties of arriving sooner instead of waiting.
- 59 Despite the initiatives mentioned above there has been an increase in the numbers of fatalities and serious accidents of 18 per cent since 2003 on North Wales roads. In 2003 there were 305 fatalities and serious accidents compared with 359 in 2008, both of these are well below the Welsh averages for these years (451 and 397 respectively) and there has been an increase each year since 2005.
- 60 In 2009 there were 2,610 casualties on roads in the Authority's area compared with 3,203 in 2004, a reduction of 19 per cent. Nevertheless, this is below the Welsh average reduction of 24 per cent and road safety has been identified as a significant key area of work for the Authority in 2010-11.

Is the Authority responding well to fires and other threats to safety?

- 61 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. In 2009-10 it responded to some 17,000 emergency calls and attended some 4,872 fires and special service incidents. Seventy per cent of these incidents were fires with the remaining 30 per cent being non-fire related incidents such as road traffic collisions, flooding and false alarms.
- 62 In order to do this it needs a well trained and well equipped workforce to safely deal with a wide range of incidents.
- 63 The Authority's focus areas in 2010-11 include many aspects of the service which are key ways in which it prepares itself to be able to respond to requests for assistance. The detailed actions can be found in the Authority's Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 on its website but are summarised as follows:
- IT and radio communications
 - Training and specialist capability
 - New appliances
 - Personal protective equipment
 - Fire cover – retained duty system
 - Control room resilience
 - Capital projects
- 64 In order to respond to requests for assistance the Authority:
- Currently employs some 883 operational and 151 support staff. Keeping staff safe is a key priority and training operational crews in the latest techniques and equipment is vital if they are to continue to successfully respond to a range of incidents.
- Has 44 fire stations. These are organised in seven geographical 'commands' which are generally coterminous with the six constituent council areas. Of these:
 - three are wholtime (staff based at the station 24 hours a day);
 - five are day crewed (staff based at the station for part of the day and retained cover at quieter times); and
 - thirty-six are retained (staff respond to incidents as needed and are only based on the station for a small number of hours a week).
 - Has 100 front line engines and specialist vehicles which are maintained (including major works and over-hauls) at its own workshop or a mobile 'workshop' is used for on-station inspections and routine repairs. It has 17 reserve vehicles which are utilised when the frontline vehicles are being repaired or maintained to ensure no loss of service and it also has three training vehicles.
- 65 The Assembly Government's Service Standard to Fires in the Home (the Standard) has been used since 2006 to measure how well the Authority is responding to dwelling fires. The Standard aimed to provide 80 per cent of Welsh dwellings with an attendance to a fire in their home in 10 minutes (five minutes where evidence determined a higher risk to life), coupled to enhanced, preventative activity for the 20 per cent of dwellings outside the Standard. Following a review of the Standard during 2010, amid concerns over potential weaknesses, an alternative approach has been developed, 'Guiding Principles for Dwelling Fires Response', which is currently subject to consultation.

- 66 In October 2008 a purpose built control room facility occupied by both the fire service and North Wales Police became operational. This has improved co-ordination of response to emergency calls. Arrangements also exist with the Welsh Ambulance Service to let the service know quickly when there are road traffic collisions and this enables a decision to be made about the level of response required from the Authority.
- 67 In October 2010 a new control room staffing structure was implemented which now provides more resources and greater flexibility at busy times. During 2009/10 some 22,000 calls were received by the Authority, of which 17,000 related to emergency incidents. The control room has a range of new IT equipment and systems which enable it to operate 'dynamic mobilising', which means that they select the nearest fire engine to attend an incident. An all Wales control resilience project (called Firelink) will become operational during 2011-12. This will provide enhanced back up and resilience between the three Fire Controls within Wales. The Authority's control room resilience is enhanced as it has a back-up facility located in Rhyl and has arrangements in place with the other two Welsh authorities as well as an English authority.
- 68 It is essential that fire crews are able to access as much information relating to incidents as possible and to do this the Authority started installing sophisticated computer systems in its 167 vehicles in October 2010. Systems include a wireless data link to ensure firefighters can access real-time information held centrally. These Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) feature sturdy touch-screens, which allow firefighters to access a wealth of information – including building and risk plans, design specifications of many cars, road maps and the properties and risks associated with more than 30,000 chemical substances – direct from the fire appliance cab. Each cab is also fitted with its own computer printer to allow fire crews to make a hard copy of the information en route to, or during, an incident.
- 69 The peer assessment process reviewed the Authority's arrangements for Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) and training, development and assessment (TDA) during the autumn of 2009. Further findings are shown in [Appendix 6](#). The PAT concluded that:
- HSW – 'good progress has been made to embed a Health and Safety culture throughout the organisation' and 'introducing a suite of local indicators would support the Service to drive improvement by identifying trends and highlighting areas for attention'.
 - TDA – 'the Service has policies and procedures to deliver training and development that reflect National Guidance, however the service should continue to review its policies to ensure currency highlighting and publicising clearly where risk critical amendments are made'.
- 70 In December 2009 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspected the Authority as part of a wider UK inspection programme. The HSE made four recommendations which covered;
- management structures and arrangements for delivering policies;
 - securing trust participation and involvement of all employees;
 - arrangements to secure the competence of staff; and
 - measuring performance against agreed standards.

- 71 The Authority is acting on the HSE's and PAT's recommendations, particularly in respect of reviewing and revising its policies and steps to address issues such as health and safety management arrangements. From January 2011 there will be a collaborative training programme introduced across Wales.
- 72 The Authority is committed to providing staff training and development as they recognize the importance of a highly skilled and motivated workforce. In 2009-10 some 7,000 days/shifts were spent on training and development.
- 73 The Authority has a comprehensive operational learning process which includes independent officers attending certain incidents. The officers observe incidents and use the information gathered to inform training and improve health and safety.
- 74 New personal protective equipment for firefighters has recently been purchased on an all Wales basis with the support of the Assembly Government.
- 75 Staff are trained to respond to national as well as local incidents. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America, the United Kingdom government implemented a programme to ensure that the UK Fire and Rescue Service had the capability to deal with events of that scale and magnitude should they occur here. The 'New Dimension' programme has enhanced the capability to respond to major disruptive events including terrorism by providing specialist vehicles and equipment across Wales (including High Volume Pumps, Incident Response Units and Decontamination equipment). The vehicles and equipment located in North Wales are valued at some £1.1 million.
- 76 In order to be able to respond to both local and national demands the Authority has developed a series of contingency plans that help it to manage when demand for its services is high. It shares these plans with partners, such as the police, ambulance, coastguard, and mountain rescue, and has undertaken a series of joint exercises to test the plans to ensure they are robust.
- 77 The number of malicious calls that the Authority received has decreased since 2004-05 when it received 930 compared with 563 in 2009-10. As well as the decrease in the number of malicious calls received the percentage of malicious calls attended has also decreased over the same period (29 per cent compared with 25 per cent). This is primarily due to suspect calls being challenged by control operators and action being taken against people making malicious false calls.
- 78 During 2009-10 there were some 4,000 days/shifts lost to sickness absence which is an increase of nearly 270 days on the previous year (seven per cent) and equates to nearly nine days per person. Control staff had the highest rate of sickness absence at an average of 15 days per person compared with operational staff (excluding retained duty staff) who have eight days and non-operational staff who have 10 days.
- 79 During 2009-10 there were 35 personnel injured whilst 'on duty' which compares poorly with the previous year when there were only 11. As a result of these injuries a total of 687 days were lost with the majority, some 80 per cent, being attributed to retained staff.

What should the Authority do?

- 80 Given the wide 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 Assembly 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.
- 81 We think the Authority needs to consider our proposals to help it improve.

Proposals we made in our earlier work

The Authority should consider:

- addressing the possible duplication of roles in monitoring performance information by the Executive Panel and Audit Committee to avoid unnecessary confusion or duplication;
- ensuring that the current range of reporting software provides for a sound decision making process in the medium to long term;
- reviewing what business processes will best support the successful delivery of planned projects; and
- formulating a medium-term plan to gain agreement on broad policy direction and required resources for delivery.

New proposals

The Authority should:

- develop further the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures so as to be able to identify and evaluate the impact of its activity for its community; and
- continue to prioritise road safety activities to better understand how it can play its part in making roads within its area safer.

Appendix 1

About the Auditor General for Wales and this report

The Auditor General

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 Wales Audit Office helps the Auditor General by examining various aspects of how Welsh public bodies work. It was created in 2005 when the National Audit Office in Wales and the Audit Commission in Wales merged.

The Auditor General is the external auditor of the Assembly Government and its sponsored and related public bodies; the National Assembly for Wales Commission and National Health Service (NHS) 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.

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 law which created the Wales Audit Office also expanded the powers of the Auditor General to follow the 'public pound' wherever it goes.

This report

The Local Government Measure (June 2009) (the Measure) introduced new responsibilities for the Auditor General, including a responsibility to publish his assessment of each council/authority's arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

This report has been produced by the Auditor General for Wales to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. The report also discharges duties under section 19, namely, to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an audit under section 17 and an improvement assessment under section 18.

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 authorities, 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 Assessment³.

³ This assessment will be conducted for each improvement authority, under section 18 of the Measure. For each authority, it will determine whether the authority is likely to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Measure. The Wales Audit Office will also undertake an improvement information and planning audit, as required under section 17 of the Measure, in order to ascertain whether the authority has discharged its duties under section 15(1) to (7).



This will be informed by a:

- Corporate Assessment – a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and
- Performance Assessment – 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 output(s) from these assessments will be issued by the Auditor General as Audit and Assessment Report(s), under section 19 of the Measure. In publishing this report under section 19, the Auditor General for Wales is certifying that we have undertaken a section 17 audit and a section 18 improvement assessment.

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 will also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments and this report will summarise any work undertaken by them.

The Auditor General sets out the fee for his performance audit work undertaken to discharge his duties under the Measure at each local authority in a Regulatory Programme agreed each year with the authority. The fee for November 2009 until March 2011 is currently expected to be in line with that set out in the Regulatory Programme.

Appendix 2

Useful information about North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The Authority has to perform all the duties and responsibilities in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations. There are two 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 ensures 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 which are expected to develop appropriate risk based inspection regimes.

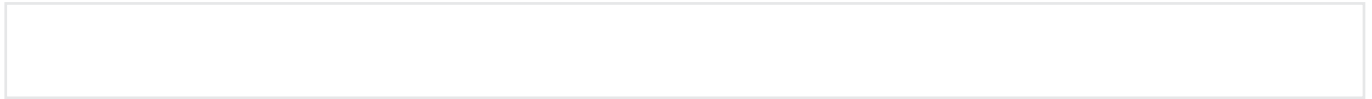
Civil Contingencies Act

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 2 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 Rescues 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 state 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 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales:

- Anglesey County Council (three members)
- Conwy County Borough Council (five members)
- Denbighshire County Council (four members)
- Flintshire County Council (six members)
- Gwynedd Council (five members)
- Wrexham County Borough Council (five members)

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

The current Chair is Councillor S Frobisher.

Meetings of the full Authority normally take place four times every year – in March, June, October and December – to consider such topics as service plans, routine business matters, budgets and spending, and to take or approve policy decisions as appropriate. 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 S A Smith the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive supported by the principal officer team, the senior management team and specialist advisers.

For more information see the Authority's website at www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk or contact the Authority at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Ffordd Salesbury, St Asaph Business Park, St Asaph, Denbighshire, LL17 0JJ.

Appendix 3

The Auditor General's Corporate Assessment

The main conclusions of the Auditor General's Corporate Assessment which was issued to the Authority in August 2010 are set out below.

The conclusion arising from our first Corporate Assessment is that stable leadership and improvements to corporate governance are likely to support improvement in the future.

How the Authority has approached improvement over time

The Authority's arrangements to support improvement have progressively strengthened over recent years and are likely to support improvement in the future:

- in the past the Authority's arrangements to support improvement have been hampered by inadequate management information;
- the Authority has a measured and inclusive approach to planning its activities in order to reduce the level of fire deaths it has experienced in recent years and has made positive changes to support improvement; and
- the direction of travel is encouraging and there is evidence that the Authority is becoming more proactive and innovative in its approach to supporting improvement.

Analysis of the Authority's arrangements to help it improve

The Authority's arrangements are generally sound and show particular strengths in partnership working but are weaker in business processes:

- the Authority has well-developed partnership-working arrangements, especially with the police, which will be further strengthened when evaluation processes are developed;
- the Authority has good arrangements that should support improvement in respect of leadership and governance, policy and strategy, resource and people management; and
- weaknesses in performance management have been recognised and steps taken to improve the robustness of management information systems, but business processes need to be further developed.

For the full report see our website at www.wao.gov.uk or contact us at the address on the inside cover of this report.

Appendix 4

Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter to the Members of North Wales Fire Authority

North Wales Fire Authority complied with financial and performance improvement reporting requirements but is facing significant financial pressures in the near future

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;
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- publish its Improvement Plan by 31 October.

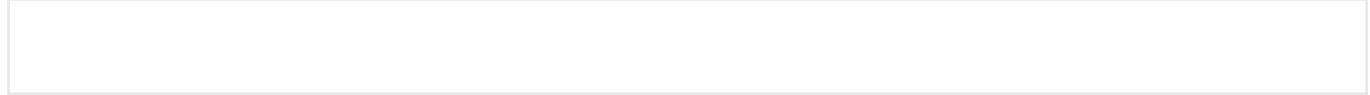
The Code of Audit Practice issued by the Auditor General (the Code) requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;
- consider whether the Improvement Plan is prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

On 29 September 2010 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 transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts.

The following areas were noted during the accounts audit:

- the accounting statements preparation processes have continued to improve, resulting in good quality draft statements supported by comprehensive working papers;
- good progress has been made to date in preparation for implementing IFRS in 2010 11 and the Authority should aim to produce a draft set of IFRS accounts including comparatives as soon as possible; and
- the Whole of Government Account's return was prepared effectively and in accordance with the Assembly's timetable.



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 LG Measure. 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:

- Effective budgetary control arrangements are in place and medium-term financial planning is under development, but the Authority faces significant financial pressures in the future. This is referred to further in the Annual Improvement Report.

The Authority's Improvement Plan 2010-11 meets all statutory requirements with the exception that although the Improvement Plan was finalised by 31 October 2010 it was not published until 1 November 2010 and provides a balanced view of its performance in 2009-10.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts had been completed on 29 September 2010.

The financial audit fee for 2009-10 was in line with that set out in the Financial Audit Strategy.

Virginia Stevens
KPMG LLP

Appendix 5

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's improvement objectives

The Authority published its improvement objectives in its Improvement Plan which can be found on the Authority's website. They are summarised below:

Objective One: To help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation.

Community fire safety is a high profile priority for the Authority. Although actual numbers of dwelling fire deaths and injuries in the area are low, the impact of each one is very high. Good progress has been made over the past decade in reducing the incidence of accidental dwelling fires, but a similar reduction in the rate of deaths and injuries is proving to be more difficult to achieve.

Expected outcome

People expect to be safe in their homes. With the right support and advice, people can protect themselves from accidental fires, both by preventing a fire from starting in the first instance, and by knowing how to react quickly and correctly if one does occur. Where that has failed, people should have confidence that the fire and rescue service will respond quickly and effectively to rescue them and limit the damage to their property.

Decrease in number of incidents.

Objective 2: To help minimise the risk of fires starting accidentally in non domestic properties, so that normal activities can continue and the lives of people visiting and working there are not put at risk.

The introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 transferred responsibility for fire safety in relevant buildings to managers of those premises and changed the Authority's role to an enforcing one.

Expected outcome

People expect to be safe in any non-domestic premises such as public buildings, workplaces, hotels, shops and sports venues. Communities also need to feel confident that fire will not damage their local schools, hospitals, businesses, cultural or leisure facilities, or cause hazardous substances to be released into the atmosphere.



Objective 3: To help to minimise the danger and damage caused by non-fire emergencies, such as flooding, road traffic collisions, and chemical incidents.

The Authority responds to a wide range of non-fire incidents with a high degree of technical expertise and specialist equipment. Flooding and other weather-related incidents are particularly common in the winter months, and road traffic collisions are more common than fires throughout the year.

Expected outcome

A safer environment, where the degree of structural damage and the incidence of harm to people are minimised by a highly-skilled and well-equipped rescue service.

Objective 4: To help to tackle problems of deliberate fire-setting so that people, communities, businesses, the environment and the area's heritage are not put at risk.

People start fires deliberately for a range of reasons. Increases in deliberate fire setting have been linked to times of recession and economic downturn, and a reduction in public sector budgets can also mean less money being spent on specific safety measures such as installing CCTV cameras in troublesome areas. The cost of repairing the damage caused by deliberate fires in public buildings (e.g. schools) and public spaces (e.g. parks) stretches budgets even further.

Expected outcome

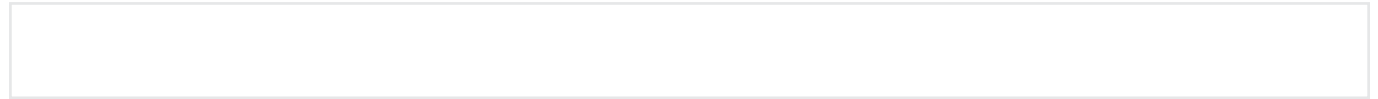
No increase in deliberate fires.

Objective 5: To focus on improving the sustainable development of the Authority by finding the right balance between the environmental, economic and social impact of providing a fire and rescue service.

The Authority has already completed a great deal of environmental and energy conservation work, primarily around reducing its carbon footprint through the management of its buildings and vehicles and fuel, energy and water consumption. However, there is more to do, including the roll-out of a sustainable development plan.

Expected outcome

A better, safer and greener North Wales through continuous sustainable development management.



Objective 6: To become better at identifying and engaging with people who could find themselves socially and/or economically disadvantaged, so that we can enhance their sense of wellbeing and reduce the level of risk to their personal safety.

The Authority devotes a great deal of time and energy to engaging with minority groups and reaching out to people who are at greater risk because of personal circumstances or state of health. Examples include

- employing a Third Sector Co-ordinator to help develop service level agreements with representatives of a range of minority groups;
- delivering home fire safety checks tailored to particular needs (e.g. for disabled and frail elderly people);
- conducting week-long courses for prisoners from Altcourse Prison, Merseyside;
- conducting a wide range of youth and schools programmes; and
- working with young drivers to help promote greater awareness of road safety.

Expected outcome

Better targeting of prevention advice, based on a sound understanding of particular communities.

Objective 7: To ensure that the Service's Business Continuity Planning and Management arrangements are as comprehensive and secure as they can be.

The public expects the Authority to be available at all times and to do this it has a comprehensive business continuity management policy in place. Staff know what is required of them but testing and updating of the business continuity plans needs to be improved.

Expected outcome

A greater degree of assurance that all aspects of the fire and rescue service's operations and the arrangements that support those operations will not be disrupted by an unanticipated event.

Appendix 6

Summary of Peer Assessment Team findings Review of Health and Safety and Training and Development (Autumn 2009)

During the pre-site and on site assessment of the Authority the Peer Assessment Team identified the following key issues in relation to Health & Safety and Training and Development.

Health and Safety

Good progress has been made to embed a Health and Safety culture throughout the organisation. It was clearly evident that the majority of personnel understood their responsibilities and the methods of reporting to further reduce the number of accidents/near misses. There is also a clearly defined accident investigation process that amends and informs policies and procedures. There has been progress with the implementation and the collation of Operational Intelligence using the Hazard Information Cards with a quality assurance system in place to provide consistency. Operational monitoring procedures have been introduced and the service is learning from de-briefs and experience from past events to improve Health and Safety across the service.

The publication of the Health and Safety Strategy and the introduction of up to date, user-friendly policies, which highlight any change from the previous version, will support the Service to discharge its Health, Safety and Welfare responsibilities. Wider consultation across the organisation will also help to further support the existing management structures and arrangements. Introducing a suite of local indicators would support the Service to drive improvement by identifying trends and highlighting areas for attention.

Training and Development

The Service has policies and procedures to deliver training and development that reflect National Guidance, however the service should continue to review its policies to ensure currency highlighting and publicising clearly where risk critical amendments are made. The Service has sought to implement and maintain an appropriate structure to design, develop and deliver its Training and Development requirements. This is further supported by IDFOs and Support Instructors to facilitate training on station and at the Service Learning and Development Centre (SLDC). To enhance this improvement the SLDC should provide further information to all operational end users on the role and work of the IDFOs and Support Instructors. Audited Personal Development Records (PDRs) are maintained to evidence competence. To support the PDR process improved access to specialist trainers and consideration for the provision of training materials are required.



Review of Community Risk Management and Community Safety Activities (Autumn 2010)

Community Risk Management

'Is the Fire and Rescue Authority identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?' The Peer Assessment Team were able to confirm that the FRA are identifying and prioritising risk faced by the community.

- The PAT noted the FRA's innovative alternative approach to assessing, understanding and targeting risks within its service area in relation to dwelling fires deaths. The PAT were pleased to note that the FRA recognised the need to develop a deeper understanding of the diversity of the people living within the service area and had built this into the 2011-12 RRP.
- The FRA has determined that HFSCs, targeted to reduce fire deaths are its highest priority. This is based upon, and driven by, known contributory factors exhibited by individuals involved in fire death incidents, as identified within the Chief Fire Officers Task Group (CFOTG) report 2007 (reviewed 2009).
- There was evidence of extensive informal engagement with partners in the development of the RRP. This was as a result of general feedback and engagement throughout the year rather than being specific to the RRP process.
- The FRA recognises that its review and learning processes based on evaluation could be further developed and is looking towards a more outcome based approach.

Community Safety

'Does the Fire and Rescue Authority have effective arrangements for delivering Community Safety in line with identified risks and priorities?' The Peer Assessment Team were able to confirm that the FRA does have effective arrangements for delivering Community Safety in line with identified risks and priorities.

- The FRA has detailed within its RRP improvement objectives clear links to the objectives within the CS strategy.
- There was clear evidence to demonstrate the embedded culture of collaborative working within the FRA and is recognised as being key to the successful progress of CS activity.
- The FRA has a proactive and progressive approach to partnership working with some initiatives which could be cited as best practice.
- The PAT note the significant work that has been undertaken to deliver over 32,000 HFSCs with 25 per cent of all HFSCs to be targeted at high risk areas. The approach to risk and HFSCs was clearly embedded.
- There were some examples of measuring and evaluating of CS activity. However this appears to be inconsistent across the Organisation. This may lead to opportunities to drive improvement and share good practice being missed.
- The PAT identified a potential risk to the FRA whereby the status and monitoring of progress in delivering high risk referrals were not as robust as they could be within the Record Management System (RMS).

Appendix 7

References

All the data referred to within the report is drawn from one of the following sources:

- Welsh Assembly Government, StatsWales
- Welsh Assembly Government, local area summary statistics
- The Authority's own websites, Authority reports and improvement plans
- Operational Assurance of Service Delivery Peer Assessment Reports 2009-10 and 2010-11
- The Wales Yearbook
- The Home Office
- Members' Research Service
- Office for National Statistics
- The Welsh Health Survey 2008-09