



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

# Annual Improvement Report

## **Mid and West 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 in 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 process<sup>1</sup> 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 Mid and West 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](mailto: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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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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# What kind of area does Mid and West 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 Mid Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority is made up of the six constituent unitary authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, City and County of Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Powys (see [Exhibit 1](#)).
- 2 The area covered is approximately 4,500 square miles (11,796 square kilometres) which equates to two thirds of the land mass of Wales. As you would expect with such a large area to cover there are a wide variety of risks ranging from petro-chemical industries in Milford Haven and Briton Ferry to the risks associated with the heavily populated conurbations of Swansea and Port Talbot.

**Exhibit 1: Composition of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**



There are also large areas with rural farming communities and large numbers of tourists. The Authority also has an extensive coastline and inland waterways within its operational area.

- 3 Based on the latest available estimates, 875,000 people live within the Authority's area in 384,000 households, of which 123,000 are occupied by people who live alone. This means that 32 per cent of all households are people living alone.
- 4 In 2007 there were some 15,677 kilometres of roads in the Authority's area. The volume of traffic on the major roads in the Authority's area totals some 8.2 billion vehicle kilometres with the highest rates occurring in Carmarthenshire and Swansea. To put this figure in context, Cardiff alone has nearly 3 billion vehicle kilometres.
- 5 The Welsh Health Survey found that the percentage of adults, who responded to the survey in the six unitary authority areas, identified themselves as being current smokers ranged from 22 to 25 per cent compared with a 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 17 per cent in 2009 whilst the number of people aged over 65 is 20 per cent. Both of these figures are close to the Welsh average 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  
11,796 km<sup>2</sup>

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population  
875,000

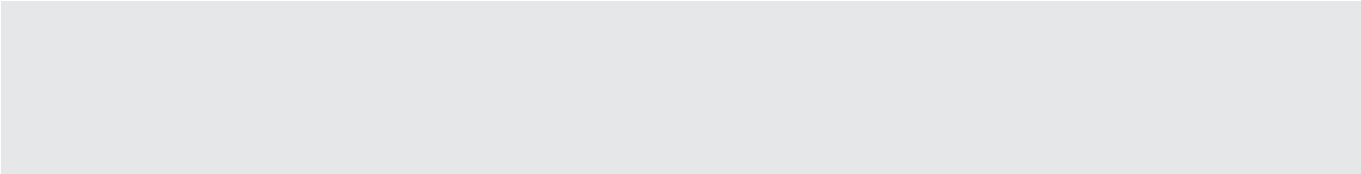
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17% aged 0-15  
20% aged >65

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## Is the Authority well managed?

- 8 In July of last year 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](http://www.wao.gov.uk).
- 9 The overall conclusion of that report was: 'strong leadership and good corporate arrangements are in place, which are likely to provide sound foundations for improvement in performance'. In other words, the Authority is likely to improve things for the people who live in its area because it has strong leadership and is generally well managed.
- 10 The key messages from the report were that:
- leadership is strong and creative;
  - the Authority is generally well run but needs to improve its longer term financial planning;
  - it is proactive in its approach to working in partnership with others; and
  - the Authority has made improvements to its people management processes but challenges remain, particularly in training and development.
- 11 Since then the Authority has made some progress in these areas, including:
- introducing new ways of recording and identifying critical training needs of staff;
  - extending financial planning to a three year period from April 2011; and
  - updating its property database as a basis for the Asset Management Plan.
- 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 £47.5 million, equating to £54 per resident. In that year the Authority also spent £3.9 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 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 £1.4 million 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 with the resources it has available.
- 14 It has been aware for some time that it needs to make sure it uses the resources it has as effectively as possible. The Authority is making sensible preparations and established a Budget Working Group which considered all possible financial and service options derived from the Service Review Programme. Its Budget for 2011-12 is designed to achieve efficiencies of £1.23 million through a range of activities that have been developed through the Service Review Programme, 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.

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- 15 In 2009, 28 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 who 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.
- 16 The Board has praised the Authority for the implementation of its new monitoring systems to record the number of Welsh and English telephone calls received, and also the number of Welsh language Fire Prevention Inspections requested and carried out. The Board has found that the Authority's website complies with the Welsh Language Scheme with the exception of two minor issues. The Board has reminded the Authority to ensure that all Welsh and English material that appears on the website is published at the same time.

# 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 vision for the Authority is to be a world-class organisation and it has a number of long-established strategic objectives published in its Strategic Plan 2010-15. These are generally consistent with the Assembly Government's national strategic priorities for fire and rescue authorities and seek to:
- save lives and protect communities;
  - be trusted and respected by all communities;
  - be seen as more than an emergency service;
  - match resources to priorities;
  - manage within budget;
  - seek out and utilise alternative resources;
  - make efficiencies year on year;
  - manage people effectively;
  - fully develop risk reduction planning;
  - develop effective partnership working; and
  - develop the workforce into effective and empowered people.
- 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 improvement objectives are based on five key themes: managing risk, managing people, working together, managing resources and managing performance. The improvement objectives are detailed in the Annual Action Plan 2011-12 (the Plan) and are summarised below with more information in [Appendix 5](#):
- Value for Money: Implement the key outcomes of the 2010-11 Service Review Programme to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of service delivery.
  - Emergency Response: Effective employee safety and welfare helps us meet the challenges faced at emergency incidents and robust training and response arrangements will help achieve this.
  - Community Wide Resilience: 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.
  - Sustainability and the Environment: We published our Sustainability and Environmental Strategy in June 2009 setting out our vision of how we will contribute to this agenda.
  - Partnership Working: To progress our strategic partnership working to ensure our community safety goals are fulfilled.
- 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 themes of the improvement objectives are clear and although there are currently no defined measures of success it is working hard to ensure it has measures in place by April 2011. It recognises that some of its objectives will be difficult to measure in terms of outcomes and has created a Risk Reduction Delivery Group which will monitor the delivery of improvement objectives and ensure that evidence is gathered, both qualitative and quantitative, to evaluate community outcomes. 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 the views. This included attending community events, using citizens panels, meeting staff, distributing some 1,300 copies of the Plan and using its website and social networking sites. Although 115 responses were received to the consultation the Authority has recognised the need to review the way in which it asks questions about service priorities as the last consultation exercise did not help to further shape priorities.
- 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 detailed Service Review Programme to identify a range of options in order to meet the reduction in its finances;
  - the development of a five year financial plan with a focus on year 1 of the plan (2011-12);
  - the development of revised business planning arrangements; and
  - the development of performance management arrangements including the development of measure and the implementation of Ffynnon<sup>2</sup> in April 2011.
- 23 We found that the above developments have been well thought through and are aspects of a coherent approach to both planning and performance management.
- 24 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.
- 25 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. A recent Peer Assessment Team (PAT) report noted that the Authority 'recognises its current community profile data is not as extensive as they would like and are working to improve this'. More information about PAT reports can be found in [Appendix 6](#). From our work we also know that changes are being made to the systems for collecting and reporting information on performance.
- 26 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 17 National Strategic Indicators (NSI) the Authority is required to collect and report to the Assembly Government, eight were corrected during the audit. We also found that the publically-reported information tends to be about what the Authority is doing rather than if it is making a difference to outcomes for people but the Authority is planning to change this from April 2011.
- 27 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 that the approach taken by the Authority is sensible. If difficult decisions are taken about service delivery structures and implemented successfully, the Authority is likely to reduce costs and achieve its improvement objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Ffynnon is a Welsh software solution, procured nationally, to meet the performance management requirements of local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities and their partners.

## Is the Authority serving people well?

- 28 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?
- 29 In this year's assessment we have looked at both the new improvement objectives for 2011-12 and the 2010-11 key 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?

- 30 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 million to the Authority in 2009-10 for preventative work.
- 31 Although there are no improvement objectives for 2011-12 which directly relate to this aspect, the following key areas support this priority for 2010-11:
- improving road safety;
  - targeting and delivering home fire safety checks; and
  - reducing deliberate grassland fires.
- 32 The Authority has described how it will contribute to saving lives and protecting people in its Community Risk Reduction Strategy. This outlines a range of activities designed to prevent fires happening and to minimise the impact when they do. 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 Peer Assessment Team reviewed the Authority's community safety activities during the autumn of 2010 and [Appendix 6](#) contains a summary of their findings.

### Domestic fire reduction

- 33 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.
- 34 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 targets those individuals who are most at risk of a fire in the home but recognises that improvements can be made. 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) in excess of 20,000 HFSC were carried out and a target of 24,000 has been set for this year, 2010-11. The target equates to six per cent of households in its area.
- 35 These measures are contributing to success as since 2004-05:
- the number of injuries sustained in dwelling fires has reduced by 165 per cent (from 122 to 42 in 2009-10);
  - dwelling fires attended have reduced by 15 per cent (from 778 attendances in 2004-05 to 661 in 2009-10);
  - accidental dwelling fires attended have reduced steadily by approximately 15 per cent (from in 690 in 2004-05 to 584 in 2009-10); and
  - there has been a steady reduction of some 13 per cent in fires started deliberately in homes (from 88 in 2004-05 to 77 in 2009-10).

36 However, despite the measures above indicating that there has been some success there are still challenges faced by the Authority to reduce the number of fire deaths in homes as these have increased from five in 2004-05 to seven in 2009-10. The Authority is concerned that despite the number of public campaigns and the activities described above, almost half (44 per cent) of the house fires attended in 2009-10 did not have a smoke alarm fitted. This year it plans to adopt a more risk-based approach to this work and to develop information that will allow it to monitor how well the Authority as a whole is performing on one of its key priority areas.

37 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

38 Across Wales two people have lost their lives in accidental non domestic premise fires in 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.

39 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.

40 There are some 33,400 non-domestic premises in the Authority's area but not all of these are currently included in the Authority's records and therefore do not receive fire safety order audits. The Authority is currently reviewing information recently received from constituent councils about business premises and updating its records to ensure it has identified all of the high risk 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 fire-fighters. Since 2009 over 7,500 inspections and audits of business premises have been carried out with enforcement action in around 80 of these premises including prosecutions.

41 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 incidents involving false alarms in non-domestic premises has increased from 1,950 in 2004-05 to 2,302 in 2009-10 although since 2005-06 false alarms have been relatively stable at 2,300 per year. The Authority has indicated that part of the increase in incidents can be attributed to 'teething problems' with new automatic fire detection (AFD) installations, particularly in larger premises such as hospitals and universities, and the increase in newly built premises fitted with AFD.

- 42 The Authority is a statutory consultee for a number of issues including housing, licensing and buildings. For example, it is consulted on Building Regulations<sup>3</sup>, which are concerned with ensuring buildings are safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable for current and future generations.
- 43 These measures are contributing to success as since 2004-05:
- there has been one death in an accidental non domestic premise fire in the last six years (in 2009-10);
  - the number of people injured has decreased from 27 in 2004-05 to seven in 2009-10; and
  - there has been a significant reduction in the number of non domestic fires attended by some 36 per cent (from 497 to 315 in 2009-10) which is better than Welsh average during this period (reduction of 21 per cent).

## Arson and crime reduction

- 44 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.
- 45 Within this Authority just over half (56 per cent) of the fires attended were deliberately started during 2009-10. This is an improvement since 2004-05 when 65 per cent of fires attended were started deliberately. These figures are below the rate for the whole of Wales which was 75 per cent in 2004-05 and 67 per cent in 2009-10.
- 46 The Authority's arson and fire crime work is delivered by the Assembly Government funded Arson Reduction Team. There are a number of initiatives aimed at tackling arson including:
- The innovative multiagency Rural and Forestry Team (RaFT) which targets deliberate fire setting and other anti-social behaviour affecting rural communities. It is the only one of its kind in the UK and was a finalist in the Excellence Wales Awards 2010<sup>4</sup>.
  - Visiting primary schools to encourage children to report incidents of arson within their school (Safety Squad).
  - Carrying out a programme of school and public building audits to help make these buildings resistant to attack from vandals and arsonists.
  - Maintaining close links with all six 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 offenders (70 Phoenix courses were run during 2009-10).

<sup>3</sup> Building Regulations set standards for design and construction which apply to most new buildings and many alterations to existing buildings in England and Wales.

<sup>4</sup> Excellence Wales is a award scheme operated by The Welsh Local Government Association.

- 47 These measures are contributing to success as:
- staff at the secure centre visited by the PAT consider the contribution of the Authority, regarding the Phoenix programme to be invaluable in working with young offenders;
  - the number of deaths resulting from deliberate fires is very small, 14 in total since 2004-05 with three in 2009-10;
  - the numbers of injuries sustained in deliberate fires is small but shows a significant reduction from 24 injuries in 2004-05 to one in 2009-10; and
  - the number of deliberate fires attended, have reduced by 40 per cent since 2004-05 from 4,712 to 2,832 in 2009-10.

### Youth work

- 48 There are a number of programmes targeted at children and young people in respect of fire prevention and road safety. Programmes not mentioned above include Pass Plus Cymru and CSI Cymru, which are aimed at young drivers to reduce their risk of becoming road traffic collision casualties. One hundred and sixty young drivers have taken part in the drive to arrive, motorcycle safety, pass plus, road safety initiatives and CSI Cymru during 2009-10.
- 49 There are 10 Young Firefighter groups across the area.
- 50 An education programme is operational and has elements which link to the national curriculum at key stages two, three and four and 260 schools were visited during 2009-10. Specific programmes such as Fire Awareness Child Education (FACE) and Firesafe are aimed at young firesetters (during 2009-10 33 FACE programmes were delivered).

- 51 Seven Young Parents courses, developed to raise awareness of the dangers of fire amongst young people who are parents, have been delivered.

### Road Safety

- 52 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.
- 53 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 terms of casualties in 2009 there were 10,354 casualties on Welsh roads compared with 13,687 in 2004, a reduction of 24 per cent.
- 54 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. Notwithstanding this road safety is a significant key area of work for 2010-11.
- 55 The Authority is the first in the UK to sign up to the European Road Safety Charter<sup>5</sup> and is making good progress in implementing the following five actions between 2008 and 2011:
- Replacing the existing fleet of fire engines with 84 dedicated rescue appliances fitted with the most up-to-date rescue equipment – the programme to replace front line fire engines with rescue pumps at each fire station was completed in December 2010.
  - An interactive road safety section on the website - the road safety section of the Authority's website has been improved and holds a range of advice and information on initiatives as well as links to related websites. The website

<sup>5</sup> The objective of the European Charter is to help reduce road fatalities and has more than 1950 signatories.

continues to be developed and there are proposals to involve children and young people in the development of the site so that they may learn from the exercise and help build a site that is attractive to higher risk groups.

- Design and deliver advanced driver training to existing operational managers and newly qualified personnel - a training programme has been developed to provide appropriate driving skills to both operational and non frontline drivers. The programme provides initial and refresher training.
- Support the Pass Plus Cymru Driving Scheme by providing dedicated staff as instructors to facilitate one course per month for up to 22 candidates- the Authority is represented on the Pass Plus Cymru Steering Group and have undertaken over 60 courses designed to improve the skills of newly qualified drivers during 2010.
- Support the Bikesafe initiative by providing community rooms for training sessions and train two officers to the RoSPA<sup>6</sup> Gold Standard to act as assessors and mentors to motorcyclists - over 20 Bikesafe events happened during 2010. Road Safety events have also been held at known motorcycle meeting sites such as Storey Arms and Crossgates in order to publicise the Bikesafe initiative and to provide motorcycle safety advice. The Authority has eight riders trained to ROSPA Gold Standard who act as assessors and mentors to motorcyclists.

56 These measures are contributing to success as:

- the number of road traffic collisions attended has decreased by eight per cent from 1,371 in 2004-05 to 1,266 in 2009-10 and is in stark contrast to the Welsh average increase in road traffic collisions attended of six per cent;
- the number of fatalities and serious accidents on roads in the Authority's area has decreased by 24 per cent from 550 in 2003 to 416 in 2008; and
- the number of casualties on roads in the Authority's area has decreased by 20 per cent from 4,455 in 2004 to 3,568 in 2009.

<sup>6</sup> The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

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

- 57 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 a total of 23,180 emergency calls resulting in approximately 15,000 incidents attended. This included almost 10,000 fires and special service incidents; 52 per cent of these incidents were fires with the remaining 48 per cent being non-fire related incidents such as road traffic collisions, flooding and false alarms.
- 58 In order to respond to requests for assistance the Authority:
- Employs some 1,200 operational and 180 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 successfully respond to a range of incidents.
  - Has 57 fire stations where the majority of staff and equipment are based. These are organised in geographical 'commands' which are coterminous with the six constituent council areas. Of these:
    - seven are shift crewed (staff based at the station 24 hours a day);
    - six are day crewed (staff based at the station for part of the day and retained cover at quieter times); and
    - 44 are retained (staff respond to incidents as needed and are only based at the station for a small number of hours a week).
  - Has 72 front line engines and a range of specialist vehicles which are maintained (including major works and over-hauls) at its own workshops. It has 16 reserve vehicles which are utilised when the frontline vehicles are being repaired or maintained to ensure no loss of service.
- 59 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.
- 60 No key areas identified for 2010-11 directly relate to this aspect of the service but the following two improvement objectives for 2011-12 are appropriate for the Authority as they directly relate to key statutory functions:
- Emergency Response: Effective employee safety and welfare helps us meet the challenges faced at emergency incidents and robust training and response arrangements will help achieve this.
  - Community Wide Resilience: Continue to develop our ability to respond to exceptional events that impact upon our communities and the Authority by working with partner agencies to develop and practice emergency plans.
- 61 New personal protective equipment (PPE) for fire-fighters, has recently been purchased on an all Wales basis with the support of the Assembly Government.



- 62 During 2009-10 there were 57 personnel injured whilst 'on duty' which is a decrease on the previous year when there were 81. As a result of these injuries 446 days were lost (compared with 624 in 2008-09) by wholetime staff. The programme of Health and Safety audits at stations and departments has continued and recommendations implemented including the development of a manual handling training refresher course to ensure competency of manual handler trainers.
- 63 During 2009-10 there were some 3,800 days/shifts lost to sickness absence which is a reduction of nearly 205 days on the previous year (five per cent) and equates to approximately 6 days per person. Control staff have the highest rate of sickness absence at an average of 11 days per person compared with operational staff who have six days and non-operational staff who have seven days.
- 64 The PAT process reviewed the Authority's arrangements for Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) and training, development and assessment (TDA) during the autumn of 2009. They concluded that 'the Authority's arrangements for meeting its responsibilities in relation to HSW and for TDA corresponded to all the 'established' descriptors in the relevant sections of the operational assurance of service delivery guidance' and further findings are shown in [Appendix 6](#).
- 65 The Authority has acted on the PAT recommendations, particularly in respect of training records and has recently taken steps to address the issue of duplicate training records by removing spreadsheets from stations and centralising records. The Authority is currently undertaking a review of its Personal Development Review Process (PDRP).
- 66 It is essential that fire crews are able to access as much information relating to incidents and to do this, the Authority has installed sophisticated computer systems in the cabs of all frontline emergency vehicles. These Vehicle Mounted Data Systems (VMDS) feature sturdy touch-screens, which allow fire-fighters to access a wealth of potentially life-saving information – including building and risk plans, design specifications of many cars, road maps and the properties and risks associated with 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.
- 67 The Earlswood Training Site is the Authority's main training venue. The site offers the ability to undertake 'fire behaviour' training by re-creating realistic fire conditions as well as more challenging scenario-based exercises. The site also has a road traffic collision training area, three purpose built classrooms and is the home to the all Wales Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training facility. From January 2011 there will be a collaborative training programme introduced across Wales.
- 68 Staff are also 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 UK 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' (ND) 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 Mid Wales is valued at some £2 million.

- 69 The ND programme also provides specialist capabilities, for example, USAR. The USAR teams have the capability to carry specialist rescue operations from incidents that involve collapsed buildings, confined spaces and large scale transport incidents. There are 20 USAR teams across the UK and one is located in Wales. The Welsh USAR team is made up of members from both Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities. The team is always available to respond and trains together twice a month. The National Resilience Assurance Team undertook an assurance process of the Welsh USAR capability during October 2010 and found that of the 45 key question areas reviewed only one area of development was noted in respect of awareness training and its introduction into the organisational training plan.
- 70 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 are high. It shares these plans with partners, such as the police, ambulance, coastguard and has begun a series of multi-agency testing of the plans to ensure they are robust and undertaken joint training exercises.
- 71 During 2009-10 some 34,110 calls were received by Fire Control. In order to strengthen call handling arrangements the Fire Control is co-located with Dyfed Powys Police and has recently been upgraded. A new all Wales control resilience project will become operational during 2011-12. This will provide enhanced back up and resilience between the three Fire Controls within Wales. The resilience of the Authority has also been improved through the use of the Airwave radio system to allow better contact with other emergency services.
- 72 The number of malicious calls that the Authority received has decreased since 2004-05 when it received 1,197 calls compared with 701 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 (47 per cent compared with 33 per cent). This is mainly due to suspect calls being challenged by control operators and action being taken against people making malicious calls.
- 73 The Authority has a comprehensive operational learning process which includes independent officers attending certain incidents to observe and provide advice to officers in charge should they need it. Information gathered is used to inform training and improve health and safety.

# What should the Authority do?

74 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 recommendations to the Authority, we would expect them to do something about them and we will follow up what happens.

75 We think the Authority needs to consider our proposals to help it improve:

## Proposals we made in our earlier work

- develop an asset management plan and performance management arrangements in respect of buildings management; and
- develop a detailed training needs analysis to underpin its training and development activities.

## New proposals

The Authority should:

- review the range data and information systems so that:
  - better information is available to support operational service delivery and decision making e.g. community profiles;
  - sharing of information with partners is easier e.g. in respect of non domestic property databases and HFSC 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; and
- 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.

# 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 Assessment<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> 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 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 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 ensure that risks are kept under review. Under the Order the Responsible Person<sup>8</sup> 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 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

<sup>8</sup> 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.

- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

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:

- Ceredigion County Council (two members)
- Carmarthen County Council (five members)
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (four members)
- Swansea City Council (seven members)
- Powys County Council (four members)
- Pembrokeshire County Council (three 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 of the Fire Authority is Councillor Eurfyl Evans.

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 Assembly 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](http://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

## The Auditor General's Corporate Assessment

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

Strong leadership and good corporate arrangements are in place, which are likely to provide sound foundations for improvement in performance.

### How the Authority has approached improvement over time

The Authority's strong leadership and innovative approach make it well-placed to address its known challenges:

- the Authority has a history of strong corporate leadership and stability that has delivered continuous change and improvement to date;
- the Authority has a robust approach to planning its improvement activities that is based on clear priorities; and
- the Authority's arrangements make it well placed to address known challenges in a positive, proactive and innovative way.

### Analysis of the Authority's arrangements to help it improve

The Authority demonstrates particular strengths in leading and providing strong governance but some aspects of people management are not yet fully supporting improvement:

- the Authority is strongly and creatively led;
- the Authority's development of strategy and policy is coherent and it continues to strengthen its approach to partnership working;
- the Authority's effective business processes and day-to-day resource management will be further strengthened when the medium-term financial plan is developed; and
- the Authority has made improvements to its people management processes but challenges remain, particularly in training and development.

For the full report see our website at [www.wao.gov.uk](http://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 Mid and West Wales Fire Authority

#### **Mid and West 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.

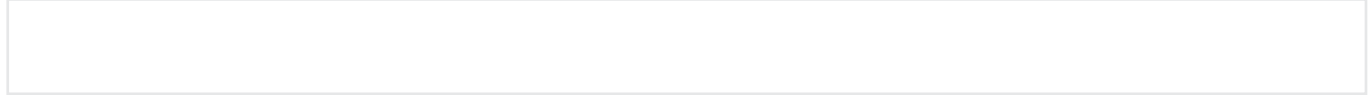
The Code of Audit Practice issued by the Auditor General (the Code) requires me to:

- 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.
- Further progress is required in preparation for implementing IFRS in 2010-11. The Authority should aim to produce an opening balance sheet and a draft set of IFRS accounts including comparatives as soon as possible.
- 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 2010-2011 meets statutory requirements and provides a balanced view of its performance in 2009-2010.

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

The financial audit fee for 2009-2010 was in line with that set out in the Financial Audit Strategy.

Virginia Stevens  
KPMG LLP

# Appendix 5

## Mid and West 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 at [www.mawwfire.gov.uk](http://www.mawwfire.gov.uk). They are detailed within the overall themes below:

### Managing Risk

Risk is managed across a range of areas as identified in the Strategic Plan, and keeping communities safe continues to be the Authority's priority. The 2010-11 Annual Action Plan focused its work on community safety; these objectives are long term and will be delivered this year and in the future.

The Authority has identified that resilience is a priority for other public, voluntary and private sector services and they already work together to ensure that they work closely, delivering a strong collective service to the people who need it. Community Wide Resilience is identified as a focus for 2011-12 so that the Authority can continue to develop its ability to respond to exceptional events that impact upon communities and the Service by working with partner agencies to develop and practice emergency plans. To do this the Authority intends to:

- continue to work within the Local Resilience Forums to further develop our collective plans;
- run a number of exercises to test our plans to ensure they work;
- share our facilities and resources to support community needs in the event of large scale events; and
- review and test departmental business continuity plans to ensure core services are maintained at all times.

The Authority published its Sustainability and Environmental Strategy in June 2009 to outline its vision of how it will contribute to this agenda. It has identified Sustainability and the Environment as a focus area for 2011-12 and intends to:

- continue working towards the objectives contained within the Assembly Government's Strategy – One Wales One Planet ([www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk));
- deliver the second year of our plan to achieve the Green Dragon Environmental Standard;
- produce a Green Transport Plan for the Service;
- review the environmental impact of the way in which we tackle all types of fire; and
- continue to play our part in building safer communities, and reducing antisocial behaviour through arson reduction programmes and youth engagement activities.



## **Managing People and Emergency Response**

Effective employee safety and welfare helps the Authority meet the challenges faced at emergency incidents by providing employees with the necessary training, guidance and equipment. A training needs process has been developed in order to identify and manage risk critical training. Equality and diversity awareness is promoted through training and policies and processes are equality impact assessed. Employee safety is a focus area for 2011-12 and next year the Authority intends to:

- continue to invest in core skills training for our employees based on the risks they face at emergencies;
- continue to support continuation training for front line firefighters;
- continue the development of the training needs analysis framework;
- work in collaboration with other emergency services to ensure our emergency procedures work together;
- improve our training and support of employees in the event of verbal or physical abuse;
- increase the numbers of CCTVs installed on our appliances;
- maximise technology to improve the equipment crews use to tackle emergencies safely and efficiently; and
- continue to use risk information obtained from operational activity, both locally and nationally, to influence our strategies and policies for reducing accidents and ill-health to our employees.

## **Working Together**

The Authority has worked hard over the years to develop relationships with public, private and voluntary services, in order to deliver the best possible service and to reach a greater number of the most vulnerable people within its community. They already work with partners on a number of initiatives and Partnership Working is a focus area for 2011-12 in order to progress strategic partnership working to ensure that community safety goals are fulfilled. The Authority intends to:

- increase our home fire safety partnership working with organisations that have direct access to the most vulnerable people;
- use our Welsh Assembly Government funded Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator to improve our partnership arrangements;
- improve our partnership engagement enabling us to contribute more effectively towards road safety;
- improve the way our employees interact with many of our vulnerable citizens;
- be a driving force behind an all Wales approach to procurement, information exchange and training to ensure we achieve value for money;
- seek ways to expand our community role by building new partner relations;

- 
- evaluate our partnership arrangements to ensure they achieve real community benefits;
  - continue to extend our outreach work to reduce arson and further engage with children and young people; and
  - develop our work with Civil Contingency partners.

### **Managing Resources**

To reflect the importance that the Authority places on ensuring that its public funding is used in the most cost effective and efficient way during 2010-11 the Authority will focus on Value for Money by implementing the key outcomes of the 2010-11 Service Review Programme to reduce costs and improve the efficiency of service delivery. The focus will be to ensure that resources meet the community needs for today and the future by:

- prioritising our activities based upon the risks we face;
- balancing demands to ensure we provide value for money;
- improving our ways of working so we remain flexible, safe and able to adapt to meet future challenges; and
- working with local authorities and other key partners to deliver community outcomes.

### **Managing Performance**

As part of our drive to work in partnership with local agencies, our performance management system is being prepared to migrate to the All-Wales performance management system 'Ffynnon'. This will enable improved reporting and monitoring of our own data as well as sharing and comparison of performance with other public services in Wales.

# Appendix 6

## Summary of Peer Assessment Team findings Review of Health, Safety and Welfare (Autumn 2009)

### Health, Safety and Welfare (HSW) Arrangements

- The Authority's high level of commitment to HSW is reflected in its comprehensive and well-communicated HSW policy and effective welfare arrangements. It has an established system of timely review of policies, and has recently reviewed its standard operating procedures to link them to generic risk assessments.
- To move the Authority into the 'Advanced' category there needs to be greater clarity as regards how the HSW policy is embedded throughout the organisation in terms of its integration with some other policies/strategies, e.g. training delivery, core skills and incident command competence.

### Management Structures and Arrangements to Support HSW

- The Authority develops and implements its HSW activities through its management structures and arrangements. The Authority has nominated an elected member to act as Health and Safety Champion; there is a highly-regarded Corporate Risk Team in place; and clear communication channels exist to reinforce the sense of responsibility for HSW throughout all tiers of management.
- Further integration, support and control of risk-critical activity would reduce the Authority's level of exposure to risk. The PAT wished to encourage the Service to find ways of achieving tighter control of the reassessment of firefighters over a range of skills.

### HSW Plans, Targets, Procedures and Practices

- The Authority has established procedures and practices in place to ensure that safety critical information is captured and disseminated to staff. A confidential helpline service is provided for staff, although not all are aware of its existence.
- The Service acknowledges that there are inadequacies in the welfare facilities at the Earlswood Training Centre, which now need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Also, there is some lack of clarity over the level of detail required when completing an Accident Investigation report and when reporting 'near misses'.

### Measurement and Evaluation of HSW Activities

- The Authority has processes in place for measuring, evaluating and disseminating a range of health and safety related information, and Members have a high level of awareness of HSW-related performance through the Performance Review and Audit Committee (PRAC).
- A review of these processes to ensure that all relevant health and safety related information, from all relevant sources, is considered at appropriate levels in the organisation would assist in moving the Authority into the 'Advanced' category.

## Review of Health, Safety and Welfare (Autumn 2009)

### Training, Development and Assessment (TDA) Policies

- The delivery of training and development is supported by a range of policies. ADCs can now be accessed by support staff as well as operational staff, and PPDRs are mainstreamed throughout the Service to support individual development.
- The Service would benefit from a clear and current bespoke training strategy linked to policy to deliver organisational objectives, as a lack of clarity in differentiating between training policy and training strategy could hinder the achievement of successful implementation.

### Management Structures and Arrangements to Support TDA

- The Service has recently introduced a new structure (POD) for managing its TDA activities, which has real potential to deliver/support improved TDA. Furthermore, the Authority's commitment to improving TDA can be demonstrated by recent support through the allocation of budget.
- The intended benefits of the new structure are yet to be fully realised, however, and unless capacity constraints are addressed there is a risk that full compliance in risk-critical training may never be achieved.

### TDA Plans, Targets, Procedures and Practices

- A number of positive developments have taken place in TDA within the Service, and a service-wide risk-critical training and assessment programme has been developed.
- It was not clear, however, whether the Service-wide training programme could be delivered within the current training capacity, and the Service would benefit from undertaking a detailed analysis of training requirements to identify the scale of any backlog in risk-critical training.

### Measurement and Evaluation of TDA Activities

- The Service has introduced a number of positive developments to support the measurement and evaluation of TDA activities. There is evidence that staff on fire stations are now using the new electronic system (PDR Pro) to record training and development and incident-related activities.
- The Service uses three electronic recording systems to capture information relating to training, development and operational activities of its staff, but the information that is inputted into these systems appears to be inconsistent and partial and is difficult to validate. The Service would therefore benefit from undertaking a review of the various systems. Data capture, particularly at RDS stations, would benefit from an enhancement to the current IT infrastructure and on-station facilities.

Also, the Service would benefit from having a process in place for evaluating the performance of instructional staff and the content of courses.

## 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 FRA uses a range of forums at both strategic and practitioner level to inform the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) development process with strong evidence of effective Fire Authority member participation.
- Evidence confirmed the FRA to be actively working to consult as widely as possible including innovative approaches to raising awareness of the consultation process via social networking sites.
- The FRA uses the range of available data to inform its RRP process. The FRAs communication of community profile data into and out of the Strategic Planning and Performance Department (SP&P) showed opportunities for improvement to reduce the risk of duplicating data.
- The FRA recognises its current community profile data is not as extensive as they would like and are working to improve this.
- The FRA learns through formal review and examination of objective outcomes and consultation responses. This could be expanded to include formal review of the RRP development process.

### 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 does deliver a wide range of targeted community safety initiatives to minimise identified risks within the community.
- The FRA has developed and implemented an effective and robust Community Safety (CS) Strategy and recognises the advantages of further engaging with a wider range of partners.
- There is strong evidence to link stakeholders to the delivery of the CS strategy although stakeholders did not feel they formally contributed to the development of the CS strategy. Evidence indicates the feedback from the work of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) & partnerships influences the CS strategy development on an ongoing informal basis.
- The PAT saw good examples of beneficial outcomes through partnership initiatives.
- The FRA recognises the need to enhance the current arrangements for measuring and evaluation of Community Fire Safety (CFS ) initiatives, an area of work that is being progressed.
- Partners conveyed overwhelming support and respect for the partnerships they have with the FRA.



# 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 website, 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