



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

# Annual Improvement Report

## **South 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 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 South 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.

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](mailto:info@wao.gov.uk), or see website [www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> The 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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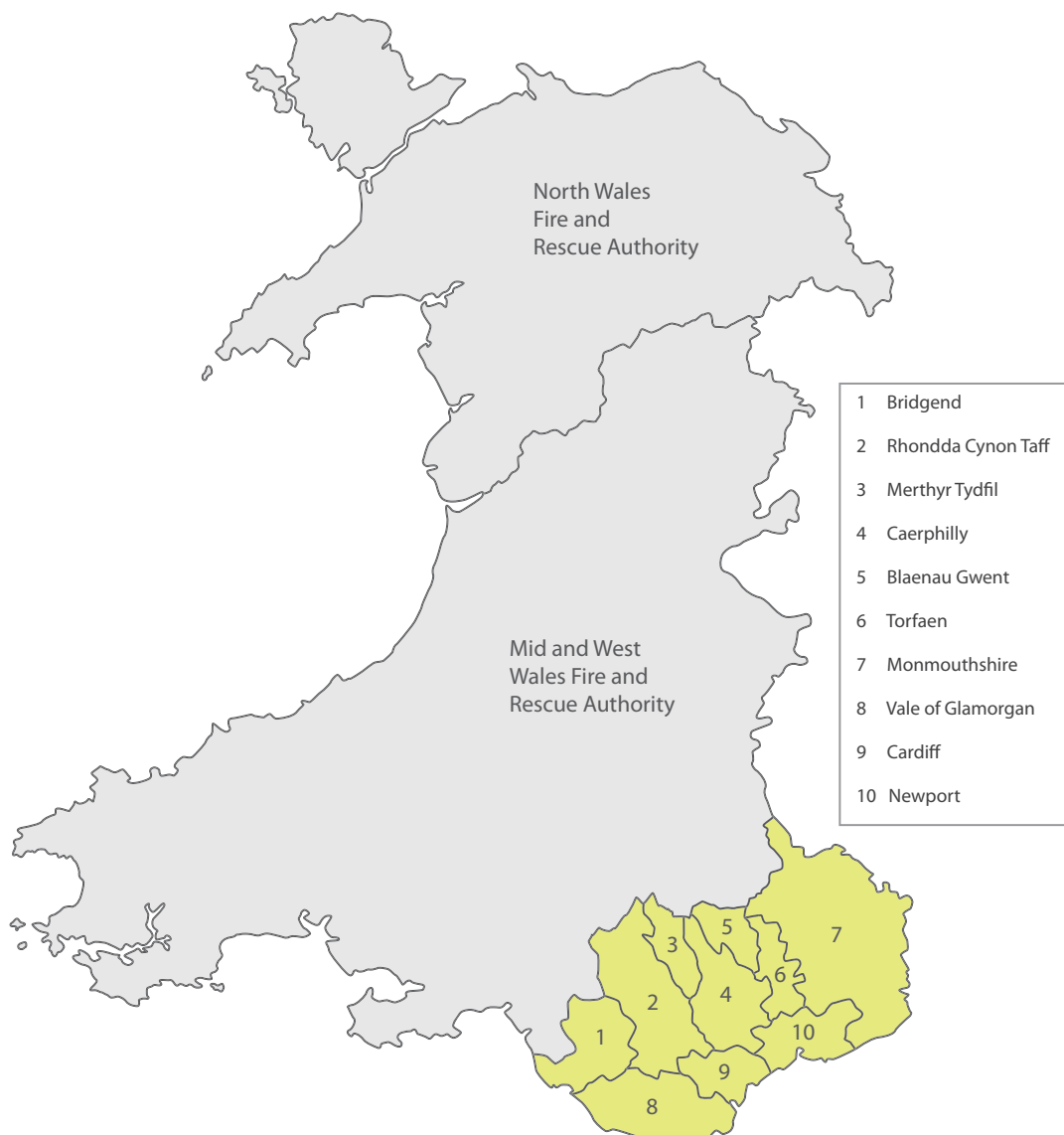
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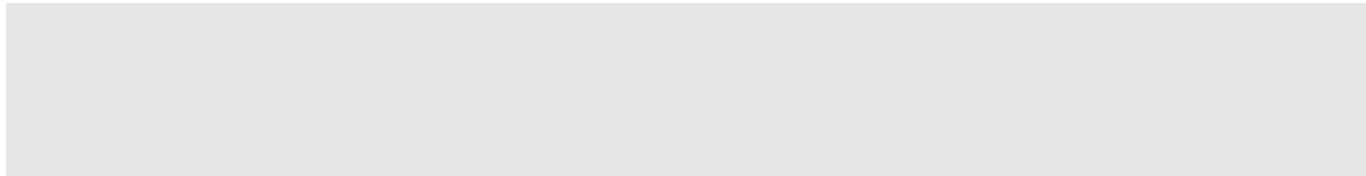
# What kind of area does South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority cover?

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 South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority is made

up of the 10 constituent unitary authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Monmouth, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan (see [Exhibit 1](#)).

## Exhibit 1: Composition of South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority





- 2 The area covered is approximately 2,811 square kilometres (1,085 square miles) and includes a wide range of risks. The area includes the South Wales valleys, large areas of rural countryside and two cities, Cardiff and Newport. Having a capital city within its area adds significant issues for the Authority to manage, particularly security. Capital cities attract key political gatherings and events that require additional planning to protect citizens.
- 3 Based on the latest available estimates 1,446,000 people live within the Authority's area in 605,000 households of which 179,000 being occupied by people who live alone. This means that 30 per cent of all households are people living alone.
- 4 In 2007 there were some 8,750 kilometres of roads in the Authority's area. In 2007 there were 444 fatalities and serious accidents on the roads within the Authority's area compared with 415 in 2008 when the most incidents occurred in Cardiff. The volume of traffic on the major roads in the Authority's area totals some 13.1 billion vehicle kilometres with the highest rates occurring in Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf. To put this figure in context, Cardiff alone has nearly three billion vehicle kilometres.
- 5 The Welsh Health Survey found that the percentage of adults, who responded to the survey, in the 10 unitary authority areas, and who identified themselves as being current smokers ranged from 20 to 30 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 just under 19 per cent in 2009 (slightly higher than the Welsh average of 18) whilst the number of people aged over 65 is just under 17 per cent (slightly lower than the Welsh average of 19).
- 7 Further information about the Authority is included in [Appendix 2](#).

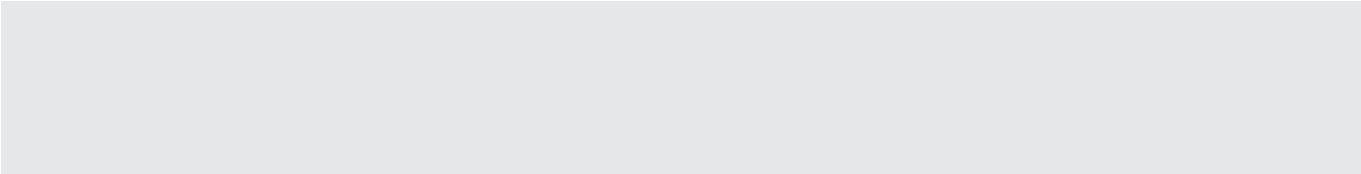
geographic area  
2,811 km<sup>2</sup>  
//////////

population  
1,446,000  
//////////

19% 0-15  
17% >65  
//////////

## Is the Authority well managed?

- 8 In August 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: 'that effective leadership and robust corporate arrangements provide a sound foundation 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 sound leadership and is generally well managed.
- 10 The key messages from the report were that the Authority:
  - has consensual and open leadership;
  - is generally well run although public accountability could be better;
  - is doing its best to work with partners but this takes up a considerable amount of time and it is not clear what benefit this is having for the community; and
  - needs to ensure that staff understand the programme of change ahead and are involved in its implementation.
- 11 Since then the Authority has made some progress in these areas, including:
  - improving the information available on its website;
  - undertaking a series of road shows to tell staff about the changes ahead; but
  - due to a recruitment freeze it has not yet been able to broaden the diversity of its workforce.
- 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 £70.1 million, equating to £48 per resident. In that year the Authority also spent £4.8 million on capital items. The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave his opinion on the Authority's accounts; he qualified his opinion because, as in 2008-09, there was disagreement over the accounting treatment for the Authority's general and earmarked reserves balances but confirmed 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 £1.5 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 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 is making sensible preparations and established a Finance Working Group which considered all possible financial and service options. Its Medium Term Financial Plan is supported by the People Plan and the Asset Management Plan. Its budget for 2011-12 is designed to achieve efficiencies of £1.54 million through a range of activities that have been developed through the Finance Working Group, consultation with staff 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.

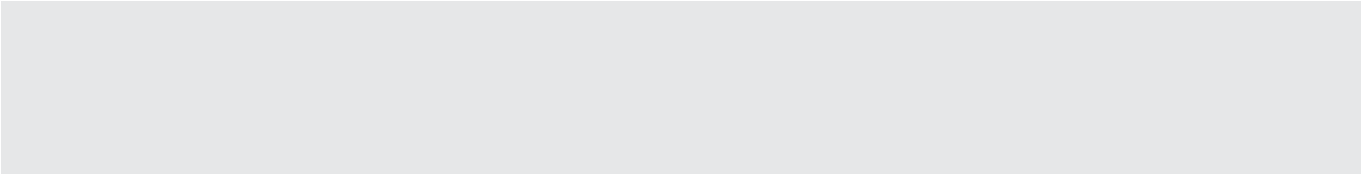
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- 15 In 2009, just over 17 per cent of the population within the Authority's area could speak Welsh compared with just under 26 per cent of the total population of Wales. The Welsh Language Board (the Board) works with fire and rescue authorities to 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 a fire and rescue 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 its new General Guidance for Third Parties on Equality, Diversity, Health and Safety and Welsh Language implications. The Authority was also praised for its continuing commitment to deliver and complete Language Awareness Training for every member of staff by the end of 2010-11. The Board has found that the Authority's website had three issues requiring attention to ensure compliance with its own Welsh Language Scheme. The Authority has agreed to develop an action plan to rectify these issues. The Authority has a specific target of recruiting eight Welsh speakers to all eight of its Welsh essential posts in the Fire Control Room by 2013. Five are already in post, but with a current recruitment freeze, there is a potential risk of failing to complete the target.



## 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 'make our communities the safest places to live, work and visit'. To achieve this it has a number of long-established aims which are generally consistent with the Assembly Government's national strategic priorities for fire and rescue authorities and seek to:
- ensure all of our communities are aware of the risks;
  - work with partners to reduce the risks;
  - target our services according to need; and
  - give an excellent and rapid response when our services are required in order to save and protect.
- 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 the following five key themes with more information in [Appendix 5](#):
- community protection: reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions;
  - attract and develop people: continue to develop a responsive and creative workforce;
  - effective use of resources: ensure that our resources and assets are utilised effectively to support service delivery;
  - organisational improvement: to improve internal service delivery ensuring the most effective use of both financial and people resources; and
  - sustainability: to promote sustainable local communities through our activities.
- 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 clearly set out in its Plan and it has set out how it will know if it has been successful to allow it to begin to measure what benefits will result in the future. The Authority recognises that some of its objectives will be difficult to measure in this way but is developing measures that will be in place by April 2011. 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 on over a 12-week period during the summer. Following the consultation exercise, proposals were changed to reflect the responses received. The Peer Assessment Team (PAT) report states 'PAT identified a wide ranging engagement and development process for the 2011-2012 .... including senior manager development groups, internal workshops, surveys and station visits'. 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 to identify a range of options in order to meet the reduction in its finances and the development of performance management arrangements that include a clear outcome focus.



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- 23 We found that the actions proposed in the Risk Reduction Plan projects have been well thought through and are aspects of a coherent approach to both planning and performance management. 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. A recent PAT report noted that the Authority 'recognises there are gaps in their data gathering. The Authority believes the future development of 'data observatories' will address this issue.' From our work we also know that changes are being made to the systems for collecting and reporting information on performance as new measures are introduced to monitor implementation 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 as all National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) the Authority is required to collect and report to the Assembly Government were correctly stated. However, we found that the publicly 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.
- 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 what we can say is that the approach taken by the Authority is sensible, and if difficult decisions are taken about service delivery structures and 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 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?

- 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 do this they provided funding of over £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 set itself an improvement objective to reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions, during 2010-11 by:
- identifying and targeting vulnerable groups for Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs);
  - researching and evaluating the effectiveness of existing community safety partnerships;
  - developing closer working with partner agencies;
  - maintaining its partner role with the Road Safety Wales group;
  - continuing to develop Legislative Fire Safety processes by:
    - improving business processes within the Legislative Fire Safety department;
    - building on existing partnerships with business and promoting awareness and understanding of the Fire Safety Order;
    - using the Risk Based Inspection Programme to target commercial properties which present the highest risk of environmental harm if a fire broke out in order to reduce that risk; and
  - pro-actively developing existing Fire Safety partnerships within businesses and commerce.
- 31 Although the Authority does not have a Community Safety Strategy document, its priorities outlined above set a clear strategic direction for its community safety activity. 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
- 32 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.
- 33 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 priority 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. The Authority is developing ways of identifying those most at risk of a house fire and prioritising them for HFSC using enhanced social demographic information (MOSAIC database). Last year (2009-10) some 24,000 HFSCs were carried out and a target of 23,000 has been set for this year, 2010-11.

- 34 These measures are contributing to success as since 2004-05:
- total dwelling fire deaths have reduced significantly by 70 per cent (from 10 in 2004-05 to three in 2009-10);
  - the number of injuries sustained in dwelling fires has remained broadly the same at around 105 injuries but there has been an increase in the proportion of injuries received in fires started deliberately (increased 75 per cent from 15 to 26 in 2009-10) compared with accidental fires (decreased 15 per cent from 93 to 79 in 2009-10) over this period;
  - dwelling fires attended have reduced by 10 percent (from 1,100 attendances in 2004-05 to 992 in 2009-10);
  - accidental dwelling fires attended have reduced steadily by approximately six per cent (from 856 in 2004-05 to 801 in 2009-10); and
  - there has been a steady reduction of some 22 per cent in fires started deliberately in homes (from 244 in 2004-05 to 191 in 2009-10).
- 35 However, despite the measures above indicating that there has been some success there are still challenges faced by the Authority as over half of the house fires attended in 2009-10 did not have a smoke alarm fitted. As noted above the Authority provides free smoke alarms as part of its HFSC work this year they plan to undertake more targeting of these checks to reach those most at risk.
- 36 Information on HFSCs undertaken for the Authority as a whole (regarding targeting and numbers completed) is no longer reported to members of the Finance, Audit and Performance Management Committee or the whole Authority. A lack of high level reporting makes it difficult for senior staff and members 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 life 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 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 42,000 non-domestic premises in the Authority's area of which approximately 27,000 are currently recorded on the Authority's database. Of these 570 are classified as very high or high risk, 2,996 medium risk, 2,286 are low or very low risk. 13,700 have been assessed as not requiring a programmed re-inspection. The Authority considers that a further 7,600 premises are of lower risk and is in the process of classifying these. Where risk data on premises is not currently held, an eight-year programme is in development to review them. The Authority believes these premises to be of a lower risk as they were not captured within previous fire safety legislation.
- 41 During 2009-10 some 2,000 fire safety audits of premises were carried out which equates to approximately five per cent of total business premises. It took action in over 1,400 of these 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).
- 42 The Legislative Fire Safety Department is currently in the process of reviewing and changing how it works including the development of new performance management tools to better reflect the current work of the Department. Due to the limitations of the existing fire safety management system, it is not currently a straightforward task to identify the numbers of audits required, and carried out by risk category and so it is important that this work is completed as quickly as possible. The process for buying a new fire safety management information system is currently underway for possible purchase in 2011-12.
- 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 reduced over the last six years and was 3,809 or 11 false calls a day 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 Regulations<sup>2</sup>, 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 since 2004-05:
- there have been no deaths in non-domestic premise fires (there was one in 2004-05);
  - the number of people injured has decreased from 12 to 11 in 2009-10 but this has been as low as four (2006-07) and high as 14 (2008-09); and
  - there has been a gradual reduction in the number of non domestic property fires attended by some six per cent (from 605 to 569 in 2009-10) which mirrors the picture across Wales but at a significantly lower rate (the Welsh average reduction was 21 per cent).

<sup>2</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.

## 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. During 2009-10, over two-thirds of all the fires attended across Wales were started deliberately (12,902 fires).
- 47 Within this Authority some 80 per cent of the fires attended were deliberately started during 2009-10 even though it has reduced over the last six years from 85 per cent in 2004-05. This is significantly above 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 commits resources to tackle arson and fire crime work. In addition, the Assembly Government funds the Arson Reduction Team and a number of projects within community safety including:
- Project 'Bernie' launched to tackle youth behaviour in setting deliberate grass fires;
  - 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; and
  - maintaining close links with all 10 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.

- 49 These measures are contributing to success as since 2004-05:
- the number of deaths resulting from deliberate fires is very small (two per year since 2006-07 and 11 in total since 2004-05); and
  - there has been significant improvement in the number of deliberate fires attended, which have reduced by a third from 12,543 to 8,534 in 2009-10); but
  - although the number of injuries sustained in deliberate fires is small there has been a steady increase from 29 injuries in 2004-05 to 34 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 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 forty-four young driver events including CSI Cymru, vehicle crime awareness day, 'Ride Out Ride Right', Megadrive, Pass Plus Seatbelt Options and other road safety initiatives have been undertaken during 2009-10.
- 51 There are 10 Young Firefighter groups across the area. An education programme has elements which link to the national curriculum at key stages one and two, and 449 schools were visited during 2009-10. In addition, resource materials are provided by a fire and rescue service all-Wales education group for key stages three and four.
- 52 Specific programmes such as Fire Awareness Child Education (FACE) and Firesafe are aimed at young firesetters (during 2009-10, 67 FACE programmes were delivered).

## Road Safety

- 53 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.
- 54 In 2008 there were 1,190 fatalities and 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.
- 55 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.
- 56 The Authority undertakes a number of initiatives designed to reduce the level of road accidents including:
- The Domino Effect – an education package for key stage 3 pupils to inform them of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour in vehicles, whether as a passenger or a driver.
  - Operation Cruise – an engagement programme used by the Authority's Road Safety Manager to interact with the most at risk group (17 to 24 year old drivers) where they gather in areas such as out of town shopping car parks or at official off-road events. This programme aims to raise the awareness of the consequences of inappropriate driver behaviour using case studies and personal testimony. One in four drivers who die in road traffic collisions are under 25, but under 25s account for only 10 per cent of the driver population. Death on the road is the biggest killer of people aged between 17 and 25.
- Superbike Safety – an initiative based on interaction with superbike users. This programme has received full funding and support from the Assembly Government. The aim of the superbike project is to encourage riders to attend the police sponsored rider training courses which are currently operating with limited uptake.
- 57 Whilst the total number of fires attended by the Authority has decreased by 28 per cent, since 2004-05 in line with the Welsh average (from 14,747 to 10,684 in 2009-10) over the same period the number of road traffic collisions attended has increased by eight per cent from 1,268 to 1,372 (slightly more than the Welsh average of six per cent). However, the measures described above are contributing to success as:
- in 2008 there were 415 fatalities and serious accidents on roads in the Authority's area compared with 498 in 2003, a reduction of 17 per cent; and
  - in 2009 there were 4,176 casualties on roads in the Authority's area compared with 6,029 in 2004, a reduction of 31 per cent.



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

- 58 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 44,500 emergency calls resulting in approximately 22,500 incidents attended. This included 15,500 fires and special service incidents; 73 per cent of these incidents were fires with the remaining 27 per cent being non-fire related incidents such as road traffic collisions, flooding and false alarms.
- 59 In order to respond to requests for assistance the Authority:
- Employs some 1,370 operational and 265 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 50 fire and rescue stations where the majority of staff and equipment are based. In 2007 the Authority began a plan to move four stations to a Retained Duty System (RDS); two have been achieved with two more changing to RDS during this financial year. It has also been working hard to recruit retained duty staff and is now achieving an average of 98 per cent availability of fire cover across all its stations of which:
    - 10 are wholetime shift crewed (staff based at the station 24 hours a day);
    - two are day crewed transitioning to retained duty crewing (staff based at the station for part of the day and retained cover at quieter times);
    - twenty-eight are retained (staff respond to incidents as needed and are only based on the station for a small number of hours a week); and
    - 10 are multi-duty with both wholetime and retained crewing systems being worked.
  - Has 95 water ladders including six used for training and 12 in reserve; five aerial appliances (including one in reserve); 10 rescue tenders (including one in reserve); 61 operational support vehicles; and a light vehicle fleet including panel vans and officer cars, all of which are maintained (including major works and over-hauls) at a single site workshop facility or a mobile 'workshop' is used for on-station inspections and routine repairs. Reserve vehicles are utilised when the frontline vehicles are being repaired to ensure no loss of service.
- 60 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 computer modelling 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.
- 61 One of the Authority's improvement objectives for 2011-12 is 'develop a responsive and creative workforce who practice our values'. This year's (2010-11) objective to 'attract, retain, develop and maintain the health and well being of its people' is a key way in which it prepares itself to be able to respond to requests for assistance and its plans to do this include:
- aligning attraction and recruitment processes for whole time and retained fire-fighters;

- put in place high potential schemes, succession planning and workforce planning; and
  - continually improve on the reduction of accidents by encouraging a pro-active approach to health, safety and welfare.
- 62 New personal protective equipment for fire-fighters has recently been purchased on an all-Wales basis with the support of the Assembly Government. The Authority has also replaced all 461 breathing apparatus sets during 2010-11.
- 63 During 2009-10 there were 91 personnel injured whilst 'on duty' which is an increase on the previous year when there were only 80. As a result of these injuries 1,251 days were lost (compared with 1,448 in 2008-09) by wholetime staff. The programme of Health and Safety audits at stations and departments has continued throughout the year.
- 64 During 2009-10 there were some 9,700 days/shifts lost to sickness absence which is a reduction of nearly 480 days on the previous year (four per cent) and equates to nearly eight days per person. Control staff have the highest rate of sickness absence at an average of 15 days per person compared with operational staff who have seven days and non-operational staff who have 10 days. There appears to be a particular issue with control staff as not only do they have the highest level of sickness absence but have also experienced an increase between 2008-09 and 2009-10 (from 740 to 854 days/shifts an increase of over 15 per cent) when other staff categories have reduced.
- 65 The PAT 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 'arrangements for meeting its responsibilities in relation to health, safety and welfare and for training, development and assessment corresponded to, and, in some areas, were close to exceeding, all the 'established' descriptors in the relevant sections of the operational assurance of service delivery guidance' and further findings are shown in [Appendix 6](#).
- 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 fire appliances (80 in all). This includes a wireless data link to ensure fire-fighters can access real-time information held at Fire and Rescue Service headquarters. These vehicle Mounted Data Terminals (MDTs) 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 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.
- 67 Training is provided at the purpose-built Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre which has a wide range of fire training capabilities. A variety of different fire scenarios, including simulated Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) fires in an industrial environment, and a house, bedroom and kitchen fire, can be created and enhanced with synthetic smoke. In addition to fire-based training, the Centre is equipped with facilities for rope and ladder rescue on a purpose-built tower that replicates a rock face, electrical pylon and a traditional building on three elevations. There is also an area for road traffic collision training, including a 'floodable' concrete ditch, large animal rescue and specialist technical rescue. 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 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 programme was called New Dimension (ND) and has enhanced the capability to respond to major disruptive events including terrorism. The ND programme has resulted in specialist vehicles and equipment being located in Wales and includes High Volume Pumps, Incident Response Units and Decontamination equipment. The vehicles and equipment located in South Wales are valued at approximately £2.5 million.
- 69 The ND programme also provides for specialist capabilities, for example, Urban Search and Rescue (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 South Wales and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities. The team is always available to respond and trains together twice a month.
- 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 44,500 calls were received by Fire Control. In order to strengthen call handling arrangements the Fire Control has recently relocated and 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 3,083 compared with 2,209 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 (31 per cent compared with 27 per cent). The Crown Prosecution Service has also recently successfully prosecuted a persistent hoax caller to the emergency services in South Wales including the fire and rescue service.
- 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 proposals 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

The Authority should:

- improve public accountability and engagement by providing more information for the public about its operation such as agendas and minutes for key meetings, and consider its engagement and consultation processes to encourage wider participation eg, Facebook and Twitter;
- seek to broaden the diversity of its workforce by fully evaluating the impact of initiatives it has taken to date to meet associated targets;
- identify how the Performance Development Review (PDR) process can be more consistently used across the organisation; and
- develop further its approach to workforce engagement.

## New recommendations

The Authority should:

- develop improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures that:
  - enable it to identify the impact of its activity for its community; and
  - show how the Authority performs now, its targets and how it compares with other fire and rescue authorities.
- ensure that changes to processes within the Legislative Fire Safety department and weaknesses in the management information available are prioritised.

# 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's/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>3</sup>

<sup>3</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 South 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>4</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**

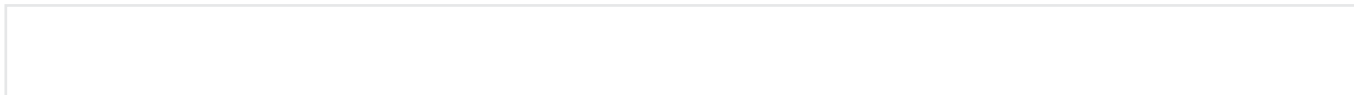
The Act delivers a single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Act is divided into two parts; Part 1 which defines the obligations of certain organisations to prepare for various types of emergencies and Part 2 which provides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

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

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

<sup>4</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.





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 24 councillors from the 10 unitary authorities of South Wales:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (1 member)
- Bridgend County Borough Council (two members)
- Caerphilly County Borough Council (three members)
- Cardiff City Council (five members)
- Monmouth County Council (two members)
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (one member)
- Newport City Council (two members)
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (four members)
- Torfaen County Borough Council (three members)
- the Vale of Glamorgan Council (two members)

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

The current Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority is Cllr Anthony Ernest.

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 Assembly Government. The Authority meets on a quarterly basis and its work is supported by three main committees, namely, Finance, Audit and Performance Management, HR and Equalities and Standards and a number of working groups. 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 A Marles the Chief Fire Officer supported by the corporate management team.

For more information see the Authority's own website at [www.southwales-fire.gov.uk](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk) or contact the Authority at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, CF72 8LX.

# 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.

Effective leadership and robust corporate arrangements provide a sound foundation for improvement in performance.

### How the Authority has approached improvement over time

The Authority has improved the transparency and effectiveness of its approach to securing improvement:

- before 2008 the Authority's arrangements were traditional in style with some key weaknesses especially in relation to governance;
- consensual and open leadership has led to significant improvement with a sharper focus on effective strategic planning and business processes; and
- the Authority's arrangements provide a good platform for service improvement.

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

Good use of resources and appropriate information support a clear strategic approach and effective leadership:

- the Authority manages its resources effectively, ensuring its strategic choices are informed by accurate, timely management information;
- members and senior officers are providing clear leadership and strategic direction that support improvement but public accountability could be strengthened;
- collaborative working is well developed but partnerships make considerable demands in capacity which are not yet fully evaluated in terms of outcomes for the community; and
- while the Authority is addressing the future nature of its workforce, there are challenges in ensuring that staff understand the programme of organisational change planned and are involved in its implementation.

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 South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

#### **South 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:

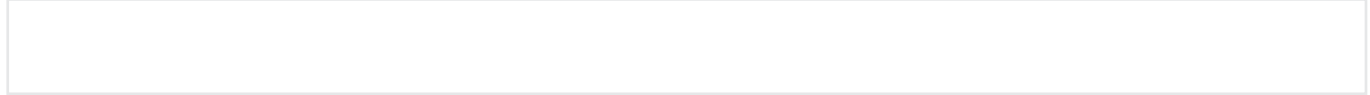
- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements;
- establish and keep under review appropriate 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 a qualified audit opinion on the accounting statements. The qualified opinion arose, as in 2008-09, from disagreement over the accounting treatment for the Authority's general and earmarked reserves balances.

My report was qualified because during the audit of the accounts for 2007/2008, legal advice obtained by the Wales Audit Office confirmed that the statutory framework under which the Authority operates does not provide for the holding of reserves which have been accumulated from an excess of its constituent authorities' appropriate proportion of the net expenses of the Fire Authority in respect of each financial year. However, the Authority chose not to make an adjustment in its accounts to remove the balances previously held within such reserves and reclassify the amounts as current liabilities (amounts held on behalf of constituent authorities). This led to a qualified audit opinion being given on the accounts due to a disagreement on the accounting treatment related to reserves.



The Authority continued its accounting treatment in 2008/09. A consultation process to amend the Combination Order in order to enable Fire Authorities to hold reserves is now complete confirming that Fire Authorities can hold reserves from 1 December 2009. However, this amendment was not retrospective and therefore an uncorrected misstatement has been identified in the accounts resulting in a qualification of the audit report. 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 although there is further room for improvement in the process for amending the accounts for audit adjustments;
- revised accounting requirements for PFI were correctly implemented but 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; 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 has been implemented, 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 statutory requirements 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

## South 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.southwales-fire.gov.uk](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.uk). They are:

### Theme 1 - Our Communities

#### Improvement Objective - reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions

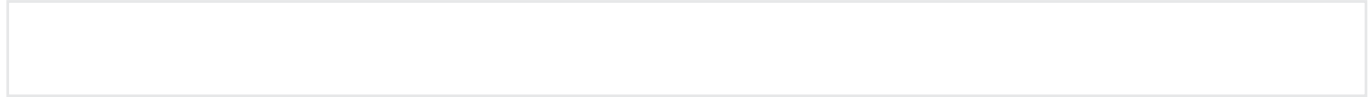
In order to ensure that it makes its communities the safest places to live, work and visit, the Authority has committed to responding rapidly to incidents in order to minimise the loss of life and injury and to reduce the physical, social and financial effects of any resulting loss and damage. Its call profile over recent years show an increase in operational activity in relation to road traffic collisions and public expectation that they provide rescue services to a wide variety of incidents. Both the public and staff have expectations that the Authority retains its track record of increasing standards of service delivery.

To do this the Authority intends to build on previous work by:

- Working proactively both individually and in collaboration with other organisations in order to further reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions.
- Utilising FSEC risk modelling and MOSAIC data in order for areas of high risk based on dwellings and demographics to be identified and enable more effective targeting of safety initiatives to maximise resources most efficiently.
- Utilising any increased capacity for community safety initiatives.
- Expanding our partnership arrangements to work with other agencies across Wales to target our home fire safety activities at the most vulnerable groups in our communities.
- Implementing the outcomes of the Legislative Fire Safety business process review. This will enable us to continue to reduce risk within the business communities in a manner which is increasingly effective within the current financial climate and seek to improve awareness and understanding of the Fire Safety Order within those business communities.
- Utilising more intelligent mobilising.
- Supporting the initiative that all new housing will be built with domestic sprinkler systems.
- Reviewing our suite of standard operating procedures and tactical plans.

#### How will the Authority know if it has been successful?

- Decrease in number of incidents.
- Decrease in number of deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions.
- Reduction in number of mobilisations.



### **What difference will it make to its communities?**

The Authority's aim is for communities with zero deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions; this not only makes communities safer but also reduces the wider socio and economic costs involved to families when someone is involved in such an incident. Successful road safety initiatives can also have an impact on reducing the economic cost to business of roads being closed, delays experienced or vehicles being involved in accidents.

## **Theme 2 - Our people**

### **Improvement Objective - continue to develop a responsive and creative workforce who practice our values**

The Authority recognises that in order to continue to be successful we need to have the right people with the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to service needs. In the past the Authority has faced challenges in recruiting a workforce that is reflective of the different communities we serve, and as it adapts to the current economic changes there are different market forces and pressures being applied to the potential recruitment pool. At the same time it is monitoring the retirement profile and knows that it needs to build knowledge in the next few years to ensure we have effective succession planning in place. To do this the Authority intends to:

- Implement the People Strategy.
- Utilise the workforce creatively to ensure business.
- Engage widely with the public and with its current workforce.
- Implement the Members' Charter.

### **How will the Authority know if it has been successful?**

- Appropriately qualified staff in post.
- Planned management of staff leaving and joining the organisation.
- Successfully short listing appropriate applicants for all vacancies.
- Achievement of equality and diversity performance indicator targets.

### **What difference will it make to its communities?**

By achieving this objective the Authority will remain a trusted service with a competent workforce, able to maintain a public service in times of high demand and extreme circumstances. We will remain responsive to community needs and changing demands and ensure that we deliver a professional service to the communities we serve.



### **Theme 3 - Our resources**

#### **Improvement Objective - ensure that resources and assets are utilised effectively to support service delivery**

The Authority recognises that if it does not review its allocation of resources and business processes to ensure they are utilised in the most efficient and effective manner, there could be implications on service delivery to the public. Research has indicated changing shift patterns and staffing levels can achieve a reduction in staff costs without any detriment to the level of fire cover to the community. Also the existing location of stations was determined by the needs of the three former Brigades and these physical assets are aging and in need of maintenance. Since 1996 there has been a significant reduction in the call rate and workloads of some stations so the authority recognises the need to adapt and modernise to meet current demands and public expectations. To do this the Authority intends to:

- Maximising assets by implementing more effective management through the vehicle replacement programme and asset tracking.
- Progressing the reactive property maintenance programme.
- Taking forward the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2010/2014.
- Carrying out a high level review of the contribution to public and Firefighter safety made by each station and to identify those areas where more in-depth analysis should be conducted.
- Exploring the effectiveness and future need of each second pumping appliance including the location, incident data, call rate and crewing arrangements.
- Exploring the effectiveness of each special appliance including the location incident data, call rates and crewing arrangements.

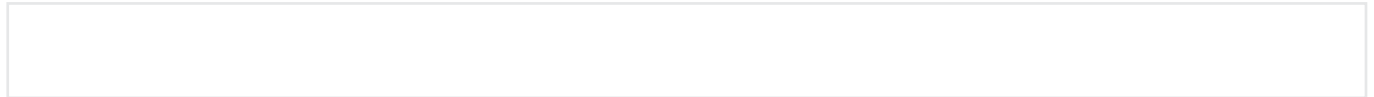
#### **How will the Authority know if it has been successful?**

- Reduction in reactive maintenance budget and increase in planned maintenance projects.
- Maintenance or reduction of FSEC risk profiles after resources have been reallocated.
- Potential efficiency savings identified and any realised in the year tracked and monitored.

#### **What difference will it make to its communities?**

Achievement of this objective will allow the Authority to make more appropriate analysis of risk to the different communities across South Wales, recognising that different areas have different needs and to get the most appropriate resources allocated and attending incidents in a cost effective manner. Modern fire stations will be fit for purpose and where appropriate they will be accessible community facilities.





## **Theme 4 - Our Organisation**

### **Improvement Objective - to improve internal service delivery ensuring the most effective use of both financial and people resources**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that it continues to provide value for money to the people of South Wales by ensuring that internal service delivery is as streamlined and effective as possible to support front line service delivery. To do this the Authority intends to:

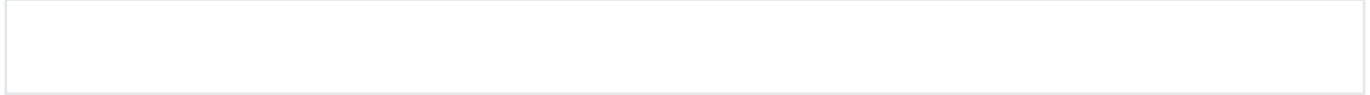
- Review and streamline the support services systems and processes to identify where efficiency savings can be made.
- Train middle managers in the systems thinking model to enable them to have the tools and mechanisms to drive through change and improvement in their areas.
- Identify and release efficiency savings that may arise through challenges to organisational structures and internal services.
- Scoping a major ICT review.

### **How will the Authority know if it has been successful?**

- Identifiable savings tracked through the year.
- Internal services become more responsive.

### **What difference will it make to its communities?**

The result of these reviews will be that the front line operational staff are able to continue to deliver responsive services and preventative community initiatives with less costs attributed to the supporting internal services behind them. This will provide better value for money to the communities of South Wales whilst ensuring that levels of service delivery remained unaffected as funding comes under increased pressure in the years to come.



## **Theme 5 - Sustainability**

### **Improvement Objective - to promote sustainable local communities through our activities**

The Authority is committed to working to protect its communities and environment both in terms of reducing the impact of operational activities and routine business, for example through the energy it uses, the way it purchases and how it manages its waste.

It is aware of the impact that the loss through fire of a community resource such as a school or business can have upon the local citizens and economy of an area. It also recognises the importance and impact that supporting the building of community capacity through youth schemes and through working with vulnerable adults has to help prevent the economic and environmental cost of incidents such as arson, wildfire, abandoned vehicles and other anti social behaviour. To do this the Authority intends to:

- Undertaking community education initiatives with youth groups and vulnerable adults.
- Amend all necessary documents to ensure they incorporate level 3 of the sustainable procurement assessment framework.
- Reviewing its Land and Buildings Plan.
- Increase intelligent mobilising to ensure we respond in a timely manner thus reducing the impact of fires.
- Increase working with partner organisation to achieve joint objectives and ensure safer communities.
- Targeting home fire safety checks to areas of identified risks.
- Implement the Asset Management Plan so that fire stations become safe and sustainable places to work and in appropriate situations also a facility for community use.

### **How will the Authority know if it has been successful?**

- Progress against actions in service plans will be monitored and reported throughout the year.
- Statistical returns.

### **What difference will it make to its communities?**

The successful implementation of these undertakings will make the Authority more efficient and better able to maintain the budget outlined within our Medium Term Financial Plan. As it becomes more efficient, whilst providing the same level of service, communities will experience better value for money. In addition, it will be playing our part in helping make its communities safer places with more pleasant environments both built and natural. It can reduce the environmental impact of fires and road traffic collisions, both in relation to the damage caused by the fire or fuel slippage and also through water usage if the number of incidents is reduced as a result of our proactive safety initiatives. Also if there are fewer incidents to attend and our resources are placed so as to be closer to areas of higher risk then we can reduce the environmental impact of vehicle movements and demand.

# Appendix 6

## Summary of Peer Assessment Team findings

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

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

- The Peer Team found clearly defined and effective arrangements in place which have been developed over a number of years following review of H&S within the Service. This has resulted in a Health and Safety Strategy (formally reviewed every 3 years) supported by associated policies (which are updated regularly).
- The Peer Team acknowledges the commitment at Director and Authority level to the ongoing development of Health, Safety and Welfare, which is demonstrated within the Risk Reduction Plan.

#### Management Structures and Arrangements to Support HSW

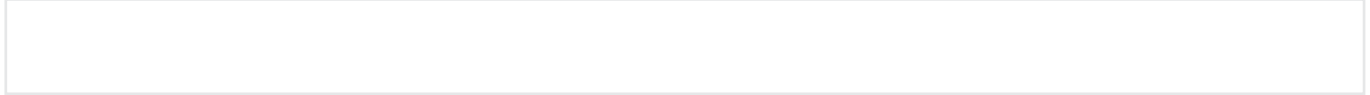
- The current structures and arrangements reflect best practice guidance for successful H&S management e.g. Health and Safety Policy, H&S Committee structures, active and reactive monitoring etc.
- The Occupational Health Team makes a significant contribution to the overall management of Health, Safety and Welfare arrangements within the Service.
- The Peer Team found examples of limited awareness and understanding of general organisational HSW arrangements at and below supervisory levels. This suggests some uncertainty regarding full implementation of HSW arrangements through all levels of the Organisation.

#### HSW Plans, Targets, Procedures and Practices

- The Service has developed plans, challenging targets, procedures and practices in relation to Health and Safety.
- Development areas have been recognised by the Service and an Improvement Plan details actions and recommendations (with nominated owners) which will further strengthen an already positive Health and Safety culture.
- The Peer Assessment Team noted the efforts made by the Service in ensuring that Health and Safety performance data was utilised in the ongoing enhancement of safety standards. However, the team was unable to readily identify where such data influenced the existing Health and Safety Strategy and Improvement Plan.

#### Measurement and Evaluation of HSW Activities

- The Service has a broad range of methods for capturing H&S performance and outcomes are disseminated using formal reporting mechanisms and key committee meetings.
- It is recognised that there is a downward trend for ill health retirements and accidents and injuries over a number of years. It was unclear to the Team how some data influenced changes in Health and Safety policies and strategies.



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

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

- There has been wide consultation to produce a Strategy and associated policies in line with National Guidance. This strategy will be further enhanced by the validation of the ADC process.

### **Management Structures and Arrangements to Support TDA**

- Structures and arrangements exist to support training, development and assessment.
- A wide range of realistic training programmes and opportunities exist to ensure personnel both develop and maintain their competencies in line with role maps/job descriptions.
- It was noted that NVQs have been introduced for RDS and the need for additional support has been recognised by the Organisation.

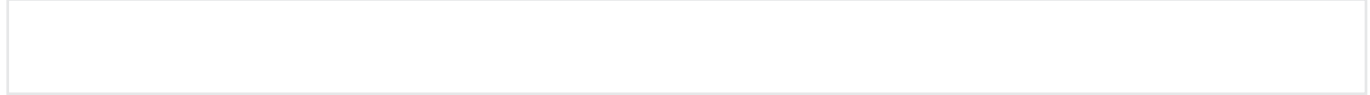
The team found that the PDR process has been shown to identify training needs and measure workplace performance but inconsistencies in application undermine the overall Learning and Development Strategy.

### **TDA Plans, Targets, Procedures and Practices**

- Data from consultation has helped to inform the future Learning & Development strategy.
- Core competencies are addressed by structured training programmes and this is complemented by guidance from ORM and Health and Safety outcomes. This is further influenced by risks highlighted in the Community Risk Register.

### **Measurement and Evaluation of TDA Activities**

- Deployment of ODART provides real time information which informs and influences future training objectives, and this includes external stakeholders. The Service has recognised that training delivery would benefit from a more effective evaluation and feedback process.
- Feedback and report systems exist for PDRs, however, this may be limited by the lack of engagement from some line managers.
- An established NVQ process exists, which is externally verified and supports the development of uniform staff.



## 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 has sufficient data sets to enable them to identify a range of risks.
- The PAT identified that the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had informed the 2011-12 RRP process in relation to resource prioritisation. This was communicated to Fire Authority members to inform their decision making processes.
- The FRAs approach to RRP development are evolving as the needs of the organisation are changing with the FRA recognising that this needs to be reflected within the way it develops future RRP.
- The FRA engages in improvement workshops which informs the development phase of the RRP and undertakes communication road shows to consult with staff to further inform and identify areas of risk.
- Formal review of the RRP development process did not appear to have been undertaken although there was evidence to support continued informal review and revision of the development process in the form of developing and widening the delivery of RRP road shows.
- The PAT found evidence of data sharing between CSPs and internal departments.

### 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.*

- Although the FRA does not have a Community Safety (CS) Strategy document, strategic direction on CS is implicit within the Organisational Strategic objectives contained within individual function/departmental plans.
- The FRA has reduced the rate of injuries and fatalities from fire. The statistics were constantly checked to monitor current trends and performance.
- Future CS activity will be targeted at a local level through MOSAIC although the PAT did not find evidence of it being consistently implemented across the organisation.
- The PAT identified evidence to suggest positive Community Safety hours allocated to RDS staff could be used in a more effective manner to increase output and efficiency.
- The PAT noted the work that had been undertaken in agreeing SLA funding for partners to undertake HFSCs, however the PAT found the content of the SLA presented a potential risk to the organisation.
- The identification, management and monitoring of HFSCs and in particular 'high risk' referrals at station level appear to be inconsistent.
- The PAT found the range of partners interviewed were keen to present anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes and feedback on their experiences of working 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
- Improvement Authority's own websites, Authority reports and Improvement Plans
- Operational Assurance of Service Delivery Peer Assessment Report 2009-10 and 2010-11
- The Wales Yearbook
- The Home Office
- Members' Research Service
- Office for National Statistics
- The Welsh Health Survey 2008-2009