



AGENDA ITEM: 4

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

9th OCTOBER 2006

DRAFT IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2006-07

**Report by Dawn Docx,
Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement)**

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of interim arrangements for the production of Improvement Plans by Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales in 2006-07.

Introduction

2. The Fire and Rescue National Framework confirmed that Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales would be subject to the Wales Programme for Improvement for Fire and Rescue (WPI-FRA).
3. Development and implementation of the WPI-FRA guidance was deferred by the Assembly whilst revisions were made to the WPI for Local Authorities.
4. WPI-FRA draft guidance is now progressing towards its final version for consultation. It is anticipated that the final version of the guidance will be issued before 1st April 2007.



Background

5. The Authority's Best Value Performance Plan in 2004-05 made reference to the imminent devolution of responsibility for fire and rescue services in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales, and signalled the Authority's intention to produce an annual Improvement Plan under new guidance in future years.
6. Due to a delay in publishing guidance on WPI-FRA, the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan in 2005-06 was produced under interim arrangements entered into voluntarily by Fire and Rescue Authorities.
7. The Assembly is continuing to develop the WPI-FRA, which has meant that interim guidance has once more been issued in relation to 2006-07. Best Value Performance Plans under WPI are called Improvement Plans.
8. To further complicate matters, an error in the drafting of the The Local Government (Improvement Plans) (Wales) Order 2006 meant that Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales were inadvertently included within its scope, whilst those in England were excluded.
9. Consequently, Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales were informed by the Assembly in August that they would be required to comply with that Order and produce an Improvement Plan by 31st October.
10. The guidance on Improvement Plans issued to Local Authorities in Circular 28/2005 requires that such plans "must be approved by the full Council before publication; doing so cannot be the sole responsibility of an Executive or Board".

Information

11. The attached draft Improvement Plan for 2006-07, complies with the Assembly's interim arrangements for this year.



Recommendations

12. That Members

- 12.1** note the requirement to publish an Improvement Plan for 2006-07 before 31st October 2006; and
- 12.2** approve the draft Improvement Plan 2006-07 for presentation to the full Fire and Rescue Authority at its next meeting on October 23rd 2006.