



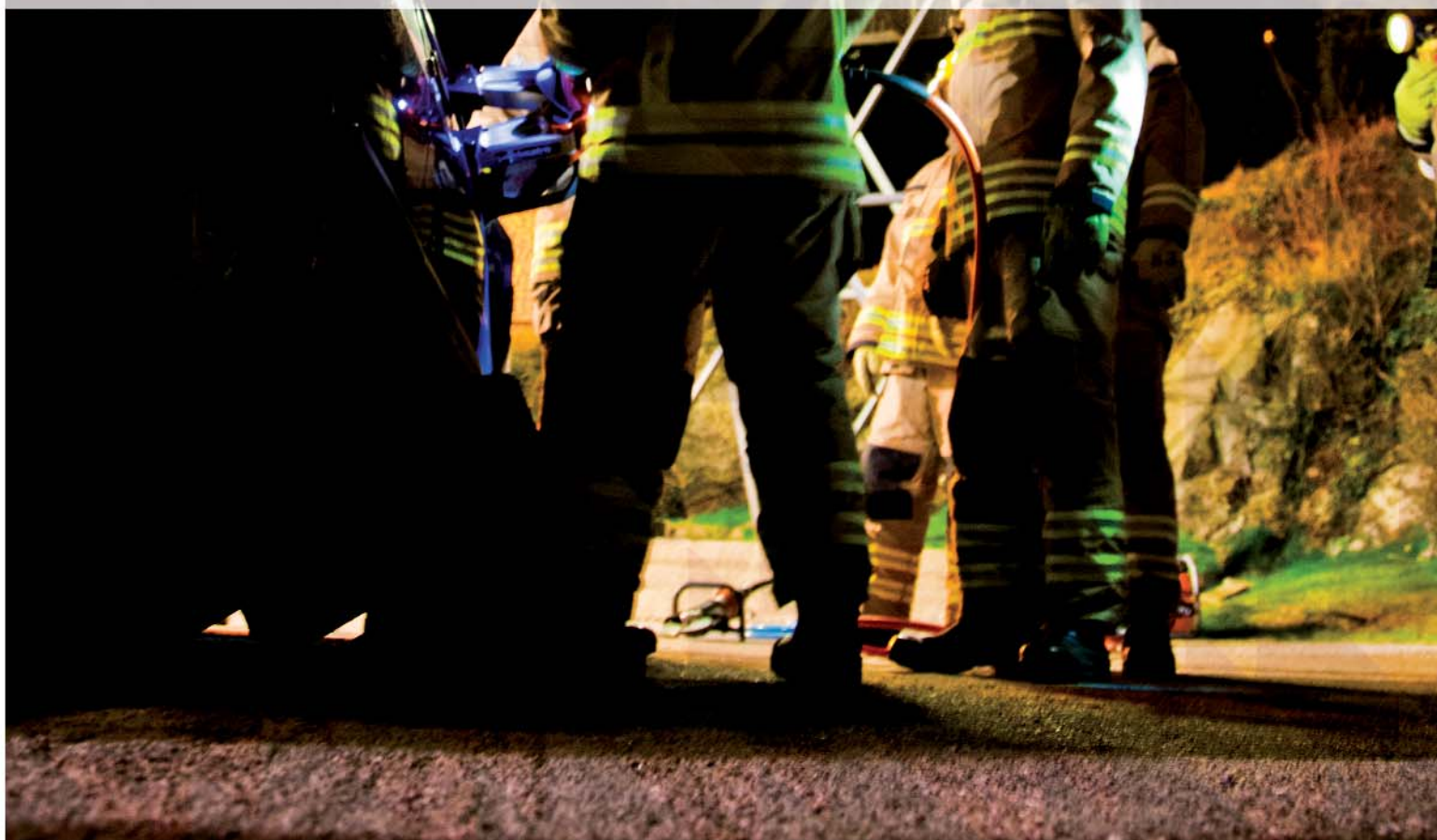
WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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About the Auditor General for Wales

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

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

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

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

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Summary report

- 1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities, and national parks are planning for improvement and delivering their services. Drawing on the work of the Wales Audit Office and relevant Welsh Inspectorates, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report is in three main sections, which cover the planning, delivery and evaluation of improvement by North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority).
- 2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority has put good arrangements in place to deliver improvement and does well in the areas it focuses on; but planning, evaluation and reporting of performance is not sufficiently balanced or outcome based.
- 3 We found that the Authority is generally making good plans and putting appropriate arrangements in place to deliver improvement. We have concluded this because the Authority:
 - has appropriate arrangements in place to address priorities and respond to previous suggestions for improvement;
 - has a sound approach to financial management but given the scale of change necessary clear leadership is required;
 - information management is supporting improvement but there are some weaknesses in governance and performance;
 - current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support improvement; and
 - it is meeting most of its statutory obligations with regard to the Welsh Language Act.
- 4 We also found that the Authority has achieved much of what it set out to achieve in its identified priorities. We based this conclusion on the following:
 - Overall the Authority made good progress towards achieving its Improvement Objectives in 2010-11.
 - The Authority is helping to prevent fires and road traffic collisions occurring and whilst fatalities and injuries in fires increased last year the long term trend shows a reduction.
 - The Authority is actively developing more innovative and efficient ways to respond to a wide range of events and incidents.
- 5 Finally the report sets out our views on the Authority's own assessment of its performance and arrangements. We have concluded that the Authority has mechanisms for monitoring performance but needs to become more balanced in the evaluation and reporting of performance and focus on improvement objectives so that there is a clearer picture of the Authority's progress against its improvement objectives.

Proposals for Improvement

Proposals for improvement	
P1	Continue to implement previous proposals for improvement to strengthen improvement objectives and associated performance and measures and reporting to be more outcome focussed as to identify and evaluate the impact of its activity for its community.
P2	Implement areas for improvement identified in our Information Management review.
P3	Implement areas for improvement identified in our use of Technology review.
P4	Implement the improvements suggested by the Welsh Language Board (the Board) regarding some front line administrative posts.
P5	Address issues arising from the performance indicator audit in respect of how 'over the border incidents' are treated.
P6	Address the suggestions made in the Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter in respect of reporting Internal Audit findings to the Audit Committee.

Detailed report



Introduction

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

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

The Authority has put good arrangements in place to deliver improvement and does well in the areas it focuses on; but planning, evaluation and reporting of performance is not sufficiently balanced or outcome based

- 10 This report sets out the Auditor General's view of the performance of the Authority in discharging its statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. This view has been informed by the work of the Wales Audit Office, KPMG LLP and the Fire and Rescue Peer Assessment Team.
- 11 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all authority arrangements or services. Our work has focused on the main objectives that the Authority has set itself for the financial year 2010-11. It builds upon earlier audit feedback and reports issued to the Authority and tracks the progress made by the Authority in responding to earlier audit findings. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings from work undertaken this year.
- 12 Our overall conclusion reflects the Authority's progress in making arrangements to secure continuous improvement and the progress that it has made in delivering against its key focus areas and Improvement Objectives.
- 13 In addition to having effective arrangements in place to plan for and deliver improvement it is important that the Authority has a good understanding of the extent of progress and improvement it is making. We found that the Authority has mechanisms for monitoring performance but this does not currently translate into a balanced evaluation and reporting of performance. This shortcoming largely stems from a reliance on selected national strategic indicators (NSIs) rather than a full suite of balanced measures to measure achievement of Improvement Objectives and a lack of narrative explanation for performance (good or bad).
- 14 The Auditor General has determined that the Authority has discharged all of its duties in relation to publishing improvement information and has acted substantially in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.

The Authority is generally making good plans and putting appropriate arrangements in place to deliver improvement

15 This section of the report sets out our assessment of the Authority's improvement objectives which are listed in **Appendix 4** and how the Authority is planning and managing its business to maintain and improve services. This section of the report also highlights the Authority's response to issues raised in previous reports.

The Authority has appropriate arrangements in place to address its priorities and to respond to previous suggestions for improvement

16 The *Corporate Assessment Update* letter issued by the Auditor General to the Authority in July 2011 reported that the Authority's leadership is continuing to drive change. It highlighted that, in relation to its corporate arrangements, the Authority's priorities for the coming period should be to developing appropriate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions to support decision making and ensuring that improvement objectives are measurable and reported.

17 Progress has been made to broaden the data available to managers through development of reporting from the Incident Recording system (IRS) and the Records Management System (RMS).

18 Business planning arrangements have been revised for 2011-12 and Improvement Objectives have been set that include detailed descriptions of the actions it is planning, expected outcomes and the measures it will use to determine success in most cases.

New Business Planning templates and associated review processes have been introduced to strengthen accountability and ensure actions are delivered and senior managers have regular meetings with nominated project managers to monitor progress in delivering the actions in Business Plans.

19 The Authority is starting to change the way it does things with the aim of improving its efficiency. It has made progress to implement new control room resilience, adopted new ways of communicating with key groups, for example students and the farming community, and made closer links with partners to better target home fire safety checks for those most at risk. It has strengthened processes for dealing with long-term sickness, introduced new operational assurance monitoring processes and, from April 2011, changed its organisational structure. Many of these changes include working in partnership with other organisations including unitary authorities, the health service and various voluntary sector groups.

20 The Auditor General has identified a number of areas for improvement for the Authority in his reports over the last two years. The *Corporate Assessment Update* letter (July 2011) noted that the Authority is working to address the previously identified areas for improvement. The table below provides an update on actions taken to address previous proposals for improvement:

Proposal for improvement	Update 2012
Preliminary corporate assessment (August 2010)	
<p>Address the possible duplication of roles in monitoring performance information by the Executive Panel and Audit Committee to avoid unnecessary confusion or duplication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerk and Member liaison officer ensures that there is no duplication in terms of the roles undertaken by the Audit Committee and the Executive Panel, particularly in respect of monitoring performance.
<p>Ensure that the current range of reporting software provides for a sound decision making process in the medium to long term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress has been made to broaden the data available to managers through development of reporting from the Incident Recording system (IRS) and the Records Management System (RMS). • There are currently no plans to further develop the use of Ffynnon.
<p>Review what business processes will best support the successful delivery of planned projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following consideration of the processes needed for successful delivery of planned projects, which brought together a number of reviews including officer cover, training arrangements and recommendations from external reviews, a new organisation structure was put in place from April 2011. • The restructure was undertaken to deliver financial savings as well as create better delivery arrangements through clearer reporting and accountability. • New Business Planning templates and associated review processes have been introduced for 2011-12 to strengthen accountability and ensure actions are delivered. Principal Officers have regular meetings with nominated project managers to monitor progress in delivering the actions in Business Plans.

Proposal for improvement	Update 2012
Preliminary corporate assessment (August 2010)	
<p>Formulating a medium-term plan to gain agreement on broad policy direction and required resources for delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium-term financial plan drafted. Arrangements in place to set its annual budget and also to forecast the budget for the following two years. The Budget Working Group considers all possible financial and service options to meet the funding gap each year and identify areas where savings could be made.
Annual improvement report (January 2011)	
<p>Develop further the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures so as to be able to identify and evaluate the impact of its activity for its community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority has set Improvement Objectives for 2011-12 that include descriptions of the actions it is planning, expected outcome and the measures it will use to determine success in most cases. • Reporting of performance information is not structured to report progress against delivery of the Improvement Objectives.
<p>Continue to prioritise road safety activities to better understand how it can play its part in making roads within its area safer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety activities are prioritised and target groups established, eg, schools, colleges and universities.

21 The Appointed Auditor's *Annual Audit Letter* (Appendix 2) highlighted some enhancements that could strengthen how Internal Audit findings are presented to the Audit Committee and how members are kept up to date about progress to implement any recommendations made.

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

22 The Authority has been aware for some time that it needs to make sure it uses the resources it has as effectively as possible and continues to make sensible preparations to addressing the financial challenges it faces including drafting a medium term financial plan. In order to manage the overall decrease in the amount of funding it will receive from Welsh Government for the three year period 2011-12 to 2013-14, the Authority decided to evenly spread the £2.45 million savings needed. This resulted in a reduction in the budget of 0.5 per cent in 2011-12 and 2012-13 and a standstill budget in 2013-14. Its budget for 2012-13, including savings of £815,000 is being considered and will be finalised in February 2012.

23 The Authority has managed its budget well in recent years and it is currently forecasting an underspend of just under £0.5 million for the current financial year (2011-12), primarily due to savings in planned reductions in staff costs. This effective management places it on a sound footing going forward into a period of significant change and financial cuts as it has a good track record of making sure its services are delivered within the resources that it has available.

24 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2010-11 accounts confirming that money had been spent in a proper way. Appendix 3 gives more detail.

The Authority's information management is supporting improvement but there are some weaknesses in governance and performance

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

- The Authority's arrangements and plans for information management are supporting improvement and it is generally aware of the issues it needs to address.
- There are some weaknesses in governance. For example: the Authority's Information Communication Technology/Information Strategy needs to be updated; it does not have formalised management forum tasked with bringing the strands of information management together; and staff are not fully trained on information management issues including information security.

- The Authority's performance is sound. It has appropriate levels of security in place but could make responsibilities clearer by having a single point of contact for all information security issues. It is less robust in its approach to managing information and managing email but is proactive in seeking a solution to this problem.

The Authority's current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support improvement

- 26 Effective use of technology is essential for transforming the delivery of public services, improving outcomes for citizens and delivering efficiency savings.
- 27 Our review found that the Authority's current arrangements for developing, using and supporting technology are likely to support continuous improvement. The Authority understands how technology can help it secure sustainable, effective use of technology, deliver efficiencies and transform service delivery, but it needs to ensure that it has capacity in terms of technical skilled resources to deliver its plans without impacting on the quality of service. The key areas for improvement are:
- develop a new five-year ICT strategy;
 - document, publish and promote technology standards and policies;

- ensure that the Authority has the ICT skills and capacity to support and develop technology without adversely impacting on service quality;
- use technology to optimise and standardise business processes and procedures; and
- put in place arrangements to monitor and measure the effectiveness and impact of technology and service user satisfaction.

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

- 28 The Welsh Language Board (the Board) praised the Authority for the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the extensive analysis of Welsh speaking skills undertaken in the course of the year. This will assist the Authority in planning its workforce effectively through its Welsh Language Skills Strategy. However, the analysis highlighted weaknesses in the provision of some frontline Welsh language services and the Board has asked the Authority to include new targets in its Welsh Language Scheme Action Plan noting how it will overcome these weaknesses. The Board also praised the Authority for addressing the recommendations of its website review.

The Authority has achieved much of what it set out to achieve in its identified priorities

- 29 This section of the report sets out our assessment of the Authority's performance in:
- achieving the improvement objectives it set for itself for 2010-11;
 - helping to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires and road traffic collisions through its prevention and protection activities; and
 - responding to fires and other threats to safety.

Overall the Authority made good progress towards achieving its Improvement Objectives in 2010-11

- 30 Fire and rescue authorities did not set Improvement Objectives under the Local Government Measure (2009) (the Measure) for 2010-11, but rather restated existing corporate objectives (as this was the first interim year prior to full implementation of the Measure). The Welsh Government requires all fire and rescue authorities to publish their plans for improving their services by the end of October prior to the year that they relate to. In October 2009 the Authority had published its plans for the year 2010-11, and has subsequently also published Improvement Objectives for 2011-12 and 2012-13. The objectives are based on 10 'themes' which are supported by numerous actions and a collection of Performance Indicators.
- 31 **Appendix 4** provides information about the actions planned to support the improvement objectives for 2010-11 and 2011-12. Overall the Authority made good progress towards achieving its Improvement Objectives in 2010-11 and this is summarised in the table below:

Theme / Improvement Objective	Progress
<p>Protection and prevention</p> <p>Reduce the number of accidental and deliberate fires and associated deaths and injuries by providing timely and targeted support and advice in conjunction with other public sector organisations, voluntary agencies and Atal Tân as appropriate.</p> <p>Support other agencies in reducing the number of road traffic collisions and associated deaths and injuries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the total number of fires attended decreased during the year there was an increase in accidental fires. • Despite a reduction in the total number of fires attended there has been an increase in the number of people dying in fires. Deaths in 2010-11 are at the same level as 2006-07 although some fires claimed the lives of more than one person and the long-term trend is generally a reducing one following the Task Group review in 2006-07 • The total number of fire injuries increased. • The Authority has continued to develop its approach to identify and target vulnerable groups for Home Fire Safety Checks with its partners. • There were fewer road traffic collisions attended during 2010-11. Fewer fatalities and serious accidents occurred in the Authority's area and there were fewer casualties overall in 2010 compared with previous years but there was a significant increase in motorcycle casualties.
<p>Operational effectiveness</p> <p>Improve emergency response by reviewing and updating the way it operates and the equipment it uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new national radio communications system has been introduced. • Six new fire appliances have been introduced, the new incident command unit is being built, and the review of light portable pumps completed. • New personal protective equipment was introduced. • The arrangements for reviewing operational assurance were strengthened with the introduction of new processes and checklists. • Review commenced to improve effectiveness of cover provided by retained duty system (RDS) and the new structure included the role of Availability Manager.

Theme / Improvement Objective	Progress
<p>Resilience</p> <p>Review and strengthen resilience to potentially disruptive events both locally and nationally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-Wales resilience project has continued between fire control rooms in Wales. • Mobile data terminals were fitted to the Authority's vehicles to allow crews access to up to date information whilst en route to calls. • Responsibility for business continuity management was identified in the organisational restructure from April 2011.
<p>Equality and diversity</p> <p>Achieve a more diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of the people it serves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work underway to deliver the single equalities scheme by April 2012. • Diversity Training and development for senior managers and heads of departments completed.
<p>Language and heritage</p> <p>Value the language and heritage of Wales to contribute to people's sense of wellbeing and safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress was made against the proposals in the 2010-2013 Welsh Language Scheme; new staff and those promoted must learn basic conversational Welsh to a set standard; new performance indicators agreed and baseline established of language skills.
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Contribute to a better, safer, greener Wales by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimising waste in own operations; and • prevent and control fires and other potentially environmentally damaging incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress made to introduce ways of making its own fleet more efficient including monitoring fuel consumption, usage and use of speed limiters. • The number of fires attended has reduced overall but there was an increase in smaller grassland, woodland and crop fires. • Call challenge undertaken to identify suspected false and/or malicious calls and attendance has reduced.

Theme / Improvement Objective	Progress
<p>Legal and political change (Maintain effective relationships with political stakeholders after 2010 general election. Adapt processes and timetable associated with introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members made aware of requirements of Local Government (Wales) Measure and processes changed.
<p>Information Strengthen information to ensure it is timely, relevant and sufficient on which to base decisions, drive improvement and measure own performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No plans to further develop the use of Ffynnon. Some improvements in respect of information made, especially with the incident recording system, business planning at county and stations, operational assurance process and fleet management. Development of local performance measures is continuing. Processes have continued to develop as a response to the 2008 staff survey; Chief Fire Officer briefings and staff newsletter introduced and new technology allows better access to intranet at stations.
<p>Technology Continue to introduce and upgrade information and communications technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going programme of upgrading within financial constraints. Corporate communications department works closely with both community fire safety and legislative fire safety teams (who work with commercial property owners and businesses) to support a range of preventative work with various groups including farmers, members of the public with mental health issues and their carers. New technologies such as facebook and twitter are used to reach target audiences such as students and raise awareness of fire safety issues.

Theme / Improvement Objective	Progress
<p>Excellent, fair workforce arrangements</p> <p>Maintain a skilled and motivated workforce, available when required to effectively provide and support the delivery of fire and rescue services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New organisational structure from April 2011 was influenced by many of the staffing reviews undertaken such as Officer cover, control and retained duty availability. • The PDRPro system is used to record personal development records and monitor National Occupational standards for firefighters. • Quality assurance process introduced for instructional staff.
<p>Increasing community safety and enhancing operational excellence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervisory cover provided by middle and senior manager at emergency incidents; • discontinue 12 arial ladder platforms, transfer work to fire crews and reallocate resources to prevention work; and • establish a small group to review risk across North Wales to ascertain whether the standards of fire cover are appropriate for the risk in the community and to examine whether the best resources are in the best place to respond to those risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included as part of the organisational restructure. • Arial ladder review completed and resources reallocated. • Risk review is ongoing.

The Authority is helping to prevent fires and road traffic collisions occurring and whilst fatalities and injuries in fires increased last year the long term trend shows a reduction

There were fewer dwelling fires attended than the previous year, but the number of fatalities and injuries increased

- 32 The Authority undertakes a range of activities designed to prevent fires happening and to minimise the impact when they do. In order to prevent dwelling fires happening and to minimise the impact when they do, during 2010-11 the Authority continued to undertake a targeted approach to its Home Fire Safety Checks programme with its partners. The Authority has continued to develop the use of its Record Management System as part of the system for monitoring the delivery of high risk referrals and to address the peer assessment team's concern that a more robust system was needed to monitor delivery home fire safety checks for high risk cases.
- 33 The number of dwelling fires attended reduced by two per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 545 attendances in 2009-10 to 535 in 2010-11). This is a slightly below the Welsh average of four per cent reduction for the same period:
- Those started accidentally reduced by two per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 479 in 2009-10 to 469 in 2010-11), the same as the Welsh average for the same period.
 - There were 66 dwelling fires deliberately started, the same number as last year.

Across Wales during the same period the average reduction was 13 per cent.

- 34 Ten people died in dwelling fires during 2010-11; this is more than the previous year (in 2009-10 there were eight people killed), although some fires claimed the lives of more than one person and the long term trend is generally a reducing one following the Task Group review in 2006-07. The number of injuries sustained in dwelling fires increased by 24 per cent (from 47² in 2009-10 to 62 in 2010-11), slightly above the 23 per cent increase seen across Wales for the same period.
- 35 There is evidence to suggest that free smoke alarms provided as part of its home fire safety checks are reaching those at risk, including:
- Fewer dwelling fires attended in properties with no smoke alarm fitted (from 25 per cent in 2009-10 to 17 per cent in 2010-11), significantly better than the Welsh average of 38 per cent for 2010-11.
 - More dwelling fires attended where fire detection equipment actuated (from 52 per cent in 2009-10 to 62 per cent in 2010-11), better than the average of 48 per cent across Wales for 2010-11.
 - The same proportion of dwelling fires attended had detection equipment fitted which did not actuate as last year, 22 per cent. This proportion is above the Welsh average of 15 per cent for 2010-11.

² North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Combined Improvement Plan and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13 restates the number of injuries previously published from 38 to 47.

There were fewer non domestic premises fires attended than the previous year and there were no fatalities but the number of injuries increased

- 36 The number of non domestic premises fires attended reduced by 11 per cent during 2010-11 compared with the previous year (from 256 attendances in 2009-10 to 229 in 2010-11) which is slightly better than the Welsh average of 10 per cent reduction for the same period.
- 37 No people died in non domestic premises fires during 2010-11 (the same as in 2009 10). The number of injuries sustained in such fires increased from 10³ in 2009-10 to 15 in 2010-11, (an increase of 50 per cent), higher than the Welsh average increase of 41 per cent for the same period. These numbers are small and each incident can have a significant impact on the year on year comparison. Since 2004-05 the Authority has seen these type of injuries reduce by 25 per cent.
- 38 The Authority has adopted the Chief Fire Officers Association's (CFOA) national guidance on the reduction of false alarms and unwanted fire signals. The number of false alarms attended has reduced by 20 per cent during 2010-11 compared with 2009-10 (from 1,646 to 1,322), which is much better than the Welsh average reduction of nine per cent for the same period.

There were fewer deliberate fires attended during 2010-11 than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased

- 39 The number of deliberate fires attended decreased by six per cent during 2010 11 compared with the previous year (from 1,536 attendances in 2009-10 to 1,438 in 2010 11), which is better than the Welsh average which saw an increase of 11 per cent for 2010-11.
- 40 Some 44 per cent of all fires attended were started deliberately during 2010-11, which is lower than in 2009-10 (46 per cent) and significantly lower than the Welsh average of 69 per cent during 2010-11.
- 41 No one died in deliberate fires during 2010-11 and the number of injuries sustained in deliberate fires decreased by eight per cent from 12 in 2009-10 to 11 in 2010 11.
- 42 The Welsh Government funds the Arson Reduction Team and a number of projects within community safety to specifically tackle deliberate fire setting.

³ North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Combined Improvement Plan and Risk Reduction Plan 2010-11 to 2012-13 restates the number of injuries previously published from 4 to 10.

Road Safety initiatives have continued this year and there has been reductions in the number of road traffic collisions attended, fatal and serious accidents and deaths, whilst casualties reduced overall there was an increase in motorcycle casualties

43 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. The Authority undertook many initiatives designed to reduce the number of road accidents including:

- maintaining its partner role with the Road Safety Wales Group;
- the Pass Plus Cymru driving scheme which is aimed at young drivers aged 18 to 25;
- the Motor Education Scheme is a partnership initiative involving police and local authorities; and
- Impact roadshow displays and participating in multi-agency road safety days.

44 There have been improvements regarding road safety within North Wales and the pattern of performance is similar to the Welsh average (as demonstrated by the figures below). Motorcycle casualties increased compared with the previous year and remain a concern:

- the number of road traffic collisions attended has decreased by 20 per cent during 2010-11 from 767 to 617, this reduction is the same as the reduction across the whole of Wales which was 20 per cent;

- fatal and serious accidents have reduced by 12 per cent between 2009 when 313 accidents occurred and 276 in 2010; this reduction is greater than the reduction seen across Wales which was 10 per cent;
- the number of people who died in road traffic collisions reduced from 23 in 2009 to 20 in 2010;
- the number of casualties reduced by five per cent between 2009 when there were 2,587 casualties and 2,450 in 2010 this reduction is similar to the reduction seen across Wales which was four per cent;
- 766 drivers aged 25 and under were involved in accidents in 2009 compared with 658 in 2010 a reduction of 14 per cent which is the same as the Welsh average; and
- there were 154 motorcyclist casualties in 2009 compared with 196 in 2010 an increase of 27 per cent which is significantly different from the Welsh average which was a reduction of approximately one per cent.

The Authority is actively developing more innovative and efficient ways to respond to a wide range of events and incidents

45 The Authority recognises the need to be ready to respond to a wide range of incidents from fires and road traffic collisions to flooding, other natural disasters and acts of terrorism. During 2010-11 some 17,600 calls were received by Fire Control resulting in approximately 8,387 incidents attended. This included 3,297 fires and 1,355 special service incidents (including road traffic collisions, rescuing people and animals).

- 46 In 2010-11 the Authority identified, through its Risk Reduction Plan, different ways of crewing that could be applied safely and cost less. Following extensive consultation with its staff and external parties, changes were made to the crewing of the arial ladder platforms and the resources reallocated to preventative work. It also introduced new operational assurance processes to ensure correct procedures are being followed, good practice is captured and training needs identified, especially for risk critical activities. The Authority is continuing to review other aspects of its service provision including location and utilisation of appliances, how more use can be made of intelligent mobilising to ensure response is timely therefore reducing the impact of fires and what information it provides to crews via standard operating procedures and tactical plans.
- 47 The Peer Assessment Team have recently reviewed response and call handling arrangements and will be reporting shortly.
- 48 The programme of Health and Safety audits at stations and departments has continued throughout 2010-11 and operational assurance processes have helped to highlight areas that require additional attention. During 2010-11 there were 43 personnel injured which is a significant reduction on the previous year when there were 86. There was also a reduction in the number of personnel injured whilst 'on-duty' (from 35 in 2009-10 to 18 in 2010-11).
- 49 During 2010-11 new processes to manage sickness absence were introduced including monthly reviews and the Occupational Health Panel for long term cases. The number of days/shifts lost to sickness absence reduced significantly in 2010-11. The total number of days/shifts lost reduced by just over 760 days compared with the previous year to 4,023 days, a reduction of 19 per cent. The number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee (by all staff) in 2010-11 was the lowest achieved by the Authority since 2004-05 at 7.1 days. Control staff have the highest rate of sickness absence at an average of eight days (but is improving compared with approximately 15 days in 2009-10), whole time operational staff had an absence rate of just under seven days (compared with seven and a half in 2009-10) and non-operational staff seven and a half days per full time equivalent, a reduction from 10 days in 2009-10.
- 50 The number of malicious calls that the Authority received decreased by 13 per cent during 2010-11 to 491 from 563 in 2009-10 which is better than the Welsh average reduction of eight per cent for the same period. As well as the decrease in the number of malicious calls received the number of malicious calls attended also decreased over the same period by 16 per cent (from 140 to 118) compared with the Welsh average reduction of 13 per cent for the same period. The Authority continues to undertake campaigns to raise awareness about the danger of malicious calls.

The Authority has mechanisms for monitoring performance but needs to become more balanced in the evaluation and reporting of performance and focus on improvement objectives

- 51 This section of the report sets out our conclusion on how good the Authority's self assessment of its performance is. Fire and rescue authorities are not formally required to produce a performance assessment under the LGM for 2010-11 but they are expected to provide an assessment of how well they delivered their planned improvements. The assessment draws on our findings from the Performance Indicators audit, our audit of the *Improvement Plan 2011-12* and our review of improvement objectives.
- 52 Accurate self assessment is critical to the Authority's ability to:
- recognise the progress it is making;
 - take remedial action when performance is not reaching anticipated levels; and
 - report its performance to local citizens in a balanced way.
- 53 To assess the progress it is making the Authority needs good performance information and robust monitoring of that information. The Authority has performance information based on a range of performance indicators that, combined with other information where performance indicators are not available or relevant, enable the Authority to make judgements on quality and performance.
- 54 We found from our audit work looking at the latest performance indicators and data that the quality and accuracy of reported information is good. Of the 12 National Strategic Indicators the Authority is required to collect and report to the Welsh Government, we identified two that needed correction due to the treatment of 'over the border' incidents during 2010-11. As suggested the Authority is reviewing its processes to ensure it has arrangements to ensure records are complete.
- 55 The Authority recognises that some of its objectives are difficult to measure and are developing new measures to do this. Last year we suggested that such indicators should include both qualitative and quantitative measures so that community outcomes can be identified and evaluated. This work needs to continue. Without a full suite of measures that can clearly show whether it has achieved its Improvement Objectives, the Authority will not be able to demonstrate whether it has achieved its objectives and made improvements for citizens.
- 56 Routine reporting of performance information does not focus on progress to deliver the Improvement Objectives. The format of reporting during 2011-12 has not changed from that used in 2010-11 and is based on Welsh Government's National Strategic Indicators with a small number of local indicators. This approach means that members and senior managers are not able to monitor whether Improvement Objectives are being delivered throughout the year.
- 57 The most important means of reporting performance to local citizens is through the Authority's annual Improvement Plan, which provides information about the previous, current and forthcoming year's improvement activities.

58 The Improvement Plan lacks a critical appraisal of how the Authority thinks it has done overall and what it is going to do differently as a result. The performance information section in the Improvement Plan shows performance for the previous years and some comparisons with other organisations are made throughout the document to give an illustration of the progress made. The Improvement Plan provides an overall assessment of the Authority's progress against its Improvement Objectives, but some of these assessments are short and tend to focus on the positive. This means citizens may find it difficult to come to an accurate conclusion of the Authority's progress in 2010-11 from reading this plan.

Appendices



Appendix 1

Status of this report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 2

Useful information about North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

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

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

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

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

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

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

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

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

There is an additional duty placed on local authorities to:

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

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

The Authority is funded directly by its constituent local authorities based on the registered electorate in each area. It comprises 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales (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 and Rescue Authority is Cllr Sharon Frobisher.

Meetings of the full Authority normally take place four times every year – in March, June, October and December to consider such topics as service plans, routine business matters, budgets and spending, and to take or approve policy decisions as appropriate. Meetings are open to the public, and records of the Authority's transactions are available from the Authority's website.

The Service is led and managed by Simon Smith Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive supported by the principal officer team, the senior management team and specialist advisers.

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

Appendix 3

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

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

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

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

It is the Authority's responsibility to:

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

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

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

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

From 2010-11 local authorities in Wales are required to produce their accounts on the basis of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The introduction of these new standards imposed significant additional demands on the Authority's finance staff. Despite these additional pressures, the accounts were prepared by the statutory deadline.

The following issues were identified regarding the accounts:

- The Annual Audit letter for 2009-10 stressed the importance of producing an opening balance sheet and a draft set of IFRS accounts as soon as possible. The number of missing disclosures and revisions to the Statement of Accounts indicates that the project timetable had slipped and there had been under-estimation in the amount of work involved. However, all deadlines were met due to the close collaboration between the finance team and the audit team.
- The delays in production of the Statement of Accounts impacted the audit of the Whole of Government Account's (WGA) return, a revised WGA pack incorporating the amendments to the final statements was not received until 27 September. The Welsh Government's deadline for submission of audited returns, 30 September was not met as there was insufficient time to complete the audit. The Authority should ensure that revised WGA packs are completed promptly and passed to the audit team together with supporting documentation.

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

- The Authority has continued to develop its arrangements for medium term financial planning ensuring it is better placed to address its financial challenges.
- The Audit Committee is responsible under its terms of reference to provide Financial, resource and general management and Assurance, this covers the consideration of Internal Audit reports. Enhancements could be made to the form of reporting of Internal Audit findings to the Audit Committee. The provision of written summary (rather than verbal updates) of Internal Audit work in the period, detailing work carried out, conclusions and key findings, should be included in the Audit Committee papers to allow Members to consider issues in advance. The introduction of a 'recommendations tracker' would allow members to monitor progress and provide assurance that Internal Audit recommendations were being implemented by management.
- The Authority has strengthened its risk management process by developing a Corporate Risk Register. This is due to be discussed and adopted by the Executive Panel shortly and we understand that it will reviewed at least annually by the Audit Committee.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 30 September 2011.

The financial audit fee for 2010/11 is currently expected to be in line with those set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Virginia Stevens

For and on Behalf of the Appointed Auditor

Appendix 4 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority improvement objectives

www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk/page.asp?page=74

2010-11 Improvement Objectives	2011-12 Improvement Objectives
<p>Focus Area One Protection and Prevention</p>	<p>Improvement Objective 1 To help keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation</p>
<p>1 Reduce the number of accidental and deliberate fires and associated deaths and injuries by providing timely and targeted support and advice in conjunction with other public sector organisations, voluntary agencies and Atal Tân as appropriate.</p>	<p>1 Delivery of Community Safety/Risk Reduction Strategy that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of community safety advice; • targeted and tailored delivery of home fire safety checks; and • provision of free equipment according to assessed need.
<p>2 Support other agencies in reducing the number of road traffic collisions and associated deaths and injuries.</p>	<p>2 Peer assessment of the Community Safety strategy.</p>
	<p>3 Continuous monitoring of the incidence of dwelling fires.</p>
	<p>4 Involvement of partner organisations in learning lessons from the dwelling fires to reduce likelihood of recurrence.</p>
	<p>5 Use of information to predict and prevent dwelling fires.</p>
	<p>6 Development of local attendance standard to support fast and accurate response to dwelling fires.</p>
	<p>7 Improve availability of retained duty system (RDS) fire stations through more efficient management of recruitment processes.</p>

2010-11 Improvement Objectives	
Focus Area Two Operational Effectiveness	
1	Progress with the planned introduction of new national radio communications and information systems.
2	Progress with plans for improving urban search and rescue (USAR), rope rescue, water rescue and large animal rescue capability.
3	Introduce six new fire appliances, a new Incident Command Unit and progress with the review into the number and location of light portable pumps.
4	Provide new operational work wear (personal protective equipment) to an All Wales specification.
5	Build on existing measures to monitor operational performance by fire crews before, during and after incidents.
6	Focus on improving the effectiveness of cover provided through the RDS.
7	Continue to improve fire control room function through collaboration with police and ambulance control room functions.
8	Continue to enhance the Authority's buildings by delivering the planned programmes of capital projects, maintenance and minor works.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives	
Improvement Objective 2 To help minimise the risk of fires starting accidentally in non-domestic properties, so that normal activities can continue and the lives of people visiting and working there are not put at risk	
1	Continued development of targeted programme of inspections of fire safety arrangements in non-domestic properties using local intelligence and information held on the Records Management system.
2	Fast and accurate response to fires in non domestic premises by fire crews equipped with information on mobile data terminals linked to centrally held hazard records and other intelligence.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives	
Focus Area Three	
Resilience	
1	Continue All Wales resilience project between fire controls.
2	Continue with roll out of replacement wide area network and mobile data solution (both part of a national project).
3	Continue to enhance information and communication systems.
4	Continue to review and exercise Business Continuity Management and enhance the Service's capability to deal with large scale incidents.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives	
Improvement Objective 3	
To help minimise the danger and damage caused by non-fire emergencies, such as flooding, road traffic collisions, and chemical incidents	
1	Continued interagency working (eg, with the Environment Agency) and active participation in the Local Resilience Forum.
2	Continued participation in schemes designed to increase road safety, such as Pass Plus Wales, the Motor Education Scheme and Impact Roadshows.
3	Development of a method of profiling RTC incidents in North Wales to support and enhance the strategy for mitigating their effects.
4	Development of, and baseline measurement against, local performance indicators to support improvement in this area.
5	Continued increase in accurate records of hazardous materials held on premises.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives

Focus Area Four Equality and Diversity

- 1 Progress with the development of a Single Equalities Scheme reflecting the requirements of the new Equality Act.
- 2 Provide training and development in particular aspects of diversity issues for Authority Members, senior managers and heads of departments.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives

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

- 1 Collaboration with North Wales Police and other public and voluntary agencies to prevent arson and acts of vandalism by fire.
- 2 Working closely with particular groups and individuals (eg, through the Phoenix and FACE schemes) to influence behaviour away from deliberate fire-setting.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives

Focus Area Five Language and Heritage

- 1 Monitor completion of actions associated with the revised Welsh Language Scheme 2010-2013.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives

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

- 1 Roll-out of Sustainable Development Action Plan.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives
Focus Area Six Sustainability
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Improve the recognition of false alarm calls, thereby reducing unnecessary and wasteful journeys when there is no emergency.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Pay particular attention to reducing the number of fires overall, and specifically to outdoor fires that cause damage to the countryside.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Improve systems for monitoring fuel consumption and vehicle tracking from the perspective of improving environmental management and energy conservation where possible.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives
Improvement Objective 6 To become better at identifying and engaging with people who could find themselves socially and/or economically disadvantaged, so that we can enhance their sense of wellbeing and reduce the level of risk to their personal safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Drawing together a range of population-based information from reliable sources to support efficient and effective targeting of safety advice.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Development of a Single Equality Scheme that helps to protect people from being disadvantaged unfairly on account of their age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives
Focus Area Seven Legal and Political change
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Continue to maintain effective relationships with political stakeholders after the 2010 general election.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Adapt to the new processes and timetable associated with the introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives
Improvement Objective 7 To ensure that the Service's business continuity planning and management arrangements are as comprehensive and secure as they can be
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Reappraisal of Business Continuity Planning resources and responsibilities to promote renewed emphasis on progressing with existing plans and continuously developing new ones.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Giving equal importance to corporate and operational business continuity management to ensure that no area has been overlooked and that recovery plans are robust.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives	
Focus Area Eight Information	
1	Continue to increase the availability of timely, relevant and sufficient information on which to base decisions, drive improvement and measure its own performance.
2	Contribute to a collaborative development of an all Wales Incident Recording System (IRS) that is specifically tailored to the needs of Wales.
3	Continue to respond to issues highlighted in the staff survey of views on corporate communications including developing a system of team briefings.
4	Continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the budget consultation process, annual service, county and station planning; recording and reporting staff, workforce and fleet information; operational intelligence and fire safety records management and overtime expenditure and efficiencies.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives	
Improvement Objective 8 To change aspects of the organisation's structure and ways of operating	
A1	Implementing the officer review.
A2	Introducing new ways of delivering the legislative fire safety function.
A3	Investigating the feasibility of using a reserve pool of WDS personnel to cover RDS stations.
A4	Reviewing the support staff function.
A5	Developing a Job Design and Evaluation protocol.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives

Focus Area Nine Technology

- 1** Continue to introduce and upgrade information and communications technology systems and capacity to support efficient, effective and safe working (includes audio-visual, alerters, fire ground radios, computers and printers, control room systems, incident information system and financial accounting systems).

2011-12 Improvement Objectives

Improvement Objective 9

To review and improve internal business processes

- B1** Reviewing the efficiency of a range of business systems and tying that in with a robust case-by-case assessment of posts to ensure that they continue to be aligned to service requirements.
- B2** Re-designing the operational support and development function.
- B3** Re-designing the training, development and learning function.

2010-11 Improvement Objectives	
Focus Area Ten Excellent, Fair Workforce arrangements	
1	Complete changes following the review of control room staffing.
2	Complete and equal pay audit.
3	Compile a Single Equality Scheme.
4	Agree a service level agreement with an employment law firm.
5	Agree a service level agreement with or appoint an internal investigating officer.
6	Continue to progress the Officer Review.
7	Extend the range of Retained Duty System (RDS) contracts to include 25% and 50% contracts for the purpose of ensuring 100% availability of RDS appliances.
8	Develop a personal qualities and attributes profile of the Service from existing records.
9	Review personal development records and embed revised National Occupational standards for firefighters.
10	Establish quality assurance systems for learning and development instructional staff.
11	Review the provision of driving instruction for drivers of emergency vehicles.
12	Consolidate the supervisory manager skills development programme.
13	Provide information to Local Government Pension Scheme about the options available to increase pension benefits, including effective measures to save for retirement.

2011-12 Improvement Objectives	
Improvement Objective 10 To plan and prepare for the 2012-13 budget reduction	
C1	Agreeing a plan to reduce staff costs by around £1,000,000 (eg, self rostering/station closures/pump removal/other option).

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@wao.gov.uk

Website: www.wao.gov.uk

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn Testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: info@wao.gov.uk

Gwefan: www.wao.gov.uk