

## Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Andy Johnson, Head of Risk Management on 01743 260287.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report presents the new 'Annual Governance Statement' (AGS) Improvement Plan 2008/09, formally approved by the Fire Authority on 11 June 2008, and the progress made to date against the improvements contained in that plan.

### 2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Note the contents of the Fire Authority's AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09; and
- b) Note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in this plan.

### 3 Background

At a meeting on 11 June 2008, the Fire Authority's Final Accounts 2007/08 were signed off by the Chair, the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer. The Final Accounts contained a statement as to how effective the Authority's various systems of internal control had been in governing the risks to which the Authority is exposed. This is known as the Annual Governance Statement, or the AGS. Areas of the system of internal control that had been identified as requiring improvement were listed in the AGS and an action plan was developed to ensure these improvements are progressed during the coming year (the AGS Improvement Plan).

This Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress the Service makes against the plan.

#### 4 **Monitoring progress against the AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09**

A copy of the AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09 is attached as an appendix to this report; progress against each of the planned activities is also included in the appendix. The Committee will receive regular reports on the progress being made against this plan throughout its life.

As is the case with most plans, the activities included within it are often subject to change. This can often be due to changes in the external environment that guides our work, as well as the internal environment that dictates whether we have the capacity to achieve our stated objectives. To ensure there is control over any slippage, the officers responsible for delivering this work must get approval, from the Service's Policy Group, if they require any variations to the current plan. These changes will also be reported to this committee.

#### 5 **Progress to date**

Progress is currently on track for seven of the eight areas identified for improvement in the plan, with slippage in the eighth improvement being brought about due to changes in requirements, as detailed in the box below.

<b>Improvement ID:</b>	1
<b>Improvement required:</b>	A Communication and Consultation Strategy will be developed to ensure that the Authority is clear about who it needs to consult with, when and why.
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Steve Worrall
<b>Initial target completion date:</b>	August 2008
<b>Progress/reason for slippage:</b>	Although the proposed strategy was developed within the agreed timeframe, the recent release of FRS Circular 32/2008 and accompanying white paper publication prepared by CLG – “Communities in Control”, has made it necessary to review the contents of this new strategy, to ensure it will meet these new requirements. This work cannot be completed until the CLG report on the outcomes from the white paper consultation process.
<b>New target completion date:</b>	April 2009

## **6 Financial Implications**

Any significant budgetary implications, brought about by the improvements proposed in the plan, have already been considered, either as part of the Fire Authority's Budgetary Planning Process or within each Department's Business Planning process.

## **7 Legal Comment**

The AGS is a legal requirement under the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and must be included in the Fire Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts.

## **8 Equality Impact Assessment**

This report simply reports progress against a previously agreed improvement plan and has no impact on people. It has been assessed against the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and this has shown that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

## **9 Appendix**

AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09

## **10 Background Papers**

**Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority**

11 June 2008, Paper 8, Annual Governance Statement

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	*
Financial	*	Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

**Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09**

(1) Area of review	(2) IRN	(3) Improvement required	(4) Improvement Owner	(5) Planned completion date	(6) Current status	(7) Likely completion	(8) Comments	(9) Variation request
Strategic Planning Process	1	With no formal communication strategy in place, the Authority cannot be sure it is providing information to, and getting feedback from, everyone that has a vested interest in the Service. A Communication and Consultation Strategy will be developed to ensure that the Authority is clear about who it needs to consult with, when and why.	Steve Worrall	Aug-08	Not yet started	On track	Strategy developed but now subject to change following the recent release of FRS Circular 32/2008 and accompanying white paper publication prepared by CLG - Communities in Control ( <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol">http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol</a> )	New completion date to be April 2009, following white paper consultation period
Finance Management	2	The current capital monitoring processes do not effectively link financial monitoring to the actual progress made on all schemes. Financial monitoring and reporting will be improved, and systems put in place to regularly review and report progress on all capital schemes.	Joanne Coadey	Dec-08	Work ongoing	On track	A report detailing the proposed new monitoring process was taken to Policy Group on 18th June. The first monitoring report detailing progress to July 2008 was presented to Policy Group on 13 August, and will be taken to S&R Committee in September 2008.	None required
Resource Management	3	The new Asset Management System has not yet been fully implemented. Service is therefore not able to fully demonstrate compliance with standards. The Asset Management System (AMS) will be fully implemented.	Andrew Kelcey	Mar-09	Work ongoing	On track	This is being managed as a PRINCE2 project and progress is regularly reviewed and reported to Policy Group.	None required

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Human Resource Management	4	A review of our current employment policies has identified certain policies that require modification or creation to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation. The identified short falls will be addressed.	Louise McKenzie	Sep-08	Work ongoing	On track		None required
Operational Response	5	On occasions it proves difficult to provide a sustained supply of water to incidents sufficient for firefighting. This particularly impacts on firefighter safety in rural areas of the county. A Water Supply Strategy will be introduced and the recommendations made will be implemented to ensure a sustained water supply anywhere in the County within 60 minutes.	Martin Timmis	Mar-09	Work ongoing	On track	The water supply strategy has been approved by Policy Group. The south of the County is now served by a Larger volume pumping unit at Craven Arms (rather than Shrewsbury), and training for resilience crews (Clun) is scheduled for October. Research is underway to provide a water carrier at Oswestry ahead of schedule, and the purchase of a Light Pumping Unit (for CA) is being accelerated.	None required
	6	Operational resilience needs to be improved to ensure the Authority is able to continue to deliver its frontline services during incidents that may in themselves cause severe disruption to our Service. An Improvement Plan to meet the requirements of the recently developed Operational Resilience Contingency Plan (ORCP) will be implemented according to a Policy Group approved timetable.	Martin Timmis	March 2009	Work ongoing	On track	Initial consultation with RBs has been conducted and there are likely to be some barriers to progress. The BC exercise planned for September will influence this plan.	None Required

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Fire Control/Convergence	7	Without appropriate planning and resourcing, there is a chance that staffing levels in Fire Control will be impacted as we move towards the cut-over to Regional Control. We will develop a plan that will ensure a sufficient number of staff, with appropriate levels of skills, knowledge and experience, is maintained in Fire Control up to cut-over.	Jim Cameron	May-10	Work ongoing	On track		None required
	8	There is a significant amount of work, currently undertaken by Fire Control staff that will not be undertaken by the new Regional Control. This will have an impact on many areas of work in the service if not adequately planned for. A report will be brought to Policy Group detailing options for adequately resourcing all out-of-scope activities into the future.	Jim Cameron	Dec-08	Work ongoing	On track		None required