

## Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report summarises the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2008/09.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the Fire Authority's AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09.

#### 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.

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 review of our current employment policies has identified certain policies that require modification or creation to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation. The identified shortfalls will be addressed
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Louise Mckenzie
<b>Initial target completion date:</b>	September 2008
<b>Progress/reason for slippage:</b>	Progress has been made on most of the areas identified, however a lack of resources combined with changes in the timetable for changes to national legislation have impacted on our ability to complete this work within the initially planned timeframe (e.g. Disciplinary legislation are expected to change in April 2009). Policy Group has approved a new completion date of April 2009.
<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 on 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**

Progress against the Annual Governance Statement 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	*

**Progress against the Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09**

(1) Area of review	(2) IRN	(3) Improvement required	(4) Officer	(5) Planned completion date	(6) Current status	(7) Likely completion	(8) Comments	(9) Variation request
Strategic Planning Process	1	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Steve Worrall	Apr-09	Work ongoing	On track	<p>Strategy developed but now subject to change due CLG's white paper - Communities in Control. Approval given for the target completion date to be moved back to April 2009, to enable the Service to take account of the outcomes from the white paper consultation period.</p> <p>This requirement has been recommended as a Service Priority, as a consequence of this year's Strategic Planning process.</p>	None required
Finance Management	2	<p>The current capital monitoring processes do not effectively link financial monitoring to the actual progress made on all schemes.</p> <p>Financial monitoring and reporting will be improved, and systems put in place to regularly review and report progress on all capital schemes.</p>	Joanne Coadey	Dec-08	Completed	Completed	<p>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&amp;R Committee in September 2008.</p> <p>The second report will go to S&amp;RC on 13 November. This focuses attention on incomplete schemes and has aided the budget setting process for 2009/10.</p> <p>These procedures/improvements are now in place and ongoing.</p>	None required

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Resource Management	3	<p>The new Asset Management System has not yet been fully implemented. The Service is therefore not able to fully demonstrate compliance with standards.</p> <p>The Asset Management System (AMS) will be fully implemented.</p>	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
Human Resource Management	4	<p>A review of our current employment policies has identified certain policies that require modification or creation to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation.</p> <p>The identified short falls will be addressed.</p>	Louise McKenzie	Sep-08	Work ongoing	Change to plan required	<p>Progress has been made on most of the areas identified, however lack of resources and changes in national timetable for relevant legislation have impacted e.g. Disciplinary legislation is now expected to change in April 09, which will have an impact on our procedures.</p> <p>Policy Group have approved the changing of the proposed timescales on this work, from September 2008, to April 2009.</p>	Delay target completion date to April 2009.

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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	<p>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) has been completed.</p> <p>Additional resilience crews at Baschurch will be trained during December, providing additional support to Shrewsbury and Prees. This has concluded the initial implementation of the Water Strategy.</p> <p>As a follow on to the Water Strategy, the Brigade is now looking at the following areas, which are likely to be completed during 2010:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research is being undertaken, by local crews, to look at the possible provision of a Water Carrier in the Oswestry area; and</li> <li>- The purchase of a Light Pumping Unit, to replace the Heavy Pumping Unit at Craven Arms, is being accelerated.</li> </ul>	None required

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	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	Mar-09	Work ongoing	On track	The Business Continuity exercise, undertaken in September, has informed the proposed planned arrangements. The work required to develop our Resilience Contracts will be undertaken over the next few months.	None required
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	'Initial Staffing Pool' staff are now working in Fire Control and gaining skills and experience. Additional staff are also being inducted into the organisation.  The LACC has commissioned an HR consultant to look at a regional Retention Strategy. CLG have not yet confirmed funding, but are known to be broadly in support of the plan.	None required



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	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	Work is ongoing to explore options for progressing all of the 'Out of Scope' activities into the future. An options report will be presented to Policy Group in early December.	None required