

Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09 – Closure Report

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260225 or Andy Johnson, Head of Risk Management, on 01743 260287.

1 Purpose of Report

This report informs Members that the Fire Authority's current 'Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan' is being brought to a close, providing a summary of the improvements that have been made to the Authority's control systems as a consequence. It also highlights the need for those pieces of work that remain uncompleted to be included in the new Improvement Plan that will be created as a result of the Statement on Accounts in July 2009.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note:

- a) That the AGS Improvement Plan for 2008/09 is being brought to a close;
- b) The improvements made to the Fire Authority's system of internal control as a result of this Improvement Plan; and
- c) That, if not completed by June 2009, the unfinished work streams, from this Plan, will be included in the AGS Improvement Plan for 2009/10.

3 Background

Following the production of the Fire Authority's AGS, the Authority formally agreed its AGS Improvement Plan for 2008/09 at its meeting in June 2008. The Plan contained the proposed actions for improvement to various elements of the Authority's system of internal control that had been identified during the AGS process. The plan was then implemented, with progress being regularly reported to this Committee.

4 AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09 – Work Completed and Closure

With the end of the financial year approaching, the AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09 is now being brought to a close.

The appendix to this report summarises the requirements initially specified in the Plan. It also lists the work that has been completed in order to achieve those requirements.

Members will note that it has not been possible to complete five of the eight work streams within the life of this plan. In some cases this is due to the work requiring more than a single year to complete. In other cases, this has been due to other reasons, including a lack of resources to complete the task, or perhaps external changes that have occurred and introduced delays. The service's Policy Group recently considered and approved changes to the target completion dates for those work streams that required an extension to the initially planned completion date. Details about this work are provided below.

Members should note that those work streams not complete prior to the Fire Authority signing off the next AGS Improvement Plan, at their July meeting, will be carried forward into the new plan.

Improvement ID: 1

Improvement required:

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.

Responsible Officer: Steve Worrall

Initial target completion date: August 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:

The strategy was developed but has now become subject to change due to Communities and Local Government's White Paper - Communities in Control ('Real People - Real Power'). The consultation response was published on 29 January 2009, the results / outcomes of which are now being assessed. The requirement to develop and implement a cohesive consultation and communications strategy has been identified as a Service Priority and, as a consequence, now features in the proposed 2009/10 Corporate Plan.

New target completion date: December 2009

Improvement ID: 3

Improvement required:

The new Asset Management System (AMS) has not yet been fully implemented. The Service is therefore not able to fully demonstrate compliance with standards. The AMS will be fully implemented.

Responsible Officer: Andrew Kelcey

Initial target completion date: March 2009

Progress/reason for slippage:

This is being managed as a PRINCE2 project and progress is regularly reviewed and reported to Policy Group. Capacity issues have meant that this project has not been completed on time. Options are being considered to improve capacity to deliver this work at station end, which may include an increase in external costs if the contractor is appointed to carry out works anticipated to be delivered internally. It is hoped that, once the alternative options have been agreed, the project should be completed by September.

New target completion date: September 2009

Improvement ID: 4

Improvement required:

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.

Responsible Officer: Louise McKenzie

Initial target completion date: September 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:

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 2009, which will have an impact on our procedures. Timescales were changed to April 2009 to reflect this and remain on track for completion by this date.

New target completion date: April 2009

Improvement ID: 6**Improvement required:**

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.

Responsible Officer: Martin Timmis

Initial target completion date: March 2009

Progress/reason for slippage:

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.

The work is also being informed by information provided by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). However, the nature of this work is such that an end date is difficult to predict. Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) Raymond continues to monitor and officers have discussed issues on a number of occasions. A request for the completion date to be extended to September 2009 has been submitted to Policy Group.

New target completion date: September 2009

Improvement ID: 8**Improvement required:**

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.

Responsible Officer: Jim Cameron

Initial target completion date: May 2010

Progress/reason for slippage:

'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 Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) has commissioned a Human Resources (HR) consultant to look at a regional Retention Strategy. Cut-over date for Shropshire has been put back to February 2011. The proposed completion date for this work has been modified to reflect this change.

New target completion date: February 2011

5 Development of the next Improvement Plan

The proposed process used to develop the Authority's new AGS Improvement Plan for 2009/10 will be reported to this committee in a separate report. This committee will once again be responsible monitoring against the new Plan, after it has received approval by the Fire Authority at its July meeting.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

This report has been assessed against the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2). 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.

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 Appendix

Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

9 Background Papers

Audit and Performance Management Committee

27 November 2008, Report 11 – Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

11 September 2008, Report 14 – Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

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

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
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	Aug-08	Work ongoing	Dec-09	See main report
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	Dec-09	<p>A report detailing the proposed new monitoring process was taken to Policy Group on 18 June. The first monitoring report detailing progress to July 2008 was presented to Policy Group on 13 August, and will be taken to Strategy and Resources Committee (S&RC) in September 2008.</p> <p>The second report will go to S&RC on 13 November. This focuses attention on incomplete schemes and has aided the budget setting process for 2009/10. These procedures are now in place and ongoing.</p>

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Resource Management	3	<p>The new Asset Management System has not yet been fully implemented. 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	Sept-09	See main report
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	Sept-08	Work ongoing	Apr-09	See main report

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Operational Response	5	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Martin Timmis	Mar-09	Completed	Mar-09	<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. Additional resilience crews at Baschurch have been trained, 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"> - Research is being undertaken, by local crews, to look at the possible provision of a Water Carrier in the Oswestry area; and - The purchase of a Light Pumping Unit, to replace the Heavy Pumping Unit at Craven Arms, is being accelerated. <p>This additional work is likely to be completed by 31 March 2010.</p>

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Operational Response	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	Sept-09	See main report

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Fire Control/Convergence	7	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Jim Cameron	May-10	Work ongoing	Feb-11	See main report
	8	<p>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.</p> <p>A report will be brought to Policy Group detailing options for adequately resourcing all out-of-scope activities into the future.</p>	Jim Cameron	Dec-08	Likely to be completed	Mar-09	Work is ongoing to explore potentially innovative options for progressing all of the 'Out of Scope' activities into the future. The advantages and disadvantages of these options are being clarified, which has lead to a small delay in the final options paper being presented to Policy Group, which should be presented during March 2009.