Statement on Internal Control Improvement Plan 2007/08 – Closure Report

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 Performance and Risk, on 01743 260287.

1   Purpose of Report

This report informs Members that the Fire Authority's current 'Statement on Internal Control (SIC) 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 of Accounts in June 2008.

2   Recommendations

Members are asked to note:

a)   That the SIC Improvement Plan for 2007/08 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, the unfinished work streams, from this Plan, will be included in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2008/09.

3   Background

Following the production of the Fire Authority's Statement on Internal Control, the Authority formally agreed it's SIC Improvement Plan for 2007/08 at its meeting in June 2007.

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 SIC process. The Plan was then implemented, with progress being regularly reported to this Committee.

4   SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08 – Work Completed and Closure

With the end of the financial year approaching, the SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08 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 nine of the twenty two work streams within the life of this Plan. The Service's Policy Group recently considered and authorised changes to the target completion dates for each of the work streams not yet completed. Details about this work are provided below.

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Improvement ID: 1

Improvement required:
The process by which the Authority identifies the stakeholders with whom it should consult is not clearly defined. Develop a Stakeholder Management Policy

Responsible Officer: Steve Worrall

Initial target completion date: November 2007

Progress/reason for slippage:
Conflicting priorities and increased workloads within the Programme Office, mainly surrounding changes to the strategic planning process and preparation for performance framework audits, has resulted in this work slipping beyond completion date. This piece of work has been re-prioritised and will form part of the development of a communications strategy now due to be delivered by September 2008, as per the Departmental Business Plan.

New target completion date: September 2008

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Improvement ID: 2

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 Strategy will be developed following the guidance given in the Stakeholder Management Policy.

Responsible Officer: Steve Worrall

Initial target completion date: November 2007

Progress/reason for slippage:
Conflicting priorities and increased workloads within the Programme Office, mainly surrounding changes to the strategic planning process and preparation for performance framework audits, has resulted in this work slipping beyond completion date. This piece of work has been re-prioritised and will form part of the development of a communications strategy now due to be delivered by September 2008, as per the Departmental Business Plan.

New target completion date: September 2008

Improvement ID: 6

Improvement required:
The Authority needs to be able to better demonstrate how its assets comply with all relevant legislation and standards. The new Asset Management System (AMS) will be implemented

Responsible Officer: Andrew Kelcey

Initial target completion date: September 2007

Progress/reason for slippage:
The most appropriate system has been identified and an order placed. Work is ongoing to develop a service wide strategy for IT training to incorporate this and other systems and implementation will be re-timed to integrate with this. The Service's ICT advisory committee (TecCom) is coordinating this work across all departments and will be formulating the overall plan required to meet all ICT training needs during 2008.

New target completion date: To be decided by TecCom

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Improvement ID: 7

Improvement required:
The Authority wishes to be able to demonstrate it complies with all relevant environmental legislation. The organisation will seek accreditation to ISO 14001.

Responsible Officer: Andrew Kelcey

Initial target completion date: December 2007

Progress/reason for slippage:
An ISO14001:2004 based management system has been introduced. This will be registered with BSI by July 2008.

New target completion date: July 2008

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Improvement ID: 8

Improvement required:
The Rank to Role process needs to be completed across all ranks. Rank to Role process to be completed

Responsible Officer: Louise McKenzie

Initial target completion date: March 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:
Work has been ongoing throughout 2007, however it was held up by 11 weeks due to the training and leave commitments of the panel members. The results are starting to be rolled out and for many roles this will be done by the end of March but the new expected full completion date is May 2008.

New target completion date: May 2008

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Improvement ID: 10

Improvement required:
Officer training records currently sit outside of the training department's administration system. Officer training records will be integrated into the system operated by the Development Department.

Responsible Officer: Louise McKenzie

Initial target completion date: March 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:
Work has now started on this and the expected completion date is June 2008. This has been delayed due to:
i   the introduction of the workplace assessment programmes for newly promoted staff and
ii   the temporary absence of the original author for discussion about how these records will integrate into the existing records.

New target completion date: June 2008

Improvement ID: 16

Improvement required:
If a significantly disruptive event occurred in the server room at headquarters, it is likely to have a significant impact on the availability of IT and communication facilities to the whole Service. The ongoing work to develop a 'shadow site' at Telford Central will be completed.

Responsible Officer: Glyn Williams

Initial target completion date: March 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:
The alternative Control Room at Telford Central Fire Station is now complete and operational.
The additional funding required to implement improvements to the Wide Area Network (WAN) was approved by the Fire Authority in February. This work will be achieved by the March 2008 deadline. The next step is the Local Area Network (LAN) upgrade. This will provide the basis for the 'shadow site', with the results from a recently completed network analysis test being expected shortly. The outcome from these tests will then enable the work on the LAN improvements to be completed by June 2008.

New target completion date: June 2008

Improvement ID: 19

Improvement required:
The health and safety training programme needs to be reviewed in light of the rank to role process the Brigade is currently going through. The health and safety training programme will be developed to take account of the new Role Maps

Responsible Officer: Andy Johnson

Initial target completion date: March 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:
The Training department is in the process of revamping the training matrix to bring it into line with the role maps. Health and safety requirements are an integral part of this training needs analysis. Once completed, a new programme covering all aspects of training needs, including health and safety, will be published. Achievement of the stated deadline will be dependent upon full implementation of Rank to Role (see IRN: 8) and the capacity within Training and Development Department to complete this work.

New target completion date: July 2008

Improvement ID: 22

Improvement required:
Operational resilience needs to be improved to ensure that 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: To be decided by Policy Group in July 2008

Progress/reason for slippage:
This work will be long term. A report is planned to go to Policy Group in July 2008, which will detail the work required and the target completion date. Initial meetings with Human Resource Department, Training and the various employee representative bodies have been held to begin exploring possible options.

Members should note that where any of these work streams have not been completed by the time of publication of the next Improvement Plan (June 2008), they will be included in that Plan, with future progress being reported to this Committee.

5   Development of the Next Improvement Plan

Due to changes in the requirements surrounding the SIC, as from this year the statement will be known as the 'Annual Governance Statement' or AGS. Because of the wide-ranging reviews already incorporated in the Authority's current SIC process, this can be seen as being merely a name change. Other Authorities, who do not have such a broad SIC process, will need to ensure they cover all aspects of governance in this year's statement.

Progress towards the development of the Authority's new AGS Improvement Plan for 2008/09 will be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee, with this Committee being responsible for its monitoring after it has received approval by the Fire Authority at its June 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 SIC (and 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

SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08

9   Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee

14 June 2007 – SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08

27 September 2007 – Progress against the SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08

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.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Equality and Diversity		Retained	
Efficiency Savings		Risk and Insurance	*
Environmental		Staff	
Financial		Strategic Planning	
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	

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Appendix to report on
Statement on Internal Control
Improvement Plan 2007/08 Closure Report
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
13 March 2008

Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Initial Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Strategic Planning Process	1	The process by which the Authority identifies the stakeholders with whom it should consult is not clearly defined. Develop a Stakeholder Management Policy	Steve Worrall	Nov-07	Work ongoing	Sept-08	See main report
	2	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 Strategy will be developed following the guidance given in the Stakeholder Management Policy.	Steve Worrall	Nov-07	Work ongoing	Sept-08	See main report
Resource Management	5	The Authority needs to be able to demonstrate the benefit it accrues from its Capital Investment Programme. A review of all capital investment projects will be conducted which will identify any learning outcomes. The review will also quantify the actual benefit to the public from the Authority's Capital Investment Programme.	Andrew Kelcey	Oct-07	Completed	Oct-07	Went to S&R on 2/10/07 (paper 14). Had been to Policy Group earlier.
	6	The Authority needs to be able to better demonstrate how its assets comply with all relevant legislation and standards. The new Asset Management System (AMS) will be implemented	Andrew Kelcey	Sept-2007	Work ongoing	To be decided by TecCom	See main report

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Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Resource Management (continued)	7	The Authority wishes to be able to demonstrate it complies with all relevant Environmental Legislation. The organization will seek accreditation to ISO 14001.	Andrew Kelcey	Dec-2007	Work ongoing	Jul-08	See main report
Human Resource Management and Training	8	The Rank to Role process needs to be completed across all ranks. Rank to Role process to be completed	Louise McKenzie	Mar-08	Work ongoing	May-08	See main report
	9	With support staff induction training only being held twice a year, some staff have to wait several months before receiving their introduction to the Service. A review of the support staff induction training will be undertaken, to ensure it is able to meet the needs of all staff	Louise McKenzie	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Mar-08	The addition of a temporary HR Officer has enabled this work to start and it is on track to be completed by the end of March
	10	Officer training records currently sit outside of the training department's administration system. Officer training records will be integrated into system operated by the Development Department.	Louise McKenzie	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Jun- 08	See main report
	11	The Service needs to encourage all managers to be more involved in the new sickness absence procedures. Managers will be given additional training on the sickness absence procedures to ensure they are effectively implemented	Louise McKenzie	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Mar-08	The first of the training sessions has been held and the remainder are planned during February and March.

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Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning	12	The Corporate Risk Register needs to have a procedural manual so that people, other than the Risk Manager, can undertake the recording and reporting procedures. A Risk Register procedural manual will be developed.	Andy Johnson	Jul-07	Completed	Jul-07	Procedural manual created and published with the risk register.
	13	The recently published Business Continuity Manual needs to be tested to ensure it is fit for purpose. Initial test of the procedures detailed in the BCM is to be undertaken.	Andy Johnson	Jul-07	Completed	Jun-07	Initial BCP exercise conducted on 25 June. Improvements identified from exercise are now being implemented through the latest review.
	14	The Business Continuity Manual needs to be regularly tested. A programme of tests is to be developed.	Andy Johnson	Dec-07	Ongoing work	Mar-08	Programme of awareness training sessions is being coordinated with all departments. New Backup Fire Control has been tested as part of a series of evacuation exercises during January/February. A summary report on the progress being made in the area of Business Continuity Planning will go to Policy Group in March. This will include the annual programme of tests, planned for June of each year.

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Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning (continued)	15	The Business Continuity Manual needs to be subject to regular review to ensure the information contained therein is current. Annual audit of all department's BC Plans to be conducted as part of the SIC Assurance Process.	Andy Johnson	Apr-08	Work ongoing	Mar-08	All Lead officers are currently reviewing their department's/section's business continuity plans. This will help to inform their respective Assurance Statements as part of the new AGS process.
	16	If a significantly disruptive event occurred in the server room at headquarters, it is likely to have a significant impact on the availability of IT and communication facilities to the whole Service. The ongoing work to develop a 'shadow site' at Telford Central will be completed.	Glyn Williams	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Jun-08	See main report

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Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Health and Safety Management	17	Whilst there is a Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit, their responsibility does not specifically cover the health and safety function. Explore the possibility of either having a specific Member Champion for Health and Safety, or having this as a role within one of the existing positions	Andy Johnson	Mar-08	Completed	Jul-07	The Fire Authority agreed at their Annual meeting in July 2007, that the Member Champion for Audit and Risk would take on the role of health and safety champion. The Terms of Reference for the role have been updated to reflect this change.
	18	The Retained Support Officer and District Support Officer roles are not currently included in the health and safety structure detailed in the Brigade Order No.1 Part 2. The Brigade Order will be reviewed to take account of new Brigade structures	Andy Johnson	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Mar-08	The Brigade Order has been updated to reflect current structures. It is now progressing through the full consultation process.
	19	The health and safety training programme needs to be reviewed in light of the rank to role process the Brigade is currently going through. The health and safety training programme will be developed to take account of the new Role Maps	Andy Johnson	Mar-08	Work ongoing	Jul-08	See main report

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Area of review	IRN	Improvement required	Improvement Owner	Planned completion date	Current status	Likely completion	Progress made
Health and Safety Management (continued)	20	Although the Brigade has gone through several audits of its health and safety function over the last few years, it is not included in the rolling programme of audits currently undertaken by Internal Audit. Consideration is to be given to the inclusion of an audit of the Brigade's health and safety function, within the next Internal Audit contract.	Andy Johnson	Mar-08	Completed	Feb-08	The new three year programme includes an audit of the H&S function.
Achievement of the Authority's Strategic Aims and Objectives	21	There are no clear instructions and/or guidance notes for the various office functions undertaken by the Level 2 Commanders, which causes potential problems when there are staff changes in the department. Procedural manuals will be developed for the each of the key functions.	Martin Timmis	Dec-07	Completed	Dec-07	A document entitled "Incident Commander's Instruction Manual" has been produced which adequately describes the operational role and non-operational functions of the department, and gives signposts to full information where appropriate.
	22	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	To be decided by Policy Group in July 2008.	Work ongoing	During 2009	See main report.

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