



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Issued: March 2013

Document reference: 202A2013



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 nearly £5.5 billion of funding that 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.

This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Lisa Williams and Ron Price under the direction of Jane Holownia.

Contents

Summary report and recommendations	4
Detailed report	
Introduction	7
The Authority is managing its improvement programme well, but public reporting of performance is not as clear as it could be	8
The Authority is making progress in delivering improvements in its core functions, although there remain areas of concern	8
The Authority's evaluation and reporting of its performance is balanced, but public reporting could be further strengthened and more accessible	12
The Authority is likely to comply with the statutory requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13	15
Appendices	
Appendix 1 Status of this report	18
Appendix 2 Useful information about South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	19
Appendix 3 Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter	21
Appendix 4 South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's improvement objectives and self-assessment	23
Appendix 5 Proposals for improvement 2012-13	28

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 relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, this report presents a picture of improvement over the last year. The report covers South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority) delivery and evaluation of services in relation to 2011-12, and its planning of improvement for 2012-13.
 - the number of road traffic collisions attended remained broadly the same and the number of casualties decreased, but there have been increases in the number of fatal and serious accidents and within priority groups of young drivers and motorcyclists.
- 2 Overall the Auditor General has concluded that the Authority is managing its improvement programme well, but public reporting of performance is not as clear as it could be.
- 3 We found that the Authority is making progress in delivering improvements in its core functions although there remain areas of concern. We came to this conclusion because:
 - there were fewer dwelling fires attended than the previous year and, although the number of fatalities increased, the number of injuries decreased;
 - there were fewer non-domestic premises fires attended than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased;
 - there were fewer deliberate fires attended during 2011-12 than the previous year and the number of injuries decreased, but the high level of deliberate fires attended remains a concern; and
- 4 We also found that the Authority's evaluation and reporting of its performance is balanced, but public reporting could be further strengthened and more accessible. We came to this conclusion because the Authority:
 - has produced a more balanced view of its performance in 2011-12 than in previous years;
 - has taken positive steps to publicise the availability of its Strategic Improvement Plan, but it relies heavily on the electronic format and wider access to the data may be an issue for some people; and
 - has used a wide range of relevant information to arrive at its conclusions and is working to improve its ability to show the impact of its activity.
- 5 Finally, we concluded that the Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13. We came to this conclusion because:
 - business planning arrangements are well-embedded, comprehensive and outcome-focused;
 - the Authority continues to manage its financial challenges effectively;

- good progress is being made to address the proposals for improvement identified in previous assessments;
- although there are some weaknesses in approach, the Authority is continuing to improve its approach to public engagement; and
- governance arrangements have been effectively reviewed as part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement process.

Recommendations

- 6 There are no formal recommendations made in this report.

Detailed report

Introduction

- 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. With help from Welsh inspectorates, including the Fire and Rescue Peer Assessment Team¹, we have brought together a picture of what each authority in Wales is trying to achieve and how it is going about it. This report also sets out the progress the Authority has made since the Auditor General published his last annual improvement report, drawing on the Authority's own self-assessment.
- 8 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all the Authority's arrangements or services. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings of prioritised work undertaken this year.
- 9 Given the wide 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 Welsh Government that they intervene in some way;
 - conduct a special inspection and publish the report with detailed recommendations;
 - 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.
- 10 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 e-mailing us at info@wao.gov.uk or writing to us at 24, Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ.

¹ The Welsh Assembly Government introduced 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 is managing its improvement programme well, but public reporting of performance is not as clear as it could be

The Authority is making progress in delivering improvement in its core functions, although there remain areas of concern

11 Below we have provided a summary of the Authority's performance in four key areas (dwelling fires, non-domestic premises fires, deliberate fire setting, and road traffic accidents). These reflect the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework and core functions or duties of fire and rescue authorities in the UK during 2011-12 which are :

- to promote fire safety through the provision of information, publicity and encouragement to prevent fires and deaths and injuries by fire;
- to give advice, on request, about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property, and on means of escape in the event of fire;
- to make provision for protecting life and property in the event of fire;
- to make provision for rescuing and protecting people from serious harm in the event of road traffic accidents; and
- to respond to other emergencies or eventualities as required to protect people, property, or the environment.

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

12 The total number of dwelling fires attended decreased by three per cent during 2011-12 compared with the previous year (from 904 attendances in 2010-11 to 881 in 2011-12) which is slightly lower than the four per cent average decrease across Wales for the same period.

- Dwelling fires started accidentally increased by one per cent during 2011-12 compared with the previous year (from 751 in 2010-11 to 759 in 2011-12). This increase does not compare well with the Welsh average decrease of two per cent for the same period.
- The number of dwelling fires started deliberately decreased by 20 per cent (from 153 in 2010-11 to 122 in 2011-12) which is better than the 19 per cent average decrease across Wales for the same period.

13 Four people died in dwelling fires during 2011-12 (one more than in 2010-11). The number of injuries sustained in dwelling fires decreased significantly, by 30 per cent (from 124 in 2010-11 to 87 in 2011-12) which is better than the 21 per cent decrease seen across Wales for the same period.

- 14 There is evidence to suggest that free smoke alarms, education and advice provided as part of its home fire safety checks work are reaching those at risk, in particular, of those fires attended:
- fewer had no smoke alarm fitted (from 47 per cent in 2010-11 to 42 per cent in 2011-12), although this proportion is still higher than the Welsh average of 34 per cent for 2011-12;
 - there was an increase in the activation of fire detection equipment (from 42 per cent in 2010-11 to 46 per cent in 2011-12), although this proportion is still lower than the average of 51 per cent across Wales for 2011-12; and
 - slightly more dwelling fires had detection equipment fitted which did not activate (from 12 to 13 per cent) and this is better than the Welsh average of 16 per cent for 2011-12.

There were fewer non-domestic premises fires attended than the previous year, no fatalities and the number of injuries decreased

- 15 The number of non-domestic premises fires attended decreased by 23 per cent during 2011-12 compared with the previous year (from 460 attendances in 2010-11 to 354 in 2011-12) which is better than the 17 per cent average decrease across Wales for the same period.

- 16 No people died in non-domestic premises fires during 2011-12 (the same as 2010-11) in line with the position across Wales. The number of injuries sustained in such fires decreased by 71 per cent (from 14 in 2010-11 to 4 in 2011-12) which is better than the 42 per cent average decrease across Wales for the same period. However, these numbers are small and each incident can have a significant impact on the year on year comparison.

- 17 The Authority is required to enforce the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to ensure that adequate fire safety measures are in place in commercial properties and businesses. They can also provide advice and take enforcement action when considered necessary, for example if a serious risk exists and is not being managed. During Autumn 2012, the Peer Assessment Team, reviewed Business Fire Safety and found that the Authority:

- Collated information from a range of sources to assess and prioritise risk which is used to target activities and resources.
- Recognised the limitations of the current Management Information System (MIS) and anticipated the introduction of a new MIS, although the assessment team was unable to confirm a firm plan for progression.
- Recognised the importance of specialist skills and reflected this in its staff structure.

- Introduced agile and remote working-supported activity which led to increased productivity and reduced costs.
- Implemented changes following an internal review, which were well-received and described by staff as family friendly. Staff development plans were in place as was engagement with internal stakeholders when planning activity, however, the Authority recognised the need to develop involvement with external partners (such as businesses) in the planning process.
- Had an effective system for quality assuring auditing activity which included observation and electronic confirmation of audit checks.
- Used technology to maximise productivity (in particular remote access to ICT systems supported agile working) and issues in relation to the functionality of mobile data tablets were being addressed.
- Worked with partners in other sectors to deliver Legislative Fire Safety activity (supported by two-way information exchange).
- Identified gaps in its measuring process which relied on Welsh Government statutory and core performance indicators. At the time of the review the Authority was considering how a wider range of outcomes could be measured and reported on including reduction in risk as a result of Legislative Fire Safety activity.

- Outlined a variety of arrangements used to identify issues and learn lessons from itself and other services, and confirmed arrangements were in place to implement improvements and share lessons learned.

There were fewer deliberate fires attended during 2011-12 than the previous year and the number of injuries decreased but the high level of deliberate fires attended remains a concern

- 18 The number of deliberate fires attended decreased by 28 per cent during 2011-12 compared with the previous year (from 9,586 attendances in 2010-11 to 6,847 in 2011-12), which is better than the 25 per cent average decrease across Wales for the same period.
- 19 Seventy-eight per cent of all fires attended were started deliberately during 2011-12, which is lower than 2010-11 (81 per cent) but remains significantly higher than the Welsh average of 65 per cent for the same period.
- 20 The number of injuries sustained in deliberate fires decreased by 14 per cent (from 22 in 2010-11 to 19 in 2011-12) which is better than the Welsh average decrease of three per cent for the same period.
- 21 Two people died in deliberate fires during 2011-12 (there were none in 2010-11) but the numbers are small and each incident can have a significant impact on the year on year comparison.

The number of road traffic collisions attended remained broadly the same and the number of casualties decreased but there have been increases in the number of fatal and serious accidents and within priority groups of young drivers and motorcyclists

22 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. During 2011-12 the Authority undertook many initiatives, some with partners, designed to decrease the number of road accidents including;

- Bike safe – a project to decrease deaths, injuries and accidents by motorcycle users;
- Domino Effect – an education package for key stage 3 pupils to inform them of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour in a vehicle;
- Car Cruise – to raise awareness and up-skill at risk young drivers identified through local and regional intelligence; and
- Pass Plus Cymru – to educate new drivers in the causes of accidents and to enhance driving skills.

23 It also maintained its membership of relevant forums such as the South Wales and Gwent Road Safety forum and the Senior Traffic Officer Committee.

24 There have been some improvements regarding road safety within South Wales:

- the number of road traffic collisions attended during 2011-12 remained broadly the same as the previous year (an increase from 1,079 in 2010-11 to 1,083 in 2011-12) which is lower than the seven per cent reduction across Wales in the same period;
- fatal and serious accidents increased by 15 per cent between 2010 when 298 accidents occurred, and 2011 when 343 accidents occurred; this is slightly more than the increase seen across Wales, which was 14 per cent;
- the number of people who died in road traffic collisions increased from 26 in 2010 to 41 in 2011;
- the number of casualties decreased by four per cent between 2010 when there were 3,935 casualties and 3,763 in 2011; this reduction is better than the decrease seen across Wales, which was six per cent;
- more drivers aged 25 and under were involved in accidents in 2011 compared with 2010 (from 1,035 to 1,055), an increase of two per cent compared with a four per cent decrease across Wales; and
- there were more motorcyclist casualties in 2011 than 2010 (from 189 to 191) an increase of one per cent compared with a five per cent decrease across Wales.

The Authority's evaluation and reporting of its performance is balanced, but public reporting could be further strengthened and more accessible

The Authority has produced a more balanced view of its performance in 2011-12 than in previous years

25 In our Annual Improvement Report in January 2012 we concluded that evaluation and reporting of performance was not sufficiently balanced or outcome-based. We specifically noted that the Authority's Improvement Plan published in October 2011 was inconsistent in its use of comparison, and lacked:

- a critical appraisal of how the Authority thinks it has done overall, and what it is going to do differently as a result;
- an assessment of progress against each Improvement Objective; and
- a balanced assessment of its achievements.

26 In December 2012 we reported that the Authority discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure and acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. It is pleasing to note that the Authority has recognised previous shortcoming, and the Strategic Improvement Plan published in 2012 demonstrated a better level of self-awareness than the previous year and provided a more balanced account of its performance, accounting for its failures to perform, as well as promoting its successes. The report describes performance against each of its five Improvement Objectives in discrete sections, which each contain a description of on-going challenges and what the Authority intends to do to address them. Public reporting would be further strengthened if the Authority:

- provided better cross-referencing and signposting, which would help guide the reader through the various sections of the primarily web-based document;
- more explicitly stated whether each Improvement Objective has or has not been fully achieved, for example, by providing a conclusive statement that reflects all the results within each objective;
- collated, these statements to provide a more robust statement at the homepage section stating how well the Authority considers it has performed overall; and
- used more concise and less 'technical' language (which assumes knowledge of the fire and rescue service, and may make it hard for some people to fully understand).

27 Performance review is a routine and regular function throughout the organisation, involving managers and members in the assessment and management of performance. Performance results are analysed and used to identify actions to address areas of weaknesses and future challenges. The preparation of the Strategic Improvement Plan also provides a focus for the Authority to challenge itself, to learn and reflect on its performance, and report on its progress to the public.

The Authority has taken positive steps to publicise the availability of its Strategic Improvement Plan; it relies heavily on the electronic format and wider access to the data may be an issue for some people

- 28 The Authority's review of its performance is primarily in electronic format, and it has made the Strategic Improvement Plan available for public scrutiny by promoting its availability through direct e-mail communication to stakeholders and ensuring it is readily available on the Fire Rescue Authority's website (on the home page). The Authority has used posters in its buildings to raise awareness of the online document; copies are available at fire stations and on request from Service Headquarters. Social media, such as Twitter, is used to promote the Strategic Improvement Plan and enable feedback from the public.
- 29 The Authority has not produced a separate 'Summary'. Including a clear summarised statement at the beginning of the review of the past year section (or in a prominent place on the website) would help the public to understand the overall position. This would also act as a means of guiding the public through the more detailed assessments for each theme (where the Authority's view of how well they have done is contained). This could also form a standalone 'summary' which can be more widely used.

The Authority has used a wide range of relevant information to arrive at its conclusions and is working to improve its ability to show the impact of its activity

- 30 Our audit of performance indicators found that the Authority has reliable systems for making sure the indicators it uses in its reports are accurate. The Authority addressed the issues raised during our 2010-11 Performance Indicator Audit in respect of improving the accuracy of the data held within the Incident Recording System, and recording fire death data in accordance with Welsh Government guidance.
- 31 The Authority used sufficient evidence to make a valid assessment of performance by explaining intentions and providing descriptions of progress. The Authority provides data on how well it has performed against the current year's targets, the previous four years' actuals and, whenever possible, against other fire and rescue authorities in its UK-wide 'family group'. Comparison of performance against other Welsh improvement authorities, public bodies and other Welsh fire and rescue authorities is however, limited. There is no use of satisfaction or citizens survey information to clarify the views of the wider community in the assessment. The Welsh Government in its Performance Indicator Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities also suggests that the following (mainly local) measures which are not currently reported should be included in the Authority's assessment of performance report:

- performance in reducing fire fighter operational injuries;
- performance in maintaining operational competence;
- performance against the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority Equality and Diversity Strategy (although some equality and diversity data is included);
- performance against the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme; and
- information in respect of sustainability (where there is a specific improvement objective for this).

32 Some of the descriptions the Authority uses to evaluate its success are not sufficiently outcome-focused. The Authority recognises this area for improvement and it has been developing more outcome-focused measures to assess performance against 2012-13 priorities and in setting 2013-14 Improvement Objectives.

The Authority is likely to comply with the requirement to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in 2012-13

Business planning arrangements are well-embedded, comprehensive and outcome-focused

- 33 The Authority's leadership is continuing to drive change. Following local government elections in 2012, there was a significant change to the membership of the Authority: 10 members returned and 14 members were new and serving on the Authority for the first time. Consequently, various training events were undertaken to fully brief members in their new roles.
- 34 The Authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under the Measure and acted in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. In October 2011, the Authority published its Improvement Plan for 2012-13 in an electronic format for the first time. During the summer of 2012 the newly formed Authority reviewed these Improvement Objectives and by using simpler language and providing further explanation about why they were chosen, made the Improvement Objectives easier for the public to understand.
- 35 The Authority has set out a clear explanation of why its four improvement objectives were chosen for 2012-13. They have also set out the visible improvements they hope to achieve (through the 'how will we know we have been successful?' and 'what outcome should our diverse communities expect?' descriptors) by using qualitative and quantitative measures.
- 36 The actions needed to achieve delivery of the improvement objectives are clearly set out and are monitored monthly by senior managers. The Authority are taking steps to update the electronic versions of the plans on the Authority's website and have changed reporting of progress for members and the public.
- 37 The Welsh Language Commissioner works with all fire and rescue authorities in Wales to inspect and advise on the implementation of language schemes. It is the responsibility of fire and rescue authorities to provide services to the public in Welsh in accordance with the commitments in their language schemes. Every fire and rescue authority is committed to providing an annual monitoring report to the Commissioner outlining its performance in implementing the language scheme. The Commissioner analyses every monitoring report; provides a formal response and collects further information as required.
- 38 During this reporting period the Authority continued the work of raising staff awareness of the requirements placed upon them to implement the Welsh Language Scheme, by developing and providing guidelines on the intranet, and also ensuring that all new staff members receive Welsh language awareness training. The support given to staff to work towards a qualification in Welsh is welcomed, but so far, only a few staff members have attained any qualifications in Welsh. The Authority showed there had been a significant increase in the number of fire fighters who can speak Welsh, and is the

result of a more precise process of collecting information via the Welsh Language Skills and Qualifications survey. One significant development is the initial consideration given by the Authority for a Mentoring Plan for learners, and the commitment given by the Authority to invest resources for the Plan. The Authority will need to ensure that establishing the Plan is a priority for 2013.

The Authority continues to manage its financial challenges effectively

- 39 The Authority is well-placed to address its financial challenges, although the scale of change required will continue to require clear leadership and direction.
- 40 Financial forecast for the three-year period to 2014-15 shows the Authority needs to deliver cumulative projected efficiencies of £9.522 million. It has set out how it is going to achieve this in its medium-term financial plan and progress against this is reported to members. The Authority updated the forecast as part of the 2013-14 budget setting and is currently developing projections to 2020. We will review this as part of our 2013-14 work.
- 41 Although the Authority's approach to addressing its financial challenges has, to date, been robust and well-managed, issues remain given the likelihood of real term reductions in central funding to 2016-17 and beyond. The Authority is continuing to seek out opportunities for further efficiency savings, over and above those already identified. Part of this work will be via the recently established National Issues

Committee which will consider the potential for efficiency savings and collaboration across the three Welsh fire and rescue authorities as well as with the wider public and voluntary sectors.

- 42 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General recently gave her opinion on the Authority's accounts and based on this, the Appointed Auditor's view is that the financial statements were satisfactory. An unqualified opinion on the accounts was given on 27 September 2012 which was summarised in her Annual Audit Letter – [Appendix 3](#) gives more detail.

Good progress is being made to address the proposals for improvement identified in previous assessments

- 43 The Authority has made good progress in implementing proposals for improvement in our Annual Improvement Report (January 2012).
- 44 During Autumn 2012 the Peer Assessment Team reviewed the evidence submitted within the Authority's self-assessment in order to assess the 'direction of travel' in implementing areas for improvement identified previously. The Team followed up the areas for development in respect of Health and Safety, Training and Development, Community Safety and Community Risk Reduction, and Call Handling and Response. Overall the team noted progress in each of the areas with some further planned improvements and agreed with the progress noted in the Authority's self-assessments.

Although there are some weaknesses in approach, the Authority is continuing to improve its approach to public engagement

45 We reviewed the Authority's approach to public engagement and concluded that the Authority demonstrates a strong commitment towards developing its public engagement activity and now needs to implement a more co-ordinated, strategic approach and ensure its engagement with the public and partners is evaluated effectively.

Governance arrangements have been effectively reviewed as part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement process

46 We considered the Authority's approach to Governance. We evaluated the effectiveness of the Authority's review of Governance, and concluded that the Authority had looked at its own Governance arrangements comprehensively and thoroughly. Its review through the completion of the Annual Governance Statement was thorough and robust and had been sufficiently wide-ranging. The Authority has made use of its Code of Corporate Governance to ensure compliance with sound Governance principles. The Authority has identified areas of improvement in its arrangements and made plans to address them.

47 There are four key areas where greater emphasis should be placed in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement to ensure:

- a greater involvement of staff across the Authority;
- a greater emphasis on community engagement;
- adequate comparison of performance with other improvement authorities takes place; and
- increased consideration of Governance arrangements around partnerships and commissioning.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. This requirement covers local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities.

This report has been produced by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. The report also discharges his 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 annual improvement assessment is the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The improvement assessment is informed by a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It also includes 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. This report also summarises the Auditor General's conclusions on the authority's self-assessment of its performance.

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the relevant authorities and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). This published Annual Improvement Report summarises audit and assessment reports including any special inspections (under section 24).

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.

Appendix 2

Useful information about South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

The 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 (FSO) 2005

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 Person² 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;

² 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.

- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination; and
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

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 population forecasts in each area. It comprises 24 councillors from the 10 unitary authorities of South Wales (the number of representatives from each constituent authority is determined by the number of registered local government electors in each area).

The Authority spends approximately £70 million per year (2011-12). In the same year, the Authority also spent £5 million on capital items. This equates to about £47 per resident.

The current Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority is Councillor Tudor Davies.

The Authority acts as the main policy-making body and governs the adoption of various working practices in line with statutory guidelines laid down by the Welsh Government. The Authority meets on a quarterly basis and its work is supported by three main committees, namely, Finance, Audit and Performance Management, HR and Equalities and Standards and a number of working groups. All of these groups meet regularly to consider issues within their areas of responsibility. Meetings of the committees 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 Huw Jakeway, the Chief Fire Officer supported by the corporate management team.

For more information see the Authority's own website at www.southwales-fire.gov.uk or contact the Authority at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, Rhondda Cynon Taf, CF72 8LX.

Appendix 3

Appointed Auditor's Annual Audit Letter

Huw Jakeway
Chief Fire Officer
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Forest View Business Park
Llantrisant
CF72 8LX

Dear Huw

Annual Audit Letter

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 as the Appointed Auditor and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice

The Authority complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting 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.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards. On 27 September 2012 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. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members of the Audit Committee in my Audit of Financial Statements report on 24 September 2012.

My consideration 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 to date as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Overall, I am satisfied that the Authority has appropriate arrangements in place. The Auditor General will highlight areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made when he publishes his Annual Improvement Report.

I issued a certificate confirming that the audit of the accounts has been completed on 27 September 2012.

The financial audit fee for 2011-12 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fee set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Stevens
For and on Behalf of the Appointed Auditor
cc. Sally Chapman, Deputy Chief Officer

Appendix 4

South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's improvement objectives and self-assessment

The Authority's improvement objectives

The Authority is required by the Welsh Government to make plans to improve its functions and the services it provides. Each year it must publish these plans along with specific 'improvement objectives' that set out the key things that the Authority intends to do to improve. The Authority must do this as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December of the year prior to the financial year to which the plan relates (the policy intention is that Fire and Rescue Authorities will publish between 1 January and 31 March).

The Authority published its improvement objectives for 2011-12 and 2012-13 on the Authority's website at www.southwales-fire.gov.uk. They are:

Improvement Objectives 2011-12	Improvement Objectives 2012-13
Objective 1 To reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions	Our Communities: To reassure, educate and protect our Community from the effects of fire, road traffic collisions and other emergencies as they occur
1 Working proactively both individually and in collaboration with other organisations in order to further reduce deaths and injuries from fires and road traffic collisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working with and through other agencies and partners that already access at risk groups (these include youth offending teams, care and social care agencies and Local Health Boards in relation to mental health).
2 Utilising Fire Service Emergency Cover risk modelling and the MOSAIC system data in order for areas of high risk based on dwellings and demographics to be identified and enable more effective targeting of safety initiatives to maximise resources most efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use valuation office data, fire incident data and local knowledge to identify high to medium risk premises and educate, advise or enforce appropriately.
3 Utilising any increased capacity for community safety initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use a strong evidence base to influence other agencies of their stake in Grass Arson as an element of anti-social behaviour. Work with the Rural affairs directorate of Welsh Government to engage and influence landowners of the requirements when burning material on their land.
4 Expanding our partnership arrangements to work with other agencies across Wales to target our home fire safety activities at the most vulnerable groups in our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Further develop local activities appropriate to each fire station in order to increase Community Safety activity relevant to each area.

Improvement Objectives 2011-12	
Objective 3	To ensure that our resources and assets are utilised effectively to support service delivery
1	Maximising assets by implementing more effective management through the vehicle replacement programme and asset tracking.
2	Progressing the reactive property maintenance programme.
3	Taking forward the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2010/2014.
4	Carrying out a high level review of the contribution to public and Firefighter safety made by each station and to identify those areas where more in-depth analysis should be conducted.
5	Exploring the effectiveness and future need of each second pumping appliance including the location, incident data, call rate and crewing arrangements.
6	Exploring the effectiveness of each special appliance including the location, incident data, call rates and crewing arrangements.

Improvement Objectives 2012-13	
Our Resources: To ensure that our resources and assets are utilised efficiently and effectively to support service delivery	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencing the Fire Cover Review.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing the planned property maintenance programme.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting actions within the Asset Management Strategy and associated management plans.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reviews of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Improvement Objectives 2011-12	
Objective 4	To improve internal service delivery ensuring the most effective use of both financial and people resources
1	Reviewing and streamlining our head office support services systems and processes to identify where efficiency savings can be made.
2	Training our middle managers in the systems thinking model to enable them to have the tools and mechanisms to drive through change and improvement in their areas.
3	Identifying and releasing efficiency savings that may arise through challenges to organisational structures and internal services.
4	Scoping a major ICT review.

Improvement Objectives 2012-13	
Our Organisation: To improve internal business processes to ensure the most efficient and effective use of both financial and people resources	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopting a structured systems thinking approach to our processes aimed at identifying and eliminating waste.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence work on refining business processes within HR and payroll, finance and procurement and flexible rostering.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training personnel in any revised business processes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence the development of our 2013/2014 Objectives to include customer engagement.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where agreed, continue to implement the outcomes of service assessments, peer reviews, audits and thematic reviews within the service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate fully in the National Issues Committee to deliver collaborative solutions where appropriate.

Improvement Objectives 2011-12

Objective 5 To promote sustainable local communities through our activities

- 1 Undertaking community education initiatives with youth groups and vulnerable adults.
- 2 Amending all necessary documents to ensure they incorporate level 3 of the sustainable procurement assessment framework.
- 3 Reviewing our Land and Buildings Plan.
- 4 Increased intelligent mobilising to ensure we respond in a timely manner thus reducing the impact of fires.
- 5 Increased working with partner organisation to achieve joint objectives and ensure safer communities.
- 6 Targeting HFSCs to areas of identified risks.
- 7 Implement the Asset Management Plan so that fire stations become safe and sustainable places to work and in appropriate situations also a facility for community use.

The Authority's self-assessment of performance

The Authority's self-assessment of its performance during 2011-12 can be found on the Authority's website www.southwales-fire.gov.uk (Strategic Improvement Plan 2012-13).

Appendix 5

Proposals for improvement 2012-13

Proposals for improvement made in 2012-13	
P5	<p>Continue to develop corporate processes to promote public engagement, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify, define and prioritise what public engagement activity is essential for the Authority, its partners and the public it serves; and• develop a more strategic, co-ordinated and planned approach for public engagement – in order to identify risk areas, issues and topics; ascertain required resources; minimise duplication of work; and maximise impact and outcomes.
P6	<p>Develop methods to monitor, use and evaluate the results of public engagement activities more widely, and inform the public on how their input influenced what the Authority does.</p>
P7	<p>Extend the current communications strategy to include appropriate and planned public engagement activity which ties in with the Authority's improvement objectives and key priorities.</p>
P8	<p>Ensure that stakeholders and the public are made aware of the revised improvement objectives agreed in July 2012.</p>
P9	<p>Prepare a summary of the Strategic Improvement Plan to provide a clear and concise update for the public to help the Authority explain its achievements and future challenges. This should be widely available and signpost where further information can be obtained.</p>

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