



24 Cathedral Road / Heol y Gadeirlan  
Cardiff / Caerdydd  
CF11 9LJ  
Tel / Ffôn: 029 20 320500  
Fax / Ffacs: 029 20 320600  
Email / Epost: [wales@wao.gov.uk](mailto:wales@wao.gov.uk)  
[www.wao.gov.uk](http://www.wao.gov.uk)

Richard Smith  
Chief Fire Officer  
Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority  
Service Headquarte  
Lime Grove Avenue  
Carmarthen  
SA31 1SP

Reference	651A2013
Date	6 December 2013
Pages	1 of 3

Dear Richard

## Improvement Assessment

I am required, under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) to give an opinion on whether Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) has discharged its duties in respect of improvement reporting and met the requirements of the Measure.

**In my opinion, and based on audit work undertaken to date the Authority has discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure, although there is potential to strengthen its arrangements further**

I have reached this conclusion because:

- The Authority approved and published its Performance Assessment 2012-13 (the Assessment) before the statutory deadline of 31 October 2013.
- The Assessment considers the Authority's performance in the preceding financial year (2012-13) and sets out how the Authority has sought to discharge its duties under the measure.
- The Assessment evaluates the Authority's success in achieving its improvement objectives and expresses its view clearly.
- The Assessment includes details of performance as measured by the National Strategic and Core performance indicators.
- The Assessment includes a section outlining the key collaborative activities the Authority is involved in and specifically around the work of the National Issues Committee (NIC) and joint working with Local Authorities and other public services.
- The Authority has made its citizens aware of the existence of the Assessment. It is easily accessible, in English and Welsh on the Authority's website with hard copies, and other formats, available on request.

- The assessment makes it clear how people can proposed new priorities for improvement.

It is pleasing to note that the Authority has responded positively to our previous proposals for improving its Assessment (raised in my letter 28 December 2012) and suggestions to make the document more 'user friendly', specifically:

- by making a summary of performance widely available;
- drawing out the areas of improvement in 2012-13 within the five thematic areas (managing risk, managing people, working together, managing resources and managing performance) more clearly;
- including a clear statement of how well the Authority thinks it has achieved in each of its thematic areas for improvement; and
- using less 'technical' language and providing clearer explanations that enable readers to see and understand the impact of improvements and changes made during the year.

The Authority could further improve its Assessment by:

- **Including actual data described in the 'how success has been measured' section:** although these are listed the data is not provided. Doing so, together with a rationale to explain why specific measures are used and are appropriate to evaluate progress, would aid the reader's understanding.
- **Using more comparative data:** although the Assessment contains comparison data against the Welsh National Strategic and Core indicators, and targets for 2013/14 there is limited use of comparative data showing performance against other Welsh Improvement Authorities.

### **Further proposals for improvement/recommendations**

No new proposals for improvement are being suggested in this letter. We will continue to monitor and report on the progress made by the Authority in implementing the proposals set out in my previous reports and letters.

I will undertake more detailed work on the arrangements that support the Authority's performance management and reporting over the following months and report this, as well as summarising all of my work and that of relevant regulators during 2013-14, in an Annual Improvement Report for the Authority that I will publish by the end of March 2014.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Huw Vaughan Thomas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS**

**Auditor General for Wales**

CC: Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Local Government and Government Business

Lisa Williams – Performance Audit Lead