



**AWDURDOD TÂN GOGLEDD CYMRU  
NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY**

**CADEIRYDD/CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Trevor Roberts, 6 Llys Dedwydd, ABERMAW, Gwynedd LL42 1HP

Miss Alison Thomas  
Housing Directorate  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3NQ

Dear Ms Thomas

Please find enclosed the North Wales Fire Authority's response to the Draft Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. If you would wish to discuss any item or require further detail, please do not hesitate to contact this Authority.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Trevor Roberts'.

Cllr Trevor Roberts  
Chairman, North Wales Fire Authority

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**  
**RESPONSE TO THE**  
**DRAFT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WALES**

**Chapter 1 The Welsh Fire and Rescue Service – Partnership Development Umbrella**

Sections 1.1 to 1.3

**Answer to Question 1:**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority welcomes the establishment of a Wales Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Committee (WFRSSC), and indeed considers it essential to take forward the development of the Service to meet the specific needs of Wales. We agree that there is a need for this committee to be ‘a small high level advisory group’ as stated, and we believe that it is essential that it should include the Chiefs and Chairs of the three fire authorities in Wales. However, the suggested inclusion of a number of external bodies, i.e. business, industry, local authorities, representative bodies, seems to dilute this intention. There is most certainly a need for inclusion of the opinion of many of these bodies further down the chain (as well as other voices in society representing equalities, health, education, age, other emergency services, etc.), but surely not at the highest strategic policy advisory level.

Section 1.4

**Answer to Question 2**

We support the drive for consistency of approach across the whole of the UK in the way certain policies are implemented. There are paragraphs in the document that imply that the high level advisory board would be concerned with the detail of day to day working, but we assume this was not the intention.

**Answer to Question 3**

The questions of cross-borders issues can be adequately dealt with at local level, following Welsh Assembly Government policy and guidance, however the needs of Wales at a UK level would be better addressed via a different route than the WFRSSC.

Sections 1.5 to 1.8

**Answer to Question 4**

Although it is not clear from the document, we have assumed that the proposed new Community Fire Safety (CFS) Committee and the expanded CFS Group are, in fact, one and the same. We would support the continuation of the good work that this group has already begun, and would not wish to see its time being diverted by the introduction of additional tiers of accountability. To this end, we would favour the notion of a ‘Group’ of people and organisations working together on common issues, as opposed to a formalised ‘Committee’ operating as part of the existing structure.

With reference to the membership of the proposed CFS Committee, we tend to favour the Wales CFS Working Group’s recommendations to include the following:

- a) A senior responsible representative from the Assembly Government
- b) A senior Assembly official responsible for housing in Wales
- c) A senior person responsible for co-ordinating statistical information in support of the group’s activity
- d) Chair of CACFOA Wales CFS Working Group
- e) One senior CFS Fire & Rescue representative from each of the three fire and rescue services in Wales
- f) Chief Executive Atal Tân Cymru
- g) A senior representative from the Welsh Association for Community Safety Officers, WACSO
- h) A senior representative from voluntary groups within Wales e.g. substance misuse, carers etc
- i) A senior representative on equalities issues
- j) A senior member of the Probation Service in Wales
- k) Two senior representatives for education in Wales (one to specialise in activity related to the inclusion of Community Safety in the National curriculum, and a second with a specialism for youth inclusion programmes for socially excluded youths)
- l) A senior representative for health in Wales,
- m) A senior responsible Police Officer from each of the four forces in Wales

In considering the membership of other bodies such as the CBI and FSB in Wales, Building Control Officers, Insurers, it is thought that they would be better involved as co-opted rather than standing members of the committee, brought in when specific issues arise. The above mentioned constitution would clearly have sufficient representation to liaise with existing forums such as;

- Joint Arson Working Groups
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Community First Partnerships
- Specific agency groups linking to Local, Regional and National activity.

#### **Answer to Question 5**

The remit as listed represents a good starting point to meet the priorities and needs of the communities of Wales in relation to fire safety. However, it should be remembered that continuous development will need to take place as matters develop in relation to a continually changing fire and rescue service environment.

### **Chapter 2: Risk Management and Prevention**

Sections 2.1 to 2.5

#### **Answer to Question 6**

As we know that a high number of fire deaths occur in areas of social deprivation or involve individuals who are already known to health and/or social services, we should seek to influence those agencies that are able to bring about improvements in these areas. Similarly, we need to work with those agencies able to influence policies relating to alcohol, smoking and drugs.

To significantly reduce deaths and serious injuries in road traffic accidents is an aim which we would support, but which would have significant resource implications in either diverting resources, by reducing activity in other areas, or requiring additional resources in each fire and rescue service.

We strongly reject the proposed introduction of a 'new' category of fire deaths – namely those described as being 'preventable' – when up to now only definitions of 'accidental' or 'deliberate' have been applied. Not only would this re-categorisation be incompatible with the existing arrangements for data collection and target setting, but also we think it would be impossible to devise a workable definition that adequately reflects the parameters of responsibility for such implied 'preventability'.

Sections 2.6 to 2.23

#### **Answer to Question 7**

The Fire and Rescue Service is fully involved in all of the collaborative partnerships mentioned, and has been for several years. The Service's influence has grown during this time, fuelled as much as anything by a changing culture within the Service.

Although this looks set to continue to gather momentum over the coming years, it is difficult to envisage a process that could force this pace, other than through encouraging the expansion of this influence or by dramatically reducing some of the causal factors such as substance abuse.

Sections 2.24 to 2.33

#### **Answer to Question 8**

Insofar as the legislative framework is concerned, we are satisfied that all is being done that can be, although it may well be the case that more could be done to manage risk and promote fire prevention in general in Wales. Having said that, it should be remembered that fire deaths are more likely to happen in premises outside the remit of the legislative framework, namely in domestic dwellings, and as such we would expect to see continued efforts being made to manage risk and promote prevention in these premises.

The Authority strongly supports the principle of installing sprinkler systems in domestic property, particularly those at high risk.

### **Chapter 3: Working Together Effectively**

Sections 3.1 to 3.14

#### **Answer to Question 9**

We consider that the Assembly is doing enough to ensure collaboration between the three Fire and Rescue Authorities, although other opportunities are sure to arise in future.

**Chapter 4: Effective Response**

Sections 4.1 to 4.13

**Answer to Question 10**

Authorities could open discussions with medical and ambulance service to properly assess the advantages and implications of such a scheme. However, it would probably not be appropriate without first having received a clear indication from the ambulance service that first- or co-responder schemes would improve outcomes for patients.

Sections 4.14 to 4.16

**Answer to Question 11**

The question seems to imply that a conducive atmosphere does not already exist, whereas the opposite is true. Although there may be an argument for better rationalisation, mutual assistance arrangements are well established and have been readily actioned without any difficulty wherever practically feasible and necessary. For example, North Wales Fire Authority has arrangements for providing sea rescue firefighting first response with all the fire authorities that have a coastline between Mid and West Wales and the Scottish border, and also incidents off the coast of the Republic of Ireland.

Sections 4.17 to 4.20

**Answer to Question 12**

It is assumed that this question relates to the major incident protocols outlined in paragraphs 4.17 to 4.20. Many of these protocols are in the stages of being redeveloped under the umbrella of terrorist incidents and New Dimensions. The effectiveness of response to such incidents can only improve following the upgrading of appliances, equipment, training and exercising which has taken place over recent months.

Sections 5.1 to 5.12

No comments.

**Chapter 5: Resilience and New Dimensions**

Sections 5.1 to 5.12

**Answer to Question 13**

There will be issues with resilience and cross-border interoperability if England, following regionalisation of Control Rooms, uses different mobilising equipment, techniques and protocols, and operates a different resilience regime.

**Chapter 6: Fire and Rescue Staff**

**Answer to Question 14**

It is assumed that this question relates to the section on human resource management, paragraphs 6.8 to 6.10 and 6.23 to 6.26. This being the case, these improvements, if achieved, will help to provide the staff needed in future for the fire and rescue services in Wales.

**Chapter 7: Workforce Development**

Sections 7.1 to 7.22

**Answer to Question 15**

Following the full implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) as outlined here, then the developmental needs of our staff will be fully met, but with one notable omission, namely non-uniformed support staff. There appears to be no mention to this group of workers although our understanding of the IPDS is that it is all inclusive, and that the development needs of these members of staff will also be met, to the advantage of the Service.

**Chapter 8: Finance**

No comments.

**Chapter 9: Effective Performance Management**

Sections 9.1 to 9.19

**Answer to Question 16**

## **ATODIAD/APPENDIX: 1**

It is important that the Framework accurately reflects the final version of the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI), which is currently under development. In seeking an effective national performance framework, it is worth remembering that Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) are fundamentally tailored to local risks and needs, and that trying to force these into a national framework may compromise them. However, in terms of the national performance framework for the Welsh fire and rescue services, we consider that the proposals being made do strike the right balance of national and local priorities.

### **Chapter 10: Research**

#### **Answer to Question 17**

If this question is in relation to the outlining in paragraphs 10.9 to 10.16 in the construction of a database targeted at the problems of domestic fires, then this is a commendable step towards achieving one of our goals. However, this sort of data collection and analysis is only one aspect of our research needs, and is presumably the first step in a longer term research strategy.

## **General Points**

### **Point 1**

As a general observation, we think that the document itself would benefit from some work to make it generally clearer to understand. Many have commented that they have found it a difficult document to follow, and ambiguous in places.

- a) It can be hard to interpret what exactly is being proposed.  
For example, paragraphs 1.5 to 1.8 (Community Fire Safety Committee), are particularly unclear in relation to the use of the words 'group' and 'committee'. Elsewhere, in paragraph 2.5, the 'we' is not explained ("how we can prevent road traffic collisions").
- b) Sometimes the words used in the sentences cloud their meaning. For example, paragraph 3.3 - "...the service is already experienced in working together. Their work with the Assembly...".
- c) The headings do not always reflect the content of the paragraphs that follow. For example, the section on 'Incident Management Protocols' (4.17 – 4.20) deals largely with *major* incidents and civil contingencies, although these are discussed again in Chapter 5.

There are also some simple errors which need to be corrected. For example:

"...we do not see full regionalisation..." (3.4), "...human source issues..." (6.5), center (7.5)

Wales Programme of Improvement (9.3), the double use of the word 'advice' in the final sentence of 4.26.

### **Point 2**

Some of the headings and sub-headings do not always correctly reflect the content of the section.

### **Point 3**

We are disappointed at how few references are made in the document to equalities issues, and particularly to Welsh language issues.

Whereas the document repeatedly draws attention to those issues that are common to all fire and rescue authorities throughout the UK, it is surprisingly reserved in its approach to one of the main differences. The delivery of effective fire and rescue services, particularly in relation to preventative work, relies heavily on effective communication with the public. To this end, the importance of being able to deliver those services in Wales through the medium of Welsh and English should not be underestimated.

### **Point 4**

The list of matters that fire authorities should set out in their IRMPs does not exactly match that already published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

### **Point 5**

Paragraph 9.13 is factually incorrect in that the working group has been set up by the ODPM, not the Audit Commission, and that the Welsh member referred to is an Officer, and not an Authority Member.

END

## ATODIAD/APPENDIX 2

# FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK - FOR WALES

### **Foreword**

Edwina Hart AM, MBE  
Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

### **Introduction**

#### **Statutory Powers**

This Fire and Rescue National Framework has been prepared by the National Assembly for Wales (“the Assembly”) in accordance with section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”) which states that a Framework –

- (a) must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (“Authorities”) in connection with the discharge of their duties;
- (b) may contain guidance to the Authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
- (c) may contain any matter relating to Authorities of their functions that the Assembly considers appropriate.

The Assembly must keep the terms of the Framework under review and may from time to time make revisions to it.

The Assembly must discharge its functions of preparing and reviewing/revising the Framework so as to promote –

- (a) public safety,
- (b) the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Authorities,
- (c) economy, efficiency and effectiveness in connection with the matters in relation to which Authorities have functions.

Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

The 2004 Act also contains a mechanism for intervention by the Assembly (section 24). If the Assembly considers that an Authority is failing (or is likely to fail) to act in accordance with the Framework, it may make an order requiring the Authority to do something, to stop doing something or not to do something. The Assembly may make an order if –

- the Assembly considers that making the order would promote public safety; the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority; or economy, efficiency and effectiveness in connection with matters in relation to which Authorities have functions;
- the Assembly first gives the Authority the opportunity to make representations about the proposed order; and
- the Assembly has had regard to the intervention protocol prepared under section 23.

The 2004 Act requires the Assembly to publish reports on the extent to which Authorities are acting in accordance with the Framework and on any steps taken by the Assembly to secure that Authorities act in accordance with the Framework (section 25).

The Assembly's power of intervention under the Framework is different from, and additional to, the Assembly's powers if an Authority fails to comply with the statutory requirements relating to best value.

## General

The Assembly Government recognises that delivery of an improved service for the people of Wales depends largely on the efforts of individual fire and rescue authorities working with their local communities and, increasingly, together through collaboration.

The focus of the First National Framework for Wales is therefore on delivery at the local and all-Wales level and how we will contribute to wider national objectives. It has three principal objectives:

- To provide clarity about the outcomes and objectives the Assembly Government wants to be achieved;
- To set out what the Assembly Government expects the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales to do in order to meet these objectives;
- To explain what the Assembly Government will do to support the Fire and Rescue Service to meet these objectives and the structures we intend to put in place to support Wales-wide development and cross border collaboration.

This is the beginning of a long road of development and collaboration between the Assembly Government and all partners with an interest in the work of the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales. The Framework will therefore evolve as our thinking and the relationships necessary to support the policy develop. Giving the Fire and Rescue Service the flexibility needed to meet the specific needs of local communities is at the heart of our approach. The Framework is designed to give the Service a firm foundation on which to build local solutions.

The 2004 Act places the Framework on a statutory footing. It is our intention to continue to update the framework for future years and to reflect developing policies and practices, not only within the Assembly Government and Fire and Rescue Service, but also within the communities of Wales. The National Framework will be reviewed annually and revised if appropriate. Major revisions will be subject to consultation.



## **Structure**

The Framework is divided into ten chapters:

- **Chapter 1 - The Partnership Development Umbrella** - covering the development of the advisory bodies we envisage to ensure appropriate Wales-wide and cross-border collaboration in the future development of the Service and in relation to our community fire safety agenda.
- **Chapter 2 - Risk Management and Prevention** - covers work to prevent fires and manage risk, including the development of Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP).
- **Chapter 3 – Working Together Effectively** - focuses on collaborative arrangements within the service.
- **Chapter 4 – Effective Response** – focuses on ensuring a professional and effective response to a range of incidents.
- **Chapter 5 - Resilience and New Dimension** - explains how the Fire and Rescue Service should respond to the new terrorist threat and other major natural or man-made disasters.
- **Chapter 6 – Fire and Rescue Staff** - deals with fair and effective management of fire and rescue service staff, including the important issues of equality and diversity.
- **Chapter 7 – Workforce Development** - covers the implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System and training provision.
- **Chapter 8 - Finance** - deals with the funding provided by the Assembly Government and financial management issues.
- **Chapter 9 – Effective Performance Management** - covers Best Value and progress towards the introduction of the Wales Programme for Improvement within the Welsh Fire and Rescue Service.
- **Chapter 10 - Research** - outlines the programme of research to support activity within the service.

## **Chapter 1 - The Welsh Fire and Rescue Service - Partnership Development Umbrella**

### **Advisory Bodies**

1.1 In the statement to the Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 24 September 2003, the Minister undertook to establish two advisory groups to take forward, in partnership, the Assembly Government's priorities for the future fire and rescue service in Wales and to maintain the necessary links with the rest of the UK fire and rescue community. These will comprise the Wales Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Committee - to inform high level policy development and advise Ministers on fire and rescue issues - and the Community Fire Safety Committee - to influence and develop operational issues and fire prevention initiatives in support of fire and rescue activity in our communities. Close liaison will continue to be maintained between the Assembly Government and the Fire and Rescue Service over the development of the service.

### **Wales Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Committee (WF&RSSC)**

1.2 We believe that strategic development and policy advice in Wales is best served by the establishment of a standing Committee - the WF&RSSC. The small size of Wales, in comparison to England, and the strategic direction provided by and close interaction between the Assembly Government and the communities it serves works in favour of inclusive strategic policy development for the future fire and rescue service of Wales as served by a standing advisory body comprising key partners. Therefore we believe a small high level advisory group can effectively represent the diverse needs of Wales; take forward the development of the service for the benefit of those working within it and the people they serve; represent Wales effectively in relation to cross-border and other issues affecting Wales; and effectively advise the Assembly Government in its role of setting the overall policy direction for the service.

1.3 . The membership of the WF&RSSC will appointed by the Minister who will also chair the committee, which will also comprise a representative of Fire and Rescue Authorities; a Chief of the Fire and Rescue Service; a representative of the Fire and Rescue Service employees; a representative of local authorities; a representative of community and town councils and a representative of business and industry, in order to bring a wider range of experience and expertise to policy development. However, this will also enable the Committee to be kept to a manageable size.

1.4 The role of the WF&RSSAC will be to advise Ministers on:

- those issues relating to fire and rescue service policy in Wales and in the wider UK context, so as to ensure they take account of the views of those engaged in operating the Service when they make decisions on the development and implementation of policy, in particular in relation to the delivery of the National Framework, in partnership with all stakeholders, providing a consistent approach to the implementation of policy and operational reforms.
- the provision of professional advice, guidance and support to the Assembly Government and partners in respect of the practical implementation of specific policy initiatives, reforms and improvements.
- the promotion of the involvement of the Fire and Rescue Service in the community safety agenda, ensuring that the interests of the Service are recognised and used for the achievement of the Assembly Government's wider policies for social inclusion and community capacity building.
- promoting the interaction and representation in relation to issues that impact on a UK wide basis and the maintenance of relations with those organisations/bodies being established to drive forward the Fire and Rescue Service in other parts of the UK. In this respect we will discuss with colleagues in UK Government and the devolved administrations how best to

ensure relations are maintained in relation to high level policy development and, in particular, technical and operational matters, which impact upon the delivery of the service.

### **Community Fire Safety Committee (CFSC)**

1.5 For several years the Assembly has fostered a close working relationship with the fire services and others working in the field of community fire safety. This relationship - under the banner of the Community Fire Safety Working Group - has resulted in the production of two well received reports into the problems of domestic fires in Wales and arson; the establishment of Firebrake Wales (formerly the Wales Community Fire Safety Trust); and has seen the Assembly provide considerable funding to take forward the Group's activity in recent years, with the budget rising from £3m in 2003-04 to £5m for 2004-05.

1.6 With these already well established links, the Assembly Government now proposes to build upon the success and expertise of the Group in developing the CFSC to deliver and support the fire and rescue service in providing extensive community fire safety programmes in Wales. We intend to seek as wide a range of expertise and experience as possible on the Committee, including representatives from business, industry and local communities. The exact size, composition and terms of reference of the Committee are still matters for consideration. However, our intention is for a broad cross-section of community representation, though balanced by the need to keep the Committee to a manageable size. Therefore co-opting members to consider specific issues in addition to a small core of standing members will enable effective policy development. We will seek formal nominations for membership and consult on our detailed proposals early in 2005.

1.7 Subject to consultation, we see the new Committee having as its remit

- Facilitating and advising on the WF&RSSC's recommendations in relation to the Fire and Rescue Services role in the community safety agenda, ensuring effective linkages and collaborative arrangements with partner organisations working within the field of the Assembly Government's wider policies for social inclusion and community capacity building;
- to consider the most effective forms of partnerships and the needs of individual communities;
- to examine the most effective options for the promotion of community fire safety programmes in our communities and in relation to specific fields, carrying forward the existing work on arson reduction, as well as on domestic fire safety;
- to consider ways of raising consciousness about community safety issues and the implications for communities;
- co-ordination of national priorities and Assembly policies across Wales and dissemination of best practice in relation to activity which takes place at a local level to tackle specific issues of concern to individual communities. This activity will in turn support the fire and rescue service in developing activity and strategies for improving community fire safety contained in their future Integrated Risk Management Plans; and
- to work closely with Education Authorities and other key stakeholders to foster an awareness and sense of responsibility about fire and fire safety matters in children so that they can take forward the principles and learned behaviours into adulthood.

1.8 However, the fire and rescue service alone cannot be responsible for taking forward the Committee's work in their respective areas. In order not to promote a proliferation of groups and initiatives we propose to use existing infrastructure, wherever possible, to take forward the implementation of the Committee's work in the communities they serve, through, for instance, bodies such as the existing Joint Arson Group; Communities First Partnerships; Community Safety Partnerships; existing fire service structures; and Firebrake Wales.

## **Chapter 2: Risk Management and Prevention**

2.1 Our objectives are to significantly reduce, in the first five years of this framework, the number of preventable deaths and serious injuries by fires; and aim towards significantly reducing deaths and serious injuries in road traffic accidents by working in partnership with the other emergency services, local, devolved and national government and other agencies that deal with the aftermath of and causes of such accidents.

2.2 The Minister in her statement to the Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 24 September 2003, said that we intend to:

“... set ambitious targets in the first five years for reducing deaths in fires by between 30% and 50% and working with other agencies aim towards a target of reducing deaths and injuries in road traffic accidents by a similar figure.”

2.3 We remain committed to this. However we also recognise that this is a challenging target, as only one serious fire with several injuries or deaths will negate any positive activity we may have undertaken over a series of years; nor is this achievable by the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales working in isolation. The other emergency services, and a range of other agencies, such as local authority roads maintenance and development arms all have a role to play. The prevention of deaths and injuries in road traffic accidents is a key performance indicator for local authorities expressed through the Road Safety Plan, which sets specific targets in relation to prevention of road deaths and injuries. Furthermore the Traffic Management Act 2004 proposes an agency to aid in dealing with the aftermath of road traffic accidents on trunk roads.

2.4 To this end we will wish to keep this under review and will consider activity and achievement against this target periodically during the five year span.

2.5 We will work towards this target by:

- increasing fire prevention activity;
- ensuring appropriate intervention in fire and other emergencies by ensuring that resources are in the right place at the right time to provide an effective response;
- influencing UK Government and others in respect of changes to the Building Regulations and other activity to design fire safety into new or materially altered homes;
- reviewing, in concert with other emergency services, both how we can prevent road traffic collisions and how we can improve survivability for those involved in these crashes. It may be that through the auspices of the Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG) consideration could be given to joint targets for all agencies in Wales); and
- seeking to influence those agencies dealing with deprivation in the health and social services sectors to bring about improvements in these areas and with agencies able to

influence policies relating to alcohol, smoking, drugs, healthy eating and lifestyle that have an impact on the risk of fire.

## **Integrated Risk Management Plans**

2.6 The previous statutory “standards of fire cover”, which dictated the speed and weight of response to fires depending on building density, were insufficiently flexible to allow the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to the needs of their communities. They were weighted in favour of risk to property rather than risk to life, and did not take account of the serious non-fire incidents to which the Service responds. From April 2003 local Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) replaced national standards. All Fire and Rescue Authorities have produced an IRMP.

2.7 IRMPs set out each Fire and Rescue Service's strategy for:

- reducing the number and severity of fires, and in collaboration with other agencies, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents occurring in the area for which it is responsible;
- reducing the severity of injuries in fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents;
- reducing the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergency incidents;
- safeguarding the environment and heritage (both built and natural); and
- providing value for money.

2.8 An IRMP must set out an authority's assessment of local risk to life and, in line with this analysis, how it is going to deploy its resources to tackle these risks and improve the safety of all sections of society. The IRMP should identify the ways in which the authority can work in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other agencies to deliver improved public safety. It should develop these relationships and build upon the lessons learned. It must also set out the targets an authority will set itself and the standards it will apply to meet the specific pattern of local risk. This will be done in the context of its statutory duty to secure continuous improvement and achieve best value in accordance with the WPI framework set out in chapter 9 of this document. The IRMP itself should be a strategic, forward looking document with the approach and detail of business and change management plans. Annual action plans, which may be produced separately or integrated with the main plan, will set out what the Service plans to do in the year ahead. The Fire and Rescue Service should ensure that its IRMPs are both accessible - to the public, business and other stakeholders. They should also be easy to understand and clear and precise about exactly what plans the Service propose for their intervention and prevention strategies. The Action Plan should also be clearly linked to Performance Objectives set to improve public safety. In this respect we will be considering proposals as part of the WPI framework to introduce performance targets against which the service can be measured.

2.9 The Assembly believes that consultation with the community the Service serves and their staff will be an essential element in the preparation of an IRMP. Consultation provides an opportunity to explain how the service has been performing, what opportunities exist for improving community safety, and how any changes will deliver those improvements. The guiding principle in deciding how extensively to consult is that any person or organisation that might have a legitimate interest in the proposals under consideration, or who may be affected by those proposals, should have the opportunity to express their views. The scope of the consultation will be proportionate to the nature and extent of any changes proposed.

2.10 The Assembly considers that an IRMP will form the strategic ‘blue-print’ on which the Service will base its decisions about future service provision and how it intends to improve community safety. Before decisions are made, in formulating their Action Plan and IRMPs, the Assembly Government expects that the Service will consult and as a minimum this should include:

- The general public, council tax payers, households, etc,

- Community organisations, including specific community groups, such as ethnic minority and other often excluded groups,
- Public representatives, e.g. Members of Parliament and Assembly Members,
- Business organisations,
- Local authorities, town and community councils, public agencies, and other emergency services,
- Employees (uniformed and non-uniformed) and their representatives,
- Notifying the Welsh Assembly Government of their intention to consult (see also last bullet paragraph x)

2.11 Authorities will also be expected to consult on subsequent annual Action Plans if these include any changes in the standards and/or provision of resources for intervention services. As the Action Plan is likely to form part of the Service's business planning process, it may achieve the best effect if consultation is co-ordinated.

2.12 All responses received must be evaluated and formally considered by the Authority before it reaches a final decision about implementing any proposals. The process should be open and transparent with all relevant factors and views taken into account, including perceptions of risks faced and public concerns. In due course, the Service should make available a summary of the responses received, along with their response to the points raised.

2.13 During 2003/04 Authorities drew up their first IRMPs, consulted with their local communities over the Autumn and, after taking account of the responses to consultation, started to implement their first year action plans as from 1 April 2004. Authorities should keep their IRMPs under review, and revise them on a regular basis when new evidence or analytical tools become available. They should also use previous experience to inform future development and monitor decisions taken as a part of earlier IRMP exercises to ensure their continued appropriateness. This is particularly important where adopted proposals raised concerns over public safety during the consultation process.

2.14 As part of the draft framework for the Wales programme for improvement of Fire and Rescue Services, explained further in Chapter 9, it is proposed to integrate aspects previously covered by the integrated risk management planning within WPI. It also suggests that it is appropriate for a single document to be produced with what would have been the IRMP. This reaffirms the centrality of the IRMP to the WPI process.

2.15 In summary, Fire and Rescue Authorities must each have in place and maintain an IRMP which reflects local need and which sets out plans to tackle effectively both existing and potential risks to communities. They should also:

- produce annual action plans on which they have consulted and taken into account the views of their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for the consultation;
- take account of guidance from the Assembly Government in producing their plans;
- ensure that the risk analysis used to evidence their IRMP is robust and reliable and can be clearly evidenced to identifiable risks within the Service area;
- make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the action plan, including using more efficient working practices where appropriate;
- consult the Assembly in advance of finalising their IRMP for the year; and
- obtain the approval of the Assembly Government to any proposals emerging from the authorities IRMP to close or downgrade a fire station.

In taking this work forward Authorities should have regard for their statutory duties in relation to this Framework.

2.16 We recognise that authorities need support in developing and maintaining their IRMPs. Authorities in Wales used guidance prepared by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister before formal devolution. This covered preparing and maintaining IRMPs in 2003, and in April 2004 guidance on the impact of the Working Time Regulations on current and new working patterns<sup>3</sup>. The Assembly Government notes that current proposals for 2005-06 will likewise be based on ODPM guidance and we will consult on a new set of guidance for the 2006-07 period during 2005.

2.17 During the past year Welsh FRAs have also benefited from:

- a 'oneoff' incident data cleansing exercise for authorities wishing to avail themselves of the service, to help ensure that local risk can be reliably located and measured;
- the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) toolkit which is based on years of research into riskbased fire cover; and
- the Implementation Support Teams (ISTs), who have provided support and feedback on emerging good practice. ODPM continue to fund the work of four IST members during 2004/05.

### **Community Fire Safety**

2.18 The 2004 Act places a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities to promote community fire safety. The Assembly Government welcomes this as an important aspect of the modernisation of the service, which will build upon prevention activity on which the Assembly Government and FRAs have collaborated for several years.

2.19 Research across England and Wales shows that those most likely to be at risk from and adversely affected by fire are those in the lower socio-economic groups. Identifying patterns of risk in Wales and then addressing the risks faced by vulnerable communities will be an important part of the IRMP process.

2.20 Supporting this activity the Assembly Government has for several years taken a strong lead in developing community fire safety policies for Wales, since it established the Community Fire Safety Working Group in 2001.

2.21 The reports produced by the Group, into domestic fires ('Wired for Safety') and arson ('Up in Flames'), made a range of recommendations to increase domestic fire safety and reduce the incidence of arson in Wales. This is the third year of funding a range of initiatives arising out of 'Wired for Safety' and, as an example, by March 2004 we have ensured that 60,000 social houses in Wales have been fitted with hard-wired smoke detectors and we are well on course to achieve the recommendation in the report that all social housing has such an alarm by the end of 2005. Policies in relation to 'Up in Flames' are being developed including the specific recommendation that the Welsh Assembly Government adopts proposals for a comprehensive arson strategy for Wales. Contributing to this we have already committed to providing three years funding for three pilot arson reduction teams working in each of the Service areas of Wales and have established a small arson grants programme, to fund small local projects. For the future we will look to the Community Fire Safety Committee to advise on the planning of future spending priorities as part of its deliberations.

2.22 Complementing our work in this field the Assembly Government and the fire service, have established the Wales Community Fire Safety Trust, now called Firebrake Wales. Firebrake's overall remit is to improve the quality of life in Wales by participating in reducing the numbers of preventable fire deaths and injuries. It will do this by pursuing three distinct areas of activity through promotional campaigning and public education; research to better understand the causes of fire death and injury; and grant giving to support local fire safety initiatives.

**2.23 Firebrake Wales has established close working relations with the community fire safety teams in all three fire and rescue services and is a member of the Joint Arson Group. It is concentrating efforts on adding value at the all Wales level by the sponsorship of activities and services on a Wales wide basis, co-ordinating bids for new projects on an all Wales level and organising events and conferences to raise awareness of fire safety. Firebrake has worked hard to develop links with potential sponsors and has been successful in gaining the support of businesses. Examples of achievements to date include:**

- Firecracker (2003) - a firework safety campaign delivered in partnership with Community Fire Safety Teams across Wales and England in conjunction with the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society.
- Sam joined the South Wales Fire Service in 2003 as their first Arson Detection Dog, with sponsorship from Hill House Hammond. Not only is Sam trained to sniff for accelerates but he is also working with community fire safety teams, taking the fire safety message to schools.
- Fireflash (2004) kitchen safety leaflet delivered to every household in Wales in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and sponsors.
- Save Our Schools conference (2004) on school arson, organised behalf of the Joint Arson Group and with support from the Home Office.
- Assistance in preparation of successful bid for Arson Business Wardens.

#### **Fire Safety Behaviour and Arson Reduction**

2.24 Arson is a significant problem in many areas. Arson puts lives at risk, damages property and strains the resources of fire authorities and other public services. It can also have a very negative effect on the local environment - for example, some neighbourhoods are scarred by burnt out abandoned cars. The Assembly Government, working through the Community Fire Safety Working Group, undertook an examination into the issues surrounding arson in Wales, these were published in our report 'Up in Flames' in February 2003, and we remain committed to the implementation of the recommendations arising out of the report.

2.25 'Up in Flames' represented considerable deliberation into the issues surrounding the problems of arson in Wales, by those organisations with an interest in the field and recommended that:

- the Assembly Government adopt proposals contained in the report for the establishment of an all-Wales strategy to tackle the problem of arson;
- sprinkler systems and other measures be adopted to reduce the impact of arson attacks on schools;
- Community Safety Partnerships be encouraged to actively consider the issue of arson and that Group's are established at local levels, mirroring previous best practice in other areas, to specifically consider arson issues, such as car arson and localised problems;
- youth initiatives be expanded and built upon to tackle the problem of young firesetters; and
- the Assembly Government earmark funding to support this work and the Arson Strategy for Wales.

2.26 In addition, the report also proposes a number of short, medium and long term targets to measure the success or otherwise of the Arson Strategy in reducing the incidence of arson in Wales. We have now begun to take this work forward. We have announced a pilot programme of school sprinkler installations to inform policy development, with the first such school to receive funding in Swansea having reopened in September 2003 following refurbishment. We are developing initiatives to tackle arson, working with partner organisations, and being informed by Fire and Rescue Service local IRMPs. Utilising our Community Fire Safety Budget of £5m for



2004-05, we have agreed funding for a three year pilot of Arson Reduction Teams, with one team working in each of the three Service areas. Each team will consist of police and fire service secondees with specialist skills in community relationships, crime prevention, and fire investigation and prevention. They will be supported by an administrator who will provide essential secretarial and administrative support. The teams will target arson 'hotspot' areas, having the flexibility to respond to the highest areas of need. Their creation will complement and support the efforts of local Community Safety Partnerships in reducing arson in hotspot areas.

2.27 During 2004-05 we have earmarked £1.25m to fund anti-arson initiatives in Wales and, in addition to the arson reduction teams, have funded projects which have large regional coverage – such as a radio campaign aimed at deterring young firesetters who light grass and mountain fires, covering South Wales FRAs operational area and running over the course of the school summer holidays. In addition we have established a small arson grants programme, to fund small local anti arson projects.

2.28 The causes of arson and other forms of anti-social behaviour are deep-rooted and can only be addressed successfully if public service providers work together.

2.29 The Assembly Government believes that the Fire Service can make an important contribution not just to reducing arson but also to wider objectives. Firefighters can provide a positive role model for young people. Fire and Rescue Services already undertake a wide range of work with young people through a range of initiatives such as Crucial Crew and Young Fire Fighter groups. In addition, the fire service in Wales has also developed a teaching tool to teach fire safety through the PSE curriculum, in order to deliver a unified programme of fire safety to schoolchildren within key stages 1 to 4.

2.30 The Assembly Government recognises that such work not only contributes to the reduction of fire risk in communities, but also to the wider social agenda of encouraging good citizenship and building community cohesion. The Assembly Government will encourage and support the further development of this work.

2.31 The Police Reform Act 2002 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities, working with the police and local authorities in Community Safety Partnerships, to identify crime and disorder problems in their area and to develop and implement a strategy to tackle them. There is a great deal that the fire service can contribute to these partnerships. Increasingly, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) also include the Fire and Rescue Service.

2.32 The Fire and Rescue Service can also contribute to community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal in many ways, including by making fire stations available for partnership and community use, and by working with young people. The Thematic Review, *'The Fire and Rescue Service - Working with Young People in the Community'*<sup>55</sup> surveys the full range of education and youth work undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service and contains many examples of good practice. Youth training schemes and youth diversion work can increase awareness of fire safety and reduce hoax calls, and therefore form an important part of the Service's community fire safety strategy. This type of work can also help to tackle crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, as well as improving school attendance and employment chances for young people.

2.33 The Fire and Rescue Service should use the opportunity afforded by their membership of the Community Safety Partnerships (established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998) to develop, with other agencies, local solutions to local problems - for example, deliberate firesetting, hoax calls and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

## **Building Regulations**

2.34 The objectives of the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations (Part B) are to ensure that reasonable provision is made for the health and safety of people, including firefighters, in and around buildings. Building Regulations are not devolved to the National Assembly, though the

Assembly Government nominates representatives of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee and looks to influence the development of regulations where they impact upon Assembly policies.

2.35 The regulations apply whenever 'building work' is undertaken in England and Wales, typically the erection, extension or alteration of a building. While the regulations do not cover property protection, or the condition of the existing building stock, they do provide a mechanism for the progressive 'designing in' of fire safety to the built environment. To support this regulatory system, guidance is published in the form of Approved Document B. The current substantive version of this was published in 2000, although subsequent amendments arising out of European harmonisation were published in a supplement in 2002, and came into force on 1 March 2003.<sup>6</sup>

2.36 Early in 2004, the UK Government began a fundamental review of the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations and supporting Approved Document B. This review will consider fire safety in all types of buildings, including residential premises, schools and warehouses, and will draw on the findings of recent research and experience. As part of the broad review, provision of fire safety measures will be targeted in those new and altered premises where people are considered to be most vulnerable. The UK Government is keen to improve fire safety by all reasonable means and we will therefore consider carefully the role that sprinklers can play as part of a package of measures that can be provided in buildings. The publication of a consultation paper on proposed changes, supported by a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment, is anticipated in Spring 2005.

2.37 The process of designing fire safety into buildings relies upon maintaining and developing close co-operation between Fire and Rescue Authorities and their stakeholders, such as building control bodies. Authorities should continue to give advice to these bodies on whether the measures proposed appear adequate to provide reasonable levels of fire safety. ODPM publishes guidance on consultation<sup>7</sup>. A review of this important document has recently been started. Following consultation with stakeholders, ODPM aim to publish a revised version to coincide with implementation of the Regulatory Reform Order in 2005.

### **Regulatory Reform Order**

2.38 It is the UK Government's intention to reform general fire safety legislation. This will include removal of the requirement to obtain a fire certificate. Responsibility for fire safety in non-domestic premises will rest with the person responsible for the premises. That person will be required to assess the risk in respect of both the place and activities in it, implement such general fire safety measures as are reasonable and necessary to reduce risks that are found, and protect all persons using the premises from risks that remain. Enforcement of these requirements will be principally by Fire and Rescue Authorities, though other authorities may enforce the requirements in certain specified situations, for example the Health and Safety Executive for the nuclear industry.

2.39 The UK Government's proposals, laid before Parliament on 10 May 2004 in the form of a draft Regulatory Reform Order, complement the change in emphasis of the role of the Fire and Rescue Service to one of prevention, where they are responsible for ensuring public safety by monitoring 'responsible persons' compliance with the law and, where necessary, enforcing the requirements of the new legislation. Service strategies for enforcement of fire safety legislation must form part of its overall strategy for the protection of its community, as detailed in its IRMP.

2.40 The Fire and Rescue Service should - in drawing up their enforcement programmes - prioritise inspection of places that, in the case of fire, pose a significant risk to life.<sup>8</sup> This will improve upon the current approach to inspection where priority is given to premises needing a certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. Further guidance on risk-based enforcement was issued in January 2004 by the ODPM as Fire Precautions Act Circular 29 and IRMP Guidance Note 4<sup>9</sup>.

### **Crown Premises**

2.41 Crown Fire Inspectors enforce fire safety legislation in Crown Premises and provide fire safety advice and guidance. The UK Government will support and promote the focus on prevention by continuing to encourage safe behaviour in Crown Premises. The 'Revitalising Health and Safety' Strategy Statement<sup>10</sup> published in June 2000 said: 'The UK Government will seek a legislative opportunity, when Parliamentary time allows, to remove Crown immunity from statutory health and safety enforcement'. ODPM is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to explore the best way to achieve this through jointly addressing health and safety and fire safety legislation. In the meantime, the UK Government states that it remains committed to ensuring full compliance with the requirements of health and safety law and best practice.

2.42 The Crown Premises Inspection Group (CPIG) will work closely with local Fire and Rescue Authorities, since both parties are interested in the risk posed by premises. CPIG enforce legislation and, to inform their risk prioritisation, benefit from intelligence gathered by the Fire and Rescue Service whilst responding to emergency incidents. The Fire and Rescue Service need to gain information to inform their local risk management plans and to inform the intervention strategies of firefighters.

2.43 The Fire and Rescue Service should be aware of the contribution Crown Inspectors can make to achieving the aims and objectives of their IRMPs, consult Crown Inspectors on their IRMPs, and work closely with them where appropriate.

### **Chapter 3: Working together effectively**

3.1 The previous chapter highlighted the importance of developing local solutions to meet local needs. However, there are some challenges on which local fire and rescue authorities working in isolation do not have the capacity to provide an efficient and effective service. These include specialist areas such as responding to terrorist incidents, and services such as training and procurement on which collaboration could yield significant efficiency improvements.

3.2 The Assembly Government is committed to a Wales-wide approach where that is the most appropriate level, while we have stated that we do not see regionalisation, along the lines of that proposed for England, the Service in Wales will be required to collaborate and to work with their counterparts outside Wales to achieve improvements in terms of procurement, etc.

3.3 The service in Wales is already experienced in working together to achieve common aims. Their work with the Assembly on the Community Fire Safety Working Group and taking forward the recommendations contained within the Group's two reports 'Wired for Safety' and 'Up in Flames' and the partnership between authorities and the Assembly in establishing Firebrake Wales, to drive forward aspects of community fire safety at the all-Wales level are examples of this.

3.4 In addition, in Wales work has also been undertaken into collaboration and joint working across the emergency services, stemming from the 'Shared Ambitions – for a Safer and Healthier Community' produced nationally by the three emergency services in 2001. The document made a number of recommendations intended to facilitate greater collaboration, co-operation and partnership, which were taken up by the Joint Emergencies Services Group (JESG) for Wales (comprising the chief officers of each of the three emergency services and coastguard) in February 2003, who agreed to examine the potential for further collaboration and joint working with the aim of enhancing service delivery to the public. Following interviews with each of the Group's members, a further set of recommendations was presented to JESG during July 2003. These considered issues such as collaboration in the field of control rooms; estate; training; procurement; and the co-responder scheme. In the light of this work, JESG members have established a board adding the Chairs of Police Authorities, Fire Authorities and the Ambulance Service for Wales. This board oversees work with the aim of improving service delivery through collaboration and joint working, with the first priority areas being a feasibility study into occupational health and an appraisal of existing and future estate requirements.

## Control Rooms

3.5 Work commissioned by the UK Government from independent consultants<sup>1</sup> in 2001 showed that the current pattern of control rooms was costly and inefficient. A subsequent report by HM Fire Service Inspectorate in 2003<sup>2</sup> revealed that a centrally driven Best Value review process had failed to deliver improvement. Further work in 2003<sup>3</sup> reviewed national control room provision in the light of the events of September 11th 2001 and the experience of joint control rooms during the fire pay dispute. This reinforced the conclusions that regional fire and rescue control rooms were necessary in England to support resilience requirements and would achieve major efficiencies.

3.6 Since publication of the Mott MacDonald report, the conclusion that Wales should have a single control room as part of an integrated set of regional control rooms is now a matter for the National Assembly for Wales. The Assembly believes that the Welsh context is different from that of England. Following reorganisation in 1996, which saw the previous eight fire authorities reduce to the existing three, the case for further amalgamation has not been made and further consideration on our plans for the next five years and beyond is needed. However we want the fire and rescue service to consider longer-term partnership and collaborative working arrangements that enhance operational effectiveness. This should include considering opportunities for joint working with the other emergency services where it makes clear sense in terms of operational effectiveness and best value for all concerned.

3.7 Already a number of premises sharing initiatives have been introduced or are in advanced stages of completion, involving one or more of the three emergency services. These include joint fire and police facilities at Crymych and Llandeilo, with discussions ongoing regarding possible similar joint arrangements at Aberystwyth and Cardigan. The exploration of further opportunities for the fire and rescue services to collaborate at the new communications centre being developed by Dyfed Powys Police Authority at its Headquarters site in Carmarthen, which will house not only the Police control facility but also the Mid and West Wales regional control for the Wales NHS Ambulance Trust, is another manifestation of the desire of all three services to work together in the best interests of our communities.

3.8 The Fire and Rescue Service must agree with the Assembly Government the arrangements for managing and maintaining the control room in their area and comply with national protocols on staff roles and training and back-up and resilience requirements. Control rooms are not merely technical systems, they rely on the people who manage them and we will expect control room staff to be trained to national standards and be competent in nationally agreed roles, having regard to the Integrated Personal Development System as it applies to Control Room Staff.

## Procurement

3.9 The Audit Commission's report *In the Line of Fire*<sup>15</sup> highlighted the need for greater co-operation between Fire and Rescue Authorities on the purchase of equipment and improved efficiency in purchase management. Authorities were statutorily required to review their procurement arrangements in 2001/02<sup>16</sup>, supported by Audit Commission guidance<sup>17</sup>. A review by HMFSI<sup>18</sup> concluded that a centrally driven Best Value review had not made sufficient progress in achieving efficiencies.

3.10 Research carried out on behalf of ODPM by Cap Gemini Ernst and Young and the Improvement and Development Agency concluded that specialist Fire and Rescue Service procurement is best carried out nationally, and that an appropriate institution should be established to undertake this work. This conclusion supports earlier Audit Commission work which supports

<sup>1</sup> Mott MacDonald

<sup>2</sup> HM Fire Service Inspectorate: Analysis of the Best Value Reviews of Control and Communications (ODPM November 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Mott MacDonald: The Future of Fire Service Control Rooms in England and Wales Update (2003)

national standards and specifications where appropriate. . Arrangements for specialised central and regional purchasing would enable the development of the sort of procurement expertise that individual Fire and Rescue Authorities find it hard to develop or acquire, and will lead to benefits derived from combined Service purchasing. The integrated clothing project is an example of how service-wide procurement can work to reduce the costs to individual Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Assembly Government is committed to this project, subject to clarifying the costs and benefits for the service in Wales.

3.11 In partnership with stakeholders the UK Government has, through consultants, reviewed the work done to date on a national strategy for Fire and Rescue Service procurement, and a report was delivered in March 2004. Further work on legal and technical issues is ongoing. A draft procurement strategy will be issued in Summer 2004 for consultation. The Strategy will be produced in 2005 [**check ODPM circular for date**]

3.12 The Assembly sees merits in the strategy though have yet to fully assess the implications for Wales. It therefore will need to fully consider the issues in relation to the Welsh fire and rescue service before committing to the project having regard to activity already underway through the Wales Procurement Group and the programme board of JESG; the alignment of procurement cycles; that the potential benefits in terms of cost, safety and corporate standards are achievable; and identifiable benefits in terms of cost savings, efficiency and effectiveness in supporting joint procurement among the Service in Wales.

3.13 ODPM Fire Service Circular 11/2004<sup>19</sup> gave advice on the arrangements that Fire and Rescue Authorities should adopt before entering into new contracts for major operational equipment, with the aim of aligning contract termination dates to those envisaged in the national strategy. These arrangements will be lifted once the draft national strategy is published<sup>20</sup> and subject to the Assembly Government signing up to the terms of the strategy. If adopted in Wales, the Fire and Rescue Service should implement the national strategy for procurement.

#### **Chapter 4: Effective response**

4.1 The Fire and Rescue Service deserves its reputation for providing an effective and professional response to fires and other incidents.

4.2 Although the Fire and Rescue Service should, in future, place greater emphasis on preventing fires from happening in the first place, the need for an effective response to incidents that do occur is not diminished. The Fire and Rescue Service will need to develop its capacity to respond to new challenges such as terrorist incidents in accordance with the emerging needs of the national New Dimension programme.

4.3 The starting point is to maintain and where possible reduce the risk that people in Wales are exposed to in respect of fire. The fire and rescue service must ensure that appropriate levels of resources are deployed, within agreed timescales, to incidents to achieve Assembly Government Service Delivery Standards. These Service Delivery Standards will be the subject of detailed guidance to be issued during 2005 and will include an examination of the level and deployment of resources. The Fire and Rescue Service should ensure a professional and effective response is available to meet the range of incidents which they may encounter, working together as appropriate. This includes ensuring that:

- staff are trained to professional standards, are familiar with risks and understand the concept of risk and risk reduction;
- effective command and control systems are in place;
- incident commanders have the appropriate training and experience; and
- the right equipment is available and staff are fully supported with appropriate resources to deal effectively with incidents, within agreed timescales, to ensure the safety of those undertaking the tasks.



4.4 The Assembly Government recognises that in Wales significant progress has already been made, producing benefits for the public. Joint procurement of appliances, the provision of IPDS and assessment centers are examples. Further activity on specialist support, such as arson investigation; sharing estates; training and 'back-room' services should continue.

### **Management of Health and Safety**

4.5 Health and safety legislation applies to the Fire and Rescue Service. There is a need to care for the safety and health of all staff, and others at risk from operations particularly when dealing with emergency incidents.

4.6 Fire and rescue managers have generally maintained and often increased the operational effectiveness of fire crews by applying the principles and practices associated with health & safety legislation.

4.7 It is important that good practice is shared between the fire and rescue service, managers and front-line staff. HMFSI will work together with the HSE and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) on an ongoing basis to provide a national lead and co-ordination in the generation of health and safety guidance<sup>21</sup>. This is particularly appropriate in the case of generic risks and in the identification of common solutions to emerging challenges. Working with the ODPM, the Assembly Government will risk assess the Operational Training and Development Manual in 2005; revise guidance on dynamic and generic risk assessment in 2005; and improve the quality of accident and injury data and its collection arrangements in Autumn 2005.

4.8 The national Health and Safety Task Group<sup>22</sup>, chaired by HMFSI, meets quarterly and reports against an agreed business plan. The Group aims to develop policies and strategies to support the management of health and safety in the Fire and Rescue Service; ensure that such policies support the national workforce development competency requirements; and ensure that the risks arising from Fire and Rescue Service activities are properly managed. The Assembly Government wants to ensure these are also adopted across Wales.

4.9 The Fire and Rescue Service, in Wales has structured arrangements for sharing good practice in Health and Safety. This includes collaborative working and peer reviews of Health and Safety arrangements. Fire and Rescue Services in Wales have been recognized for their improvements in Health and Safety via independent bodies. Such good practice should be built upon and the Fire and Rescue Service should explore further opportunities for collaboration.

### **Utilisation of Resources**

4.10 The Assembly Government believes that there is scope to improve the efficiency of the Fire Service in responding to incidents while still maintaining the highest standards.

4.11 Traditionally, pumping appliances, with pre-determined numbers of firefighters and officers, offered the initial response to emergency incidents. Occasionally specialist vehicles such as water carriers or aerial appliances supplemented the response.

4.12 This overly prescriptive, blanket response can over-provide, particularly where hoax calls, signals from automatic fire alarm systems and fires clearly defined as being of limited extent are concerned. It can also mean that fewer resources remain available for incidents where the risk to life and injury is greatest - often in the home. However the Assembly Government recognises that fire alarms give early Warning of fire; Fire and Rescue Services must take account of the consequences of any decisions, particularly in premises which present a life risk.

4.13 In April 2004 ODPM published a Guide to Reducing the Number of False Alarms from Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems<sup>23</sup>, in conjunction with CFOA and the British Fire Protection Systems Association. This guide is aimed at the owners and users of such systems. Because of the introduction of IRMPs and the removal of the nationally recommended standards of fire cover

and associated guidance, authorities will in future have more flexibility in deciding response to automatic fire alarm signals. Modern, intelligent information systems mean that risks can be assessed more effectively allowing a more appropriate and better targeted response. In coming to their decision on attendance to these incidents the Fire and Rescue Service should:

- have regard to ODPM's Guide to Reducing the Number of False Alarms from Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems;
- where appropriate, working with other Fire and Rescue Authorities and other emergency services, take steps to drive down the number of hoax calls and unwanted signals from automatic fire alarms; and
- log the callers and properties that create the greatest demand, assess the risks associated with them, and decide upon action to achieve improvement, which may include increased fire prevention work or a changed level of response.

4.14 The aim of an emergency response is to reduce deaths and the number and severity of injuries. If outcomes can be improved by adapting services or working with other service providers this should be pursued. For example, the use of defibrillation equipment could save the lives of people who have suffered heart attacks. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service has been operating First Responder schemes within parts of its rural areas since 1998. The schemes are a partnership between the Fire and Ambulance Services and provide a supplementary life saving service to local communities. Firefighters trained in resuscitation - including the use of defibrillators - render first aid assistance to life threatening conditions pending the arrival of Ambulance paramedics. Mid and West Wales currently operate five schemes and further locations have been identified to expand this very valuable service within its area. We believe these schemes should be expanded to encompass all areas of Wales and will support discussions between Welsh FRAs and the medical and ambulance service to explore the further advantages and implications of this, perhaps initially on a priority area basis.

### **Mutual Assistance**

4.15 Fire and Rescue Service has for many years provided mutual support across borders for fire-related emergencies through the shared availability of fire crews and appliances.

4.16 It is important that this best practice is universally applied. Local, regional and national boundaries should not stop FRAs from delivering the most speedy, effective and efficient response possible.

4.17 The Service should, therefore, design their IRMPs to ensure that, so far as practical, there is greater shared use of resources, particularly, for example: the services of senior officers<sup>24</sup>; pumping and non-pumping appliances, such as those used for aerial access; equipment used in traffic accident response and the bulk supply of water; and specialist support services such as rope rescue teams.

### **Incident Management Protocols**

4.18 Major fire related incidents, terrorist attacks or large environmental disasters have no respect for Service boundaries. Nor can they be dealt with by one emergency service working in isolation. Increasingly, they demand co-ordinated planning, operational co-operation and compatibility in response management between the Fire and Rescue Service and other emergency and non-emergency responders, such as local authorities, the Environment Agency and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

4.19 The Fire and Rescue Service has an increasing role to play in dealing with these incidents. The 2004 Act gives statutory effect to the wider role of Fire and Rescue Authorities in responding to emergency incidents other than fire. The Civil Contingencies Act includes provision to require the Fire and Rescue Service to work with other emergency services in producing comprehensive plans for major and catastrophic incidents.

4.20 Common emergency management policies, practices and procedures are essential. To ensure a consistent operational approach the service should adopt the principles and procedures detailed in the Fire Service Manual Vol. 2: Fire Service Operations - Incident Command (2002). This will ensure the adoption nationwide of common arrangements and the safe and effective management of operations. CFOA and HMFSI will work together to maintain the Manual's currency in response to new threats and emerging issues. The Manual, together with the Cabinet Office publication, *Dealing with Disaster - 3rd Revision*<sup>26</sup>, provides the template for regular inter-service training and exercising and will form an integral part of the training at the Fire Service College. The Fire Service College will also provide a centre of specialist expertise in urban search and rescue and related major emergency incident techniques.

4.21 In accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act, the Fire and Rescue Service, where appropriate, should:

- work with other emergency services, authorities and agencies in the development of major emergency response management and recovery plans, and review all existing operational plans and policies;
- employ national incident command management systems to enable safe and effective emergency operations and joint service training; and
- adopt recognised good practice.

### **Fire Investigation**

4.22 Fire investigation can provide an invaluable insight into the behaviour of fire and therefore useful evidence on ways to manage risk in the future.

4.23 Few Fire and Rescue Authorities are able to deploy adequate resources, at all times, to ensure effective fire investigation. This activity is one of many that should be delivered more effectively by Fire and Rescue Authorities working collaboratively.

4.24 In the case of deliberate fires the lead authority will ultimately be the Police. In other cases the lead authority will depend on the circumstances and the initial fire investigation results. A degree of flexibility is necessary to allow the leadership at various stages of the investigation process to be shared, with the most relevant agency assuming the lead role as required. Formal protocols and Memoranda of Understanding are essential foundations for ensuring that the needs of all partners are considered. The 2004 Act provides formal powers for the Fire and Rescue Service to enter premises for the purposes of investigating the causes of fires and the reasons for fire spread. These powers, which are balanced by safeguards for the public, would be for use in cases where permission for fire investigation cannot be obtained from, or is withheld by, the person responsible for the premises in question.

4.25 The Arson Control Forum, which brings together police, fire and rescue practitioners, insurers and other stakeholders, is developing a model protocol for fire investigation. This will be supported by new National Occupational Standards for fire investigation for Fire and Rescue Authorities, the Police and the Forensic Science Service. These are being developed to Qualifications and Curriculum Authority criteria and will be available in 2005. The Vocational Standards Group responsible for this work includes HMFSI and the Fire Service College, together with representatives from the Fire and Rescue, Police and Forensic Services and the insurance industry. Once published, the Fire and Rescue Service should have regard to the model protocol for fire investigation and should look to pool specialist fire investigation capacity to provide an effective Welsh response capability.

### **Contingency planning for any future industrial action**

4.26 Drawing on the experiences of the national industrial action, new and more effective arrangements for the provision of emergency fire and rescue cover have been developed. Fire



and Rescue Authorities will, in future, play a significant part in contingency provision, including the supply of appliances and equipment and the effective deployment of available personnel.

### **Quality Assurance and Best Practice**

4.27 The Audit Commission in Wales (Wales Audit Office from 1st April 2005) will in future be responsible for inspection of Fire and Rescue Authorities through the Wales Programme for Improvement. See chapter 9.

4.28 The Audit Commission and HM Fire Services Inspectorate will identify and promote good practice. HMFSI will also assist with the identification and development of future leaders of the service and be a source of advice on professional and technical advice.

4.29 Both the Commission and the HMFSI will carry out co-ordinated national studies of service specific activities from time to time (thematic reviews).

**4.30 As thematic reviews attempt to gauge the progress, success and obstacles to success in any given subject, it will remain a useful part of continuous improvement for the fire and rescue services in Wales to be a part of these reviews. In fact the opportunity to compare different approaches to the same problems (where they exist), could prove beneficial indeed. However, the Assembly Government recognises that the propensity to over inspect has a detrimental effect on service delivery, diverting scarce resources away from service delivery and improvement at the time of inspection. To obviate this, the Assembly Government will look to work with UK Government in order to be apprised of the programme of thematic reviews and take the opportunity to involve fire and rescue services in Wales whenever this is beneficial**

## **Chapter 5: Resilience and New Dimension**

5.1 Resilience is defined as the ability to manage disruptive challenges, such as terrorist attacks or major flooding that can lead to or result in crisis.

5.2 The Assembly Government's aim in building resilience capacity in the fire and rescue service in Wales is to ensure public safety by taking practical steps to reduce the likelihood of such incidents occurring and responding quickly and effectively when they do.

### **Statutory responsibilities of Fire and Rescue Authorities**

#### **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**

5.3 The 2004 Act extends the duties of the Fire and Rescue Service to include the promotion of fire safety and response to road traffic accidents, in addition to their traditional firefighting role. The Act also provides the Assembly with the power to extend further the duties to deal with other emergencies. The proposed new duties will be set out in an Order, subject to the Assembly legislative process, and will place on a statutory basis those emergencies to which the Service responds at present, but for which it has no statutory requirement to plan, train or equip. The Service is likely, therefore, to be required to make provision for:

- removing chemical, biological or radioactive contaminants from people (using the mass decontamination equipment provided under the UK Government's New Dimension programme) and capturing any water used to remove such contaminants;
- assisting other agencies in dealing with chemical incidents occurring in other ways;
- incidents involving search and rescue. This would include any terrorist or other incident where there is the potential for persons to be trapped, or where it is necessary to use search and rescue equipment to detect individuals;

- major flooding incidents where there is a serious threat to human health or welfare. For example, firefighters would be needed to assist in the rescue of people trapped by large floods and their transfer to safety. This excludes smaller and more localised flooding events, such as a burst water main; and
- serious transport incidents, other than road traffic accidents.

5.4 We will consult widely on our proposals before making an Order under the Act in 2005.

5.5 The 2004 Act also empowers the Assembly to make an order which requires authorities to use and maintain any equipment as specified by the Assembly. This would include mass decontamination and search and rescue equipment provided under the New Dimension programme.

5.6 Where authorities are given new duties in relation to the New Dimension programme, new resources will be provided in agreement with key stakeholders.

### **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

5.7 Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act, along with the accompanying regulations and guidance, will establish a new framework to reinforce co-operation between the emergency services, local authorities and other front line responders at the local level. This will ensure that they can deal with the full range of emergencies from localised major incidents through to catastrophic incidents. Part 1 also creates a statutory duty on the part of local bodies including the Fire and Rescue Service to work together to develop contingency plans. The Fire and Rescue Service is under a duty to work in co-operation with other emergency services, local authorities and front line responders at the local level to:

- assess the risk of an emergency occurring;
- put in place emergency contingency plans and conduct exercises to ensure that they can both prevent and respond to emergencies;
- establish business continuity management arrangements, so that an authority can function in an emergency;
- share information with other local emergency responders; and
- inform the public about civil protection in order to reduce, control or mitigate the effects of emergencies.

5.8 Participating in the four local Resilience Forums in Wales as well as the resilience forum (see paragraph [X]) will help the Fire and Rescue Service to discharge their statutory duties under Part 1 of the Act.

5.9 under part 1 of the Act, the UK Government will not be able to make regulations or give directions in Wales in areas within devolved competence, such as the Fire and Rescue Service, without the consent of the National Assembly for Wales. The Assembly will not make its own regulations under part 1 of the Act.

5.10 Part 2 of the Act, Emergency Powers, seeks to address a much wider range of circumstances than those addressed by the present legislation, which dates from 1920, reflecting the different risks and new threats we face today. It broadens the definition of an emergency to include events and situations which threaten serious damage to human welfare, or to the environment or security of the United Kingdom. Part 2 of the Act also proposes a range of safeguards against the possibility of misuse to ensure, amongst other things, compliance with Human Rights legislation and effective parliamentary scrutiny.

### **Resilience in Wales**

5.11 A framework for co-operation between the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government is to be established through concordat on issues pertaining to the Civil Contingencies Act. The concordat is to clarify the anticipated role (s), in practice, of the Welsh Assembly Government under the Act and, in particular, with regard to handling an emergency in Wales.

5.12 At the UK level clear co-ordination arrangements are in place to ensure successful emergency planning. The Home Secretary has overall responsibility for safety and security. The Cabinet Office co-ordinates the development of resilience policy and procedures across Government and seeks to identify and prevent potential disruptive challenges. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government provides a Wales-wide level of co-ordination on emergency planning issues. The Assembly engages closely with the UK Government on all issues relating to civil protection and emergency preparedness in Wales.

5.13 The Fire and Rescue Service has a longstanding tradition of effective planning and response to non-fire incidents at the local level. However, the tragic events of 11 September 2001 changed the frame of reference for dealing with terrorism. The response to a similar attack in the UK, or one which involved a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) element, requires more than local planning and response.

5.14 In recognition of its functional responsibilities and its territorial role, the Welsh Assembly Government has a team dedicated to supporting multi-agency co-operation in Wales and engaging with the UK Government on all issues relating to civil protection and emergency preparedness. This team, led by a senior official, works in partnership with local responder organisations to address large-scale or wide-area civil protection issues in Wales. The team also facilitates communication between the UK Government and local responders in Wales; provides secretariat support to the Wales Resilience Forum and the Wales Emergencies Working Group; and works with the regional resilience teams in England to ensure robust cross-border arrangements are in place.

5.15 The principle mechanism for national multi-agency co-operation is the Wales Resilience Forum (WRF). The forum meets quarterly and is chaired by either the First Minister or the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration of the Welsh Assembly Government. It provides multi-agency strategic advice on civil protection and emergency planning, enabling Chief Officers to discuss with the Welsh Assembly Government strategic issues of emergency preparedness in Wales. It brings together central government agencies and the Armed Forces, and representatives of local responders, including the emergency services and local authorities. The forum is not a statutory body it does not have powers to direct its members. The forum provides for senior representation from the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities, the emergency services, the armed forces, the Environment Agency, NHS Wales, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Health and Safety executive. It meets at regular intervals for planning and preparation matters and it functions in a similar way to the regional resilience forums in England.

5.16 In the event of a larger scale emergency a separate ad hoc committee, the Wales Civil Contingencies Committee, could be formed its role would be to assist in co-ordinating the all-Wales response to an event which overwhelmed local responders or which had an impact over a wide area. The Civil Contingencies Act requires a UK Senior Minister to appoint a Welsh Emergency Co-ordinator (WEC), to help co-ordinate activities under any regulations made in response to an emergency. The role of the WEC will be similar to the Regional Nominated Co-ordinator appointed for each part or region of England to which the regulations apply.

5.17 The Wales Emergencies Working Group (WEWG) provides a means for all local responder organisations in Wales to contribute, at official level, ideas and suggestions for improving emergency planning arrangements in Wales. The primary role of the group is to support the WRF, facilitating co-operation between local responders in Wales. It is chaired by the Welsh Assembly Government and includes representatives from local authorities, the emergency services, the

armed forces, the environment agency, NHS Wales, the Maritime and coastguard Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and the local resilience forums in Wales.

5.18 These structures will provide the platform for co-ordinating both planning and response in relation to civil contingencies at an all Wales level. They will provide co-ordination and facilitation functions to a disruptive event, while-under direction- any response will remain for the most-part, with local responders.

5.19 To facilitate co-operation and information sharing between Wales and the border areas of England, a group has been formed which brings together the Welsh Assembly Government with the regional resilience teams from the government offices for the South West, West Midlands and North West. The group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss issues of mutual interest in civil contingencies and to help foster links at both the regional and local levels.

5.20 The duty on local responders to co-operate will result in Local resilience forums being established in each police area in Wales. The establishment organisation and the process of these forums will be largely a matter for negotiation between local responder organisations. Such forums already exist on a voluntary basis in Wales in the four police areas under various names.

5.21 The Wales National Emergency Co-ordination Arrangements set out the structures for the integration at an all-Wales level for the response to a wide-area emergency in Wales. The arrangements, which have been produced and agreed by the WEWG, reflect the principles contained in *Dealing with Disaster* and provide a framework for the management of a Welsh national crisis. These arrangements define the roles and responsibilities of agencies and committees on an all-Wales and local level basis. They would only apply to a wide-area emergency and would not interfere with the multi-agency operational response to a local emergency. The generic nature of the arrangements provides flexibility and they can be adapted to form the basis of a response to any emergency affecting Wales. The arrangements have been in place for several years; are non binding; and were established on the agreement of all parties. They will need to be amended in the light of the Civil Contingencies Act and to be consistent with the arrangements to be established under the concordat.

### **New Dimension**

5.22 To build resilience, in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, the UK Government launched the 'New Dimension' programme. New Dimension seeks to ensure that fire and rescue authorities are sufficiently trained and equipped to deal safely and effectively with major CBRN and conventional terrorist incidents on a national scale. The UK Government invested £56 million to purchase equipment for phase one of the New Dimension programme, which includes seven purpose-built Incident Response Units (IRUs) equipped with mass decontamination facilities in Wales. In addition the New Dimension programme provided **[CD to provide figure for Wales]** protective suits for firefighters and delivered enhanced search and rescue capabilities for the UK Fire Search and Rescue Teams.

5.23 The UK Government is funding the purchase of, and training in the use of, modern search and rescue equipment such as heavy lifting gear, search cameras and high volume water pumps which will improve authorities' capacity to respond to incidents involving, for example, collapsed buildings or widespread flooding.

5.24 Vehicles and equipment located within Wales, will need to be strategically positioned around the country to enable effective, coordinated national and regional responses to any largescale incident. As was the case for deciding the location of IRUs, the location of vehicles and equipment for phase two will be the result of a robust, objective risk assessment exercise.

5.25 We are keen to ensure a co-ordinated response from the Fire and Rescue Service in the event of a major emergency. That is why all Fire and Rescue Authorities have been invited (as a first step to comply with the obligations in section 13 of the 2004 Act) to sign a Mutual Aid

Agreement, which will enable individual authorities to ask for assistance from another authority in the event of an incident.

## **Firelink**

5.26 As explained in ODPM Fire Service Circular 7/2002, ODPM is funding the procurement of a new national radio system for Fire and Rescue Authorities (the Firelink radio project) in order to increase resilience and provide interoperability within the Service and with other emergency services. It will replace the radio systems currently owned and managed by authorities. Fire and Rescue Authorities will contribute to the revenue costs of the new radio system.

5.27 It is planned that the new radio system will roll out from early 2005 to the end of 2008, when the lowband VHF radio spectrum used by the Fire and Rescue Service in England and Wales is being withdrawn. While the Firelink project is being developed, we recognise that it is essential to safeguard the performance of existing radio communications systems. We will therefore need to consider funding measures that will sustain highrisk items of existing systems thereby ensuring that they continue to be operationally effective until they can be replaced.

5.28 In England the ODPM propose that the roll-out of Firelink where possible will be implemented in conjunction with the implementation of regional control centres (FiReControl), to maximise systems interoperability and reduce costs. The Assembly Government remains committed to the Firelink project, though our deliberations over the issue of control rooms in Wales have a bearing on the Welsh Services' adoption of the new system. However, the roll-out of the programme over several years will enable us to plan sufficiently in advance for our involvement. In the intervening period we wish to work with the Service to ensure the continued performance of the existing communications systems is maintained.

## **Training**

5.29 New Dimension training facilities have been built at the Fire Service College, and training courses began in April 2004. This will help to achieve the safe and effective management of operations outlined in paragraph [X].

5.30 Training for firefighters is based on risk assessment carried out by the New Dimension programme in consultation with local fire and rescue services. Initial firefighter training has been fully funded by the UK Government as part of its investment in New Dimension. 5.31 Chief Fire Officers will work with the New Dimension Regional Planner to decide which personnel receive New Dimension training.

## **Chapter 6: Fire and Rescue Staff**

6.1 The Fire and Rescue Service' most important resource is their staff. It is essential that people from all backgrounds and with many different skills and specialisms; are encouraged to join the service, in both uniformed and non-uniformed roles; are used as effectively as possible; and are offered a rewarding and flexible career.

6.2 The Fire and Rescue Service must ensure that all members of staff are treated fairly and afforded equality of opportunity. Authorities should ensure that all staff are developed in a way which takes account of the differing needs of the individual, in order to deliver the Fire and Rescue Service's aims and objectives effectively.

6.3 Business needs will be driven to a large extent by IRMPs. These will set out when and where people and other resources are needed; how they will be used, in operational and non-operational roles; and what skills are required. Fire and Rescue Authorities should ensure that their human

resources strategy fully reflects the needs set out in the IRMP, and includes the use that will be made of flexible shift patterns and working practices.

6.4 The move away from 'one size fits all' shift patterns, and from standard nine to five hours for those who work in administrative jobs, will help to open up opportunities for people from a wider range of backgrounds and with family and other commitments. It should also mean a more flexible and rewarding career for all staff. The Assembly Government is working with the UK Government to amend the Firefighters' Pension Scheme to allow part-time service as a regular firefighter to count towards pension entitlement. This will facilitate arrangements that are already operating in some Fire and Rescue Authorities and encourage others to extend the practice. Amendments to the Scheme are expected to come into operation later in the year. **[October 2004?]** Fire and Rescue Authorities should ensure that there is as much opportunity as is reasonably possible for people to work flexibly, for example on a part-time basis, using flexi-time or working as part of a job share partnership. **[rewrite/update?]**

### **Retained Firefighters**

6.5 The Assembly Government values the contribution of staff on the retained duty system and the support given by their primary employers. Those staff provide fire and rescue cover for much of the geographical area of Wales. It is important that full use is made of this valuable resource, and that more is done to address recruitment difficulties in some areas. The introduction of IPDS (see Chapter **[X]**) is an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge of staff on the retained duty system by utilizing the flexibility it offers.

6.6 The Assembly Government will, as part of the work on IPDS, collaborate with UK Government to examine ways in which it can best meet the needs of staff on the retained duty system. The employment conditions including time for training and development have changed little for retained staff over the last fifty years. Given that position and the requirement for providing cover for 120 or so hours every week, it is surprising that the system is as resilient as it is in 2004. There is general recognition that the retained systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will need to reflect modern working practices and human resource issues. At the same time the systems should be appropriate for the risk. South Wales Fire Authority reviewed their retained contracts in 2001 and has arrived at a system that meets these requirements. The modernization agenda allows the other fire authorities to undertake a similar review.

6.7 In December 2003 a review was commissioned into the retained duty system in England and Wales. The report of the Retained Review Team (RRT) is currently with the ODPM. **[need some more info on this]** The Assembly Government will wish to review this work and engage with UK Government, FRAs and the business community in Wales to encourage more people to apply to join the retained duty system and to make the positive changes necessary to encourage existing staff to stay in the service by:

- highlighting the benefits of having in their workforce the skills which staff on the retained duty system can bring; and
- tackling the barriers to releasing employees for their fire and rescue duties.

6.8 The Fire and Rescue Service should ensure that they:

- make full use of staff on the retained duty system, in line with the needs in their IRMPs;
- give staff on the retained duty system access to development opportunities comparable to those for wholetime and other staff; and
- break down artificial barriers between staff on the retained duty system and other staff, including where appropriate exploring options such as mixed crewing.

### **Human Resources Management**

6.9 The modernisation programme will place additional demands on the Human Resources function within Fire and Rescue Authorities. The introduction of greater collaboration between FRAs offers authorities the opportunity to consolidate expertise in these areas, and thereby provide a more efficient and effective service.

6.10 The Assembly Government wishes to join with the UK Government to stimulate the development of a more skilled, professional and strategic HR function nationally by:

- encouraging more HR staff to undertake professional qualifications and, through networking meetings, seminars and professional support, to develop their workforce planning skills and their capacity to help modernise the current management culture;
- producing recruitment and career literature, launched in July 2004, which has been designed to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds to careers in the Fire and Rescue Service;
- facilitating the sharing of best practice among HR staff in Wales through the developing Fire and Rescue Service HR Practitioners' Network and through seminars covering key HR and employment law issues; and
- setting out the role of training and development at all levels within the context of a Welsh National Workforce Development Strategy and as part of a wider UK strategy. The UK wide strategy will need to be agreed by the Service in Wales to ensure transferability of skills. However, the Wales strategy will go further and include issues such as Welsh language skills and the development of managers and leaders in the Fire and Rescue Service through participation in the cross sector Public Sector Management Initiative (PSMI).

6.11 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- draw up HR strategies which encompass recruitment, training and development, occupational health, health and safety, medical advice services, sickness/ill-health management, discipline, mobility and an equalities strategy and which promote collaborative arrangements in Wales, which in turn will lead to organizational benefits as well as cost savings; and
- identify and implement the most efficient and effective means to deliver these services.

### **Improving opportunities**

6.12 The Fire and Rescue Service does not properly reflect the community it serves. The latest available figures show that only 13.2% of the fire service staff in Wales are women, the majority of these being employed in a support (including control room staff) capacity; while ethnic minority staff make up just 0.4% of the workforce.

6.13 More flexible patterns of working should help improve this position, but they will not of themselves be sufficient.

6.14 The Service must improve its performance. The employment ratios in the Fire Services in Wales should reflect the known diversity of Wales and its communities, once account has been taken of genuine occupational requirements of the service such as health, strength and fitness. Working with stakeholders, the Assembly Government will look to the Fire and Rescue Service to identify suitable targets that reflect the diversity of the communities that they serve, through:

- the production of core values for the service; benchmarking fire and rescue services achievement on equality and diversity issues;
- reviewing equality training and the role of equality advisors, and promulgation of good practice;
- reviewing recruitment, progression and retention targets for ethnic minorities and women; and

- a programme of peer review on equality issues, both between the service and other sectors and local government services.

6.15 In England the programme, is being directed and supported by the Equality and Diversity Programme Board *Diversity Happens!*, chaired by Sir Graham Meldrum (HMCIFS), and will result in a series of actions for Fire and Rescue Authorities which will comprise the national performance expectations in this area. These will inform assessment and the improvement planning process. The Local Government Equality Standard, which currently provides the generic national guidance, is being reviewed by the *Diversity Happens!* team with a view to producing a standard tailored for the Fire and Rescue Service by Spring 2005. In Wales the Assembly Government will consider the implementation of this work in order to improve opportunities within the service along national guidelines. However, in implementing this work we will also have regard to the Assembly Government's policies and priorities that affect the service such as the introduction of the Wales Programme of Improvement (see Chapter 9).

6.16 The Fire and Rescue Service should produce an equalities strategy as part of the Wales Workforce Development Strategy (as set out in paragraph [XX]) which should include stretching targets for improvement. HR strategies should be compatible with IRMPs. It is for the Service to decide which issues are best dealt with in their HR strategy and those which fall within IRMPs, and to ensure that there is a fit between the two.

### **Appointments and Promotion**

6.17 On 25 March 2004 the UK Government introduced the Fire Services (Appointments and Promotion) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004 in order to:

- confirm the principles of IPDS (see chapter [X]), including the replacement of ranks with roles;
- remove potentially discriminatory requirements e.g. for time-serving in certain ranks;
- remove the single level entry system for operational staff and facilitate multi-level entry, allowing for suitable staff to be recruited directly into roles other than firefighter;
- enable in-service staff with potential to progress more quickly; and
- make possible the introduction of the new standardised national firefighter recruitment and selection tests.

6.18 The new regulations led to some posts being advertised in open competition, including to applicants from outside the Fire and Rescue Service. Following enactment of the Fire and Rescue Services Act, fire and rescue services are now expected to make appointments on the basis of merit and open competition. We welcome these changes which will accelerate the process of increasing our diversity. We do however recognise the primary health and safety issues that need to be addressed on the incident ground by senior managers. We therefore will need to be reassured that the assessment of operational competence is included in all promotion and appointment processes. Where a candidate can demonstrate competence in all areas other than operational performance there will need to be an auditable, robust and agreed system of development before the appointment can be finalised.

6.19 The Fire and Rescue Service should, act in accordance with Assembly Government guidance<sup>27</sup> and employ best practice in the operation of appointments and promotions for all staff in line with legal requirements and the principles of IPDS.

### **Recruitment**

6.20 The Assembly Government aims to ensure consistency, both across Wales and with other parts of the UK, in recruitment to fire and rescue authorities by working with the UK Government to build upon existing activity, involving:



- supporting the provision of centrally developed and funded national recruitment literature and career information for use by the Service in recruiting staff to all sections of their workforce; and
- participating in defining the personal qualities and attributes as the basis for appointment to all operational roles.

6.21 This will involve:

- developing national firefighter selection tests by spring 2005;
- agreeing the personal qualities and attributes as the basis for control room roles by October 2005;
- providing guidance on medical criteria for firefighter appointment and retention, which are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995); and
- producing guidance on good practice regarding selection and recruitment for all Fire and Rescue Service staff.

6.22 The Fire and Rescue Service where appropriate, should:

- apply identified good practice;
- comply with existing equality legislation on race and gender, the newly-introduced regulations on sexual orientation, religion or belief, the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and in due course with regulations on equal treatment and age; and
- from Spring 2005, operate recruitment using national firefighter selection tests.

### **Discipline**

6.23 The Fire Services (Discipline) Regulations 1985 were abolished with the repeal of the Fire Services Act by the 2004 Act. Fire and rescue services should now implement disciplinary procedures which are based on Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) best practice guidance.

6.24 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- introduce disciplinary procedures taking account of ACAS best practice guidance;
- advice issued by the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services; and
- consider the costs, best practice and efficiency benefits of operating an all-Wales HR function for dealing with disciplinary and other HR issues.

### **Sickness Management/Ill Health Retirement**

6.25 Whilst there has been improvement in sickness management and a reduction in ill health retirements, Fire and Rescue Authorities still need to become more effective.

6.26 Previously agreed national fire and rescue targets for sickness and retirements are to reduce sick absence in the service from 9.2 shifts per person in 1998-9 to an average of 6.5 shifts per person for firefighters and from 13.4 to 5.4 shifts per person for fire control staff by March 2005. The figures for 2002/03 were 10.2 shifts per person for firefighters and 13.0 for control room staff. Although marginally better than for the previous year, progress remains insufficient to meet the target by 2005. While recording systems have improved since 1998/99, there is no obvious reason for the continuing high levels of sick absence, which remain very inconsistent between authorities. **[do we have stats for FRAs in Wales which backs up/refutes this?]**

6.27 The target for ill health retirements is, by March 2005, to reduce them to 6.9 retirements per thousand employees. There continues to be a year-on-year reduction in the number of ill health retirements, but at 16.9 per thousand in 2002/03 it is unlikely that the target will be met by 2005. **[do we have stats for FRAs in Wales which backs up/refutes this?]**

6.28 We are working with the UK Government to amend the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. Changes will enable Fire and Rescue Authorities to continue to draw on the experience of trained firefighters who may no longer be fit to undertake firefighting duties, rather than have to retire them with an ill-health pension. They will also place an obligation on Fire and Rescue Authorities to use independent medical assessment – whose opinion will be binding – before approving applications for early retirement on ill-health grounds. We aim to have the amendments operating by [xxxx]. Guidance on medical issues will be issued to Fire and Rescue Authorities in Autumn 2004. **[has this been issued yet?]**

6.29 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- ensure that their occupational health arrangements are efficient and effective and that staff are able to access these;
- ensure proper consideration is given to the health and fitness of staff and that they are assigned to appropriate roles;
- ensure that targets on the reduction of sickness absence and ill health retirements are achieved through the introduction and administration of effective absence management processes and procedures; and
- consider the most efficient and cost effective method of obtaining independent Occupational Health advice. This could be pursued on a Wales-wide basis and could also potentially be shared among the three emergency services. JESG should consider the potential of this.

## **Pensions**

6.30 We are committed to working with the UK Government to review pension arrangements for all firefighters. Work is under way on the development of new pension arrangements which reflect: the changes in the nature of fire fighting duties under modernisation proposals; the changes in the regulatory and tax framework for pensions generally; and equality and diversity issues. The UK Government and devolved administrations have now issued a consultation document on the new proposals and we envisage any new pension scheme being operational from April 2006. We will also contribute to the review of the financial arrangements for funding firefighters' pensions.

## **Chapter 7: Workforce Development**

### **Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS)**

7.1 The revised and enhanced roles of fire and rescue service staff put a premium on flexibility and personal skills and competencies. This is true for all staff within the fire and rescue service, whatever aspect of the service they deliver and whether they are uniformed or non-uniformed.

7.2 The new IPDS system for people and organisational management represents a complete change of approach to workforce development for Fire and Rescue Authorities. It introduces a competence-based approach, and provides a system of development targeted specifically to the needs of the individual (See also Chapter 6, which deals with specific HR issues). Changes to the appointments and promotion regulations for operational staff (see paragraph [X]) have made it possible for staff to join at all levels of the service and progress according to their ability. IPDS allows staff with high potential to undertake an appropriate programme of tailored development.

7.3 While the IPDS programme has focused largely on operational and control roles to date, initial scoping work is now under way to consider role maps for non-operational posts within the Service.

7.4 The Assembly Government supports the provision of support and advice in the roll out of IPDS through Implementation Support Teams operating from the 'IPDS Hub' - the centre of specialist expertise at the Fire Service College. Its communications programme includes written and electronic information, outreach work, workshops and seminars on all aspects of the IPDS implementation, including workplace assessment, development programmes and national occupational standards. This programme will run until the end of 2005 and we encourage the Welsh Service to make full use of it.

7.5 The demands of the resilience agenda and emerging European training and development legislation underline the need for national standards and consistent procedures. The removal of national examinations for career advancement within operational roles will require national consistency in the assessment arrangements that replace them. IPDS will provide the foundation for this.

7.6 The Assembly Government will work with the UK Government to:

- develop the necessary training and development systems, tools and assessment arrangements; and
- ensure through the Fire Service College that appropriate quality assurance systems for development activities are put in place to enable equality of standards to be maintained through a diversity of providers.

7.7 In adopting and implementing IPDS the Fire and Rescue Service should:

- use the nationally developed personal qualities and attributes for assessing the potential of candidates for a new role;
- put in place systems and train managers to ensure that staff are assessed fairly against national standards and that workplace assessments are recorded consistently<sup>4</sup>;
- consider how collaborative working may maximise the benefit from available resources for IPDS;
- support the use of any pay flexibilities currently available with robust evidence, for example on recruitment and retention needs and through job evaluation exercises; and
- effectively communicate all changes to staff.

### **National Workforce Development Strategy**

7.8 Firefighters, control operators and managers will be expected to demonstrate competence in new IPDS roles. In many cases this will mean developing people's existing knowledge, skills and understanding. Similar challenges face staff fulfilling other roles within the service. To meet these growing and more diverse needs the Service will need to look to a range of sources for training and development support, including some outside the traditional fire and rescue institutions, such as Further Education, management colleges and e-learning.

7.9 To support the Service the UK Government has drawn up a draft National Workforce Development Strategy. The workforce development strategy will fit within the UK Government's wider skills development framework. The Assembly Government will wish to consider the adoption of the strategy in Wales as the detail becomes clearer and in line with its own policies for training and development.

7.10 The UK Government believes that there is over-provision of dedicated fire training and development facilities across the UK, with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) statistics showing wide variations in the use of training facilities and the cost of provision. The specific circumstances of Wales mean that it will be desirable that some training should be delivered at a regional or sub-regional level, while, due to geographical considerations, it would be impractical for other training to be centralised. This is mainly centered around e-learning, while

---

<sup>4</sup> See ODPM Fire Service Circulars 14/2003 and 19/2003

very little practical learning and development could be shared at a single venue in Wales that would not be duplicating Fire Service College resources.

7.11 Specialist, operational incident command and urban search and rescue training is best delivered at the Fire Service College's unique fireground, which is the only place where it can be carried out. The draft national strategy will set out the role of the College in developing fire and rescue staff. It proposes, for example, that this specialist operational training should be a mandatory element of IPDS at key stages, and that authorities should use the College for it; but other simulated and operational training may be carried out regionally and locally. The provision of quality assurance in the delivery of IPDS, including accreditation and securing the training of trainers to national occupational standards, is another function that should be led by the College.

7.12 We also wish to explore the scope for greater co-operation between emergency service providers. Current training centers around initial skills training, refresher training, additional skills, managerial and specialist training. The scale of localised training facilities will depend upon the numbers and locations of staff employed who require that training. Moving large numbers of staff around for single event training is not cost effective particularly when seeking to add additional skills to retained personnel who need to seek agreement to absences with their main employer. The Fire and Rescue Service in Wales needs to review thinking on developing people and providing learning opportunities for staff. Over reliance on instructional training is neither cost effective nor a reliable way of ensuring competence in the workplace. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service have been working with a training provider to reach a new understanding of learning and development which will be available to Fire and Rescue Services both within Wales and outside.

7.13 South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has recently received agreement from the ODPM and Assembly Government to proceed with a new dedicated training centre, a PFI project to which the Assembly Government will provide over £15m of revenue support. The project will meet the training requirements of both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel of South Wales FRS; disseminate best practice and improve fire safety and fire awareness within the region through the provision of education and training services. The Assembly Government is pleased to support the project and in line with its developing agenda for training and development within the Welsh FRS, hopes that its provision will provide a greater opportunity to encourage collaboration between the Welsh Service

7.14 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- deliver training and development in accordance with nationally agreed standards and in collaboration; and
- review how best to develop people and provide learning opportunities to all staff.

### **The Fire Service College**

7.15 The UK Government intends that the College will continue to provide a national and international facility for operational incident management training, centred on its unique fireground. Its objectives include:

- delivering as its core business the training and education that the UK Fire and Rescue Service wants and needs in ways that suit its customers;
- developing its core business in ways that offer customers affordable, competitively priced best value training whilst enhancing its expertise and longer-term position; and
- demonstrating sustained improvement and financial stability.

7.16 The College will develop a comprehensive suite of courses to support all aspects of vocational development, including community fire safety, work with young people, fire safety legislation and risk management. It will provide a centre of expertise on civil contingency planning,

including search and rescue techniques. It also expects to provide training on New Dimension response and containment techniques, in partnership with other emergency services.

7.17 The UK Government has invested £5 million in capital funding to improve the College's training facilities and student accommodation; and £2.5 million under the New Dimension programme to build new urban search and rescue facilities. A further £2.5 million is being provided to develop the remaining IPDS modules and workbooks, and to implement IPDS both within the College and across Fire and Rescue Authorities as a whole through the IPDS Hub (see paragraph [XX]) and Implementation Support Teams. The fireground is being refurbished and enhanced to develop its potential as the primary UK facility for New Dimension training.

7.18 It will also develop its role as a centre of excellence by exploring partnerships and, where it makes sense, co-location with key fire and rescue organisations. Following the report of the UK Government Task Force into the College<sup>29</sup>, it is working on options for partnership with the private sector in developing the use of its fireground and facilities.

7.19 Within the National Workforce Development Strategy, the College will play a key role in the support framework for IPDS. It is proposed that the college will:

- be responsible for central policy on setting and maintaining the national occupational standards;
- provide consistency and quality control in the delivery of IPDS through accrediting, verifying and possibly licensing learning and development modules for local and regional delivery;
- 'train the trainers' in accordance with national standards and expectations for all Fire and Rescue Service specialisations;
- review and develop policy on IPDS as a whole, and on the management of recording systems; and
- through the IPDS Hub, provide expert advice and support to the Fire and Rescue Service on IPDS and its implementation.

7.20 The UK Government also expects the College to become a Centre of Vocational Excellence. This will enable the College to offer a broader range of qualifications to fire and rescue staff.

7.21 The Assembly Government recognises the knowledge and expertise contained within the College and wishes to ensure that the Welsh Fire and Rescue Service continues to benefit from the provision of services at the College.

## **Leadership**

7.22 There is a need for a new approach to leadership within the Fire and Rescue Service, both from authorities and from senior managers within the Service. This needs to be underpinned by the effective development of staff to prepare them for management roles and to ensure that they have the skills to carry out the full range of management and leadership responsibilities. New entrants with different backgrounds and experience will help develop a breadth and depth of approach that will add to the existing skills base. Multitier entry and targeted development schemes will support this aim.

7.23 Under the auspices of the IPDS Project Board, a new group has been convened to consider whether and to what extent there is a need for a specific leadership model for the Fire and Rescue Service. The group, which will include the Fire Service College and a range of stakeholders, will also make recommendations about selecting and developing senior level leaders for the future.

7.24 The Assembly Government supports these objectives and the transferability of skilled staff throughout the public sectors.

7.25 Other initiatives underway at an all-Wales level such as the Public Sector Management Initiative and the potential for Joint Emergency Service Group collaboration on training provide considerable opportunities for leadership and management development.

7.26 The Fire and Rescue Service should ensure that:

- existing staff are developed and supported in their leadership functions;
- there is interchange of staff between authorities and with outside organisations and in authority areas, between the service and different services in the authority area; and
- they consider how to use the new flexibilities for recruitment.

## **Chapter 8: Finance**

### **Revenue Support**

8.1 The fire and rescue service in Wales has seen a 38% increase in core expenditure spending for Fire and Rescue Authorities since 1997, from £81.46m to £112.723m in 2003-04; a year-on-year increase of over 5%.

8.2 The national changes under the modernisation programme and the associated agreement on pay and terms and conditions will have significant financial ramifications. There will be increased costs to fund the pay award and potentially some aspects of the modernisation agenda - for example the increased emphasis on prevention. However, savings are also available, for example through better targeting of resources to match risks, and through collaboration.

8.3 The Assembly Government is also committed to pursuing the modernisation agenda. Nevertheless, before we can make any firm decisions, we need to satisfy ourselves as to the extent to which savings arising out of the 1996 reorganisation of the fire service in Wales have been realised and taken account of; and the progress currently being made in realising the potential for further improved efficiency. In addition, the rurality of much of Wales also needs to be taken into account when considering the potential for further savings. Fire and Rescue Authorities must understand fully their own responsibility to act prudently in setting their budgets and recognise their role in working with their constituent councils to limit council tax increases.

8.4 The UK Government recognises that there may be a lag between costs and savings of modernisation. £30m transitional funding has been made available for England and Wales, which has been released following satisfactory progress on ongoing pay negotiations and modernisation. Phase 1 of the Audit Commission's national pay verification study on modernisation in the Fire and Rescue Service made it clear that while progress had been made, there was still more to do. Wales share of the funding is £1.67m, which has been distributed on the basis of the existing Fire Standard Spending Assessment.

### **Distribution**

8.5 The costs and savings of modernisation will fall unevenly across Fire and Rescue Authorities. This is particularly true of Services with a large proportion of firefighters on the retained duty system. This has specific implications in Wales given our reliance on the use of retained duty system personnel. However, it is not intended at this point in time to change the, existing Fire Standard Spending Assessment (distributed using the total population share in local authorities).

## **New Local Prudential Borrowing Regime**

8.6 The Local Government Act 2003 replaced the existing system of basic and supplementary credit approvals for local authorities with a new local prudential regime. From 1 April 2004, local authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, have been free to borrow for investment without Assembly Government consent, provided they can afford to service the debt. The current decision on fire authority funding and precepting means that in effect any borrowing is affordable as the consequent costs form part of the bill on unitary authorities. We will discuss with fire authorities and WLGA a means of ensuring sensible use of borrowing.

## **Supported Capital Expenditure**

8.7 The UK Government distributed £60.53 million in supported capital expenditure to English and Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities in 2004/05, plus an extra £1 million which has been set aside for regional control centres and £0.15 million for joint procurement. Wales' share of this funding in 2004/05 is £3.7m.

## **Combined Fire Authorities**

8.8 From 1 April 2004 Combined Fire Authorities (CFAs) in England became major precepting authorities. English CFAs receive revenue support grant and a share of business rates directly from Central Government, and are required to issue a precept or precepts on Council Tax to the billing authorities in their area for each financial year.

8.9 The Assembly Government has decided not to pursue this route, though the Act provides the Assembly with the powers to introduce this in Wales in the future, if appropriate. This is entirely consistent with the notion of non hypothecation of funds to Unitary Authorities, who, through combination orders, discharge their duties through the three Combined Fire Authorities. Extracting this would in effect unhypothecate support and require balances and reserves to be held by Combined Fire Authorities, amongst other things.

## **Private Finance Initiative**

8.10 The Minister of Finance, Local Government and Public Services announced last year that she would not be inviting local councils to bid for specific funding to help finance any proposed PFI schemes. The introduction of the new Prudential borrowing arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 allows authorities greater freedom to pursue the most appropriate method of procuring capital investment, including PFI.

## **Other sources of funding**

8.11 We have also made £5 million available for community fire safety and arson reduction work for 204-05 and will continue to take this activity forward in future years.

8.12 The UK Government has invested heavily in the New Dimension programme and is funding the Firelink project, which Wales FRAs will benefit from.

8.13 The Assembly Government also funds a wide range of work of relevance to Fire and Rescue Authorities' role, particularly in relation to Communities First and Community Safety activity.

## Charging

8.14 The range of calls to which the Fire and Rescue Service responds goes beyond dealing simply with fires. Responding to special service calls, ranging from road traffic accidents to stalled lifts and people locked out of their homes, accounts for almost half the calls which the Service attends.

8.15 Authorities have had a power under section 3 of the Fire Services Act 1947 to charge for dealing with these special service calls. Clause 19 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act preserves a power to recover the full costs incurred. We propose to consult on the activities for which a charge should be made by authorities and will specify them by Order under the Clause 19 power during 2005.

8.16 A number of authorities have become accustomed to recovering an element of profit when setting the level of charge for services such as training and safety consultancy. To ensure that these income streams are not put at risk after the introduction of the new charging regime we will make trading Orders under section 95 of the Local Government Act 2003. These will be reviewed after the introduction of a WPI for Fire and Rescue Authorities in 2005. Although this concession will require trading to be conducted through a company structure, with associated costs, authorities will be required to price their services at market rates in the interests of fair competition. This combination of measures is considered to be revenue neutral. **[CFOs to comment on the position of trading in Welsh FRAs]**

## **Chapter 9: Effective Performance Management [NB This chapter is still subject to revision before final publication]**

9.1 People must have assurance that public services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

9.2 In England the UK Government plans to provide this assurance by inviting the Audit Commission to introduce an inspection regime based on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) system used to assess local authorities. The expectations set out in the National Framework will be central to assessing the performance of Fire and Rescue Authorities in the CPA.

9.3 In Wales in order to ensure that the fire and rescue services are delivered efficiently and effectively, we plan to invite the Audit Commission in Wales (ACiW) to develop an improvement programme based on the Wales Programme of Improvement. The Assembly Government issued statutory guidance on WPI for Local Government in Wales in Circular 18/2002, stating "that the underlying objective of the new WPI is to achieve the delivery of high quality services to the public which meet identified needs", based on the principles of:

- commitment to achieving continuous improvement;
- effective management of performance;
- a global approach, encompassing corporate performance and capacity as well as individual functions;
- targeted action based on an assessment of what will do most to improve outcomes for the public; and
- a complementary regulatory regime.

9.4 These principles, established for local government, are equally applicable to fire and rescue authorities and will be used in developing WPI for the fire and rescue service in Wales, in conjunction with considering good practice arising from the implementation of CPA in England. We therefore have the opportunity to take good practice from a range of sources to work with ACiW in producing a WPI framework based on key strategic elements which are coterminous with the modernisation agenda and our priorities for the service in Wales, but which also stand comparison



on a national basis and allow us to access knowledge, expertise and best practice from across the UK.

### **Timeframe and the way forward**

9.6 ACiW has developed a draft a WPI framework for the service, in line with development of this National Framework and which considers a range of good practice in discussion with stakeholders .this has been developed with the stakeholders and is being issued for consultation during Autumn2004 The timing of the introduction of WPI will depend on progress with the formal devolution of responsibility to the Assembly, although it is expected that WPI would be introduced from April 2005 with the first integrated improvement plan produced by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2005

### **WPI in operation within the fire and rescue service for Wales**

9.7 The WPI framework for the Fire and Rescue Service could be based on the following elements, although the AcIW will welcome views on additional elements consultees feel should also be included:

- Leadership – the demonstration of a clear vision of achievement; the engagement with staff and others in developing its 'vision' and objectives; how the Service makes priorities and the criteria used to shape these; and how well the Service develops plans and processes to achieve and deliver its 'vision' and priorities;
- Governance and Management – how clear are the structures within the authority; how aware are members and managers of the matters for which they are responsible; and how effective is management in delivering services;
- Capacity – resources and skills to deliver; ability to respond to change; and collaboration and working in partnership with other bodies;
- Performance Management and continuous improvement-intergrated – risk /management; Human Resources management; and Financial Management;performance measurement and management, operations, fire safety and scope for continuous improvement.

E-fire and Rescue – how effective are the mechanisms and information; and the extent to which services are being delivered electronically; an

9.8 The principles of WPI would incorporate a self-assessment by FRAs against the elements in the framework, which would then form the basis for a risk assessment undertaken jointly with the Audit Commission and other technical advisors as appropriate. This would result in the production of an integrated Improvement Plan and I Integrated Risk Management Plan to address areas for improvement, this would link the Authorities Corporate Plan would be underpinned by Service Business Plans to ensure improvements are achieved. The Commission will review progress of the Authority in delivering improvements against its plans and report annually on this, incorporating the principle of public reporting at follow-up stages in relation to key reports, which will celebrate success as well as highlight poor performance. This is in line with WPI being a differentiated regulatory approach focused on addressing the underlying causes of any barriers to necessary improvements, providing active support for improvement and the sharing of best practice.

9.9 A particular strength of WPI for Local Government are the functions of Relationship Managers and Performance Group Key Contacts and we would wish to see these incorporated into WPI for the Fire and Rescue Service. They would play a key role in bringing together all of the regulators at each Fire and Rescue Authority and ensure the regulatory plans incorporate all relevant work thus maximising the benefit and minimising the burden of regulation.

9.10 There will inevitably, and rightly, be public focus on how performance can be improved. In the event of poor performance being identified by inspection, we will, with other stakeholders, consider a strategy to deal with this. Among other things, this will cover engagement with authorities and consideration of existing protocols for intervention.

### **Best Value and data collection**

9.11 In order for fire authorities to demonstrate improvement, robust performance measures and appropriate target setting mechanisms will be required. We wish to move from the current performance indicators (PIs) that focus primarily on inputs and some outputs, to measures of performance based on outcomes within a performance management framework.

9.12 These performance measures should be fit for purpose and it is important that they reflect the Assembly Government's priorities for the Fire and Rescue Service and this National Framework. It is also important that PIs permit benchmarking with others and whilst it is expected that PIs should facilitate UK wide comparison and, where appropriate, internationally. Local PIs are also important in reflecting local circumstances and improvement agendas.

9.13 In England the OPPM is consulting on a new suite of Best Value PIs for the Fire and Rescue Service for England. These will apply from 2005/06 and focus on the key measures of performance flowing from the service expectations set out in the White Paper and National Framework. It is also developing a suite of local PIs drawing on the work done by Fire and Rescue Service 'family groups' and the library of local performance indicators for local government developed by the AC and the IDeA.

9.14 In Wales, it may be appropriate for the Local Government Data Unit (LGDU), which is currently reviewing the PIs for Local Government, to work with the Fire and Rescue Services, WLGA, ACiW and the Assembly Government to develop the revised PIs. As part of this, they could consider, related work in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The timetable for the Welsh Local Government Performance Measurement Review, being undertaken by the LGDU, is the same as that applying to the review of FRS BVPIs in England. Until these are available we will look to Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales to work within the suite of BVPIs being prepared by The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. However, we are convening a reference group of key stakeholders to:

- review national statutory PIs for FRS and other data requirements
- consider arrangements for collecting, validating, analysing and disseminating performance data

9.15 Stake-holders will include the Assembly Government, Fire Authorities, ACiW, WLGA and the Local Government Data Unit, among others. It will be important for national PIs and other data requirements to integrate with the new WPI framework for the Fire and Rescue Service. The review of national PIs for the service will also need to take into account the broader Assembly commissioned review of the performance measurement framework for local government in Wales, whilst retaining key comparators with England wherever possible.

9.16 Only limited changes to the existing BVPIs are proposed for 04-05:

- Deletion of BVPI 145, which measures speed and weight of response against the categories under the old fire cover standards and has therefore been overtaken by the introduction of IRMP.
- Deletion of BVPI 147 on time taken to complete inspections for Fire Safety Certificates reflecting legislative changes which, subject to Parliamentary approval, we expect to

happen during 2004-5 - these certificates will no longer be valid and no future certificates will be issued.

- Amendment of BVPI 144 no longer to require it to be broken down by the old risk categories.

9.17 We also wish to explore with stakeholders the feasibility of introducing a new measure on the number of deliberate fires. The full list of BVPIs for 2004-2005 is at Annex A.

## **E-Government**

9.18 In Cymru Arlein the Welsh Assembly Government's Information Age Strategic framework for Wales a key commitment has been given that local authorities will through partnerships and agreements use ICT to deliver first Class public services. The objective is to use appropriate technologies and collaborative ventures to provide accessible, friendly, bilingual and citizen centred services.

9.19 For local government, Best Value Performance indicator NAWPI 1.5, measures progress against the above objective. The Local Government Partnership Council has agreed to the creation of a joint working group which will be asked to establish a new strategic approach to the use of Information and Communication Technology, across Welsh local government. This will include the fire and rescue services in this work.

## **Chapter 10: Research**

10.1 Research and other evidence can play a crucial role in:

- development of policy;
- understanding risk and developing strategies to deal with it;
- identifying and sharing best practice; and
- informing the development of equipment and techniques for dealing with incidents, such as improved personal protective equipment for firefighters.

10.2 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and predecessor departments have for many years sponsored programmes of research, primarily in support of the Building Regulations and Fire and Rescue Service operations, but also in support of fire safety more generally. They are currently undertaking work on:

- **Risk Management**, in particular the development of the Fire Service Emergency Cover methodology and the associated toolkit;
- **Civil Resilience**, including projects identified by the Building Disaster Assessment Group to ensure that fire and rescue service procedures are adequate for incidents in tall buildings;
- **Building Regulations**, including studies to develop the science that underpins many aspects of fire safety in buildings and developing an understanding of the effectiveness of residential sprinkler systems.
- **Community Fire Safety**, including an evaluation of the Community Fire Safety Innovation Fund; and
- **Arson**, through the Arson Control Forum.

10.3 The Assembly Government will co-operate with UK Government in this work where it is in the interests of Wales and UK-wide priorities and pursue fire and rescue related research in Wales that is reflective of Welsh needs and priorities.

## **National Fire and Rescue Research Strategy**

10.4 Research is also sponsored by other Government Departments and members of the fire and rescue community, including Fire and Rescue Authorities, trades unions, manufacturers and suppliers, academia and insurers.

10.5 We agree the UK Government's assessment that there is considerable scope to improve collaboration on research. It is working to develop a comprehensive fire and rescue research strategy that will help underpin the modernisation agenda and the new challenges facing the Service. It will provide a strategy which embraces the whole cycle of risk identification, prevention, mitigation and emergency response, including:

- further statistical and other analyses better to identify the categories of people and properties most at risk;
- further work on prevention and community fire safety, in particular developing the evidence base on good practice and how preventative work can address fire risk cost-effectively;
- research on innovative approaches to fire safety in building design and construction; and work to explore further the role of active and passive fire protection measures in buildings;
- research on enhancing fire-fighting and other emergency responses, including on the design and use of Fire and Rescue Service personal protective and other equipment, vehicles, and premises;
- research into search, rescue, and decontamination procedures for the civil population, including the deployment of specialist equipment and procedures for use by the Fire and Rescue Service to improve civil resilience; and
- support for underpinning both fire science and within the social sciences environment in academia.

10.6 The strategy will also examine the lessons to be drawn from international research.

10.7 The first stage will be to allocate the £1 million the UK Government is making available in 2004-5 for the support of suitable projects related to fire and rescue service business.

10.8 ODPM has had informal discussions with officials in other Government Departments and representatives of manufacturing industry, academia, and commerce. They have established support for the creation of an online Fire Research Academy, whose function will be to create the first comprehensive national fire and rescue research strategy by December 2004. Thereafter, one of the responsibilities of the Fire Research Academy will be to seek to ensure that fundamental fire and rescue research is conducted nationally as set out in the strategy, which it will keep under review.

10.9 The Assembly Government will seek to work with UK Government on the development of the strategy, while pursuing a programme of research distinct to the needs of Wales and which does not duplicate activity being undertaken elsewhere.

## **Welsh Assembly Government Fire Research Programme**

10.10 In addition to working with UK Government to deliver national and cross border priorities that are common to both the National Frameworks for England and Wales, the Assembly Government and Service in Wales will work together to pursue a research programme which builds on work undertaken to date, particularly in relation to Wales specific fire modeling.

10.11 To this end we are currently considering how best to take forward research to advise on the feasibility of mapping accurately the risk of households experiencing domestic fires at small-area level for the whole of Wales, if feasible this will be the first stage in a long term research project.

The Community Fire Safety Initiative aims to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic fires through using Community Fire Safety Teams to educate householders about risk factors and by persuading them to have smoke alarms and other measures fitted. The three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services are keen to make sure that their Teams' work achieves maximum benefit and for this reason are keen to develop a better understanding than at present of the circumstances under which various kinds of household are most likely to experience various kinds of fire and of how these risks are reflected geographically in Wales. The South Wales Fire Service is currently using a GIS system to help it to target its efforts, but there are concerns as to whether the underlying risk factors built into this system could be improved upon and better tailored to Welsh circumstances.

10.12 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- draw on relevant research in exercising its functions, for example in formulating strategies to prevent fires; and
- avoid duplication by drawing on others' work and share findings and plans.

### **Statistics**

10.13 ODPM will continue to produce national quarterly and annual statistics on the incidence of fire that are analysed and published in accordance with strict National Statistics guidelines. In addition, it collects and publishes data relating to operational and human resources issues.

10.14 A review of the fire incident report forms has been completed and concluded that detailed information should be collected on all incidents attended by the Fire and Rescue Service. A data definition group has been established to advise on the amount of detail to be collected on these incidents in the future.

10.15 The review is the first stage of a larger project to upgrade the data collection process by capturing electronic information directly from authorities. This project will improve data quality and result in more timely statistics, thereby allowing many authorities to access their own validated data more quickly. This would mean significant advances in monitoring progress against targets and performance indicators.

10.16 The Fire and Rescue Service should:

- continue the timely completion of statistical returns issued by ODPM; and
- assist ODPM in establishing a fully electronic data collection system by contributing their knowledge of fire and rescue service procedures and incident recording to the e-data collection project, which was launched with the review of the existing fire incident collection in Autumn 2003. The intention is to complete this work in 2005.

10.17 Independently of this the Assembly Government will explore, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, the future statistical needs of the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales.

## Annex

Best Value Performance Indicators 2004/05	
<i>BVPI 142</i>	The number of calls to fire attended: i) total calls (excluding false alarms) per 10,000 population; ii) primary fires per 10,000 population; iii) accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings.
<i>BVPI 143</i>	The number of – i) deaths; and ii) injuries (excluding precautionary checks), arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population.
<i>BVPI 144</i>	The percentage of accidental fires in dwellings confined to room of origin.
<i>BVPI 146</i>	The number of calls to malicious false alarms per 1,000 population.
<i>BVPI 149</i>	False alarms caused by automatic fire detection apparatus per 1,000 non-domestic properties.
<i>BVPI 150</i>	Expenditure per head of population on the provision of fire and rescue services.
<i>BVPI 206</i>	Number of deliberate fires per 10,000 population.

Corporate Health BVPIs	
<i>BVPI 2</i>	i) The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms. ii) The duty to promote race equality.
<i>BVPI 8</i>	% of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days.
<i>BVPI 11</i>	i) The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women. ii) The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities.
<i>BVPI 12</i>	i) Proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by whole time uniformed staff. ii) Proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff.
<i>BVPI 15</i>	i) whole time firefighter ill health retirements as a % of the total workforce. ii) Control and non-uniformed ill health retirements as a % of the total workforce.
<i>BVPI 17</i>	% of ethnic minority uniformed staff of ethnic minority population of working age in brigade area.
<i>BVPI 157</i>	The number of types of interactions that are enabled for e-delivery as a % of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for e-delivery.

**SECTIONS 21 – 24 OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES ACT 2004 (WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES)**

*Any reference to the "Secretary of State" in these sections should be treated as a reference to the "National Assembly for Wales" in the Act's application to Wales*

**Section 21 - Fire and Rescue National Framework**

- (1) The Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework.
- (2) The Framework-
  - (a) must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions;
  - (b) may contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
  - (c) may contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions that the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
- (3) The Secretary of State must keep the terms of the Framework under review and may from time to time make revisions to it.
- (4) The Secretary of State must discharge his functions under subsections (1) and (3) in the manner and to the extent that appear to him to be best calculated to promote-
  - (a) public safety,
  - (b) the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities, and
  - (c) economy, efficiency and effectiveness in connection with the matters in relation to which fire and rescue authorities have functions.
- (5) In preparing the Framework, or any revisions to the Framework which appear to him to be significant, the Secretary of State-
  - (a) must consult fire and rescue authorities or persons considered by him to represent them;
  - (b) must consult persons considered by him to represent employees of fire and rescue authorities;
  - (c) may consult any other persons he considers appropriate.
- (6) The Framework as first prepared, and any revisions to the Framework which appear to the Secretary of State to be significant, have effect only when brought into effect by the Secretary of State by order.
- (7) Fire and rescue authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

**Section 22 - Intervention by Secretary of State**

- (1) This section applies if the Secretary of State considers that a fire and rescue authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework prepared under section 21.
- (2) For the purpose of securing that the authority acts in accordance with the Framework the Secretary of State may by order require the authority-
  - (a) to do something;
  - (b) to stop doing something;
  - (c) not to do something.
- (3) The Secretary of State may make an order under subsection (2) only if he considers that making the order would promote-
  - (a) public safety,
  - (b) the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the fire and rescue authority in respect of which the order is made, or
  - (c) economy, efficiency and effectiveness in connection with the matters in relation to which fire and rescue authorities have functions.

(4) Before making an order under subsection (2) the Secretary of State must give the authority an opportunity to make representations about the order proposed.

### **Section 23 - Intervention protocol**

(1) The Secretary of State must prepare, and may revise, a protocol about the exercise of his power to make an order under section 22(2).

(2) The protocol must in particular make provision about persons or descriptions of persons that the Secretary of State will consult before exercising that power.

(3) The Secretary of State must have regard to the protocol in exercising that power.

(4) In preparing the protocol, or any revisions to it which appear to him to be significant, the Secretary of State-

(a) must consult fire and rescue authorities or persons considered by him to represent them;

(b) must consult persons considered by him to represent employees of fire and rescue authorities;

(c) may consult any other persons he considers appropriate.

(5) The Secretary of State must publish the protocol for the time being in force in the manner he considers appropriate.

### **Section 24 - Best value**

(1) Sections 10 to 13 of the Local Government Act 1999 (c. 27) (best value inspections) apply in relation to a fire and rescue authority's compliance with section 21(7) as they apply in relation to a best value authority's compliance with the requirements of Part 1 of that Act.

(2) As applied by subsection (1), those sections have effect as if, in section 13(2)(b) and (4), for "give a direction under section 15" there were substituted "make an order under section 22 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004".

### **Section 25 - Report**

(1) The Secretary of State must report to Parliament on-

(a) the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Framework prepared under section 21;

(b) any steps taken by him for the purpose of securing that fire and rescue authorities act in accordance with the Framework.

(2) The first report under subsection (1) must be made before the end of the period of two years starting on the date when the Framework as first prepared is brought into effect.

(3) Every subsequent such report must be made before the end of the period of two years starting on the date on which the last such report was made.



**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES ACT 2004**  
**EXPLANATORY NOTES AS SET OUT IN ODPM CIRCULAR 38-2004**  
**(Guidance as Applied to Wales)**

Section 21 places a requirement on the National Assembly for Wales to prepare and consult on a Fire and Rescue National Framework ('the Framework'), to which FRAs must have regard in carrying out their duties and other functions. The National Assembly for Wales must consult on the Framework, or any significant revisions to it, both of which are subject to Parliamentary scrutiny before they can come into effect. In Wales we are waiting publication of the National Framework Document. Under Section 25(1) of the Act, we will not report to Parliament, this had been amended to "publish a report".

Sections 22 and 23 deal with intervention by the National Assembly for Wales where an authority is failing, or is likely to fail to act in accordance with the Framework. FRAs remain subject to the best value regime under Part I of the Local Government Act 1999, which makes provision for the National Assembly for Wales to intervene where an authority is failing to comply with the requirements of Part I of that Act. In section 22 in order to ensure that the Fire and Rescue Services are delivered efficiently and effectively, the Audit Commission in Wales are developing a Wales Programme for Improvement for the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales. The powers under section 22 will apply to the National Assembly for Wales. Section 23 outlines the requirement of the National Assembly for Wales to consult on and publish an intervention protocol.

Section 22 provides for circumstances where wider FRS performance issues covered by the Framework, such as measures to make provision for resilience in the face of a terrorist attack, may not be covered by the 1999 Act. Section 22 enables the National Assembly for Wales to intervene via an order, where it considers that an authority is failing or is likely to fail to act in accordance with the Framework. The National Assembly for Wales must give the FRA an opportunity to make representations to it before making an order.

Section 23 requires the National Assembly for Wales to consult on and publish an intervention protocol governing the use of powers under section 22. Fire and Rescue Service Circular 28/2004 invites FRAs to comment on the suitability of using the existing Local Government Intervention Protocol governing intervention under Part I of the Local Government Act 1999. This Circular has been issued to Brigades in England only. Guidance or a Circular will need to be issued by the National Assembly for Wales.