



## **AGENDA ITEM: 9**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2011**

#### **ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT**

**Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members the Annual Improvement Report, attached as appendix 1 and the letter of response attached as appendix 2.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- 2 Following the introduction of the Local Government Measure 2009 the Auditor General for Wales is now required to produce an Annual Improvement Report about how well public authorities are improving their services. The attached report is the first of its kind.
- 3 The Auditor General will make a full assessment of how fire and rescue authorities in Wales are performing in future years.

#### **INFORMATION**

- 4 The report's main message is that stable leadership and improvements to corporate governance arrangements are likely to support improvement in the future, although it is recognised that the Authority faces some challenges.
- 5 The report made two new proposals that the Authority should:
  - "develop further the improvement objectives and associated performance and outcome measures so as to be able to identify and evaluate the impact of its activity for its community; and

- continue to prioritise road safety activities to better understand how it can play its part in making roads within its area safer.”
- 6 The Executive Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February and members were content to accept the report on the whole but expressed concern about the second proposal that the Authority should prioritise road safety activities, despite not having a primary responsibility for this matter. This concern has been expressed in the letter to the Auditor General attached at appendix 2.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 7 It is recommended that the Annual Improvement Report as published on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011 be noted for information.

14<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Auditor General for Wales  
Wales Audit Office  
24 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9LJ

Dear Mr Thomas

### **Annual Improvement Report**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is pleased to accept the Annual Improvement Report as published on 31<sup>st</sup> January.

The report has been discussed by the Executive Panel and our response to the proposals on page 19 of the report is as follows:

#### **Proposals made in earlier work**

Bullet point 1 - this was discussed at the Authority meeting in October 2010, where Lisa Williams acknowledged that having two different committees monitoring the performance may be of benefit. The agreed separation of Executive and Audit powers and roles are clear and thus far there has been no confusion. We will continue to manage work programmes for the two committees. We do not propose to change the arrangements introduced and see a low/no risk here.

Bullet point 3 - we are confident in our improvement arrangements to ensure successful delivery of planned projects, and this area continues to be work in progress.

Bullet point 4 - since the report was written in November the Authority has made decisions about its future budget and resource requirements. A medium term financial plan and strategy has been adopted in order to set sufficient direction and will be under constant review by officers with regular reports submitted to Members for information.

### New proposals

Bullet point 1 - as per bullet point 4 above. Also a Regional Partnership Board (Safer Communities) has been developed which will help with evaluating the impact of our work in the community.

Bullet point 2 - Members expressed concern about this proposal. The Authority has a contributory role towards road safety activities rather than a primary responsibility and all its work in this area is in collaboration with other agencies. Whilst Members are content to accept this proposal they have some concerns about how the Authority's involvement will be measured in terms of improving road safety.

You will be aware of the Authority's partnership working with organisations and agencies across North Wales, and will therefore recognise that the performance of partners could impinge our work.

The report together with this letter will be submitted to the Authority meeting in March.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Frobisher  
**Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**