

# Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Steve Worrall, Assistant Chief Fire Officer on 01743 260204.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report sets out the Fire Authority's statutory responsibilities to prepare and publish an annual best value performance plan. The report also identifies other related performance issues to be considered in the preparation of the performance plan. Most notably, this includes the necessity to identify by no later than 31 March 2007 improvement priorities resulting from the recent Performance Framework assessments.

### 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Consider and approve the proposed planning arrangements (as summarised in the appendix to this report); and
- b) Delegate authority to its Audit and Performance Management Committee to scrutinise and approve the Improvement Priorities prepared by officers.

### 3 Background

The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory requirement<sup>1</sup> upon best value authorities, which by definition<sup>2</sup> includes fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), to prepare and publish an annual best value performance plan. The form and content of the performance plan is determined by guidance<sup>3</sup> that the Secretary of State may issue from time to time. The existing two-year *Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Performance Plan 2006-08* was published in June 2006 and satisfied the then relevant issued guidance.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Local Government Act 1999 Chapter 27, Section 6. – (1).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* Section 1. – (1), e.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* Section 6. – (4).

<sup>4</sup> ODPM Circular 02/2004 - Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans



The most recent guidance of which the Fire Authority must take note is:

- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 05/2006 Addendum to ODPM Circular 02/2004 - Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Fire and Rescue Circular 57-2006: Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2006-07
- Communities and Local Government (CLG) Fire and Rescue Circular 5-2007: Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2007-08

The key aspects of the aforesaid guidance are discussed below and should be considered during any intended revisions to the current performance plan for its remaining duration (up to 31 March 2008).

#### **4 ODPM Circular 05/2006**

The introduction of the new performance rating system for FRAs resulting from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process has provided the opportunity for the Government to review the requirements that must be adhered to in the production of performance plans. As a consequence, the Government has decided to streamline further the requirements for FRAs that are categorised as *Excellent* or *Good*. The Government will accept an annual performance plan as meeting the statutory requirement, providing that it is identified as such and contains the following information, necessary for the Government to monitor performance:

- a) Details of performance:**
  - outturn performance over the past year on all Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs); and
  - Targets for the current year and subsequent two years for all BVPIs.
- b) Statement on contracts:**
  - The FRA should state and certify that all individual contracts awarded during the past year, which involved a transfer of staff, comply, where applicable, with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

#### **5 DCLG Fire and Rescue Circular 57-2006**

The DCLG, in September 2006, issued a consultation circular that sets out proposed changes to Best Value Circular 09/2004. The circular stated, in the context of improvement planning following the yet to be announced results of



the Audit Commission led Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 assessments, that:

*“FRAs will be expected to review their improvement priorities and existing action plans in the light of the outcomes of their fire and rescue Service Assessment, Use of Resources assessment and Direction of Travel statement. They will wish to reflect changes in their performance plan, IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Planning) action plan and other business processes as required.”<sup>5</sup>*

## **6 CLG Fire and Rescue Circular 5-2007**

The DCLG, in January 2007, issued the results of the consultation circular 57-2006. The proposed requirements set out in section 4 above remain unchanged. The most recent circular does, however, now include the statement:

*“Where authorities receive positive Direction of Travel assessment results (scores of 3 and 4) and no urgent improvement needs are identified in the other assessments, the Relationship Manager will not be facilitating a formal roundtable meeting. However all authorities should review their improvement priorities, in discussion with Relationship Managers and other stakeholders and revisit any necessary plans according...”<sup>6</sup>*

## **7 Implications for Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority**

Cognisant of the aforesaid statutory requirements and associated guidance, officers propose to repeat the previously approved *Strategic Planning Framework* as set out within the Fire Authority’s current Performance Plan (page 14). The outcome of this process will be a ‘refreshed’ version of the present two-year performance plan, that will require publication by no later than 30 June 2007, to adhere to current Government guidance.

A planning constraint to be noted by the Fire Authority is that any improvement priorities identified to address the performance shortfalls identified through the recent Use of Resources’ assessment should ideally be agreed prior to 31 March 2007. This requirement is set out within the Audit Commission’s consultation document: *Performance Assessment Framework 2007/08 and proposals for re-categorisation* (issued November 2006). The consultation document states that:

*“...the cut off date for inclusion of evidence in the use of resources assessment would be set at the end of the financial year. We are therefore proposing that in 2007/08 this date will be 31 March 2007... In setting a cut off date at the end of the financial year our assessments will take into account outcomes delivered after that date, but the arrangements must have been in place before that date.”<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>5</sup> DCLG Fire and Rescue Circular 57-2006 - Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2006-7, para 2.2

<sup>6</sup> CLG Fire and Rescue Circular 5-2007 - Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2007-8, para 2.2

<sup>7</sup> Audit Commission (2006) Performance Assessment Framework 2007/08 and proposals for re-categorisation. Para 24.



The Audit Commission's formal results arising from the Service Assessment, Use of Resources and Direction of Travel assessments undertaken in 2006 will not be published until 9 March 2007. Whilst a number of improvement planning assumptions can be made, the formal results will, of course, be central to any developed improvement priorities that form part of the revised performance plan.

The proposed timescales to review, amend and publish a revised performance plan are set in the appendix to this report. To facilitate the planning process it will be necessary to bring before Members and the Commission's Relationship Manager the developed improvement priorities by no later than 31 March 2007. The next scheduled meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee (A&PMC) is 29 March 2007. Consequently, it is recommended that the A&PMC review the Commission's formal assessment results and give consideration to any proposed improvement priorities prepared by officers.

## **8 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any consequential financial implications arising from the preparation of a revised performance plan as set out within this report will be the subject of a separate report.

## **9 Legal Comment**

The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory requirement upon FRAs to prepare and publish an annual best value performance plan. The Fire Authority must comply with the provisions contained within this Act and consider any subsequent guidance issued in accordance with this Act.

## **10 Equality Impact Assessment**

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed. It is, however, fully recognised that the proposed arrangements set out within this report to prepare and publish a revised performance plan will be subject to Equality Impact Assessments, as deemed applicable at the appropriate times.

## **11 Appendix**

Proposed Strategic Planning Framework Activity Plan



## 12 Background Papers

### **Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority:**

(2006) Performance Plan 2006-08

### **Government Legislation**

Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 27, Sections 1 and 6

### **Office of the Deputy Prime Minister**

(2004). Circular 02/2004 - Local Government Act 1999: Part 1 Best Value and Performance Improvement Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans

### **Department for Communities and Local Government**

(2006). Fire and Rescue Circular 57-2006 - Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2006/07

### **Communities and Local Government**

(2007). Fire and Rescue Circular 5-2007 - Improvement planning for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2007/08

### **Audit Commission**

(2006). Performance Assessment Framework 2007/08 and proposals for re-categorisation

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk); the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	Operational Assurance	*
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	*
Financial		Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*



**Proposed Strategic Planning Framework Activity Plan**

<b>Activity/Task</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Target completion date</b>
Review Departmental achievements against existing Performance Plan 2006-08	Department Heads	9 February
Review summary feedback from Audit Commission Performance Framework assessments 2006	Programme Office	9 February
Review outcomes of IRMP exercise	Risk Manager	9 February
Review Brigade achievements against existing Performance Plan 2006-08	Policy Group	16 February
Undertake strategic environmental analysis (SWOT)	Policy Group	16 February
Prepare draft Improvement Priorities document	Programme Office	28 February
Review formal Audit Commission Performance Framework assessment results	Policy Group	9 March
Revise draft Improvement Priorities document to incorporate formal results	Programme Office	16 March
Consult with Relationship Manager over draft Improvement Priorities	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	21 March
Present Audit Commission Performance Framework assessment results and draft Improvement Priorities to the A&PMC for scrutiny and approval	A&PMC and Assistant Chief Fire Officer	29 March
Review formal feedback arising from Cultural Audit	Policy Group	13 April
Review performance outturn for 2006/07	Programme Office	20 April
Develop revised draft Performance Plan to incorporate Improvement Priorities	Programme Office	27 April
Consult on draft Performance Plan with key stakeholders	Programme Office	11 May
Present draft Performance Plan to S&RC for scrutiny and approval	S&RC and Assistant Chief Fire Officer	24 May
Present final Performance Plan to Fire Authority for scrutiny and approval	Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer	13 June
Publish Performance Plan	Programme Office	22 June

