



**NORTH WALES
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**COMBINED IMPROVEMENT AND RISK
REDUCTION PLAN**

2013-14

Published March 2013



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SECTION 1

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND REDUCING RISK

Introduction

The risks that face North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority are changing. Like many other public sector organisations the Authority faces the prospect of meeting a potential increase in demand, but with less money.

In much the same way as individuals look to re-evaluate the way they live and to revise their plans for the future, so the Authority too is having to reconsider how it provides and delivers its services so as to put it in the best possible position to deliver high quality and effective services in North Wales over the next 20 or 30 years.

The Authority's aim is to provide continuously improving services in the most effective and efficient way it can with the money it has available. This usually involves introducing new and innovative ways of doing things.

One important aspect of that continuous improvement is the emphasis the Authority places on close collaboration with other public sector organisations. In this way, the Authority is able to bring about numerous genuinely effective improvements in outcomes (e.g. by working with a range of other North Wales organisations to identify and support vulnerable people) and in efficiency (e.g. by working with North Wales Police in the Joint Communications Centre, in managing our buildings and premises, and in tackling the problem of arson and deliberate fire setting).

The Authority is fully committed to increasing collaboration wherever it can. It is actively engaged in the work of the Local Service Boards in North Wales, and works very closely with the other two Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities. The National Issues Committee is an excellent recent example of the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities coming together to drive forward the collaborative agenda across Wales.

Since the Authority's inception in 1996 it has built up a good understanding of the risk profile and business needs in the area it covers. During that time it has overseen a welcome reduction in the number of fires in the area and a steady decline in the number of people being injured by fire.

The challenge now is to maintain that record of success at a time of unprecedented challenges and potential demands on services. It is difficult to predict with absolute certainty the changes that will take place over the next decade, but it is possible to make a reasonable assessment of the likely pressures and move to alleviate those before they become too difficult to overcome.

**Our mission is to make North Wales
a safer place to live, work and visit.**

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND REDUCING RISK

The **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** came into effect from April 2010. It requires Welsh Improvement Authorities (county councils, national parks authorities and fire and rescue authorities) to set improvement objectives and make arrangements to achieve them.

Improvement objectives can be anything that can be shown to improve what the Welsh Improvement Authority does (its 'functions') in terms of at least one out of seven aspects of improvement, namely:

1. strategic effectiveness;
2. service quality;
3. service availability;
4. fairness;
5. sustainability;
6. efficiency; and
7. innovation.

Fire and Rescue Authorities, as Welsh Improvement Authorities, have been issued with their own specific guidance relating to Part 1 of the Measure concerned with improvement.

Their operations will be subject to an Improvement Assessment by the Auditor General for Wales (operating through the Wales Audit Office) that is undertaken through a forward-looking Corporate Assessment and a retrospective Performance Assessment in each financial year.

Improving and Reducing Risk – the New Combined Approach

The Welsh Assembly Government's guidance on the Wales Programme for Improvement for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) recognises that reducing risk to communities is the cornerstone of FRAs' improvement agendas, and therefore supports the development of a new combined approach to improving services and reducing risk.

A copy of the guidance document is available from the Welsh Government's website <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/publications/?lang=en>.

Continuously Striving for Improvement

The role of the Fire and Rescue Authority is defined in a range of laws and regulations but the Authority has always sought to improve and enhance the services it provides and to do more than simply meet minimum requirements.

North Wales Fire and Rescue is committed to enhancing people's lives in a number of different ways. These include playing a part in making sure that:

- citizens, workers and visitors are protected so that they can live long and healthy lives;
- whole communities are protected so that people can lead fulfilled lives;
- the area's culture, heritage and language are protected so that people can lead enriched lives;
- cities, towns and villages are protected so that they can be economically and socially vibrant places for people to live, work and visit;
- the countryside and coastlines are protected so that they can continue to provide natural habitats and be rewarding places for people to live, work and visit;
- individual homes are protected, so that people have access to good, safe, housing;
- public buildings are protected so that people can feel safe when they conduct business there;
- workplaces are protected so that people can feel safe when they work there;
- transport networks are protected so that people and goods can pass between places freely and safely;
- the environment and the world's resources are protected so that we leave the world a better place.

Furthermore, North Wales Fire and Rescue is fully committed to ensuring that:

- it does not waste the money and other resources entrusted to it;
- it supports its employees to achieve their full potential and share their knowledge and skills with others.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has made specific arrangements to support the achievement of its improvement and risk reduction strategies.

Governance Arrangements

The Authority itself is organised in such a way that its 28 elected members can maintain a proper involvement in strategic planning, in decision-making and in monitoring the service's levels of performance. The full Authority meets regularly, at least four times per year, with more frequent meetings of the Executive Panel between times. It has an Audit Committee and a separate Standards Committee that meet to consider specific issues. The Authority's correct functioning is further supported by its Clerk and Treasurer. Meetings are open to the public, and records of the Authority's transactions are available from the Authority's website.

The Service is led and managed by the Chief Fire Officer supported by the principal officer team, the senior management team, specialist advisers, and a defined organisational structure.

The Service's structure is aligned to the six North Wales local authority areas, and works in partnership through specific collaborative arrangements with a wide range of organisations including other emergency services, members of the local resilience forum, health, education and voluntary sectors, specific agencies and commissions and local service boards. Where appropriate, formal agreements are entered into for the sharing of data.

Progress against specific departmental and project plans, annual service plans and detailed budget plans is monitored and reported regularly throughout the year, with in-year adjustments to plans being agreed where necessary.

Separate assurance processes are provided through internal and external audits, including financial audits.

For a number of years a programme of Operational Assurance has been in place, involving self-assessment against a centrally provided framework followed by peer assessment from the other two Welsh fire and rescue services observed by Wales Audit Office and Welsh Government officials.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

Collaboration

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority supports collaboration with other fire and rescue services in a range of improvement activities, pooling expertise and sharing resources (e.g. joint procurement of equipment, joint recruitment of wholetime firefighters) where appropriate, at both UK and Wales levels.

National Issues Committee (NIC)

The Welsh Fire and Rescue Services' National Issues Committee (NIC) was established in 2012 to further improve collaborative working, service delivery and sustained service improvement.

The NIC's aims are to develop and implement improved arrangements for the strategic and co-ordinated delivery of collaborative work where service improvements, efficiencies are realised. These will embody intent to deliver National outcomes without compromising the independence of the constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities to make local decisions to meet local needs.

The Key Collaborative Areas of the NIC are:

1. National Control Arrangements
2. Effective Resilience Plans for Large-Scale Emergencies
3. National Collaborative Procurement
4. National Training and Development Functions
5. National Human Resources Functions
6. Common and Specialist Services, including ICT and Transport

Other Collaboration

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority also supports collaboration with a range of partner organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This includes collaboration for the purposes of:

- realising its own aims and objectives
- local and national resilience, and
- supporting multi-agency improvement through Single Integrated Plans.

General Statement

The Local Government Measure 2009 introduced a general duty for Welsh Improvement Authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions.

Whilst there could never be an absolute duty to improve, there is an expectation that authorities will make suitable arrangements to improve and set themselves realistic, relevant and sufficiently ambitious objectives.

Authorities are required to make a general statement outlining the nature of their intentions for discharging the general duty to improve.

In accordance with this legislation, North Wales Fire and Rescue develops and publishes an annual improvement and risk reduction plan upon which it has consulted. This plan is published as soon as possible after 31 December in the year prior to the financial year to which it relates, and itemises the improvement objectives and associated measures of success for the forthcoming financial year.

Once agreement has been reached about the level of funding that the authority will have available (by mid February prior to the start of the financial year), budgets are allocated to specific purposes. This includes revenue spending and the roll-out of the capital programme.

Departmental plans showing how the high level objectives will be achieved (with associated quantitative targets where appropriate) are developed by the end of March.

Central monitoring by senior management of spending and the completion of planned objectives takes place at quarterly meetings through the year, so that any in-year adjustments can be made if necessary. Progress reports are provided to the Authority throughout the year. External assessment of progress is provided by Wales Audit Office.

A summary of the achievement of objectives is provided through the following year's Performance Assessment, published by 31 October in relation to the previous financial year, and through the Treasurer's report to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

SECTION 2

OVERVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY AND SERVICE

The Authority's Core Duties

The principal duties of the Fire and Rescue Authority, as defined in the **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**, are:

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

The Authority's Corporate Aims

This set of five corporate aims was adopted by the Authority in 2001. It summarises every aspect of what North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority seeks to achieve through the day-to-day operations of the Service.

1. To prevent accidental and malicious fires.
2. To protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards.
3. To protect the community, businesses and the environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards.
4. To find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the community.
5. To operate as effectively and efficiently as we can, making the best use of the resources we have available.

The Service's Core Values

The Fire and Rescue Service's core values summarise the principles by which it operates and the personal values that staff are encouraged to adopt and demonstrate.

These core values are:

Service to the community

Valuing service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do

People

Valuing all our employees by practising and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

Diversity

Valuing diversity in the Service and the community by:

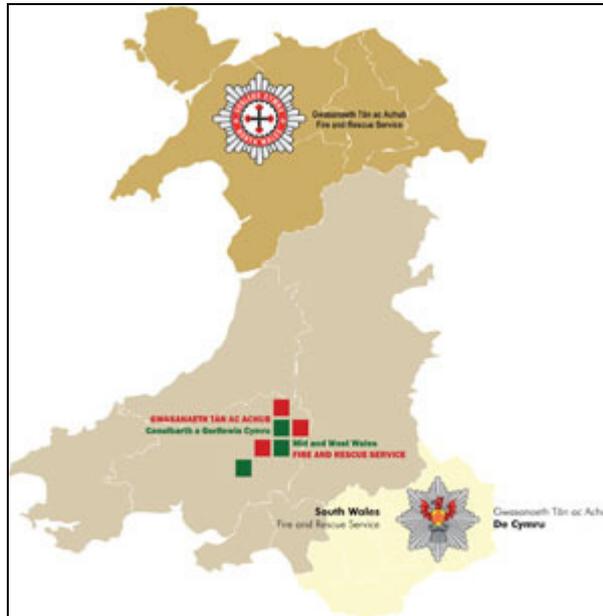
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing various solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment with progression within the Service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

Improvement

Valuing improvement at all levels of the Service by accepting responsibility for our performance by:

- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others

Responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services



North Wales **Fire and Rescue Authority** is one of just three fire and rescue authorities in Wales. Its role is:

- To perform all the duties and responsibilities of a Fire Authority in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations, in particular the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) Order 2005 - which came into force on 1 October 2006, and the 1995 Combination Scheme.
- To agree the annual service plans, the revenue and capital budgets and the contribution for the constituent councils.
- To monitor the revenue and capital budgets and deal with any significant variations, including decisions on any supplementary contributions.

The Authority was established in April 1996, and comprises 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales: Anglesey County Council (3); Conwy County Borough Council (5); Denbighshire County Council (4); Flintshire County Council (6); Gwynedd Council (5); Wrexham County Borough Council (5). The number of representatives from each constituent authority is determined on a population basis.

North Wales **Fire and Rescue Service** is headed by the Chief Fire Officer, who has overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the Service. He also provides professional advice to the Authority.

Responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services

Governmental responsibility for fire and rescue services and the promotion of fire safety in Wales lies with the **Welsh Government**. Ministerial responsibility for fire and rescue services including community fire safety falls to the Minister for Local Government and Communities. The Fire and Rescue Services Branch of the Community Safety Division of the Welsh Government is based at Rhydycar, Merthyr Tydfil.

The Programme for Government sets out the Welsh Government's aim to contribute to making communities safer by reducing the incidence and impact of fires as well as effective co-ordination of emergencies.

Its aims for the Fire and Rescue Services are that they will "achieve results by working proactively individually and in partnership with each other and across relevant agencies (including the third sector) to:

- further reduce the incidence of fires, deaths and injuries resulting from fire, and the resultant cost/impact of fires to the economy and society, at local, regional and national level;
- contribute to the further reduction of deaths and injuries from road traffic collisions; and
- be recognised by partners (including local authorities, police authorities, the health service and the third sector) and the community as being key stakeholders in delivering wider improvements for environmental and societal change through their community safety activities"

(Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards, published March 2012)

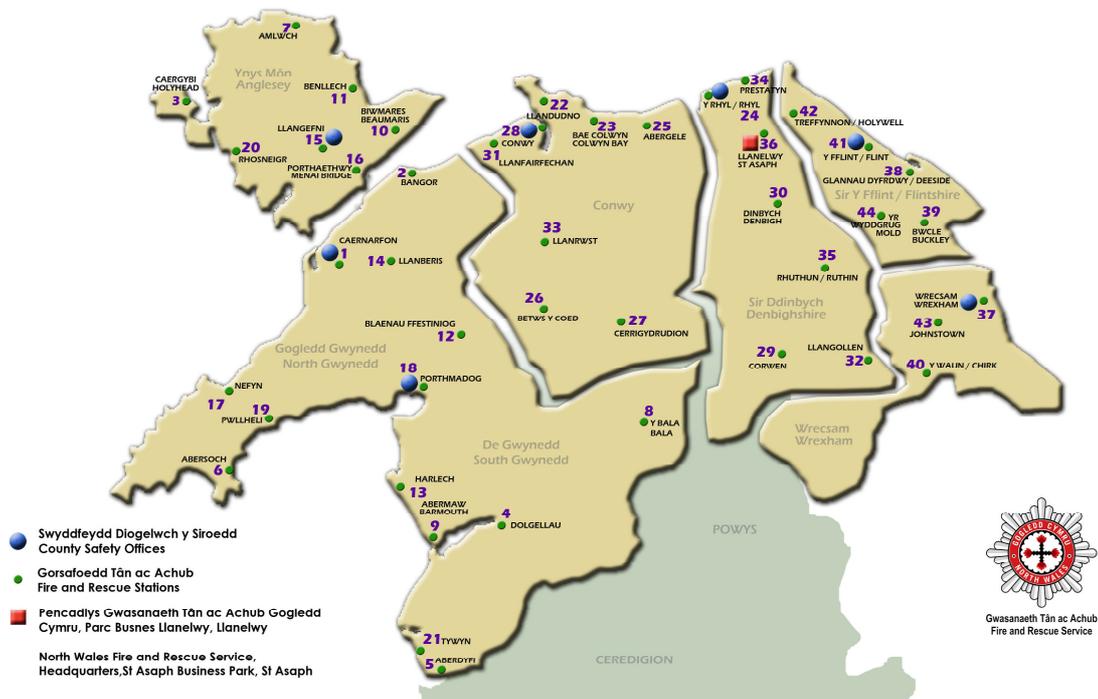
FACTS AND FIGURES

General

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service operates across the six unitary authority areas of North Wales, helping to protect a population of around 680,000 people¹, 319,772 domestic properties² and 27,419 non-domestic properties³. Additionally, it protects visitors, transport network users, the natural environment and public, business and other infrastructures.

It supports other fire and rescue services in the UK when required and remains continually prepared to protect in the event of large scale disasters.

GWASANAETH TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE Lleoliad y Gorsafod / Station Locations

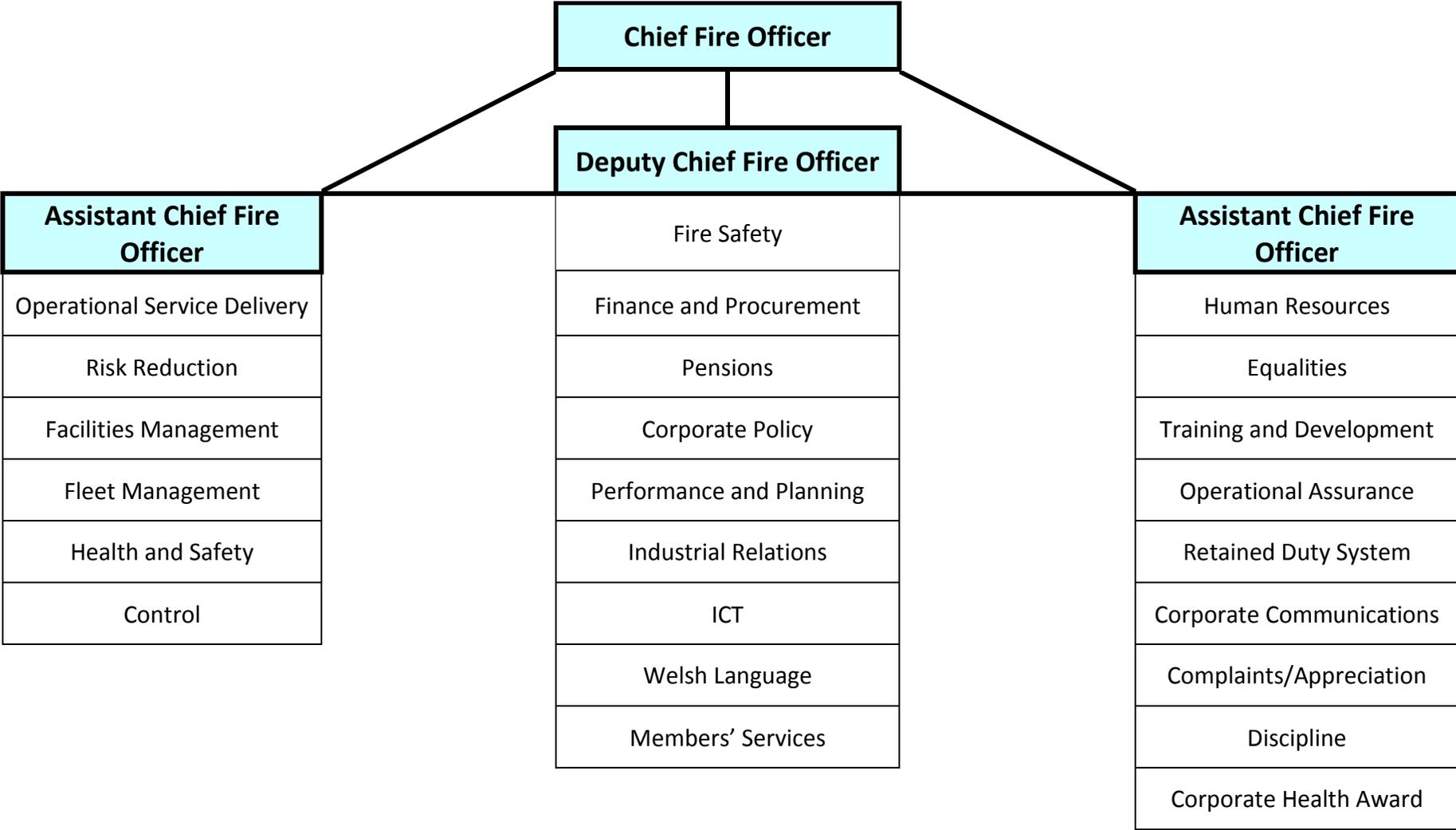


¹ 688,400 according to the Office of National Statistics 2011 mid year estimate and 687,600 according to the 2011 census.

² www.statswales.wales.gov.uk 308,893 dwellings subject to council tax, plus 10,870 dwellings exempt from council tax, by local authority (2013-14)

³ www.statswales.wales.gov.uk Non-domestic rates estimates by authority (2012-13)

The Service's Management Structure (Temporary Arrangement)



The Service's Workforce Structure

(As at 31 March 2012.)

	All posts	Centralised and county-based functions†	Staff training and development	Legislative Fire Safety	Community Fire Safety	Fire Stations	RDS posts on fire stations as 24 hour units of cover	Control
Principal Officer	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Area Manager	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
Group Manager	11	7	2	1	1	0	0	0
Station Manager	27	13	4‡	6	1	0	0	3
Watch Manager	95	5	10	1	4	22	44	9
Crew Manager	139	0	0	0	1	48	90	0
Firefighter	568	0	0	0	0	130	423	15
Support Staff	149.04	86.54	10	16	29.5	7	0	0
Externally funded*	9	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Totals	1007.04	119.54	26	24	45.5	207	557	28

RDS = Retained Duty System

‡ = 2 non-operational uniformed posts

The table shows the number of posts funded by the Authority (not individual people employed) **as at 31st March 2012**. Not all posts are full-time posts. Temporary posts set up for special short-term projects have not been included.

*Externally funded = non-permanent posts created through separate or shared funding sources e.g. from the Welsh Government.

On 31st March 2012, a total of 983 individual people were employed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – 252 men and 18 women as wholetime firefighters/operational managers, 504 men and 24 women as retained firefighters, 3 men and 28 women as control staff, and 62 men and 92 women in a range of specialist roles including legislative and community fire safety roles⁴. †Central and county-based functions include (alphabetically):

- Administration and Secretarial Services
- Authority Member Services
- Business Continuity Management
- Catering
- Corporate Communications
- Corporate Planning
- Equalities
- Estate Management
- Finance and Payroll
- Fleet Management and Maintenance
- Health and Safety
- Human Resources
- Information & Communications Technology (ICT)
- Information Legislation
- Reception and Switchboard
- Local Resilience
- National Resilience
- Operational Support
- Performance Data Analysis
- Strategic and Departmental Management
- Supplies and Stores
- Translation Services

⁴ Further information at all-Wales level is available at <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Community-Safety/Fire-Service-Operational-Statistics>.

Financial Information

In 2010-11, contributions totalling £32,093,400 were applied to fund revenue expenditure from the six Local Authorities in North Wales.

Against a backdrop of reducing public expenditure, the Fire and Rescue Authority decided in December 2010 to match its own budget to the indicated reduction in the Revenue Support Grant provided to local authorities in North Wales for the next three years. This resulted in a reduction in the North Wales fire and rescue budget of 0.5% in both 2011/12 and 2012/13 and a standstill budget in 2013/14.

Given that the anticipated financial commitments would normally have increased the budget by 2% in the first two years, and then by 2.5% in year 3, the overall budget reduction savings required to be made over the 3 years amounted to £2.45million, or 7.5% of the 2010/11 budget.

2013-14 is the final year of that 3-year financial strategy. Anticipated cost increases during the year will therefore need to be accommodated within a standstill budget of just under £32million.

Contributions from the unitary authorities for 2013-14 were determined by the Fire and Rescue Authority as:

Authority	Contribution 2012/13 £	Population Estimates 2013	2013/14 Contribution £	% Change
Conwy County Borough Council	5,206,959	112,988	5,198,570	-0.16%
Anglesey County Council	3,219,270	69,903	3,216,231	-0.09%
Gwynedd Council	5,525,827	119,713	5,507,985	-0.32%
Denbighshire County Council	4,569,316	99,840	4,593,630	+0.53%
Flintshire County Council	6,981,590	151,165	6,955,089	-0.38%
Wrexham County Borough Council	6,269,049	136,938	6,300,506	+0.50%
Total	31,772,011	690,547	31,772,011	

(Changes per unitary authority reflect changes in the population.)

Revenue Expenditure in 2013-14

Spending plans in 2013-14:

	Budget 2012/13 £	Budget 2013/14 £
Employees	23,048,716	22,945,848
Premises	1,279,800	1,310,347
Transport	1,148,051	1,178,052
Supplies	3,009,194	2,979,346
Agency	319,000	322,000
Support Services	323,700	377,960
Capital Financing	2,923,050	2,946,623
Total	32,051,511	32,060,176
Income	-279,500	-288,185
Net expenditure	31,772,011	31,772,011

Assets

Buildings

In North Wales there are 44 fire stations, 3 of which (in Wrexham, Queensferry and Rhyl) stay open around the clock; 5 of which are permanently staffed between 12:00 midday and 10:00 p.m. and operate as retained fire stations outside those hours; and 36 of which operate wholly as retained fire stations. The first purpose-built community fire station in North Wales was officially opened in Rhyl in October 2008.

Since 2005, the main headquarters function has been run from premises on the St Asaph Business Park, with a few central functions (including the Training and Development Centre) located in Rhyl and Conwy. There is a county safety office in each county council area, and additional training facilities at several locations throughout North Wales.

The fleet maintenance workshops and stores are located in Llandudno Junction.

The main Control function moved from Rhyl to the Joint Communications Centre on St Asaph Business Park in 2008, but with the Rhyl control retained as a secondary fallback control room.

Vehicles

The Service also manages a fleet of operational and support vehicles to respond in a range of emergency and non-emergency situations (figures as at 31st March 2012):

- 54 operational fire and rescue appliances
- 3 aerial appliances
- 9 reserve appliances
- 3 training appliances
- 104 non-operational fleet vehicles (cars and vans)
- 2 incident response units
- 1 incident command unit
- 20 other operational special appliances (prime movers)
- 4 other special fire and rescue appliances

Capital Expenditure in 2013-14

Under the prudential Code the Authority can finance its capital programme in accordance with whichever method is most cost effective. It is anticipated that the following capital spending will be financed by loan:

	2012/13 Estimated outturn £	2013/14 Proposed Expenditure £
Premises	3,152,507	4,700,000
Vehicles	492,250	2,117,000
ICT and other equipment	721,056	799,000

SECTION 3

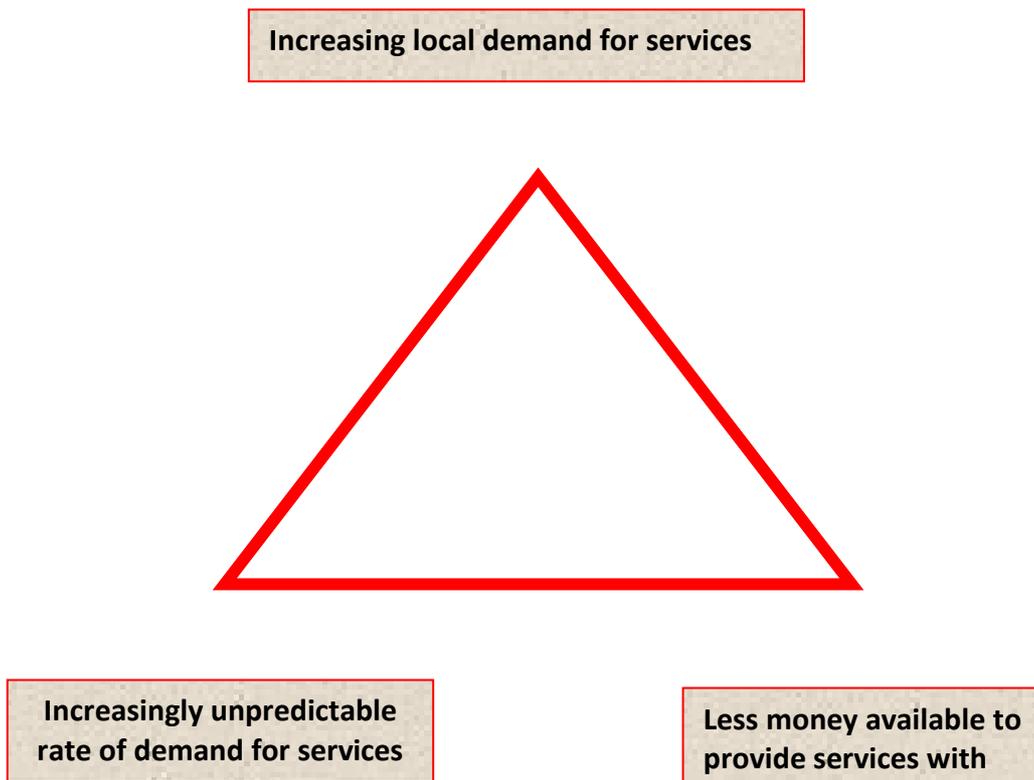
IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

IDENTIFYING AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

In 2012 members of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority set up a working group to develop a set of draft Improvement Objectives for 2013-14. This was achieved through a series of meetings to consider a range of information and to identify the main strategic priorities for the Authority.

The draft objectives were subject to a 12-week public consultation from mid October 2012 onwards before being finally approved by the Authority in March 2013.

The Authority recognised from the findings of the working group that in future it was likely to have to face:



IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

The Authority based this assessment on the following four risk categories:

1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES

- **THE POPULATION OF THE AREA IS INCREASING**

Why is that relevant?

Because the more people in the area, the greater the challenge of preventing fires and maintaining the quality of the Authority's response to emergency incidents. An increasing demand for fire and rescue services may not necessarily be matched by an increasing budget.

- **THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE ONE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS**

Why is that relevant?

Because our analysis of fire deaths showed that being alone at the time of the fire was a risk factor. More people living alone increases the overall risk.

- **THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IS GROWING AT A FASTER RATE THAN THE POPULATION**

Why is that relevant?

Because when taken in combination, a growing population and more households in the area means that the Service will need to work even more effectively to continue to ensure good outcomes for people.

- **A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE HOUSING STOCK IS IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR**

Why is that relevant?

Because our analysis showed that the risk of dying in a dwelling fire is higher for households living in rented accommodation. Conversely, our partnerships with the social housing sector make it easier to deliver prevention services to tenants in these dwellings than to tenants of individual private landlords.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

- **PEOPLE ARE LIVING LONGER AND THE NUMBER OF OLDER PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES LOOKS SET TO RISE SHARPLY**

Why is that relevant?

As people age they become more vulnerable because their mobility may be affected and their sensory responses may not be as sharp.

- **DEPENDENCY IS HIGH, BUT PEOPLE EXPECT TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE**

Why is that relevant?

Because people will need to be supported to live independently as they age and the Authority will need to continuously find ways of contributing to their safety

In Summary:

There will be more people to protect – and specifically more people in the higher risk categories.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

2. POPULATION LIFESTYLE CHALLENGES

- **THE RATE OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS HIGH**

Why is that relevant?

Because people under the influence of alcohol are much more vulnerable to the dangers of fire as they underestimate or ignore risk and are less able to self-rescue.

- **SMOKING RATES REMAIN RELATIVELY CONSTANT**

Why is that relevant?

Because fires started by carelessly discarded cigarettes can be amongst the most deadly. Despite the recent introduction of cigarettes that extinguish themselves when they are not being smoked, the risk is not entirely removed and the prevalence of smokers and the number of young smokers in Wales suggests that this should remain on the Authority's register of risk.

- **SUBSTANCE MISUSE IS WIDESPREAD**

Why is that relevant?

Because people are at greater risk if their lives are chaotic or their awareness of their surroundings is impaired through drugs or alcohol.

In summary:

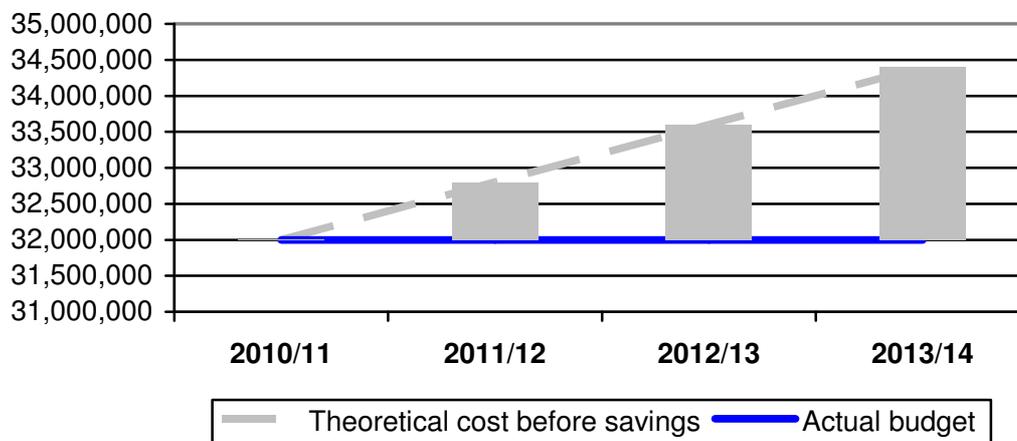
It isn't necessarily *where* people live that puts them at greater risk, it's *how* they live.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

3. FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

This section focuses on the risk of not being able to afford the cost of running the service or maintaining its assets such as its buildings and vehicles.

The national economic downturn together with the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2010 gave an indication of the level of cuts to public services expected in the coming years. In December of that year, the Authority took the decision to freeze the annual budget for three years, which in real terms (taking account of predicted cost increases) meant cutting the annual budget by around £800,000 each year for three years.



Any future cuts to the budget will therefore be added to the £2.4 million per year already saved.

The financial outlook for the public sector in Wales will be challenging.

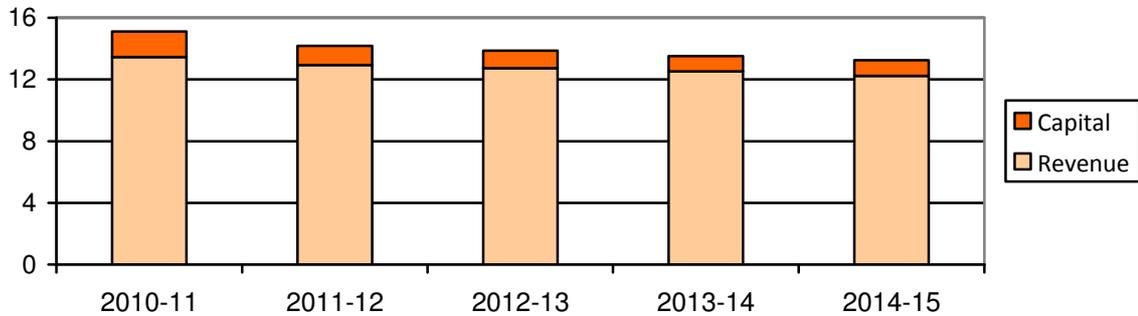
The Auditor General's report "A picture of public services 2011" acknowledged that "Welsh public services face change and tough choices as a result of budget cuts and other pressures over the next four years".

The report recognised that "Overall, police and fire and rescue services in Wales are preparing well for the challenges they face, with clear plans and a good track record of financial management and delivering transformational change." However, the main point of the Auditor General's message was that even though public services are prepared for funding cuts, they will nevertheless be "seriously tested as they move to actually delivering real cost reductions".

The Auditor General's report presents clearly what the Welsh public sector can anticipate over the next couple of years, with reduced funding for the Welsh Government being reflected in real-terms cuts.

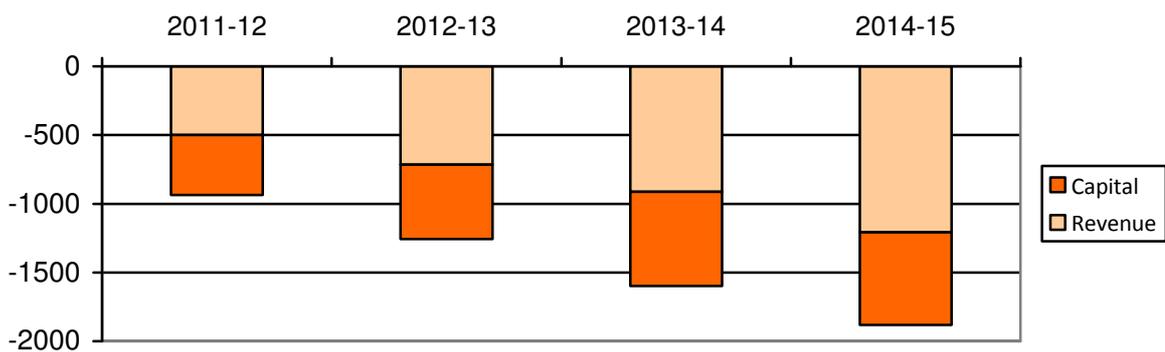
IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

Welsh Government funding in real terms (£ billion)



Source: Wales Audit Office's analysis of Welsh Government figures in "A Picture of Public Services 2011".

Real-terms 'cut' using 2010-11 as a baseline (£ million)



Source: Wales Audit Office's analysis of Welsh Government figures in "A Picture of Public Services 2011".

Responding to the Auditor General's report, the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee also acknowledged that the public sector in Wales would need "to make further savings and mitigate the impact that a reduction in budget will have on service users".

Grants from the Welsh Government have also enabled the delivery of much of the Authority's prevention work in recent years. If these were to cease, decisions would need to be made about the extent of, and funding of, future prevention work.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

4. AREA-BASED CHALLENGES

- **WEATHER**

Why is that relevant?

Because the fire and rescue service has to remain equipped and ready to respond to many weather-related incidents. By their nature these types of incidents are hard to plan for as we cannot know when and where they are going to happen, or how long they will last. For that reason services have to be organised in order to be able to react to spate conditions including large countryside fires, widespread flooding, high winds and storms.

- **ROADS AND ROAD TRAFFIC**

Why is that relevant?

Because the fire and rescue service responds to many RTCs where people have to be extricated from crashed vehicles. It does not have a legal duty to prevent RTCs, but it does play a part in seeking improvements in road safety. As with weather-related incidents, it is difficult to predict when and where RTCs will occur, but also the rurality and the anticipated increase in the number of older people indicate that serious RTCs could increase disproportionately in North Wales in future.

In summary:

The rate of demand for some of the less predictable Services may increase or become more volatile.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

Based on this assessment of strategic risk, the Authority therefore proposed that its Improvement Objectives for 2012-13 should continue into 2013-14, with the specific addition that it would adopt a new Dwelling Fire Response Charter and set local response criteria.

The Authority conducted a public consultation to check that there was wider support for these proposals.

Around 170 different comments, views and questions were received during the consultation period at the end of 2012 and the Authority's proposals were generally well-supported. 74% thought that the Authority had identified the right priorities for 2013-14 and 89% agreed that the commitments made under the all-Wales Dwelling Fires Response Charter were the right ones.

The majority of respondents also contributed views on what the Authority should be considering as it prepared for 2014-15 and beyond through two specific workstreams. These are covered in more detail in Section 4.

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

Improvement Objective 1

To help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation.

Why has this objective been chosen?

Because keeping people safe is at the heart of what the Authority does. The safety of people in North Wales is its primary concern, but also it makes much better sense to prevent incidents from happening than to simply react every time they do.

The Authority is committed to retaining its annual target of delivering 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks to householders in North Wales, but the demographics of North Wales and the identified behaviours mean that prevention activity may need to increase in order to keep pace, and that response services will need to remain available to deal with failures and the unexpected or genuinely unpreventable accidents. For many years the Authority has been reminding people that prevention is better than cure, and it still believes that.

Furthermore, the Authority is very clearly mandated to work in this direction - the Welsh Government's Programme for Wales sets out its own commitment to improving community safety, which is reflected in its Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards.

What is the expected outcome?

People expect to be safe in their homes. With the right support and advice, people can protect themselves from accidental fires, both by preventing a fire from starting in the first instance, and by knowing how to react quickly and correctly if one does occur.

Where that has failed, people should have confidence that the fire and rescue service will respond quickly and effectively to rescue them and limit the damage to their property.

What actions are planned for 2013-14?

1. Delivery of Community Safety/Risk Reduction Strategy that includes:
 - Provision of Community Safety Advice
 - Targeted and tailored delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks
 - Provision of free equipment according to assessed need.

2. Continuous monitoring of the incidence and causes of dwelling fires.
3. Involvement of partner organisations in learning lessons from dwelling fires to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.
4. An examination and review of the factors that may contribute to the particular vulnerability of some people to fire, cross referenced where appropriate to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
5. A review of the Service's current arrangements with partner organisations for the delivery of home fire safety checks and referrals of particularly vulnerable people.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Outputs

- The number of home fire safety checks delivered, with a target of 30,000 during the year.
- The percentage of home fire safety checks delivered as a result of a referral from a partner agency, with a minimum target of 30% of the overall number delivered.

Outcomes

- The number of deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires compared with previous years and in other areas.
- The number of injuries (especially in the more serious categories) sustained at accidental dwelling fires compared with previous years and in other areas.
- The percentage of people involved in accidental dwelling fires who were able to escape unharmed without needing assistance from a fire crew to do so compared with previous years.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

During 2012 the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities of North Wales, Mid & West Wales and South Wales come together to develop an all-Wales Charter to ensure that wherever people live in Wales they can expect to be helped and supported to remain safe from fire in their homes and that if a fire does break out that they will receive a prompt, effective and professional emergency response to their call for assistance.

The Charter makes seven specific commitments that the Fire and Rescue Authority will:

1. Take the lead in driving down the number of dwelling fires that occur and in reducing their impact on people.

We will do this by:

- 1.1 Giving advice on home fire safety to the general public and specific audiences, using a range of media and communication methods.
- 1.2 Using relevant information to identify and direct prevention advice at people whose homes may be at relatively higher risk from fire.
- 1.3 Ensuring that people can access home fire safety checks where advice can be tailored to suit their own individual needs.
- 1.4 Engaging with partner organisations to help tailor home fire safety advice to meet the needs of people who require additional support.
- 1.5 Actively promoting the use of smoke alarms and other home fire safety equipment.
- 1.6 Working with communities, community groups and their representatives to help prevent deliberate fire-setting in dwellings.
- 1.7 Working with other agencies to try to deter individual people (including children and young people) who have an identified propensity to start fires deliberately from doing so.
- 1.8 Working with landlords and other people responsible for managing particular types of dwellings to help them meet their legal obligations as regards fire safety in those premises.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

2. React quickly and efficiently every time we receive an emergency 999 call to attend a dwelling fire.

We will do this by:

- 2.1 Answering every emergency 999 call we receive within seconds of it being put through.
- 2.2 Providing a high quality, professional telephone response that is mindful of callers' language preference and disability needs.
- 2.3 Ensuring that even before a call comes in we have the appropriate arrangements in place to deal effectively with it.
- 2.4 Mobilising the correct response to the correct address as quickly as possible after receiving the call.
- 2.5 Providing life saving advice to callers when it is needed.
- 2.6 Maintaining and updating our electronic communications and mobilising systems.
- 2.7 Routinely updating and improving the information we hold about routes, locations and premises in the area.
- 2.8 Constantly reviewing levels of demand on the service and where appropriate making adjustments to continue to provide the best level of cover available.
- 2.9 Being skilled at identifying hoax calls to avoid tying up valuable resources unnecessarily.
- 2.10 Regularly reviewing our own resilience and performance, taking steps to address deficiencies and finding ways to improve the way we handle calls and mobilise to dwelling fires.

3. Attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them.

We will do this by:

- 3.1 Mobilising the resources that are most likely to reach the dwelling fire soonest (normally the nearest available).
- 3.2 Keeping the time it takes to arrive at the dwelling fire as short as possible, bearing in mind people's safety en route.
- 3.3 Deploying enough resources to the dwelling fire to be able to deal with it effectively in accordance with recognised procedures and safe systems of working.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

- 3.4 Ensuring that the fire and rescue personnel deployed to the dwelling fire have attained the appropriate level of operational competence for their respective role.
- 3.5 Ensuring that the fire and rescue personnel deployed to the dwelling fire have the appropriate equipment (including personal protective equipment) to tackle it effectively and safely.
- 3.6 Ensuring that the fire and rescue personnel deployed to the dwelling fire meet defined fitness and health criteria, and that they have access to occupational health services.
- 3.7 Ensuring that the vehicles and equipment provided are fit for purpose and have been properly serviced and maintained.
- 3.8 Regularly reviewing our own resilience and performance, taking steps to address deficiencies and finding ways to improve how we attend dwelling fires.

4. Deal with dwelling fires effectively, efficiently and professionally.

We will do this by:

- 4.1 Regarding the protection of human life as our highest priority.
- 4.2 Ensuring that we always deploy enough suitably trained and equipped fire and rescue personnel to the dwelling fire to tackle it safely and effectively in accordance with recognized procedures and safe systems of working.
- 4.3 Ensuring that fire and rescue personnel attending the dwelling fire have access to the correct level of supervision and management to deal with the incident correctly and safely.
- 4.4 Working well alongside personnel from other agencies (e.g. ambulance and police) according to recognised protocols and procedures.
- 4.5 Providing basic life support and first aid to casualties at the scene pending their transfer to the care of the ambulance service.
- 4.6 Treating people affected by the fire sensitively and with respect.
- 4.7 Keeping the property damage and environmental effects of the fire to a minimum.
- 4.8 Regularly reviewing our own performance, taking steps to address deficiencies and finding ways to improve the way we deal with dwelling fires.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

5. Help to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.

We will do this by:

- 5.1 Providing an appropriate level of post-incident advice and reassurance to residents in the vicinity of the dwelling fire, working with other organisations as appropriate.
- 5.2 Working supportively with the people who were directly affected by the fire.
- 5.3 Regularly reviewing our own performance, taking steps to address deficiencies and finding ways to improve how we help communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.

6. Investigate the causes of dwelling fires and hold relevant people to account when appropriate to do so.

We will do this by:

- 6.1 Investigating and recording the cause of every dwelling fire that we attend.
- 6.2 Assisting with police investigations and working with other organisations as appropriate where a dwelling fire is suspected or is known to have been started deliberately.
- 6.3 Providing a comprehensive and robust enforcement regime to ensure that landlords and managers of relevant living accommodation fulfill their responsibilities in compliance with fire safety legislation.
- 6.4 Regularly reviewing our own performance, taking steps to address deficiencies and finding ways to improve how we investigate dwelling fires, apply our enforcement powers and hold people to account in cases of negligent or criminal behaviour.

7. Strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

We will do this by:

- 7.1 Recording relevant information accurately and to a consistently high standard.
- 7.2 Routinely reviewing and assessing our performance and the outcomes that have been achieved, looking for ways to improve.
- 7.3 Reviewing incidents involving loss of life or injury at dwelling fires to find ways of minimizing the likelihood of recurrence.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

- 7.4 Analysing and examining relevant information with an open mind.
- 7.5 Consulting and engaging with others to help identify how we might improve what we do or the outcomes that are achieved.
- 7.6 Inviting external views and opinions, including through audit and assessment of our performance and activities.
- 7.7 Responding quickly and fairly to complaints according to a published complaints procedure.
- 7.8 Reporting our performance publicly, giving a balanced assessment of the progress made towards a continuing long term downward trend in the incidence of dwelling fires and associated casualties, and explaining what we will do to improve further.
- 7.9 As a minimum we will report against:
- Welsh Government performance indicators relating to fire deaths, injuries, accidental dwelling fires and home fire safety checks.
 - Local performance indicators relating to operational competence levels of fire and rescue personnel.
 - Local performance indicators relating to any serious injuries sustained by fire fighters at dwelling fires (under RIDDOR criteria).
 - Local performance indicators relating to working time lost as a result of those injuries.
 - Local performance indicators relating to response criteria (including response time) to dwelling fires.

Specific Commitments of the Dwelling Fire Response Charter

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Where performance can be reported back numerically (e.g. the number of accidental dwelling fires attended, the number of serious injuries sustained by fire fighters at dwelling fires) we will do so.

Where we have set specific targets, we will report performance against them. These include to:

- a) answer 85% of all 999 calls within 7 seconds, 95% within 10 seconds and 98% within 20 seconds
- b) initiate a response to a dwelling fire within 90 seconds on 80% of occasions and within 120 seconds on 100% of occasions.
- c) send at least two fire appliances and eight firefighters to every dwelling fire. (The officer in charge of the incident will assess whether to bring in additional resources, depending on the extent of the fire.)

Where numerical reporting is not appropriate (e.g. working with landlords and other people responsible for managing particular types of dwellings to help them meet their legal obligations) we will give a narrative account of our work during the year.

Additionally, in accordance with Welsh Government Circular W-FRSC-(2012) 04⁵ that was issued in March 2012, we will be reporting:

- national strategic and core indicators
- attendance times to dwelling fires⁶
- the number of serious injuries (under RIDDOR criteria) sustained by firefighters during the year, and the number of working shifts/days lost due to sickness absence as a result of those injuries
- attendance at core operational skills courses compared with planned attendance.

⁵

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/fire/circulars/2012/wfrsc201204/?lang=en>

⁶ As reported through Welsh Government Fire Statistics Wales series. Response times in 2011-12 were reported in July 2012 in bulletin SB 67/2013.

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120731sb672012en.pdf>

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

Improvement Objective 2 (continued from 2012-13)

To find ways of reducing the overall cost of running the Service each year in order to operate with the annual budget.

What is the expected outcome?

The Authority is now approaching the third year of its 3-year strategy for reducing its level of spending.

What actions are planned for 2013-14?

For the second and third years, members agreed that the majority of the savings - over £1,000,000 – would come from a reduction in expenditure to deliver fire cover and a corresponding reduction in the level of support.

For the reduction in cost of fire cover, members opted to make changes to the system of rostering of crews with any changes made by negotiated agreement. This option was chosen on the grounds that it would have the least impact on the service delivered to the public of North Wales.

Agreements were reached between officers and the representative bodies and a new rostering system was implemented from 1st April 2012.

The agreement was a reduction of 22 firefighter posts which was to be achieved by natural wastage. However, if the number of firefighters retiring is not in line with the proposed budget savings then a reserve has been set aside to cover additional costs until the numbers leaving the Service are in line with those set out in the original proposal.

The number of support posts has been reduced following a restructuring exercise and further reductions are to be made in 2013/14 following a further review of services.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Estimated provisional outturns for the previous financial year are routinely reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority every Autumn, with an explanation of any variances to the planned budget. These are followed by more detailed reports and audit findings.

SECTION 4

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR 2014-15

Preparing to set the 2014-15 improvement objectives.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has a good track record of introducing improvements to offer better quality, better value and more efficient services to the population of North Wales. It accepts, however, that there are some aspects that have not changed sufficiently - if at all - and which could potentially jeopardise the Service's capacity to deliver prevention and response services in future.

For this reason the Authority has commissioned work to start looking into some specific areas with the overall aim of ensuring that fire and rescue services can be successfully sustained in North Wales over the next 20 years at least.

This preparatory work relates to two specific workstreams:

1. To complete a Sustainable Fire and Rescue Services Review

Many Fire and Rescue Authorities – but especially those that provide services in rural areas - are finding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain staff who can provide fire cover and hold down a full time job with their primary employer.

The Retained Duty System is a recognised system of employing people to remain available to respond quickly to emergency fire and rescue incidents. They are paid an annual retainer and fees for attending incidents.

This duty system suited previous generations very well as people generally stayed within their communities without travelling far for either work or leisure. However, this is no longer the case and people find it increasingly difficult to commit to staying close to their local fire station for up to 120 hours per week just in case they are needed.

The review will look at a range of options for providing fire and rescue services in North Wales, particularly in rural areas, focussing on the long term sustainability and affordability of services.

2. To devise a three-year financial plan for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

Careful financial planning is vital to being able to provide fire and rescue services. The Authority has already reduced its budget by £2.4 million between 2011/12 and 2013/14, effectively driving out savings of £800,000 in the first year, another £800,000 in the second year, and a further £800,000 in the third year.

The public sector is facing a very uncertain period of reduced spending. Planning the delivery of fire and rescue services will become increasingly challenging if the money available to run the service does not keep pace with increased costs and increased demand.

The review will look at known and anticipated costs, and prepare the way for the Authority to set its annual budget for these three financial years.

The Next Steps

The Authority proposes to draft its Improvement Objectives for 2014-15, consult publicly on them towards the end of 2013 and publish them before the end of March 2014.

SECTION 5

OTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT DETAILS

Postal address: North Wales Fire and Rescue
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Telephone: 01745 535250

Website: www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** came into effect in October 2004, replacing the previous Fire and Rescue Services Act 1947 in England and Wales. It clarifies the duties and powers of Fire and Rescue Authorities to:
 - Promote fire safety
 - Fight fires
 - Protect people and property from fires
 - Rescue people from road traffic accidents
 - Respond to other specified risks, such as chemical incidents
 - Respond to large scale emergencies such as terrorist attacks
- The **National Framework 2012 Onwards** was issued by the Welsh Government under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It sets out the Welsh Government's vision and priorities for the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales and what is expected of them during the lifespan of the framework.
- **The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** came into effect from 1st April 2010. It created a statutory regime that integrates shorter term local service improvement and long term community planning. Specific guidance relating to the improvement element (Part 1) for fire and rescue services was issued by the Welsh Government in May 2010.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The **Fire and Rescue Authorities (Improvement Plans) (Wales) Order 2012** came into force on May 21st 2012. It requires fire and rescue authorities to publish their improvement plan as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December in the year prior to the financial year to which the improvement plan relates.
- **Previous year's Performance** - Section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish performance information relating to each financial year, by 31 October, in the year following that to which the performance relates. The Authority's assessment of its performance in 2011-12 is available from the Performance and Improvement Section of its website – www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk.
- The **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** came into effect in October 2006, replacing over 70 pieces of fire safety law. It applies to all non-domestic premises in England and Wales, including the communal parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation. It abolished the requirement for businesses to have fire certificates and put the onus on the person responsible for the premises to address fire safety in those premises.
- The **Equality Act 2010** replaced over 100 pieces of equality law. The General Duty and specific duties for the public sector in Wales came into force in April 2011. Listed bodies (including Fire and Rescue Authorities) had until April 2012 to publish equality objectives and Strategic Equality Plans.
- The **Civil Contingencies Act 2004** received royal assent in October 2004. It provides a single framework for civil protection to large scale emergencies that threaten serious damage to human welfare, the environment or to security. Fire and Rescue Services are 'Category 1' responders under this act.
- **Welsh Government Fire Branch**
The responsibility for providing fire and rescue services and promoting fire safety in Wales was devolved to the National Assembly for Wales on 10 November 2004. The Community Safety division of the Welsh Assembly Government is based at Rhydycar, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ.
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/?lang=en>
- **The Fire and Rescue Adviser**
The postholder is accountable to the Director of Communities and Social Justice, and advises Welsh Ministers on fire and rescue matters.
- **Wales Audit Office**
The Wales Audit Office publishes reports on behalf of the Auditor General who is required to assess the likelihood that the Authority will continue to improve and whether the Authority is discharging its duties and acting in accordance with relevant issued guidance. Auditors also work with fire authorities across Wales to

deliver a programme of financial and value-for-money audits.

<http://www.wao.gov.uk/>

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INTERVENTION IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE OR POTENTIAL FAILURE TO COMPLY

The Welsh Government has powers of intervention:

- under section 22 of the **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the National Framework. In such cases, section 23 - Intervention Protocol would apply.
- under section 29 of the **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is at risk of failing, to comply with the Measure. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, Welsh Ministers may only intervene after they have offered voluntary support to the Authority under section 28 of the Measure.

CONSULTATIONS

	Consultation	Publication	For year
Full Risk Reduction Plan	Summer 2006	October 2006	2007-08 onwards
Annual Action Plan	Summer 2007	October 2007	2008-09
Annual Action Plan	Summer 2008	October 2008	2009-10
Annual Action Plan	Summer 2008	October 2009	2010-11
Full Risk Reduction Plan (principles)	Summer 2009		
Full Risk Reduction and Improvement Plan (detailed)	Summer 2010	October 2010	2011-12
Improvement Objectives	Summer 2011	October 2011	2012-13
Improvement Objectives	Autumn 2012	March 2013	2013-14

HOW ANYONE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Sections 5 and 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 require the Authority to consult widely before coming to final decisions about improvement.

The Welsh Government recommends that Authorities should consult citizens, local businesses, community planning partners, other fire and rescue authorities, and other current or potential partners.

The Authority conducts a public consultation each year when it publicises its proposed improvement and risk reduction objectives for the following year and invites comments from anyone with an interest in what the Authority does. All comments received are taken into account before finalising the following year's plans.

Anyone wishing to contribute new ideas about future improvement objectives should write to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer at the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Ffordd Salesbury, St. Asaph Business Park, St. Asaph, Denbighshire LL17 0JJ.