



AGENDA ITEM: 11

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21st December 2009

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2009

**Report by Shân Morris
Corporate Planning Manager**

Purpose of Report

- 1.** To inform members of the steps being taken towards the introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 ('the Measure').

Introduction

- 2.** The Measure will take effect incrementally from January 2010. It replaces the previous definition of public service improvement as characterized under the Best Value regime with one that gives consideration to broader matters of strategic effectiveness, service quality and availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.
- 3.** Under Part 1 of the Measure (Improvement), fire and rescue authorities in Wales are designated as 'Welsh Improvement Authorities'.
- 4.** The Measure also seeks to strengthen the processes of Community Planning as a means of improving local wellbeing over periods of 10-15 years.
- 5.** Under Part 2 of the Measure (Community Planning), fire and rescue authorities in Wales are designated as 'Community Planning Partners' to county/county borough councils.

Information

- 6.** The Measure introduces changes to the Authority's planning processes and the Auditor General's approach to performance audit and inspection. This therefore requires a number of steps to be taken before full implementation can be achieved in practice:

a. Guidance

- 7.** Section 48 of the Measure enables Welsh Ministers to issue guidance to Welsh Improvement Authorities. The Assembly is now consulting on two versions of Part 1 guidance – one for county/county borough councils and national parks authorities, and the other for fire and rescue authorities. The Assembly is also consulting on a single version of Part 2 guidance that will apply to local authorities and all their community planning partners.
- 8.** Responses to the Assembly should be submitted for Part 2 by 15th January 2010 and for Part 1 by 25th January 2010.

b. Planning

- 9.** Co-ordinated planning needs to take account of the full range of processes such as improvement and risk reduction planning, budget planning, public engagement, operational assurance, audit and inspection.
- 10.** Work is now underway – in consultation with the Assembly and the Wales Audit Office – to put in place an appropriate annual planning cycle that seeks to streamline and unify processes where possible.

c. Audit and Inspection

- 11.** The Auditor General for Wales' annual audit and inspection responsibilities will only apply to Part 1 of the Measure, as community planning is not considered to be compatible with audit methodologies.
- 12.** Arrangements under Sections 17 to 19 of the Measure will introduce annual forward-looking Corporate Assessments and backward-looking Performance Assessments of each fire and rescue

authority. The findings of both will be summarised in Annual Improvement Reports published by the Auditor General every November.

- 13.** Because of the retrospective elements of the Measure, some parts of it will not commence fully until April 2011. Audit arrangements have therefore been devised to cover the transitional period between now and March 2011.

d. Performance Indicators

- 14.** The introduction of the Measure annuls the set of National Strategic Indicators. Moreover, the Service Standard for responding to fires in the home is being reviewed by the Assembly.
- 15.** The same set of indicators as in 2009-10 will therefore continue to be collected and reported after 1st April 2010 on a non-statutory basis until a new statutory set is introduced.

Recommendations

- 16.** That members:
 - (a) note the steps being taken towards the introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009; and
 - (b) agree that given the deadlines for responding to the Assembly's consultation on the draft guidance, the Authority's response will be approved through the Chairman and the Clerk.