NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

16 September 2013

COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SERVICE GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

Report by Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

1   To inform Members of the contents of the Authority's response to the Public Services Commission's call for evidence.

Background

2   The Welsh Government's Programme for Government includes a series of reforms and reviews to strengthen the delivery of efficient, effective and accessible public services. In April 2013, the First Minister established the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

3   The aims of the Commission are to:
   • gather and provide an objective, authoritative assessment of the extent to which current arrangements for public service governance and delivery in Wales meet the needs and aspirations of people today and provide a sustainable basis for the future
   • propose an optimal model of public service governance and delivery for Wales, that will ensure that efficient, effective and accessible services are provided to the citizen; and support continuous improvement in those services against the background of financial and demand pressures
   • and, as part of this, to engage with those who provide and use public services.

Information

4   As noted in the Chair's report, the three FRA Chairs met with the Commission during August as did the three Chief Fire Officers. This gave the Chairs and CFOs the opportunity to inform the Commission about the work of the fire and rescue services in Wales and also to contribute to the wider discussion on the public service sector within Wales. In addition, the 'service providers call for evidence' questionnaire has been completed and a copy is attached at Appendix 1 for members' information.

Recommendation

5   Members are asked to note the information provided in the questionnaire.

30 August 2013

North Wales Fire and Rescue evidence to the

Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery in Wales

We welcome the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Commission, through both this written submission and through your recent meetings with Chief Fire Officer Simon Smith and Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies, Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

The fire prevention agenda in Wales has been very successful in improving public safety over a number of years. The 68% reduction in fires and the 44% reduction in fire casualties since 2001-02 are remarkable. It is therefore entirely appropriate to consider the factors that have contributed to that success and whether there are any messages for other public services in Wales.

The clarity, consistency and focus of the fire prevention agenda, along with the funding to support it, have enabled the three Fire and Rescue Authorities to develop their individual strategies for achieving this strategic aim. We have learned from each other but developed bespoke ways of achieving that outcome by analysing our own data, working with partners and listening to our local communities.

We recognise, however, from our work with local partners and our involvement with all the Local Service Boards in North Wales that this is not always the case. We would very much like to highlight to the Commission the distinct advantages of working towards achieving a limited number of genuine *priorities*, maintaining a clear focus on the desired outcomes, retaining consistency over time and allowing sufficient time for local strategies to be put into action and show evidence of their successes.

We trust that our evidence will be useful to the Commission in its deliberations.

1.   Performance

We note the Commission's observations about 'poor and patchy' performance and slow progress in improving Welsh public services; and the Welsh Government's increasing level of intervention in recent years.

We note also the Commission's recognition that the reasons behind under-performance in the public sector are not simple, related perhaps to the scale and complexity of an organisation, but more specifically (for this section of the review) to the possibility that under-performance is the product of a failure to manage performance effectively and consistently.

See Appendix 1 for a summary of North Wales Fire and Rescue's impact on public safety since 2001/02.

See Appendix 2 relating to a case study on improving outcomes in North Wales.

Performance Q1. Does your organisation collect the right information to support and improve the services you deliver?

- *The range of data that your organisation collects - is it comprehensive and useful?*
- *Whether there is an over-reliance on data at the expense of other sources of intelligence*
- *Whether data are collected simply to comply with legal or regulatory requirements*
- *What information is not collected and why*

Yes it does, unless it is already collected elsewhere in suitable form (e.g. census and mapped data). And, as the questions recognise, the range of information that is needed to fully support and improve services extends to more than just numbers.

The Service collects a wide range of management information which it keeps under review to ensure that it is both useful and used. There are instances where compliance is the major rationale for recording information, but there are very few instances where the information has no purpose whatsoever for the Service, either for research or for management purposes. This includes information on:

- ❖ Emergency response;
- ❖ Operational intelligence – risks, premises information;
- ❖ Incidents and false alarms attended;
- ❖ Prevention;
- ❖ Workforce - personal details, training and skills incl. language, employment history, accidents and injuries, disciplinary;
- ❖ Equipment;
- ❖ Premises;
- ❖ Energy and resources – fuel, water, electricity, oil, gas;
- ❖ Fleet-management;
- ❖ Finances – spending, payroll, pensions;

It is worth emphasising that it is not simply about collecting information – being able to share the information collected and held by others is also important. The Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) has been useful in this regard.

We have been encouraged by the Welsh Government's readiness to work with the fire and rescue services through working groups to refine the information reported up annually, removing annual returns and indicators that were no longer useful or meaningful and clarifying definitions to ensure consistency in the remaining ones.

The Strategic and Core Performance Indicators for fire and rescue services give a useful overview to the public (the number of fires, fire casualties, etc.) without being onerous to collect or publish.

We have also been pleased with the progress made by the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services section in understanding and intelligently interpreting performance in regular Statistical Bulletins. The availability of data on the StatsWales website is equally appreciated – and envied by our counterparts in England.

Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities benefit from a UK-wide on-line system for recording details of every emergency incident attended (Incident Recording System – 'IRS'). This captures and records the details (partly automatically), and avoids the need to purchase and maintain such software locally. Information can then be used for monitoring reports, Freedom of Information requests, research purposes, and service planning and improvement. UK and Welsh Governments also have access to this data, feeding national research, performance and statistical reports. This sort of on-line centrally-supported data capture system works very well.

Decisions about not collecting some information would be made on the basis of cost-benefit, whether it is already available from elsewhere, whether other organisations are better placed than the fire and rescue service to collect and manage it (e.g. population and demographic information, weather and climate data, chemical hazard information).

Performance Q2. How does your organisation manage its performance to improve delivery?

- *When does your organisation use performance data to inform decisions and priorities?*
- *How has your organisation managed performance to drive changes in operational delivery?*
- *How has your organisation managed performance to drive strategic change?*
- *What use do you make of standards, targets, benchmarks and comparative data?*
- *How and how well do politicians use performance data to inform decisions and priorities?*
- *How and how well do politicians use performance data to scrutinise delivery and decision making?*

We agree with the Commission's reference to performance data as something that can *inform* decisions and priorities, rather than something upon which to wholly *base* decisions and priorities. We would suggest also that performance data is more often used to check that the strategy is being followed, or the way the service is being delivered is as expected.

How *well* an organisation performs is a particularly complex area to measure. How much an organisation does can usually be measured, as can how quickly, how regularly, or at what cost; but how well it performs is particularly subjective and people's views will differ according to their own experience of, or contact with, that organisation, and their own expectations of what they should receive from it. For that reason, performance data tends to measure the easily measurable, whereas what satisfies or disappoints service users is generally too intangible to capture in data form.

Things that might trigger a change of direction or a fundamentally new strategy would be anything from a list of reasons, including:

a) an unexplained/unanticipated deterioration in key indicators of 'success' – i.e. if the organisation's efforts were proving to be insufficient;
b) a known pressure that is causing difficulty in delivering the service – e.g. the availability of people to provide On-Call fire cover under the existing terms and conditions of the Retained Duty System;
c) a new pressure on the Service, either internal or external – e.g. loss of funding, increase in unavoidable costs (pay, fuel), increase in demand in some areas;
d) new legislation or new government strategy that imposed the change;
e) feedback from service users or public demand for change.

From many years' experience of standards, targets, benchmarks and comparative data our advice to the Commission would be that these tend to sound more useful than they actually are and need to be used with caution. Unless the organisation can genuinely understand what affects its results and genuinely has the resources and the ability to control its own delivery against those results, there is a risk that standards and targets will mislead and distract.

Benchmarks and comparative data should theoretically help drive improvement, but in practice rarely do so, as people tend to focus on explaining differences or finding favourable comparisons without really understanding why or how they are doing so well. They can be useful for improving activity measures, but less so for outcome measures.

In the early days of Best Value (before responsibility for fire and rescue services had been devolved in Wales), UK fire and rescue authorities were assigned top quartile targets whereby all those not in the top quartile were expected to set themselves targets to try to match the performance of those already in the top quartile nationally. Also, all fire and rescue services were assigned to one of five 'family groups' where they were expected to compare their own performance against the other members of their family group and try to match them. What became evident was that there were too many variables in how things were measured and too many differences in local contexts. Services struggled to ascribe their relative position (good or bad) with any level of certainty to anything that they had done.

The things that seem to make a difference in terms of improving performance include:

- ❖ Ensuring central control and overview, clear lines of command, clear lines of reporting;
- ❖ Realistic and properly understood organisational aims and strategies, allowing sufficient time for them to take effect;
- ❖ Ensuring that targets are intelligent, and realistic in the service's own context (i.e. the best comparative data is frequently the service's own past performance);
- ❖ Enough routine and regular monitoring of performance by people who genuinely understand what they are looking at, and who are at the right organisational level to initiate corrective action when things are not going as well as they should be.

Performance Q3. Is your organisation delivering for your users?

- *How effective have your service outputs been in contributing to positive change in outcomes*
- *To what extent are your services available in ways which meet your users' needs (eg Welsh language, multiple channels, disability access)*
- *How far can you and do you consider and implement alternative means of delivering services which better meet users' needs? Are there any barriers to your doing so?*
- *What does data about public perceptions of service quality tell you? How do they relate to data about service performance?*
- *How do you report performance data to the public? What evidence is there of this increasing accountability?*

'Users' of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service include anyone who lives, works, visits or travels through/above the six unitary authority areas of North Wales, as well as those in neighbouring areas, and potentially those in any other part of the UK experiencing large scale emergency, disruption or threat.

We believe that North Wales FRS is delivering a very good service and has seen some significantly improved outcomes in recent years. [Significant reduction in fires since 2001/02 - see Appendix 1.] Performance data is reported to the public through annual publications and summaries, as well as having routine performance monitoring reports available on-line for anyone with an interest.

We would like to draw the Commission's attention to two specific issues:

- the importance of differentiating between a scalable demand-driven service (e.g. education, refuse collection) and a non-scalable risk-based service (e.g. street lighting, fire and rescue service).
- regarding accountability to the public, performance data constitutes only a small part of that overall public-facing narrative. For the most part, the public's perception of good or poor performance will be based on its own experience of accessing that service, rather than on a set of published data.

In relation to considering and implementing alternative means of delivering services, the Authority compiles an annual improvement plan comprising a range of enhancements and innovations. Recent examples have included:

- Changed hours of day crewing stations – for years the day shift went off duty at 6:00 p.m., transferring to an on-call system of crewing for the overnight hours. However, this time of day was when the number of calls started to increase, so it made little sense to send firefighters home at that time only to

call them back in again. The shift now runs until 10:00 p.m. meaning that response is quicker as well as making pay savings on incident fees.

- Home Fire Safety Checks by partner organisations – we could take the names of vulnerable people and visit them to undertake a HFSC in their home, but it makes much better sense for us to train home carers to do the HFSCs themselves while they are with the vulnerable people. The vulnerable person gets a check sooner, and has the benefit of a familiar person undertaking it.

As regards barriers to change, these include:

- the public's perception of 'winning and losing' – the Authority takes a strategic view of services for the whole of North Wales. However, that is not how people view their local service, and can resist changing what they have become accustomed to, despite reassurances;
- staff terms and conditions of service (notably operational fire and rescue personnel) which can restrict flexibility to introduce new ways of working;
- cost;
- reputation and good performance – the fire and rescue service has an excellent reputation, and the incidence of fires continues to fall. This limits the motivation to fundamentally change the way the Service operates.

We now offer a language choice for anyone contacting the Service, including 999 callers, as well as safety advice including schools visits and Home Fire Safety Checks in either English or Welsh.

The Service enjoys a high level of public trust, and consistently receives very low levels of complaints.

Performance Q4. How has working with others delivered services for users?

- *How and how well can you manage the efficiency and impact of partnership and cross-sector working?*

We would differentiate between managing the efficiency of and managing the impact of partnership and cross-sector working.

For the former, this would entail bringing senior managers together often enough to discuss and make decisions. The success of a partnership relies on having someone to steer it effectively including by maintaining that frequent dialogue as a normal part of the day-to-day work. There is a tendency for partnerships to centre around formally minuted meetings – whereas in reality the efficiency of the partnership rests with genuinely working in partnership.

For the latter, this would entail making required outputs and outcomes agreed and clear for all. There must be a mutual benefit from the partnership – something that

could not otherwise be achieved or achieved as well if any of the partners were going it alone.

The key to both efficiency and management is to have the right combination of skills and the right level of oversight and monitoring. Who would recognise that the people who were delivering the work of the partnership were succeeding or not, and who would do something about it?

There are numerous excellent examples of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's partnerships delivering improved services. Apart from multi-agency response to emergencies, there are examples such as:

- the Joint Communications Centre in St. Asaph that gives the benefit of improved response by having Police and Fire and Rescue control functions operating alongside each other – improving co-ordination of response to major or complex incidents;
- the Arson Reduction Team comprising Police and Fire and Rescue staff working together to target anti-social behaviour and criminal activity leading to a significant reduction in the level of deliberate fire-setting;
- the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services are achieving excellent results and are working well together (including through the recently established National Issues Committee *www.nic.org.uk*) to deliver even better, sustainable, resilient and affordable services in future.

Although we can identify obvious benefits from partnership working, it is also worth noting that there are challenges to working with multiple 'partners', especially when new structures are being developed (e.g. LSBs). We think there is therefore a discussion to be had about the balance of placing these partnerships on a legislative basis in order to ensure inclusivity, and being afforded the freedom from legislation to pick and choose the most effective working partnerships at any given time.

2. Scale and Capability

The Commission's introduction to this section recognises that the size, complexity, functional domains and geographical coverage of public service organisations *probably* have an effect on their performance and services, but that the relationship between these is unclear.

Scale and Capability Q.1 What is the evidence that an organisation's ability to deliver its key functions is related to its size?

- *How far are unit costs, overheads, service quality and service availability driven by organisational scale?*
- *What evidence is there that a minimum 'critical mass' exists for a given type of organisation or service?*
- *How far is capacity to innovate and to respond to new developments constrained by organisational scale?*

In Wales the three fire and rescue authorities are different in terms of their size, geographical area covered, population density and risk profile, but the cost per head of running those three service is very similar – in 2013/14 the revenue budgets per head of population equate to £50 in South Wales, £49 in Mid and West Wales and £46 in North Wales.

The experience of the 1996 reorganisation should provide good evidence.

Scale and Capability Q.2 What functions and services are most effectively delivered at which level?

- *How can we be sure that services are delivered at the most appropriate geographical level (local, regional or national)?*
- *How far is it true to say that the Welsh public sector is over-populated?*

The arguments made in the early 1990s for establishing 22 local authorities covered very similar ground. Since then, there have been numerous configurations (three fire and rescue authorities, one ambulance services trust, four police forces, etc.) in operation, which should provide a wealth of information for the Commission.

The most appropriate geographical level might be related to the distance that people's expectations of the service provider and the organisation's key messages to the service user can travel before getting lost.

Similarly, there may be correlations to draw on between the geographical size of an organisation and its managers' and leaders' ability to deal effectively across the whole of their span of control.

Scale and Capability Q.3 Does the current number and structure of organisations provide value for money

- *How far are your budgets driven by prescribed governance structures and accountability relationships?*
- *Do sectoral partnerships tell us something about scale (perhaps an indication that organisations are too small?)*
- *How far have your overheads been controlled by better or more collaborative procurement of support services?*
- *How far have your overheads and other issues of scale and complexity been overcome through use of information and communication technology?*

The fire and rescue service provides very good value for money, especially if calculated on the basis of the costs saved to other parts of the public sector by preventing fires and injuries (e.g. to health and social services, economic regeneration).

It is important not to overstate the potential for economies of scale without being sure that the practice will match the theory. For example:

- it makes better sense for North Wales Fire and Rescue to jointly procure its estates maintenance with North Wales Police than with the other two Welsh Fire and Rescue Services because of the distances involved;
- comparing what happened with the abandoned Fire Control project in England, where the theoretical advantages of replacing 46 individual control rooms with 9 regional sites against the very successful Welsh Control project that retained three but linked them together electronically so that they can provide back-up to each other.

Joint procurement can help reduce costs, but it requires strong leadership to ensure that the contract does not become over-inflated by trying to accommodate everyone's individual wish list – there will be times when standardisation and compromise have to be accepted.

Scale and Capability Q.4 Does organisational size affect the effective management of human, financial and other resources?

- *What are the current and recent levels of senior and professional vacancies within your organisation? What do you think the reasons are this?*
- *How far do vacancy levels relate to organisational scale? Do you feel that there is a sense of (eg) small organisations being more or less attractive as employers?*
- *What evidence is there that public-sector organisations are competing for the services of a restricted pool of talent?*
- *How well can and do you redeploy or develop talent to meet emerging or changing pressures?*
- *How well can you and do you redeploy or flex budgets to meet emerging or changing pressures?*

This has not been the experience in North Wales Fire and Rescue, but we acknowledge that the pattern of development and promotion is slightly different in the fire sector. For example, firefighters receive all their operational training and much of their management training <u>after</u> they join, and very few leave the sector once trained.

Whereas across the whole of the UK fire and rescue service there are still only a few examples of senior managers joining from outside the sector, Wales has been much more progressive in this respect, not because of any lack of talent from within the Service but because it has been more willing to adopt a less conventional approach and appoint the best candidates for those posts without insisting on a fire service background. This has also brought a far more balanced gender makeup in senior management teams.

Despite being a small organisation with limited promotion opportunities in the specialist functions that we have available, staff turnover in these posts is low.

Where we need senior level specialist expertise but cannot justify creating full time posts (e.g. procurement, estates management, employment advice and occupational health) we have not had difficulty in buying that in through a contract. To some extent this can work better because of the flexibility it brings, and the reduced risk, for example if an employed specialist is off on long-term sickness absence; but the contract has to be well-thought through to ensure that it provides what the Service needs.

3. Complexity

It is not surprising that the Commission refers to a public service sector comprising around 900 public bodies as 'highly complex', particularly given the size of Wales. It recognises that this structure was not planned, and wonders whether it may inadvertently have given rise to duplication, overlap and conflict, silo working and disregard for the cross-cutting needs of citizens and communities.

Complexity Q.1 To what extent is there organisational overlap?

- *How far is there coherence and synergy between functions within your organisation and others within your sector of the public service, at both the strategic and operational levels?*
- *How far is there coherence and synergy between sectors of the public service, at both the strategic and operational levels? How far, on the other hand, do they duplicate or conflict with each other?*
- *How far does the interface between your organisation's role and that of others maximise resource efficiency?*
- *Are there too many organisations acting in or making decisions in "tiers" on the same issues?*

The fire and rescue service's functions are clear, and the sort of 'organisational overlap' referred to in this question is rarely an issue.

Where we are *required* to work with other organisations (e.g. as designated responders under the Civil Contingencies Act; as enforcement authorities under business fire safety regulations; or with other emergency services at complex incidents), roles and responsibilities are clear. This is also the case where we *choose* to work with other organisations (e.g. installing smoke detectors in social housing and other instances of looking after the safety of particularly vulnerable people in their homes).

There is obviously a great deal of synergy between the emergency services, but roles and responsibilities are rarely unclear at either the strategic or the operational levels.

Complexity Q.2 Do current structures enhance seamless services and provide better services?

- *How far are organisational and administrative boundaries coterminous? Why and to what extent does it matter?*
- *Do such boundaries reflect different patterns of or drivers for demand between sectors; and how far are such differences justified?*
- *How far do such boundaries reflect public senses of place or identity?*
- *How do such boundaries affect service accessibility, and citizens' perceptions of service coherence and integration?*

North Wales Fire and Rescue operates across the six unitary authority areas in North Wales, matching the boundaries of both North Wales Police and Betsi Cadwaladr UHB.

The North Wales structure is more than a convenient boundary. The North Wales Regional Leadership Board brings together senior leaders to discuss and agree on strategies affecting the whole region. Whatever the eventual configuration of public services in North Wales, co-terminosity and proximity to the population receiving the services would be beneficial. We cannot say that working with six unitary authorities in North Wales is particularly problematic, but there is a limit to how much time an organisation such as our own can spend at meetings with the senior managers of those six.

Complexity Q.3 Has collaboration led to improved services?

- *If collaboration has led to improved performance why? If not, why not?*
- *To what extent has collaboration yielded sustained resource savings and/or gains in performance?*
- *To what extent has collaboration created a further and/or distracting management burden?*
- *Does partnership working add to the complexity or point to a more effective way of configuring services?*
- *How far has your organisation collaborated willingly? How far have you simply followed mandates or expectations that you should do so?*
- *Have partnership arrangements been focussed on improving services? Or what is more effective for the organisation?*

Yes, we believe that collaboration has been able to jointly achieve what single organisations could not achieve.

With reference to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, examples include:

- The work of the Chief Fire Officer's Task Group that changed the way prevention and home fire safety services were delivered;
- Collaborating with…
  - Conwy County Borough Council for financial services & treasury;
  - Flintshire County Council for pensions;
  - North Wales Police for estates management and the Joint Communications Centre;
  - other Civil Contingencies Act responders;
  - the other two Welsh fire and rescue services e.g National Issues Committee, control and mobilising arrangements, Operational Assurance of Service Delivery, and sharing expertise and work through specialist groups;
  - other UK FRSs for risk information and specific policy development.

[Other examples are provided elsewhere in this response.]

There is no single rationale – improvements have included better delivery, higher quality services (expertise) and reduced cost.

Complexity Q.4 Do current arrangements blur accountability?

- *How many tiers of accountability exist within key services? What are the effects of this?*
- *What has been the effect of collaboration on organisational accountability?*
- *Do current arrangements led to blame passing or cost shunting?*
- *Does the number of organisations mean that getting appropriately senior and mandated representation in partnerships is too great a challenge?*

It seems that it is already quite difficult to attribute success or failure to any single service – the impact of welfare changes/the health service's strategy of caring for people at home is likely to be reflected in the costs of numerous other services e.g. social services, fire and rescue. So it is important to agree that is actually meant by 'accountability'.

Complexity Q.5 Do different organisational scales and boundaries affect the ability of your organisation to collaborate effectively?

- *How many partnership arrangements are there within your sector and between sectors? What is their coverage, and how rational and coherent is the overall structure?*
- *How important is 'co-terminosity' to cross sector working?*
- *Does some collaboration work more successfully than others? If so, why?*

Answers to this are given in other sections of this response.

4. Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny

We refer to the principles of good governance as articulated by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services, and specifically to the last principle of '*engaging stakeholders and making accountability real'*.

We were interested to read the Commission's view that holding service-providers to account enables those service-providers to anticipate the need for change and/or react to pressure to change. The Commission appears to have accepted without question that that is an important factor in improving performance but we would refer you back to our response to Q3 under the Performance section, and our view that people will first and foremost seek to apply pressure to secure services for themselves, which may be at odds with the strategic view that the service-provider must maintain. This is particularly important in the context of changing boundaries, and the possibility that people's individual voices may fade before they reach the decision-makers.

Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny Q.1 Are the principles of good governance being upheld, and are they driving improvement? If not, why not? What needs to change?

- *Do governance arrangements for organisations effectively hold those responsible for delivery to account?*
- *How clear and simple are governance and decision-making arrangements within your organisation? What is the effect of this?*
- *How well and how consistently does your organisation change its governance process and adopt good practice to improve efficiency and clarity?*
- *How well and how consistently does your organisation adopt alternative and innovative ways of delivering services, to increase quality and/or reduce cost?*
- *How well do governance arrangements address collaboration and pursuit of shared outcomes? How diverse are governance and decision-making arrangements between your organisation and others? What effect does this have on collaboration and approaches to system reform?*
- *Should the Welsh Government be more or less prescriptive about the governance and scrutiny arrangements in place in public services in Wales?*
- *How much user involvement is there in governance arrangements? How effective is that in driving improvement?*
- *Are our regulatory, scrutiny and governance arrangements too complex? How far do they share a common purpose?*

The governance and scrutiny arrangements for fire and rescue authorities are not as complex as for the local authorities, but they work well. In North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, the full Authority ultimately takes or approves all the key decisions and the number of committees and sub-committees is kept low (an Executive Panel, an Audit Committee, and a Standards Committee). The Authority has opted not to

apply the principle of political balance to these committees (refer to our response to Q.4 in the Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny section).   The Chair and Vice Chair have regular, structured meetings with the Chief Fire Officer, and the services of Monitoring Officer and Treasurer are bought in from other parts of the public sector.

Rather than increase the number of formal scrutiny processes, the Commission might wish to consider how best to simplify it.

Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny Q.2 How effective is public engagement in influencing decisions and holding service-providers to account?

- *How and how extensively does your organisation and others account to and engage with the general public on their performance and decision-making?*
- *How powerful is this in driving improvement? How far does engagement yield tangible change at the strategic and operational levels? Or is there a sense of just responding to complaints in isolation?*
- *How far do you believe citizens understand the different roles of your organisation and others? What impact does this have?*
- *How far do citizens understand your governance and decision-making processes? What impact does this have?*
- *Do you believe the scale of your organisation and others has any impact on its ability to account and respond to citizens effectively?*

We acknowledge the potential benefits of public engagement, but also recognise its limitations and its potential to become an end in itself rather than a vehicle for genuine co-production. Research in this area[1] acknowledges how difficult it is to evaluate engagement processes despite the theorised benefits. Similarly, the recent House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee's consideration of Public engagement in policy-making (Second Report of Session 2013–14) also recognised the problems of a lack of public appetite for participation, and the risk that those with a vested interest could dominate the process.

North Wales Fire and Rescue's approach has been to integrate its engagement processes into its normal day to day operations, and to avoid spending too much time and money on formal surveys that rarely get much response. By talking to people in their homes, schools, workplaces and leisure venues, working with organisations that represent particular groups and involving other organisations in joint reviews and task groups we have been able to maintain a dialogue and tailor our services accordingly.

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[1] For example, Rowe et al (2008): Analysis of a normative framework for evaluating public engagement exercises: reliability, validity and limitations *Public Understanding of Science October 2008 17: 419-441, first published on August 6, 2008.*

The Welsh Government could perhaps do more to support authorities to explain the constraints. The conflicting goals of retaining front line services but lowering the costs of providing those services are unlikely to be sustainable or deliverable.

Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny Q.3 How effective are audit, inspection and regulation in driving change and supporting accountability and improvement?

- *How effective is audit, inspection and regulation in identifying your organisation's strengths and weaknesses?*
- *How powerful is this in driving improvement? How readily and effectively does your organisation and others respond to recommendations from auditors, inspectors and regulators?*
- *How complex and diverse are scrutiny, regulatory and accountability mechanisms within and between your sector and others?*
- *To what extent do these mechanisms focus on individual organisations and outputs rather than partnerships or outcomes? Does this matter?*

The way this question has been phrased implies that the role of audit, inspection and regulation necessarily goes beyond checking and providing assurance.

From experience of being audited by various audit bodies over the years, one of the key aspects that help to drive improvement is a combination of objectivity and a comprehensive understanding of the authority's strategic and operational aspects. This on-going relationship is both helpful and impactful as it avoids having to go back to the beginning with every audit visit. Working in support of the Authority and moving things along in a timely and constructive, intelligent and well-informed way helps to mainstream audit activity as an on-going process rather than a series of disjointed events.

What is noticeable, however, is that the Welsh Government seems to require more assurance than the Wales Audit Office provides, despite the consultative approach to policy making referred to in our response to the questions about the Welsh Government and the National Assembly.

Compliance against the Fire and Rescue National Framework and the relevant legislation are not the only aspects that the Welsh Government is interested in, and although the Authority is ultimately accountable to its local population for the delivery and quality of its services, there is evidently an expectation that there is some degree of accountability to the Welsh Government too, especially where grants have been provided.

Intervention powers are available to the Welsh Government, but there is no real clarity over what a 'failing' fire and rescue authority might look like.

The programme of peer assurance – the Operational Assurance of Service Delivery – has been extremely useful in terms of learning about each other's service, building strong professional relationships and networks, identifying opportunities to align/standardise operations or to understand and justify the differences. There have been additional benefits for the Welsh Government and the Wales Audit Office who have observed the process and provided external assurance that the process has been robust, as they have helped to improve their knowledge of the three Services and improved the standard of audit.

Governance, Delivery and Scrutiny Q.4 How well does formal and political scrutiny influence decision-making and improve accountability?

- *What evidence is there that governance arrangements which entail direct accountability to politicians (as distinct from appointed or nominated members) improve accountability and performance?*
- *How effective are formal or political scrutiny processes in influencing decision-making and identifying strengths and weaknesses in your organisation and others? Does this vary between local and national levels of scrutiny?*
- *What is the effect of scrutiny being a formalised and politicised process? Is there any evidence of different approaches having greater impact?*
- *How clear are your political scrutiny processes to all involved, including the public? How powerful are these processes in driving improvement? How responsive is your organisation and others to recommendations made as a result of these processes?*

Elected members of the Fire and Rescue Authorities are drawn from all of the constituent authorities. They operate as a single Authority rather than seek to represent their own local area. The North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's members have opted not to apply the principle of political balance to the membership of its committees, which it could do under regulation 20 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. There is a prevailing consensus that political balance would not be beneficial as the current arrangements are both inclusive and avoid creating any 'political division' in the governance of an Authority.

5 Culture and Leadership

We welcome the Commission's acknowledgement of the ways an organisation's culture affect its delivery mechanisms and ultimately its performance. The fire and rescue service enjoys a good reputation, and is trusted by the public. It has changed significantly over recent years, shedding some of the old and outdated stereotypes that were unacceptable in the modern age. And yet it has managed to hold on to many of its better qualities as a proactive and confident service with a strong community focus and an enviable record of collaboration. It is also delivering excellent results across Wales.

Culture and Leadership Q1. Does the public sector in Wales share a common set of values?

- *How far is there a shared set of public-service values and cultures which manifest support for continuous improvement, innovation, flexibility, accountability and strategic change?*
- *How far, conversely, are there no such common values? Do organisational behaviours manifest short-termism, parochialism, silo thinking, defensiveness, or cause any other problems?*
- *What, if any, is the effect of cultural, language or other distinctive features of Wales on the delivery of services or the long term ambition of Wales?*
- *Does the public service in Wales display the characteristics of high performing organisations?*

The UK fire and rescue service has a long-established culture of its own that extends beyond the boundaries of individual fire and rescue authorities or internal UK borders. It is recognisable by comparison with fire and rescue services in other countries, and few would argue that it exists. However, not all UK fire and rescue services are exactly the same, and not all UK fire and rescue services perform as well as each other, which supports the theory that there are other things that drive improvement in performance but that culture and values may play a part more generally.

It may be helpful to define culture and values separately. Values are just one part of an organisation's culture.

Generic description of organisational culture:

a) Shared beliefs, values and assumptions
b) Evident from the way people in the organisation go about their everyday work
c) Evident in the behaviours of individuals and groups
d) Amplified by the behaviours of leaders
e) Embedded in organisational practices

Specific description of fire and rescue service values:

a) Trustworthiness
b) Service to the Community
c) Valuing Improvement
d) Valuing People
e) Valuing Diversity.

Although not based on definitive evidence, experience of working alongside other public service sectors suggests that although fire and rescue services share the same fundamental *values* as the rest of the public sector, their *culture* is quite different.

This then gives rise to a range of behaviours that affect performance in quite specific ways, e.g.

- clear and timely decision-making
- well-defined lines of command and hierarchy
- clearly allocated duties and responsibility
- valuing innovation and considering alternatives in order to overcome obstacles
- support for each other, including in taking risks.

That is not to say, of course, that another part of the public sector will not demonstrate those same behaviours, but that will depend on its history, the tone and style of its leadership and the area within which it operates.

The Welsh public sector is made up of people who live and work in the area it serves. Wales employs a high proportion of its citizens in the public sector, so there will inevitably be some similarity between the two. Where the population in an area values the Welsh language, it will expect its public services to do the same. Where the population in an area is largely urban, it will expect its public services to be tailored to urban needs.

So in terms of Welsh public services 'displaying the characteristics of high performing organisations', that will depend on what the population considers would constitute 'high performing'. In the private sector, customers will pick and choose where they take their business, and private companies will therefore market their goods and services accordingly. In the public sector in Wales, choice of provider is limited, which is why it is much simpler to 'perform highly' where there is consensus on what type of service is expected.

Culture and Leadership Q2. How successfully do organisations have clear values that the whole organisation is behind?

- *To what extent does your organisation have a clear and recognised set of values which is consistent between service areas, specialisms and tiers?*
- *How effective is workforce engagement in strengthening values, stimulating innovation and supporting change?*
- *How well are strategic objectives embedded and reflected in corporate, business and operational plans, and in personal objectives of senior staff?*

All UK fire and rescue services adopted a single set of core values in 2005. These are emphasised and embedded throughout personal qualities and attributes ('PQA') selection and assessment processes. They are clearly communicated throughout the organisation.

The Chief Fire Officer's Task Group Report (Appendix 2) has been at the heart of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's strategic objectives since 2007, drawing Fire Authority members, staff and partner organisations to work together for a common purpose. What this has meant in practice is that it has become part of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's culture, reflected in its structure, resource and spending allocation, key messaging, and activity. This in turn has eased the way for collaboration, increased resilience to internal and external pressures and enabled change and innovation - because people understand the reasons why.

Culture and Leadership Q3. Where does change in organisational values come from?

- *What are the sources of change in your organisation's culture and how effective are they?*
- *What is the impact of cross-organisational professional groups and networks on your organisation's values and culture?*
- *What is the role of the Welsh Government in shaping organisational values and behaviours?*
- *How effective is workforce engagement in stimulating innovation and supporting change?*

We described in our response to the Commission's question in the Performance section what we thought might trigger a change of direction or a fundamentally new strategy. Our experience suggests that the ingredients for stimulating and sustaining a change of culture are: unequivocal leadership; consistent, unambiguous and repeated communication; and coherent threads linking strategies and action plans together.

Culture and Leadership Q4. What role does leadership play in improving performance?

- *How important is leadership in improving performance and overcoming weaknesses in values and culture?*
- *How important is leadership in improving collaboration and partnership working?*
- *How effective has Wales been in developing and sustaining a cadre of committed, highly effective public sector leaders and managers? How important is this?*
- *Is there clear understanding of differentiation between political and managerial leadership functions and responsibilities and what impact do such differences have?*

It would be difficult to argue that leadership is unimportant for improving public service performance. Similarly, it would seem perverse to suggest that having committed, highly effective public sector leaders and managers is immaterial in the quest for improving performance.

People in many walks of life show themselves to be talented and committed leaders, and apply their leadership talent with or without positional authority. Conversely, there are people in positions of authority who lack those leadership qualities but nevertheless manage to get things done.

The public sector's balance of political and managerial leadership can work well, but evidently things have gone wrong in a minority of high profile cases.

6   Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales

We welcome the Commission's interest in the Welsh Government's role of legislation, policy, enabling and delivery and the National Assembly for Wales's role as legislature and scrutiny as these differences are poorly understood.

Welsh Government and NAW Q1. How could Welsh Government do more to achieve policy coherence and aligned delivery?

- *Has the Welsh Government clearly articulated its priorities for the term of Government?*
- *Has the Welsh Government generated a shared commitment to those priorities? Is it possible or reasonable for it to do so?*

- *What are the main policy-making approaches of the Welsh Government towards your organisation?   For instance, do they emphasise co-production or direction; planned or adaptive approaches; gradual or transformative change?*

- *What evidence is there of rational choice between these modes? How far have these been consistently applied, and how far to particular policies, sectors or issues?*

- *How far has the Welsh Government involved itself in (or disengaged from) direct service delivery, and what are the implications of that?*

The Welsh Government has clearly articulated its priorities – the Programme for Government (p.3) identifies that "Wales faces significant economic challenges in the coming years. Jobs and the economy are our over-riding priorities."

We are not aware of the Welsh Government making any conscious or rational decision to adopt any particular mode of fire and rescue policy-making. However, from the early days of devolved responsibility it has largely adopted a consultative approach, setting up regular meetings with Chief Fire Officers and Fire Authority Chairs, and establishing a Consultative Forum to discuss relevant policy topics. This consultative approach started before devolution of responsibility with the establishment of a Community Fire Safety Working Group working together on improving public safety (2001 report 'Wired for Safety') and reducing the incidence of arson (2003 report 'Up in Flames').

Since 2009 the Welsh Government has also opted to employ three (in total) Fire and Rescue Advisers (retired or serving Chief Fire Officers working on a part time basis), and Assistant Fire and Rescue Advisers (officers seconded full time from the Welsh fire and rescue services) to support its work.

The Welsh Government has been very helpful in providing support (e.g. the Operational Assurance of Service Delivery process, and providing grants to support various strategies and innovations) but has then discontinued or changed the rules for that support without clear declaration or explanation for this.

In relation to the approval and allocation of grants, problems have arisen in the past from not knowing when or how much grant funding would be forthcoming. Also, an insistence on specifying very narrowly how monies had to be spent was sometimes unhelpfully constricting. The amounts received, though, (e.g. to purchase smoke alarms, undertake arson reduction work, introduce new software) were substantial in fire terms, and appreciated. By comparison with levels of grants for more complex organisations, however, they were small, and are therefore likely to be discontinued under new arrangements that seem set to end the practice of distributing smaller grants, which is regrettable.

The Welsh Government has sought to contribute through specific reviews into aspects of the fire and rescue service, such as the use of On-call or Retained Firefighters and an evaluation of Home Fire Safety Checks, but for the most part it has recognised the value of working with the Fire and Rescue Services.

Almost paradoxically, it may be that the Welsh Government could improve policy coherence and aligned delivery if it took its lead from those responsible for delivering services. Sudden changes of approach can be unhelpfully disruptive – the Welsh fire and rescue services are all delivering well, and they know where their main challenges lie. Welsh Government support to alleviate those challenges would seem a better strategy than introducing new challenges.

Welsh Government and NAW Q2. Is the distinctive role of the national government in Wales well understood?

- *Is Wales making the most of operating at a small country scale?*
- *Is accountability for the delivery of public services clear?*

- *In your experience what has been the impact of changes to the devolution settlement on policy-making? In particular, what has been the effect of the acquisition of legislative powers?*

- *Is the National Assembly's role in scrutiny of policy, delivery and legislation sufficiently clear?*

In specifically fire and rescue service terms, responsibilities are not entirely clear in relation to national security and civil contingencies, which are largely driven by the UK Government.

Also, as the Welsh Ministers have not pursued parity with their counterparts in the UK Government in relation to some powers e.g. to set pay and conditions of service of fire and rescue staff, this will inevitably reduce their influence in these areas.

As is implied by this question, the overall picture is complex, and it is difficult to ascertain whether that complexity could be simplified without impacting negatively on the delivery arm. One illustration of that complexity in a fire rescue context is that: since March 2013, Welsh Government ministerial responsibility for fire and rescue services has rested with the Minister for Local Government and Government Business (Lesley Griffiths AM). However, fire and rescue activities also relate to Housing and Community, and Community Safety. The Minister for Housing and Regeneration is Carl Sargeant AM, and the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty is Jeff Cuthbert AM.

In terms of public understanding, there seems to be very little difference between the National Assembly's voice and the Welsh Government's voice. In fact, we would go as far as to suggest that the distinction is probably only fully understood within those bodies themselves.

Welsh Government and NAW Q3. How have arrangements between the Welsh Government and organisations developed to enable and encourage improvement in delivery?

- *What policy, funding and influencing mechanisms does the Welsh Government deploy to manage relations with you?*
- *How consistently have these been deployed across the whole system and in different sectors?*
- *Could funding arrangements more effectively support delivery and accountability for delivery? If so, how?*
- *What evidence is there of the relative effectiveness of these mechanisms, and of the Welsh Government learning from that?*
- *Are performance management and scrutiny arrangements suitably aligned?*

Although consistent with government themes, improvement initiatives generally begin at the Service level, either as part of its day-to-day management; as a response to something or as part of higher strategy development. New ideas and strategies tend to arise from running the Service and operating in that professional environment.

Recent experience of direct grants for these types of initiatives and strategies has been that although the Service was grateful for Welsh Government support to deliver, the mechanism for providing those grants has been problematic, with money being received too late in the year, and uncertainty over whether the same monies

would be available again. This meant that planning was difficult as there was no certainty that the strategy could be delivered. To some extent this has been alleviated by the recent change of legislation to allow fire and rescue authorities to hold reserves, but the circuitous route by which fire and rescue services receive their funds means that there is still some uncertainty for budget-setting.

Welsh Government and NAW Q4. How effectively does the Welsh Government directly manage services?

- *How effectively does the Welsh Government manage those services for which it is directly responsible? How far does it learn from others in doing so?*
- *How far does the Welsh Government have the specialist expertise it needs – particularly but not solely in areas where it has taken on direct responsibility for service delivery?*

It is not clear from the questions in this section what the Commission has in mind as regards 'directly managed services', or at what level. It would seem reasonable, however, to see national governments as better equipped to set the strategic aims than to directly manage services.

It may be that the Welsh Government could play a useful part in slowing the constant 'churn' of new initiatives and aims. Although the Programme for Government has helped by including its 'priorities' in one document, it is nevertheless very detailed and yet does not contain everything.

Service-delivery organisations are generally capable of being more agile and responsive than national governments, and therefore supporting those organisations to deliver but allowing them the freedom and flexibility to do so might be a better alternative.

Welsh Government strategies need to be funded if they are to be delivered effectively – all have work associated with them. It may therefore be better to focus more clearly on just a few at any given time and to allow innovation and creativity to come from the delivery end rather than from the government end.

Welsh Government and NAW Q5. How well does Wales handle cross-border service provision between Wales-England/ Devolved-non-devolved?

- *What are the effects of Wales-England cross-border flows in service provision and demand on service delivery? How well do the Welsh Government and other organisations manage this?*
- *What is the impact of UK Government policy, and of the boundary between devolved and non-devolved matters, on service delivery? How effectively does the Welsh Government manage this interface with Westminster?*

Cross-border mutual assistance is an important part of the UK fire and rescue service's operations, both as part of its day-to-day emergency response and as part of its role in the UK's national resilience arrangements. (Please refer to previous comment re UK Government's leading role for resilience matters.) Additionally, information (e.g. hazards, incidents, risks), research and development (e.g. incidents, equipment, vehicles) and policy development (e.g. training, incident and false alarms management) are routinely shared throughout the UK. It is vital that Wales maintains this relationship with the other UK countries.

The political interface between the Welsh Government and Westminster has felt tense at times – but perhaps this is inevitable when different political parties are in power. There are numerous examples of the Welsh Government doing things differently - and there have been benefits to that – but it is important that such decisions are always fully impact-assessed, and taken for rational rather than ideological reasons.

7 Concluding Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts Q1 What are the greatest challenges that you see in delivering public services in the future?

- *In responding on this you might wish to consider overarching matters such as geographical location; changes in demographics; technology; socio economics as well as the 6 themes above.*

The current consensus is that demographic, societal/lifestyle, environmental, financial and inequity pressures will be the greatest challenges to delivering public services in future. Discussions around an increasingly dependent population and largely uncontrollable external pressures have been well-rehearsed.

As such, one of the Commission's aims is to "propose an optimal model of public service delivery for Wales" to ensure sustainably good, improving and affordable services.

In making such a recommendation, the Commission might wish to consider the following:

- That one optimal model for all parts of the public sector may not necessarily be the best solution. We already operate with a variety of models, and we would strongly recommend that that continues.

- That not all parts of the public sector needs to change – where services are already being delivered 'efficiently, effectively and accessibly' then there would seem little purpose in disrupting that.

- That there is a real need to determine first what are genuinely national 'priorities', and whether the same set of public services as currently provided will be affordable in future. There seems little purpose in proposing a model of delivery without first being clear about what exactly is going to be delivered.

- Whatever the eventual model(s) of delivery, there needs to be an assurance of equitable funding based on more than simple population size or on levels of demand (the 'perverse incentive' not to reduce demand). Without this, different services may end up unable to work effectively together because of tensions generated by having to constantly compete against each other for resources.

- Any change of local authority boundaries will necessarily involve an element of equalisation of council tax. We therefore wish to remind the Commission of

the importance of considering the impact of that on the funding of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Concluding Thoughts Q2 How would you like to see public services delivered in the future?

- *What key things you would transform?*
- *How would your future public services improve delivery to the user?*
- *What opportunities for transformation do you feel are already evident*

We accept that a public service sector comprising around 900 public bodies is probably overly complicated in a country the size of Wales, but suggest that reducing to too few too quickly risks replacing one problem with another.

The lessons learned from the 1996 reorganisation when the eight councils moved to twenty-two local authorities, and the eight fire services moved to just three fire and rescue authorities should inform the debate in this area.

Concluding Thoughts Q3 Are there any other areas of focus that the Commissions should be looking at as part of their evidence gathering?

- *Drawing on UK and other experience, what more should be done to drive up public sector performance in Wales?*

The Welsh Fire and Rescue Services compare very well with their UK counterparts, and operate at low cost to the taxpayer, especially in the context of preventing the transfer of costs to other parts of the public sector. The experience of establishing a single fire and rescue service for the whole of Scotland is as yet untested, but anecdotally the journey has not been an easy one, and costs have been significant.

North Wales Fire and Rescue's impact on public safety since 2001/02.

Fires Attended in North Wales 2001/02 to 2012/13
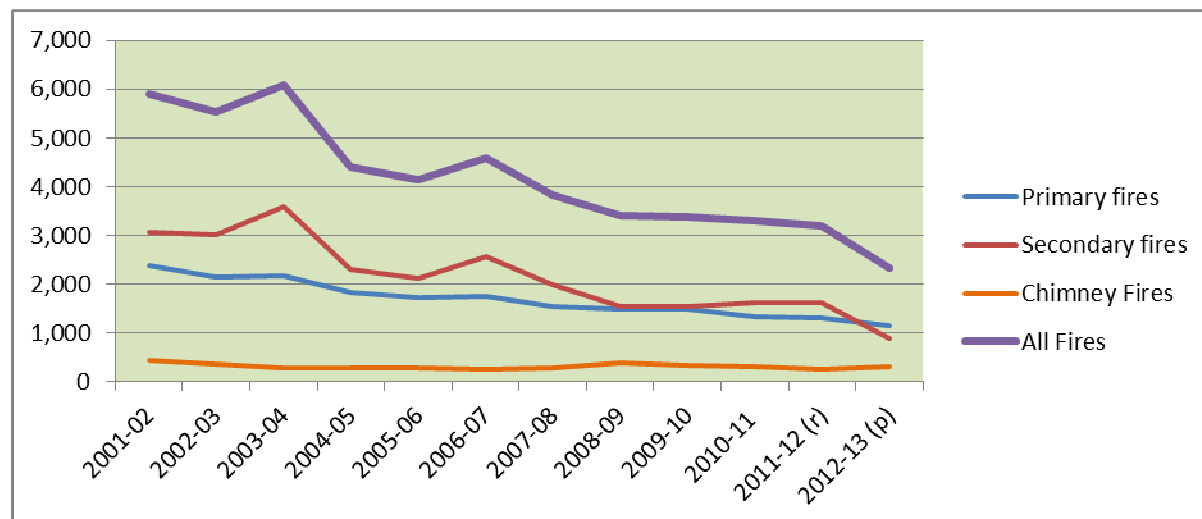
The incidence of fires in North Wales has declined significantly in recent years. Secondary fires (i.e. mainly small outdoor ones) and chimney fires have reduced despite weather-related influences, but the steady and sustained reduction in primary fires (i.e. mainly in buildings and larger outdoor fires) reflects very well the success of the Fire and Rescue Service's prevention strategy.

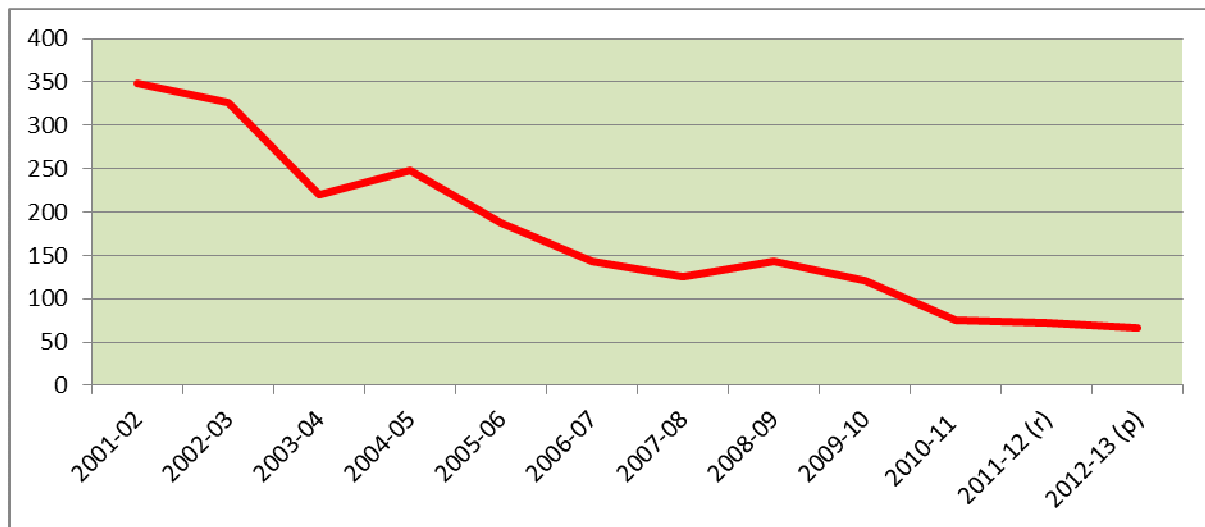## Accidental Dwelling Fires in North Wales
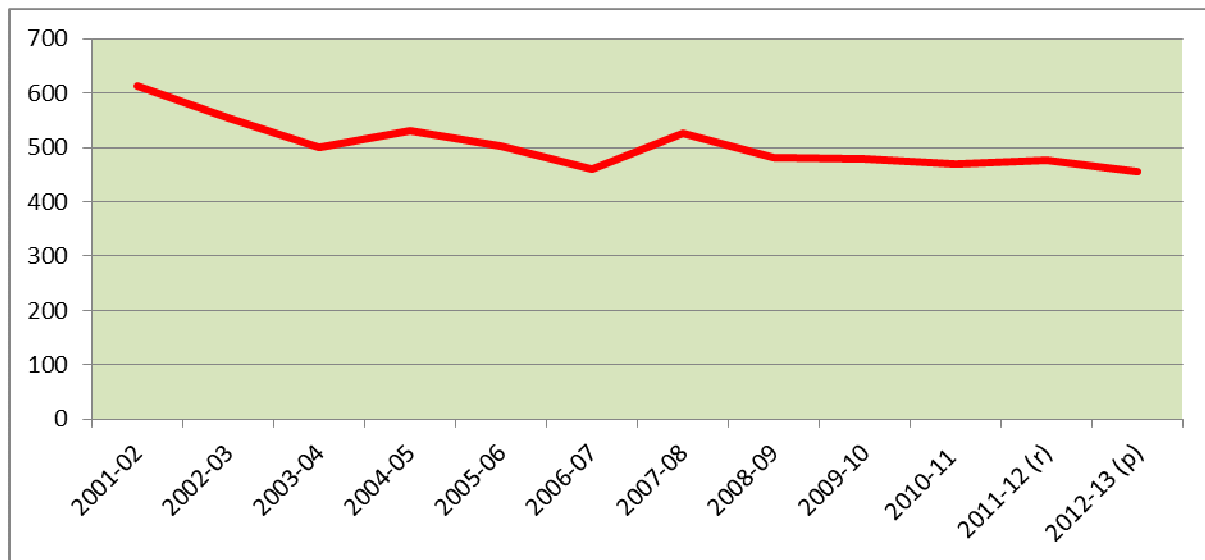
Fire deaths happen most often in dwellings, so the number of accidental dwelling fires is a key indicator for the Service.

The number of dwellings in North Wales has increased by around 9% (26,658) since 2001-02, but the number of fires that started accidentally in those dwellings has fallen by almost 26% (from 614 to 456).

Last year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service attended the equivalent of one accidental dwelling fire per 698 dwellings. Eleven years earlier, accidental dwelling fires were occurring far more frequently, at a rate of one per 475 dwellings.

Dwelling Fires in North Wales Where no Smoke Alarm Already Fitted

When a fire breaks out in a dwelling, having a working smoke alarm in place to give early warning can mean the difference between life and death. Last year North Wales Fire and Rescue Service attended 67 dwelling fires (out of a total of 493 accidentally or deliberately started fires) where there was no smoke alarm already installed - a significant reduction compared with the 348 eleven years earlier.

<u>The Chief Fire Officer's Task Group – a Case Study on Improving Outcomes</u>

Following a sudden increase in accidental dwelling fire deaths the Chief Fire Officer of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service formed a Task Group in 2007 whose remit was to examine the reasons behind the increase and to make recommendations to implement measures that would reduce the prevalence of such incidents.

There had been 54 recorded deaths by fire in North Wales between 1st April 2001 and 31st January 2007, 42 had been in dwellings and 40 had been categorised as accidental.

Up until 31st January 2007 there had already been 9 accidental dwelling fire deaths during that financial year, and it was projected that at that rate North Wales could potentially witness another 11 such tragic deaths in the following year.

Nationally, there had been a 12% decrease in this type of fire death, but North Wales was at the time recording the highest rate of such deaths per head of population. Gradually, through thorough analysis and discussion through the membership of the Task Group a complex picture emerged that explained what put some individuals at higher risk than others of dying in a fire at home.

The Task Group included senior figures from other public sector organisations alongside fire and rescue managers as it was important to ensure that this problem was shared and addressed through a multi-agency approach.

The Task Group's findings transformed the way dwelling fire prevention and fire safety services were provided in North Wales. Data sharing, cross-sector working, joint ventures and collaborative working became the norm as partner agencies mobilised in the pursuit of a common aim of achieving zero accidental fire deaths.

Defined 'contributory factors' - which in combination had been found to be statistically valid indicators of increased risk of dying in a dwelling fire - formed the basis of prevention messages and activities. A target was set for delivering 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks every year for ten years – highly ambitious for a small organisation, and all the more challenging when one considers that the majority of its personnel had their primary employment in other organisations (i.e. Retained Duty System personnel).

The clearly declared aims simplified the process of attracting additional support and resources, including grants from the Welsh Government.

A review in 2009 concluded that progress has been made and a number of recommendations had already been fully implemented. Good practice initiatives and case studies had also been identified, but there was an acknowledgement that more remained to be done as an on-going process of continuous review and improvement.

The learning from the Task Group's work continues to contribute to reducing fire risk in North Wales, having become embedded as part of North Wales Fire and Rescue and its partners' operating culture.