

Tayside Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Audit Report 2006

Contents

Executive summary	2	Part 4: Workforce management	22
Introduction	4	Part 5: Management of operational business	26
Part 1: Strategic management	8	Part 6: Communication	30
Part 2: Fire prevention and risk management	13	Part 7: Improvement agenda	33
Part 3: Financial management	18	Appendix	35
		Glossary	35

Executive summary

1. Tayside Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) has a clear vision for the future which is widely communicated and clearly understood by staff throughout the service. This reflects the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland. There is strong leadership from the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and staff are empowered to take individual responsibility and drive service improvements. The FRA has made good progress in implementing a performance management framework which ensures that directorate, departmental and station plans are linked to the strategic objectives and monitored regularly.
2. Board members and the senior management team demonstrate commitment to the modernisation agenda, however robust challenge is not currently evident throughout the Board structures. The FRA should put in place a development programme for members prior to the May 2007 elections and consider introducing the concept of 'Board Champions' for specific policy areas.
3. The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) has been integrated into the strategic aims and wider service delivery of the FRA. The shift from intervention to prevention is clear and resources have been reallocated to meet this change. Partnership working is a key component of the IRMP, the FRA makes use of a partnership register and is an active partner in the community planning partnerships of the three constituent local authorities. However, a more strategic approach to partnership working is required.
4. The FRA must do more work on collecting and modelling data to ensure community safety work is directed towards the communities that need it most, and develop a more systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives. This is important given that the number of incidents such as Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) and deliberate fires attended by the FRA has increased in the past 12 months. Progress on Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) has been slow and its roll out must be accelerated across the whole Tayside region.
5. The FRA has put in place a five-year People strategy which demonstrates its commitment to workforce development. Good progress has been made in the rollout of the Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS) and the associated learning and development plan. There is a strong commitment to the equality and diversity agenda, with solid evidence of achievement; however the workforce does not yet reflect the diversity of the communities it serves.
6. Effective communications within the FRA are underpinned by a well developed strategy. Innovative ways of working with staff have been established including 'Breakfast with the Chief' and staff focus groups. Public Performance Reporting (PPR) is a strength of the FRA and forms a key component of the external communications strategy.

7. Overall, the FRA has made good progress since the 2004 Accounts Commission Phase 2 Verification audit, having successfully embedded both IRMP and IPDS into mainstream service delivery. Rank to Role is complete and the FRA has put in place a wide range of operational policies to improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, the FRA needs to ensure that the impact of its work is properly evaluated, particularly in relation to community fire safety and partnership working.

Introduction

Background

8. Fire and rescue authorities across the UK are undergoing an extensive programme of modernisation following the National Joint Council (NJC) agreement on pay and conditions in 2003. This programme of change is intended to move authorities towards a more targeted and risk-based approach to prevention, protection and emergency response.
9. As part of the NJC agreement, the Accounts Commission undertook a verification exercise to examine whether the intended benefits of the various national changes under modernisation were being delivered locally. This was conducted in two phases during 2004 with reports on progress produced in March and October of that year¹.
10. The second verification on the progress of modernisation reported that progress was being made in Scotland and that the building blocks were in place. However, the report concluded there was still a significant amount of work to be done before real change would be delivered on the ground. As a result, the Accounts Commission asked Audit Scotland to undertake a performance audit on the Scottish fire and rescue authorities during 2006 to include a review of the overall outcomes of modernisation.
11. Following the NJC agreement, new legislation was enacted in Scotland (The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005) which provides the statutory framework to enable Fire and Rescue Authorities in Scotland to modernise their services. The 2005 Act is accompanied by a statutory Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland, finalised in September 2005, which sets out the priorities, objectives and guidance for the fire and rescue service.
12. With enabling legislation and a new statutory framework in place, the Commission agreed a project brief for a national performance audit of Scottish Fire and Rescue Authorities in February 2006. The overall focus of the audit should be the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are achieving the objectives of modernisation, and in particular whether:
 - Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) are effectively supporting the change in emphasis from intervention to prevention, and
 - the progress to modernisation is reflected in the culture of the organisation.

¹ Accounts Commission (2004) Scottish Fire Services. Verification of the progress of modernisation (March) and the second verification of the progress of modernisation (October)

13. During the summer of 2006, an Audit Scotland performance audit team visited all eight fire and rescue authorities in Scotland. In each authority, the audit team conducted an extensive range of interviews, reviewed relevant documents and analysed performance information. The audit team reviewed six areas of performance:
- Strategic management
 - Fire prevention and risk management
 - Financial management
 - Workforce management
 - Management of operational business
 - Communication.
14. This local audit report presents our findings and conclusions against these six areas for Tayside Fire and Rescue Authority. A national report summarising our findings for all Scottish Fire and Rescue Authorities will be published in February 2007.
15. In conducting the local audit work, Audit Scotland reviewed the inspection report of Tayside FRA by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland (HMFSIS). The inspection was carried out in November 2005.
16. We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided to the audit team by the many councillors, FRA staff and other stakeholders who assisted us in our work.

Local context

17. Tayside Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) covers an area of 7,527 sq km (9.7% of Scotland) and delivers services to 393,000 people, approximately 7.6% of Scotland's population. The majority of the population is centred in Dundee and Perth with the remainder spread throughout a number of towns and villages in Angus and Perth & Kinross. The region is diverse, covering urban centres in Dundee and Perth as well as remote rural areas stretching into the Scottish Highlands.
18. The population of Tayside is set to decline by 4% by 2024. However, this overall figure hides some significant variances. In particular, the population of Dundee City is projected to decline by 15% in that period, while the population of Perth & Kinross is projected to increase by 6%.
19. 1.9% of the regional population is from ethnic minorities. The minority ethnic communities are concentrated in Dundee with 3.7% of its overall population from these communities. Just 1% of Perth & Kinross and 0.8% of Angus' populations are from minority ethnic communities.

20. Tayside covers a spectrum of affluence and deprivation. There is a strong link between living in an area of deprivation and being at risk from fire. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Executive's official tool for identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland. The SIMD 2006 divides Scotland up into 6,505 small geographical areas (called 'data zones'), with a median population size of 769.
21. The 2006 SIMD shows that 29% of Dundee's population live in the 15% most deprived datazones in Scotland. In contrast, the equivalent percentages for Angus and Perth & Kinross are 6% and 4% respectively.
22. The FRA needs to take account of these demographic and sociological factors as it develops services for local communities in the future.

The Fire and Rescue Authority

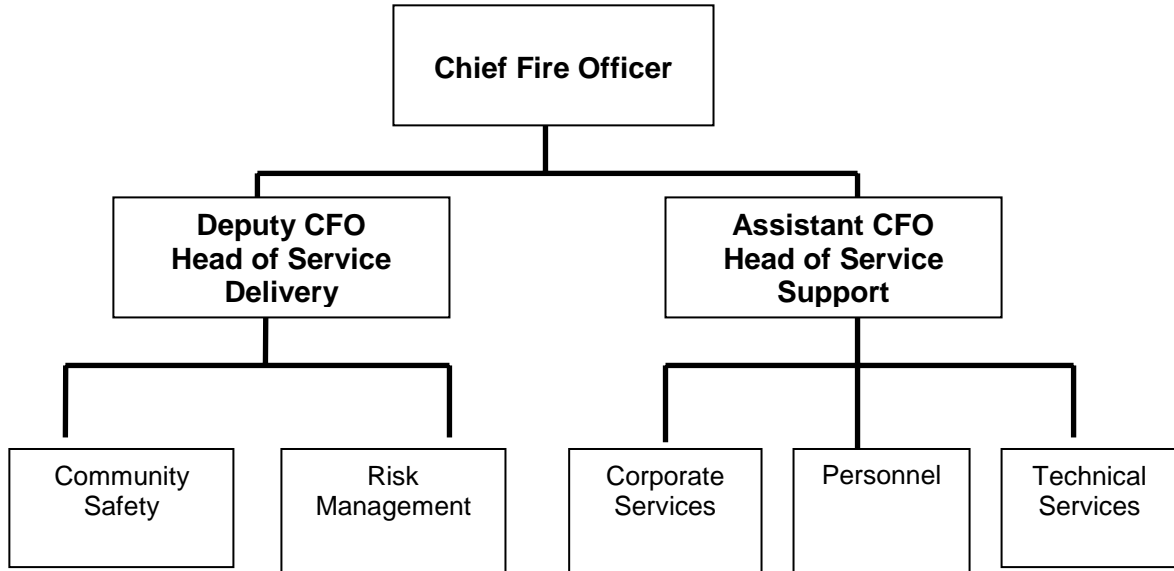
23. Tayside Fire and Rescue Board is a Joint Board formed in 1996, covering the three constituent local authorities of Angus, Perth and Kinross and Dundee City. The Board comprises 18 elected members of which five are from Angus, six from Perth & Kinross and seven from Dundee City. The Fire and Rescue Board is led by a convenor, supported by two vice convenors.
24. The Fire and Rescue Board's revenue budget for 2005/06 was £25.9million with a supporting capital budget of £1.7million. The FRA employs 780 personnel. Of these, 409 are operational wholetime firefighters, 251 are retained firefighters and a further 23 are volunteer firefighters. There are 23 members of staff employed in the control room and a further 74 non-uniformed staff² based throughout the FRA area.
25. The current management structure of the FRA is based around functions of service delivery and service support. Service support encompasses Corporate Services, Personnel and Technical Services, whilst service delivery encompasses Community Safety and Risk Management, as outlined in Exhibit 1 below.
26. There are 24 stations located within the area. Of these, four are wholetime stations, two wholetime/retained and 15 are staffed by retained personnel. The remaining three stations are staffed by volunteers. There is a fleet of 57 appliances, including two urban search and rescue (USAR) vehicles, and other specialist response and service delivery units.

² In this report, the term non-uniformed is used to describe only those staff who are not subject to the NJC Schemes of Conditions of Service Sixth edition 2004. We have used this term in the absence of any nationally agreed description for this group of staff. Some FRAs use 'support staff' and/or 'corporate staff'.

27. In 2005/06, the FRA responded to 8,197 incidents which included 1,157 primary fires and 1,931 secondary fires.

Exhibit 1

Organisational structure



Source: Tayside Fire and Rescue Authority

Part 1: Strategic management

Key findings

- The FRA has a clear strategic direction recognising the requirements of the national framework and designed to meet local needs. The overall approach is supported by robust service planning arrangements.
- Members are supportive and participate fully in the work of the joint board, but there is a need for more public scrutiny of service development proposals. Robust challenge is not evident through the existing joint board arrangements. The FRA should use the opportunity of the 2007 local elections to put in place a development framework for members and consider implementing the concept of 'Board Champions' for specific policy areas.
- The senior management team led by the CFO operates well together. Staff display a strong sense of ownership and belonging to the FRA. The introduction of a partnership forum with representative bodies would assist consultation and communication throughout the FRA.
- The FRA has made good progress in developing a performance management framework, which tracks progress against agreed objectives for achieving its strategic aims and operational performance. The framework would be enhanced by the implementation of a suitable IT software system. The FRA also needs to develop a personal appraisal system linked to their strategic objectives and performance management framework.

Strategic direction

28. The FRA has clear and realistic ambitions for itself as a service and for the wider communities within Tayside. Their vision is clear and simple, '*Protecting the Community*', and is encapsulated as part of a mission statement displayed across all FRA premises and published in all public documents. The vision encompasses four strategic aims:
- Prevention – work with local communities to reduce risks to life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.
 - Intervention – respond promptly and effectively to deal with fires and other emergencies when they occur.
 - People – ensure that services are delivered by a well equipped, skilled and highly motivated workforce which is able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse communities it serves.

- Performance – monitor performance to ensure continuous improvement and delivery of best value.
29. The vision reflects the role that the modern fire and rescue authority must fulfil, as outlined in the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, in moving the focus of its service to prevention from intervention. There is a high level of 'corporate branding' within the FRA and this has resulted in a widespread awareness of the FRAs strategic direction among staff in all service areas.
30. The FRA has developed medium and long-term plans for the future articulated through its five-year strategies covering the four areas of Prevention, Intervention, People and Performance. The FRA regularly reviews its plans to ensure they are relevant and up to date, and review periods are explicit in all the main strategies. For example, the FRA undertook a review of its objectives in the current planning cycle, to ensure that it has captured and prioritised all its stakeholder needs and expectations and that plans are consistent with the IRMP. There is also consistency with local community planning partnerships, with relevant elements of the FRAs service plans and IRMP incorporated into local community safety plans and Anti-Social Behaviour strategies.
31. The FRA has an organisational structure to support the delivery of its service objectives. In 2004, it undertook an organisational review, with the aim of introducing a structure that would support delivery of the modernisation agenda resulting in new corporate and operational arrangements being introduced. Both middle and senior management view this as an important and helpful development but it is too early to gauge the impact on overall effectiveness.
32. The FRA operates within a clear business planning framework, which is driven by the bi-annual service planning workshops. These workshops set the agenda and framework within which the FRA needs to operate to deliver its key objectives. The summer workshop sets the proposals for the following year including reaching agreement on the strategic objectives of the Service, whilst the autumn workshop ratifies the objectives reached at the earlier event. Strategic objectives thereafter are cascaded down throughout the organisation and are followed by the establishment of operational plans which flow directly from these.

Leadership and governance

33. The FRA has a clear corporate governance framework. The delegated responsibilities and accountabilities of the various panels and working groups are well documented and reviewed on an annual basis.
34. Board members are clearly committed and supportive of the FRA. Members place considerable reliance on the views of the CFO with minimal challenge. There is a balance to be struck between members recognising the professional advice provided by the CFO, but undertaking robust and effective scrutiny of policy decisions. The CFO provides clear professional leadership to the Board but members need to recognise and properly fulfil their scrutiny role.

35. The two Sub-Committees of the Board – Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) and Performance Monitoring – are the mechanisms for detailed debate and challenge over key issues. In particular, the establishment of the IRMP sub-committee has allowed members to debate risk management planning in more detail, resulting in an increased member involvement in developing the IRMP. However, while the sub-committee structure enables more detailed discussion on particular policy areas, there is limited evidence of robust scrutiny and challenge at Board level.
36. The FRA places reliance on the constituent authorities taking responsibility for member training. While the majority of members on the Board are highly experienced, due to length of time served, members' development has not been informed by a comprehensive training needs analysis. Some members appear unaware of the need for specific training by the FRA to assist them to work more effectively as members of a Fire and Rescue Joint Board. Addressing any training needs, as well as recognising skills that members bring to their roles, is important in promoting effective engagement of members and realising their full potential for the benefit of the FRA. The FRA may wish to address this issue in preparing for and following local government elections in May 2007.
37. The FRA does not make use of the concept of Board champions. There is scope for lead roles to be developed among members, covering aspects such as performance management and diversity and equality. The outcome of any training needs analysis could help identify suitable members to fulfil these roles. This is another area for the FRA to explore with the new Board.
38. Relationships between members and officers are well developed and a number of members visit local stations to talk to staff, offer advice and discuss in more detail the work of the Board. The CFO has regular dialogue with the Convenor and Vice-Convenor between formal Board Meetings.
39. The Senior Management Team led by the CFO operates well together and is clear on what it is trying to achieve. There is a clear sense of ownership and pride amongst staff for driving forward service improvements.
40. The CFO is building an empowered organisation that is developing and working in a more decentralised way. The FRA has encouraged managers and Heads of Department to attend the LEO course (Leading an Empowered Organisation) run by Leeds University. This four day course explores the benefits of decentralisation and empowerment and equips managers with practical skills they can use on a daily basis. To date, 124 members of staff have completed the course, 79% of all managers within the FRA. Supporting managers in this way demonstrates the FRAs intention to change the organisational culture and improve service delivery. Interviews with staff who had completed the course confirmed that they found it a useful learning experience.
41. The FRA recognises that effective communication and consultation with representative bodies is critical to achieving its objectives. Senior management meet regularly with individual union representatives and have recently taken the step of formally recognising the Fire Officers Association (FOA) and the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) for consultation purposes. However, overall

progress in this area is hindered by the absence of a consultation forum for all representative bodies which would assist in developing and sustaining productive working relationships with senior management.

Performance management

42. The FRA has made good progress in introducing performance management arrangements, which provide the senior management team with a clear view and understanding of how the FRA is performing against its strategic objectives and on its operational performance. The internal performance management arrangements are complemented by the annual Public Performance Report (PPR) which reports on progress against the actions in the Service Plan.
43. The FRA reports quarterly on performance against Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs), Local Performance Indicators (LPIs), and Brigade Performance Indicators (BPIs). SPIs are set out in the Accounts Commission's annual Direction and are reported on by all Scottish FRAs. LPIs are agreed by the Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland) and allow fire and rescue authorities in Scotland to benchmark their performance against each other. These indicators measure performance in areas such as fire prevention, the diversity of the workforce, attacks on firefighters and Freedom of Information requests. A new suite of LPIs was introduced on 1st April 2006, so at present no annual comparable data is available. BPIs are set by the FRA and reflect local priorities in each service department, such as the number of formal complaints received, number of 'return to work' interviews completed and the number of vehicle accidents. This quarterly performance reporting process works well and permeates the whole organisation as individual managers/departments are all expected to submit their reports on progress against the service plan objectives and agreed performance information.
44. Over the course of the last financial year, the FRA has developed a set of strategic performance indicators that will allow progress towards the five-year strategies to be measured. These indicators will assist decision making at station, district and corporate levels and provide the Board with assurance that on-going progress in delivering and embedding the modernisation agenda is being achieved. For example, within the five-year people strategy, strategic objective number 14 is "*to embrace diversity and offer equality of opportunity in everything we do*". To measure progress against this objective, the FRA have put in place three performance indicators which will identify:
 - Number of investigations relating to equality and diversity issues
 - Number of discipline cases relating to equality and diversity issues
 - Number of approaches to harassment contact advisors.
45. While the FRA has developed a solid framework for performance management, progress is required in two related areas:

- the procurement of performance management software to enable the service to develop the full potential of the performance management framework. The FRA is taking this forward through the CFOA (S) network who are exploring the procurement of a national performance information management system.
 - the development of an appropriate personnel appraisal system linked with performance management and the FRAs strategic objectives.
46. The FRA has robust project management systems which strengthen the overall performance management framework. A project planning tool has been developed in-house and the FRA has adopted the European Foundation for Quality Management Business Excellence model as a means of promoting continuous improvement in all its projects and initiatives.
47. The FRA maintains a risk register. Strategies to manage new and existing risks are identified and reported to senior managers via the risk register. However, further work is required to ensure that both financial and non financial risks are properly assessed and risk management processes are embedded throughout the service.

Part 2: Fire prevention and risk management

Key findings

- IRMP has been successfully mainstreamed into the service planning process within the FRA. This has been assisted by the merger of the Operations and Community Fire Safety Departments to form a single Community Safety Department.
- There is a strong focus on prevention and protection work delivered through a wide range of initiatives and partnerships however progress on Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) has been slow.
- The FRA needs to do more to measure the impact of community safety initiatives to ensure that it is making optimum use of resources and collectively contributing to the objectives identified in the IRMP. The FRA cannot yet demonstrate improvements in areas such as deliberate fire raising, and Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) which have increased in number over the last 12 month period despite engaging in a wide range of initiatives.
- The FRA recognises the benefits of partnership working and this is well developed locally. However, until partnerships are managed more strategically, the FRA will be unable to target resources at those which deliver the greatest benefits.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

48. IRMP is now in its second year and has been integrated into the strategic aims and wider service delivery of the FRA. The current IRMP 'Towards a Safer Tayside' (TAST) takes into account the requirements set out in the National Framework and recognises local needs. The second IRMP builds on the first IRMP and is a logical development of it.
49. The over-arching approach is to rebalance the efforts of the FRA towards a greater emphasis on preventative work on community safety and to redirect the focus of emergency intervention towards seeking to minimise loss of life rather than property. In doing this the FRA is shifting financial and human resources to meet its strategic objectives.
50. The FRA has been slow in exploiting the full capabilities of the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) computer model. However, within the last six month period, the FRA has brought its data management functions under the remit of the risk management department which has provided the team with a clearer focus and remit and allowed data across the whole service to be managed by one

department. The team has worked hard to capture datasets from a wide range of internal and external sources. Now the groundwork for this has been completed, there is scope to make more and better use of FSEC, for example by using the same system to capture information on (and to target) community safety activity and to provide for new duties resulting from Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act. The use of data overlays in FSEC, already in use in some other FRAs, would allow the security and integrity of the FSEC system to be maintained, whilst generating added value from the generic tools it can offer. Further opportunities could arise from closer integration of FSEC modelling with corporate risk management and the management of the community risk register.

51. The FRA recognises that data must also be available and managed at a station level to allow areas of high risk to be targeted more effectively. To support this the Browser for Operational System Status (BOSS) has been upgraded, providing each watch with a suitable tool through which they can record and analyse their activity. This will help each watch in producing a 'social strategy report' which will identify the number and breakdown of incidents grouped under a set of agreed headings such as Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). This will also assist the FRA in creating a comprehensive database of information to allow more in-depth analysis of service provision to take place.

Implementation of IRMP

52. Implementation of the IRMP in year one yielded a number of tangible benefits for the FRA including:
 - the redeployment of eight operational firefighter posts to Community Fire Safety and Training & Development.
 - the introduction of a range of policies, such as AFAs, Call Management and Mixed Crewing, to maximise the efficient and effective uses of resources. For example, the policy on pre-determined attendance to AFAs has resulted in a 10% reduction in costs relating to overtime and fuel, which it is estimated will yield a recurrent annual saving of £52,000.
 - new station work routines which have allowed staff in stations to conduct community safety work at the optimum times of day, helping to target vulnerable groups.
 - the appointment of District Liaison Officer posts, with responsibility for a geographical area closely aligned to local authority boundaries, to improve partnership working and bring the FRA closer to the communities it serves.
53. There are some early indications that the work undertaken through IRMP is starting to have a positive impact. Since the implementation of IRMP the number of accidental dwelling fires has decreased from

12.8 per 10,000 population in 2003/04 to 12.3 in 2005/06³. The number of incidents resulting in casualties has also decreased but only marginally from 1.8 per 10,000 population in 2003/04 to 1.7 in 2005/06⁴.

54. The FRAs commitment to Community Fire Safety (CFS) is demonstrated through the implementation of the IRMP. Internally, this is evident through the merger of the former Operations and CFS departments to form a Community Safety Department. This has integrated firefighters and CFS personnel into one department, bound by a common focus – to reduce the number of deaths and injuries through fire.
55. While the FRA has undertaken many CFS initiatives within the community it serves, overall it needs to do more to systematically evaluate their effectiveness to ensure they are making optimum use of resources and collectively contributing to objectives set out in the IRMP and associated corporate plans. This is important given that the FRA cannot yet demonstrate a record of improvement. For example the number of deliberate fires has increased from 1857 in 2004/05 to 1938 in 2005/06 and the number of RTCs has also increased from 234 in 2004/05 to 258 in 2005/06. These results are despite targeted safety initiatives such as Safe Drive Stay Alive and Risk Watch, work with young people which has included the secondment of a Community Safety Support Officer to a youth based project in Angus.
56. The FRA has made slow progress in relation to Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs). During 2005/06 the FRA completed 145 HFSVs, which equates to less than 1% of the 174,330 households within the area it serves. The FRA introduced HFSVs by piloting them in two stations initially. This was a policy decision to allow buy-in and engagement from staff at watch level and also allow the relevant training to be completed. This is now a priority area for the FRA and is a key objective in this year's IRMP action plan. Whilst there is a detailed policy in place, it is concerning that there are no overarching targets and plans for the comprehensive roll-out of HFSVs across Tayside.
57. In October 2006, Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act brought in new responsibilities and potential workloads relating to fire risk. The new legislation puts a statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of people in their workplaces or other non-domestic premises (such as residential care homes or houses of multiple occupation) in the event of a fire on the owners or managers of the relevant properties. Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for enforcing the new legislation and ensuring owners are adequately fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. This has implications both in knowing

³ Audit Scotland Statutory Performance Indicator

⁴ Audit Scotland Statutory Performance Indicator

which premises within their area are subject to the new legislation and in establishing a new inspection framework.

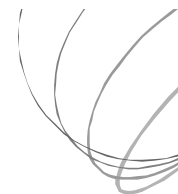
58. In response to this new legislation, the FRA has been considering the staffing implications of the new legislation and has introduced flexible working arrangements within the legislative fire safety department to enhance operational efficiency. An overarching plan is now being developed to tackle the legislation in a systematic manner.

Effectiveness of partnership working

59. The FRA recognises the benefits of partnership working and has committed significant resources (both time and people) to support this agenda. The FRA is a partner in the Community Planning Partnerships of each of the three local authorities and plays a significant role in their subsidiary community safety partnerships. The FRA is represented in these partnerships at both strategic and operational levels.
60. Partnership working is evident within the context of everything the FRA is trying to achieve. At an operational level, Community Fire Safety staff are highly committed and engaged in a wide range of initiatives, the majority of which are carried out in partnership with staff from other local authorities or other emergency services (e.g. police, ambulance service). The FRA is widely viewed as both a committed and proactive partner by other partner organisations.
61. In particular, the FRA is working with partners to deliver programmes targeted at specific high risk groups within local communities. Examples of these include the Joyriders Initiative, Safe Taysiders, Angus Riskwatch and the Electric Blanket Testing Scheme. For example data from FSEC identified that the Hilltown area of Dundee was a high risk area. The FRA, working with Tayside Police, instigated joint patrols in the area and as a result fire-raising incidents were reduced by 46% in 2005/06 compared to the previous 12 months.
62. Many of the initiatives that the FRA contribute to concern the broader social agenda such as anti-social behaviour and alcohol. The FRA recognises the link between these issues and their own community fire safety agenda (e.g. alcohol has been a contributory factor in 50% of fire related deaths in the last two years in Tayside). Against this backdrop, the FRA has initiated a campaign to raise awareness of the scale and societal consequences of alcohol within Tayside. The CFO is leading a multi-agency group, which draws its membership from a wide range of stakeholders including the NHS, Scottish Ambulance Service, Tayside Police and local authorities. While it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of such a campaign, the willingness of the FRA to lead this work demonstrates their commitment to dealing with the wider social issues facing local communities.

63. Data sharing between partner organisations through multi-agency projects is supporting the effective targeting of resources. There is a willingness to share data with partners, in particular with the Police and NHS and this has been used to initiate work in relation to the use of alcohol within Tayside.

64. Whilst commitment to partnership working is clear, the FRA is still developing a strategic approach to managing partnerships. A partnership register is now in place and the FRA has embarked on an evaluation of each partnership they are involved in to provide the evidence against which to base decisions on their continued involvement.



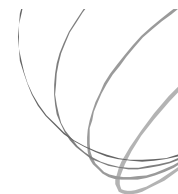
Part 3: Financial management

Key findings

- The revenue budget setting process is robust and the FRA has commenced work to identify efficiency savings through IRMP, however these need to be built into the annual budget.
- There are clear lines of accountability and sound budget monitoring procedures are in place. However the FRA should consider devolving budgets down to station level as this would allow budget holders greater flexibility in making the most efficient and effective use of resources.
- There is a well developed approach to capital planning but the absence of an asset management plan means that the FRA cannot be confident that capital expenditure decisions are soundly based in the longer term.

Financial position

65. Tayside Fire and Rescue Board's net expenditure in 2005/06 was £25.9 million which equates to £66.69 per head of population. This is higher than the Scottish average of £59.31 and is the second highest in Scotland.
66. In 2005/06 net expenditure was funded by requisitions from the three constituent authorities equal to their GAE allocation (£) and from reserves. The percentage share borne by each of the constituent authorities is as follows:
- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Angus Council | 19% |
| Dundee City Council | 52% |
| Perth & Kinross Council | 29% |
67. In recent years with the receipt of transitional funding, the revenue budget has been pegged to the GAE funding plus the amount of transitional funding allocated to the previous year. The budget that has been set this year has included the use of an amount of reserves in order to allow the FRA to undertake its key strategic objectives within the year.
68. Less than 1% of the FRAs budget is funded from income it receives during the year (excluding firefighter pension contributions) and there are currently no plans for extra income generation. The FRA considers there is limited scope for this and has instead chosen to concentrate on efficiency savings.



Financial pressures

69. The FRA has identified and considered the key financial pressures facing them in the future. These include the implementation of the Single Status Agreement, Equal Pay Claims and Rank to Role. The weakness is that whilst the FRA has considered these risks, it has not been able to predict the level of costs that would be associated with the implementation of the majority of these issues. In recognition of this, the FRA has planned to accumulate any surplus that is achieved on the revenue account into reserves, up to the statutory limit for Fire and Rescue Authorities as allowed by the Police and Fire Services (Finance) (Scotland) Act 2001.
70. The FRA has been allocated almost £3 million of transitional funding for the financial period 2003/04 to 2006/07. In common with other FRAs this has not been treated as a separate income stream but has instead been added to other resources available in setting annual budgets. It is anticipated that the costs thereafter will be funded through the normal budgetary streams, where efficiency gains will have been identified through the outcome of the IRMP process. The FRA has started to identify a series of both cashable and non-cashable efficiency gains which have materialised as a result of IRMP. The weakness however, lies in the fact that these savings are not actually built into the annual budget and there is further room to improve how these are monitored.
71. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme is administered by the FRA. It is unfunded and, therefore has no assets to be valued. The cost of the existing pensions is to be met from serving firefighters' contributions and contributions from constituent authorities, through the revenue budget. At 31 March 2006 the present value of scheme liabilities was £155 million. The increasing cost of maturing pension liabilities is in danger of outstripping the operational cost of service provision, and this situation will worsen over the next few years as the large number of firefighters who joined the service in the late 1970's approach retirement. Firefighter pension liabilities are an increasing financial risk for all FRAs and the Scottish Executive is currently reviewing a number of different options for funding.

Budget setting and monitoring

72. The revenue budget setting process is well managed. The FRA sets a zero based revenue budget each year with regards to the significant cost categories such as staff costs which account for the largest majority of revenue expenditure. This ensures that budget holders are appropriately consulted and are held accountable for their budget requests. The potential savings considered during the budget saving process include items that can be attributed as resulting from IRMP actions (for example review of resources, reduced attendance at AFAs). The cost implications of further IRMP reviews will be incorporated.
73. There are clear lines of accountability for financial matters. The Financial Regulations, as allowed for within the scheme of delegation, give authority to the CFO to incur all expenditure for which the Board



has set a budget. The current scheme of delegation is not particularly detailed and should be updated to take account of new FRA terminology. The forthcoming 2007 elections provide an opportunity for this review to take place.

74. Sound revenue budget monitoring arrangements are in place at a service level. Revenue and capital expenditure are scrutinised at the management team meetings on a monthly basis and any changes to planned expenditure are considered and approved at this forum. On a quarterly basis the Board is furnished with detailed financial reports which cover both capital and revenue expenditure.
75. The FRA has put limited arrangements in place to devolve budgets, which are currently devolved on a departmental basis only. Departmental managers have significant input into the annual budgeting process, as they provide known commitments and discretionary expenditure forecasts which support the establishment of the budget setting process. The FRA should consider devolving budgets to station level as this would ensure that budget holders not only take ownership for resources but would also provide them with greater flexibility to make the most efficient and effective use of resources.
76. The FRA has begun to integrate service and financial planning. The annual service planning cycle is well managed, roles and responsibilities are defined and there is a clear timetable within which it operates. It lays out a framework linking the revenue expenditure plans, capital expenditure plans, corporate strategies and the IRMP. Through this process, the budgets and service plans have become more aligned and in headline terms, primary budgets are allocated to corporate aims.

Internal audit

77. Internal audit plays a key role in the FRAs governance arrangements, providing an independent appraisal service to management by reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the internal control system. The Board's internal audit service is provided by Perth & Kinross Council by a Service Level Agreement (SLA). Difficulties have been encountered in this area and there is currently no formal SLA and audit plan in place. The FRA is aware of these issues and these are being addressed by the Head of Corporate Services and the Chief Internal Auditor of Perth & Kinross Council.

Procurement

78. The FRA recognises the value of procurement in delivering real benefits and against this backdrop, introduced a new procurement strategy in March 2006. This sets out eight clear objectives to ensure that the FRA achieves Value for Money in relation to all non-salary expenditure. The strategy is underpinned by an action plan which will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.



Capital expenditure

79. Capital expenditure totalled £2.3 million in 2005/06 and was funded by Scottish Executive capital grant of £1.7million, receipts from the disposal of fixed assets of £12,000 and reserves of £615,000.
80. The FRA has a robust system in place for capital expenditure. The capital planning process takes due cognisance of the prudential code. In 2004 the Fire Board set Prudential Indicators for the three-year period commencing 2004/05. As part of this process, the Board agreed that these indicators would be monitored, revised and approved each subsequent year. There is evidence that such arrangements are in place. The 2006/07 prudential indicators were approved by the Board in January 2006, however, the FRA is clear that it does not intend to undertake any prudential borrowing in the near future as expenditure will be limited to capital allocations and top slicing bids only.
81. The capital planning process involves sending out Project Approval reports to all heads of departments who then submit their bids. The value of bids generally greatly exceeds the capital budget therefore the Management Team prioritise the bids. This is then used to develop the overarching capital plan which is undertaken every three years. However, the Board are presented with an annual capital plan which is developed as part of the annual corporate planning cycle.
82. As at 31 March 2006, Tayside FRA currently had assets totalling £22 million and borrowing of £8.5 million to fund these.
83. Asset management planning is still at a developmental stage and the FRA does not currently have an asset management plan or strategy that demonstrate how its asset portfolio is fully supporting its strategic objectives. The completion of this work should provide a sound basis for improved management of assets, contributing to overall value for money.



Part 4: Workforce management

Key findings

- The FRA has a clear understanding of the people and skills required to deliver its key strategic objectives and continues to invest in the development of its entire workforce. The five-year People Strategy is the key document to realising the FRA's vision.
- The FRA has made good progress on implementation of IPDS and its rollout has been supported by an annual Training and Development plan. There are good training and development opportunities for non-uniformed staff, but more needs to be done to identify their training needs on a systematic basis.
- Equality and Diversity issues are well advanced however the workforce does not reflect the diversity of the communities it serves.

Workforce planning

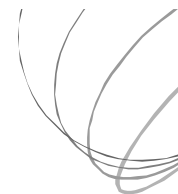
84. The FRA has a clear commitment to workforce development articulated through the five-year People Strategy which covers the period 2006-2011. This strategy clearly identifies the key issues which the FRA needs to advance over the next five years to maximise the contribution of all employees and to meet the strategic objectives. The strategy provides a clear direction for the FRA, gives a longer term focus and responds to the organisational needs identified in the IRMP. It is underpinned and supported by a range of policies for training, grievances and discipline for example.
85. The personnel function within the FRA covers four main areas – HR, training and development, occupational safety and occupational health. Each area is led by a manager, who is empowered to take responsibility and lead on their own function. The five-year strategy is distilled into yearly action plans, comprising a series of strategic, tactical and operational objectives which allow closer scrutiny of progress. Progress against the one-year action plan is then monitored on a quarterly basis and reported through the corporate performance management arrangements.
86. The FRA is addressing absence management, both in the interests of staff welfare and to maximise operational efficiency. The attendance management policy has recently been revised and regular contact with employees on long-term sickness absence helps to keep them abreast of developments in the FRA. Whilst the overall figures for sickness absence (rider shifts lost) have remained fairly static they have been consistently below the average for the eight FRAs in recent years, at 5.8% in 2003/04 (Scotland: 7.0%), 6.1% in 2004/05 (Scotland: 7.4%), 5.7% in 2005/06 (Scotland: 6.4%) However, this is clearly an area where the FRA could achieve further improvements. This is further evidenced using the FRAs own performance indicators, one of which includes the percentage of back to work



interviews completed. The target for this during 2005/06 was 100%, however the average across all areas was only 62%.

Support and development of staff

87. The FRA has well developed systems in place to understand the people and skills required to achieve its objectives. This is evidenced through the annual Training and Development (T&D) Plan which is a key component of the People Strategy. This plan clearly identifies how training activities within the FRA will be co-ordinated to meet organisational, team and individual needs.
88. IPDS is clearly a priority for the FRA. Although it is developing IPDS in line with the national direction, it has been proactive in its approach to implementation. For example, the FRA has already entered into a partnership with Dundee College to act as the principal provider for training and the authority is now looking at ways to incorporate their own training material into the Firefighter Development programme.
89. The FRA has made good progress in the implementation of PDR-Pro (national electronic development records). The system has been fully implemented across the wholetime sector and training has been completed. Wholetime personnel are now using the system for both role evaluation and development planning. Encouraging progress has been made in the retained sector. Training is currently being rolled out and 50% of retained personnel are now using the system for role evaluation.
90. The FRA recognises that to meet on-going learning and development requirements amongst its staff, the appropriate training facilities must be in place. Since 2004, this has been a key priority for the FRA, when a new Training and Development Centre was built at Perth. A new training block has also been built in Arbroath and upgrading work is ongoing at Blackness Road in Dundee. The centre in Perth is not only well positioned geographically to serve the FRA but also the other FRAs across Scotland.
91. The FRA has successfully completed the transition from rank to role (including the resolution of appeals) across wholetime, retained and control staff. This has taken longer than expected as the TAST action plan for 2005/06 identified a completion date of November 2005. To ensure consistency of approach, the FRA led a collaboration with Central Scotland, Grampian and Highlands and Islands to agree common standards for the job sizing process including the questions to be used and a weighting matrix.
92. There are good opportunities for training and development for non-uniformed staff and the strategy is outlined in the annual T&D plan. The weakness in the current system is that without an appropriate appraisal system, the training needs of individual members of staff cannot be readily identified and encompassed into the annual plan. In acknowledging this current weakness, the FRA issued a questionnaire to administrative staff to gauge their level of skills across a number of areas. This



information was then used to inform the T&D Plan. Staff are also encouraged to identify specific training needs and undertake courses for which they are fully supported both in terms of study leave and financially. Interviews across a range of non-uniformed staff confirmed a general satisfaction with the current arrangements.

Flexible working arrangements

93. The FRA has implemented a number of policies which demonstrate their commitment to family friendly and flexible working arrangements. These include policies relating to pre-planned overtime, work routines, flexitime, career breaks and mixed crewing. Furthermore, new watch routines for staff involved in delivering Training and Development have also enabled the FRA to undertake more training at weekends and in the evenings.
94. The benefits associated with flexible working are not just reserved for uniformed personnel. Non-uniformed staff can access policies such as flexible working, flexitime and career breaks to enhance their work-life balance and this option has been taken up by a significant number of personnel. The changes that the FRA has built into working arrangements have now been extended to the recruitment process, with all applicants being able to identify whether they would seek a part-time/job share post at the application stage, to allow appropriate provision to be made in this regard.
95. Overall, there is a positive approach to flexible working, also supported by a recognition that training needs to be delivered in a flexible way. All uniformed and non-uniformed staff can be considered for flexible working and there is a robust process in place to assess applications. The successful introduction of these policies has enabled the FRA to make more effective use of its people.

Equality and diversity

96. Plans and activities to address the equality and diversity agenda are well advanced. A dedicated Equality and Diversity Officer has been in post for more than two years and a diversity forum has been established which includes representation from across all areas within the FRA. The diversity forum takes an active interest in matters relating to recruitment, the cultural audit, the Race Equality Scheme (RES), Equality Training and Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
97. The commitment to this agenda is evident through the range of activities the FRA has engaged in, including the rollout of an e-learning package to allow staff to test their self-awareness of equality issues and secondly on the impact of changes which have been introduced to date. The e-learning package covers five aspects of equality – Race, Religion & Belief, Age, Gender, Disability and Sexual Orientation. It has now been completed by 90% of uniformed and non-uniformed staff.
98. Other key achievements over the last 12 months include the development of a revised RES, participation in positive action recruitment events and the introduction of EIAs. To date, the FRA has



completed training for 40 members of staff, to assist the speed with which they can undertake the EIA of its policies and procedures.

99. Both uniformed and non-uniformed staff demonstrated good knowledge of the relevant policies and procedures relating to bullying and harassment and raising a grievance. There was general agreement that such procedures would be effective if required. This high level of awareness can in part be attributed to the introduction of contact officers within the FRA, the aim of which is to offer advice and support to any member of staff who seeks advice on such issues.
100. Despite this sound approach to Equality and Diversity issues, the workforce does not yet reflect the diversity of the community it serves. For example, women currently represent 4% of the uniformed workforce, whilst Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff represent only 0.3% of the entire workforce. In recognition of this, the FRA recently held a series of positive action recruitment events targeted at both women and BME groups. Furthermore, the FRA has actively sought out different media and formats in order to target underrepresented groups. The recent recruitment campaign saw advertisements being placed in the Caribbean Times, Eastern Eye and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender media (LGBT) whilst over the past year, the FRA has participated in a number of high profile events within ethnic minority communities.
101. A practical example of the FRA's commitment to the Equality and Diversity agenda, is evident from a recent visit to one of Dundee's mosques. This visit allowed the FRA to raise its own profile and learn more about Ramadan. As a result of this visit, adjustments were made to the practical testing for recruitment, for example, in order to avoid times when individuals are fasting as part of Ramadan.
102. There are early indications that this work is starting to have a positive impact. In 2005/06 the FRA set performance targets for both women (8%) and BME groups (2%) applying for wholetime vacancies. Actual performance was 7.36% for women and 1.28% for BME groups.
103. Overall, equality and diversity issues are progressing well in the FRA. There is a clear strategic direction for training and development of all staff in this area. Good leadership is shown by the CFO, who has completed all the e-learning packages. Equality and Diversity input is included at every stage of the recruitment process, induction and training process. The FRA is also addressing more sensitive issues such as sexuality and has signed up to the national Diversity Champion Programme and held seminars internally on these issues.



Part 5: Management of operational business

Key Findings

- The FRA is committed to providing a high quality intervention service and this is reflected in the objectives within the 2006/07 IRMP action plan.
- A number of policies covering areas such as Call Management, Fire Alarm Mobilisation and Mixed Crewing have been implemented to ensure greater flexibility and more efficient use of resources.
- The FRA has made good use of a rolling programme of Best Value Reviews and there is evidence that the outcome of these have been implemented and will yield efficiency savings in the longer term.
- Health and safety systems and processes are embedded within the FRA and there is evidence to suggest that they are working effectively.

Operational management

104. Although the FRA is moving the emphasis of its service towards prevention, intervention remains one of the four core 'building blocks' of the 2006/07 IRMP Action Plan. The objectives for intervention are outlined in the action plan and these are monitored as part of the performance management framework. Operational performance is also measured against SPIs, LPIs and BPIs.

105. The objectives for intervention in 2006/07 include:

- Commence a review of the emergency response service provided to identify best use of these resources and in particular the location and number of fire stations and units.
- Consider the number and type of high reach appliances required across the Tayside Fire and Rescue area.
- Undertake interoperability exercises with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to test how effectively major incidents are dealt with.
- Evaluate the outcome of predictive crewing on retained stations and consider the introduction of a staged emergency call-out system.

106. The FRA is shifting financial and human resources to meet its strategic objectives. For example, following a Best Value review, the FRA is currently engaged in a project to provide rescue units on



each wholtime and retained station. This is scheduled to be completed by the end of this financial year and will bring about a net reduction in the number of appliance crew members whilst enhancing service quality as the units are capable of dealing not only with fires but also other emergencies such as road traffic collisions and chemical incidents. The FRA has estimated that the introduction of rescue units will result in an annual cashable efficiency gain of £92,065.

107. The FRA has implemented a range of policies to support the delivery of an effective and efficient response to fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies. These include policies relating to fire alarm mobilisations, call management, overtime and mixed crewing.
108. There are some early indications that these policies are starting to be effective. The introduction of the fire alarm mobilisation policy has resulted in 362 fewer appliance mobilisations in the first quarter of 2005/06 compared to 2004/05. This has reduced the unnecessary drain on the FRA's resources and appliance journeys. Linked to the introduction of the call management policy, there has been a decrease in the number of malicious calls from 314 in 2004/05 to 296 in 2005/06. This represents a 6% improvement in the last 12 months.
109. Both the overtime and mixed crewing policies provide examples of how the FRA has sought solutions to ensure that they are able to respond to the needs of communities in an emergency response capacity. These policies have been implemented to reduce the number of times an appliance is unavailable due to either insufficient personnel or skill levels. To date, 39 members of staff have taken up the option. The FRA needs to continue to highlight the benefits it can offer to both individuals and watches.
110. The delivery of the intervention service is also being enhanced by a number of other improvements:
- During 2005/06 two heavy rescue units became fully operational and are capable of dealing with large scale incidents of an accidental or deliberate nature.
 - The FRA is undertaking an initiative relating to the use of aerial appliances, which will help assist future option appraisals on response times and equipment assets. This analysis will inform decisions to be made on the resources required to respond to incidents.
 - Work has been completed to implement the upgrade of the Command and Control System (Fortek Vision) to further support and enhance the capture of operational data and make such information directly accessible across groups of key personnel.
111. Since the national standards of fire cover were removed the FRA has continued to monitor operational response times for its own business planning purposes, but does not report publicly on them. Response times are of significant public interest and the FRA should consider how its performance can be reported within the context of the IRMP.



112. The FRA makes use of Best Value Reviews to ensure that the correct balance between cost and quality has been achieved. The authority is approaching the end of a programme of Best Value Reviews covering the period 2004-2007. Successfully completed reviews include document management, rescue units and uniforms. The latter two reviews yielded financial efficiencies for the FRA. The outcome of the document management review led to the introduction of an electronic library system, which is accessible by all staff.
113. Emergency planning is strong both in terms of resilience with other emergency services and responding flexibly to emerging challenges and threats. The FRA is part of the Tayside RECAP Strategic Co-ordinating Group, a multi-agency group involving other emergency services and relevant organisations such as local authorities, who come together to plan for and respond to serious emergencies within the Dundee City, Angus and Perth & Kinross council areas. The group has recently been successfully restructured to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
114. The FRA has a well developed approach to health and safety, which is seen as an integral responsibility for all staff. The FRA demonstrates their approach to health and safety by the inclusion of specific objectives within the 2006/07 IRMP action plan. Furthermore, a wide range of policies and procedures have been produced to ensure that the FRA meets its obligations in terms of compliance with major legislation that impacts on service delivery. The FRA is also participating in the Scotland Health at Work Scheme (SHAW) and working towards their bronze award.
115. There is evidence to suggest that the on-going commitment to Health and Safety is having an impact. Figures reported to RIDDOR are starting to show a downward trend – 16 accidents were reported in 2003/04 and by 2005/06 this had decreased to 14, an improvement of 12.5%. Furthermore, using the FRA's own performance indicators, the number of personal injury forms submitted (for operational personnel) decreased from 75 in 2003/04 to 65 in 2005/06, an overall improvement of 13%.

Collaborative working

116. Through the CFOA (S) forums, the FRA works effectively with other services throughout Scotland in taking forward initiatives, specifically in the areas of both Operations and New Dimensions. Within CFOA (S), the CFO is leading the Business Continuity Portfolio. The FRA recognises both the benefits and importance of working in partnership with other services.
117. However, not all collaboration takes place through the CFOA (S) network and the FRA has been proactive in identifying opportunities for collaborative working with individual FRAs that meet and support their business needs. A good example of this is the recent collaboration with Highlands and Islands, Grampian and Central FRAs to complete the Rank to Role process. Working with other FRAs on this initiative allowed good practice to be shared and supported the development of a common framework.



118. The FRA also seeks to work collaboratively with other agencies and organisations to support delivery of its strategic aims. For example, as a result of a recent collaboration with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, equipment was provided to the FRA to ensure that staff could deal with any pollution threat effectively.



Part 6: Communication

Key findings

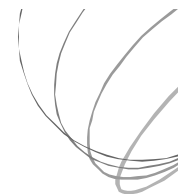
- There is a clear commitment to effective communications within the FRA. A Corporate Communications Strategy is in place and a range of innovative methods are being used. Staff are generally positive about the way information is communicated.
- The FRA has developed a range of approaches to improve the effectiveness of external communications. Public Performance Reporting (PPR) is used to good effect to educate and inform the public on future strategies and plans and provide information on community fire safety activities, as well as reporting on performance.
- The FRA continues to make good use of Information Technology (IT) in taking forward its prevention and intervention agenda, however workload prioritisation is a challenge.

Internal communication

119. The FRA recognises that effective communications is integral to delivering its organisational aims successfully both internally and externally. The Corporate Communications Strategy includes the following objectives:

- To consult with stakeholders in order to improve the ability to meet the needs and expectations of the community.
- To encourage internal communications to improve the safety, knowledge, understanding and morale of personnel.
- To provide an integrated and inclusive structure to communications which will be a key component of cultural transformation and change management.

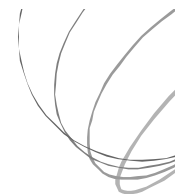
120. Work on developing a communications strategy commenced following analysis of the results from the ORS Survey, which was carried out in late 2004. The aim of this questionnaire was to assess the level of employee satisfaction across a number of key areas. The results highlighted a need for better communications. During 2005 the FRA put in place an action plan to address issues arising from the survey and there is evidence of this being implemented effectively. For example, an electronic document library (TROVE) has now been introduced as has a staff suggestion scheme. The ORS Survey provided a useful platform for the FRA to start to address and improve communication and they have used this opportunity to good effect.



121. The FRA has sought to adopt a wide range of communication techniques in order to communicate effectively with staff. These include the Quickfire newsletter, bulletins, core briefings, e-mails and internet postings. The FRA considers the needs and interests of all groups of staff with regards to communications and information is not tailored just to the needs of uniformed staff. This approach is reflected in recent editions of Quickfire which contain a broad range of articles of interest to staff across the authority.
122. The FRA has worked hard to ensure that such communication techniques go beyond the 'delivery of messages' from the management team. To this end, the FRA has adopted a number of practices that rely on two-way communication such as face to face briefings and 'Breakfast with the Chief'.
123. Integral to the final development and implementation of this strategy was work that was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of existing communication techniques. The review focussed on the more innovative methods of communication that had been introduced since the ORS Survey such as "Breakfast with the Chief" and the Core Brief. A total of 200 staff were surveyed from across the whole FRA. This evaluation confirmed that the techniques being utilised by the FRA were effective. Interviews conducted during the audit confirmed that both uniformed and non-uniformed staff across the organisation are generally positive about communications within the FRA, and consider they receive timely and accurate information.

External communication

124. The FRA continues to work hard to communicate its vision and strategy to stakeholders. A Stakeholder Consultation Programme has been developed and this is articulated in both the IRMP and annual Service Plan. This identifies the key stakeholders for the FRA and outlines a clear and focussed consultation process which is being implemented between the period 2004-2007.
125. The FRA understands the challenges associated with external communications and recognises the limitations of a traditional approach (e.g. IRMP sent out to key stakeholders, who are offered opportunity to provide feedback, yields a limited response). As a result the FRA has developed more innovative ways of working to get its messages across and take on board stakeholder views. These include the establishment of a dedicated telephone response line and the introduction of a Fire and Rescue Service consultation panel which will be used for qualitative research purposes in the future. Other techniques that have been used to engage key stakeholders include public meetings, radio phone-ins and media articles.
126. In developing its external communications strategy, the FRA has also considered both hard to reach and ethnic minority groups. For example the most recent IRMP Action Plan was available in large font with electronic formats also being available with 'talking options' for those hard of hearing. Furthermore, liaison with under-represented groups was also made to ensure that information was appropriately cascaded.



127. Section 13 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 imposes the duty on each Local Authority and partners to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcomes of its performance. Public Performance Reporting (PPR) is a key component of the FRA's external communications strategy. The annual PPR includes information on performance against a range of performance indicators, as well as summarising what the FRA has achieved during the previous 12 months. As this is a key document for communicating with stakeholders, the FRA uses it as a mechanism to put forward its community fire safety messages, and endeavours to ensure the language is accessible and easily understandable.

Information technology (IT)

128. The FRA recognises the important role that IT contributes to improving service delivery. Their approach is providing significant benefits to both staff and the organisation.

129. The FRA has put in place a new IT strategy which will become the main driver for IT development. The strategy is underpinned by an action plan, both of which are linked to the strategic and operational objectives of the FRA.

130. The FRA has acknowledged the potential that IT has to offer as both a communications and training tool. Over the past 12 months, significant progress has been made and IT infrastructure is now in place at all wholtime and retained stations giving personnel access to intranet, internet, e-mail and training resources. It is planned to roll this infrastructure out to the three volunteer stations within the current financial year. To simplify the use of IT and alleviate the need for passwords and user names etc, the FRA has introduced a single sign-on system. This removes the need to log on using passwords by allowing users to logon simply by placing a finger onto a biometric reader. The introduction of this highly sophisticated yet simplistic option, demonstrates the FRAs commitment and desire to ensure IT is a viable option for everyone.

131. Overall, the FRA has made good use of IT in helping to improve service delivery in key areas such as IPDS, Equality & Diversity and communications. However, it is evident that IT is an area that is struggling to cope with the additional workload generated through the modernisation agenda. This could impact on the department's ability to support service delivery and needs to be closely monitored.



Part 7: Improvement agenda

132. Scottish fire and rescue authorities are undergoing a period of significant change, underpinned by new legislation and accompanying statutory guidance. Locally, elected members and FRA officers must focus on delivering more targeted and risk-based services, which should be driven by a desire to achieve the highest possible standards.
133. Continuous improvement in public services and local governance lies at the heart of the statutory Best Value and community planning policy framework. This requires a culture where areas in need of improvement are identified and openly discussed, and in which service performance is constructively challenged.
134. The improvement agenda below sets out a number of actions identified through the audit and is intended to assist the FRA in focussing on the areas where it should direct its initial efforts. These areas for improvement are designed to build on the momentum for change that already exists within the FRA and will provide the basis for review and monitoring by Audit Scotland in the Autumn of 2007.

Strategic management

- Prepare for the new Joint Board members in May 2007 by providing a development framework to help members discharge their functions better and explore the potential of introducing Board champions (para 36).
- Introduce a partnership forum to provide a platform for formal dialogue between representative bodies and the corporate management team (para 41).
- Ensure performance management arrangements are effectively supported by appropriate IT systems (para 45).
- Ensure risk management is progressed throughout the organisation (para 47).

Fire prevention and risk management

- Maintain investment and support for FSEC and exploit the software to its full potential (para 50).
- Continue the development of local social strategy reports (para 51).
- Assess the impact of community fire safety initiatives in relation to objectives in the IRMP (para 55).
- Accelerate the delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits and identify targets in high risk areas right across Tayside (para 56).



- Ensure a capacity to discharge all duties on the FRA under part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act (para 58).
- Continue to make use of a partnership register to assess, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this type of work (para 64).

Financial management

- Improve the identification and monitoring of efficiency savings to ensure there is adequate budgetary provision to deliver the service once transitional funding has ceased (para 70).
- Take steps to devolve budget to station level and ensure training is in place to support this (para 75).
- Ensure there are adequate internal audit arrangements (para 77).
- Develop an asset management strategy to demonstrate Best Value in the use of the Board's assets and to ensure that spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable (para 83).

Workforce management

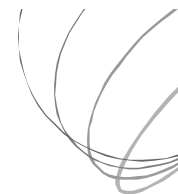
- Introduce ways to further improve the monitoring and management of sickness absence (para 86).
- Continue efforts to build a workforce which reflects the diversity of the communities the FRA serves (para 100).

Management of operational business

- Promote the take-up of new policies aimed at improving the efficiency of service delivery, in particular mixed crewing (para 109).
- Review the approach to the public reporting of response times within the context of IRMP (para 111).
- Complete the programme of Best Value reviews and implement recommendations (para 112).

Communications

- Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the various communication techniques at regular intervals (para 122 & 123).
- Monitor the IT Strategy at regular intervals (para 131).



Appendix

Glossary

AFA	Automatic Fire Alarm
BPI	Brigade Performance Indicators
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
CFOA (S)	Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland)
CFS	Community Fire Safety
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
FSEC	Fire Service Emergency Cover – software issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government to help FRAs carry out the risk mapping required for IRMP
GAE	Grant Aided Expenditure
HMFSIS	Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
HFSV	Home Fire Safety Visit
IPDS	Integrated Personal Development System
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management Planning
IT	Information Technology
LPIs	Local Performance Indicators – a set of CFOA indicators designed to allow Scottish FRAs to benchmark their performance against each other.
PPR	Public Performance Report
RES	Race Equality Scheme
RTC	Road traffic collision
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound
SPIs	Statutory Performance Indicators – statutory indicators set out in the Accounts Commission's annual Direction, under the Local Government Act 1992.