

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE  
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY REPORT**

DATE:	19 September 2005
REPORT BY:	<b>ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (SERVICE DELIVERY)</b>
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To present a draft document for adoption by Members as the Authority's informal Best Value Performance Plan 2005-06.

## 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires Best Value Authorities to '*prepare a best value performance plan [BVPP] for each financial year in accordance with any order made or guidance issued [by the Secretary of State]*'. Such guidance would normally contain references to the content and timing of BVPPs (known as 'Improvement Plans' in the Wales Programme for Improvement).

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Since devolution of responsibility for fire and rescue services in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales, the Assembly has been involved in developing a bespoke Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) framework for fire and rescue services. It has not yet exercised its power to make orders under the Local Government Act 1999 to provide statutory guidance in relation to BVPPs.
- 2.2 The Assembly's consultation document setting out proposals and guidance for the WPI for Fire and Rescue Authorities has been delayed by the need to take account of recent revisions to WPI guidance for unitary authorities.
- 2.3 On the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005, at a meeting of the Fire and Rescue WPI Steering Group, informal interim arrangements were agreed for the production and audit of BVPPs for 2005-06. These interim arrangements will cease once the definitive WPI guidance and order have come into effect. This is currently expected to happen on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006.

## 3 INFORMATION

- 3.1 The agreed informal arrangements require that the BVPP for 2005-06 should be produced by the end of September 2005, and should include:
- a summary of the authority's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement;
  - arrangements for addressing the authority's improvement priorities in 2005-06;
  - details of performance in 2004-05 and targets for 2005-06 in relation to all applicable Best Value Performance Indicators.

3 **INFORMATION** *(continued)*

3.2 Although the BVPP should be a public document, the primary audience is to be regarded as being the Authority itself. Other than making it available to those who request it, there is no requirement to publish paper copies. It will therefore be made available on the Service's website.

3.3 The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) have stated that they intend to write to the Wales Audit Office to invite them to conduct an informal inspection or audit of the BVPP, and to request clarification of detailed costs and responsibility for payment. It is understood that an audit would attract fees from the Fire and Rescue Authorities, whereas an inspection would attract funding from WAG grant.

4. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Members note the information contained in this report, and approve the draft document (appendix 1) for adoption as the Authority's informal BVPP 2005-06.