

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT

DATE:	20 th September 2004
REPORT BY:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To inform members of progress being made in relation to developing a new performance management framework for the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 1999 introduced the duty of Best Value for a range of authorities – including Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and Wales – for the purpose of promoting high quality public services which meet identified needs.

More specifically, this legislation places a duty on authorities to make arrangements to:

- secure continuous improvement in the way in which they exercise their functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- consult widely on how to do so;
- conduct reviews of their functions;
- prepare a performance plan for each financial year.

- 1.2 In 2002, the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) was introduced for the majority of local authorities in Wales. This complied with the statutory requirements of the Act, but in the context of the distinctive local government policy being developed by the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) in partnership with local authorities.

- 1.3 England took a different approach, and introduced Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) as its framework methodology for improving public services. A CPA for fire and rescue authorities is still being piloted by the Audit Commission in England, with the intention of undertaking the first proper assessments in 2005.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 With the responsibility for fire and rescue services in Wales passing to the NAfW, so a new WPI is being developed that will provide an assessment and regulatory framework for the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- 2.2 The Audit Commission in Wales is developing the new WPI for Fire and Rescue Services alongside the Welsh Assembly's National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in Wales (currently still in draft form).

2 **INFORMATION** *(continued)*

- 2.3 A series of meetings is being held by the Audit Commission, and attended by representatives from the three Welsh fire and rescue authorities, the Welsh Government Association, the Welsh Assembly and the Local Government Data Unit, to progress the work of developing the new WPI – Fire and Rescue.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That Members note the progress being made.