

# Making Cheshire Safer

Cheshire Fire Authority Corporate Plan and  
Integrated Risk Management Plan 2009/10

Consultation draft

# Foreword

Welcome to what will be the first annual plan to be produced by a new Cheshire Fire Authority. With new councils being launched in Cheshire, our fire authority, the body which manages the fire and rescue service on behalf of local people is also changing. From April 1, 2009, the Authority will be made up of 23 local councillors - with eight each from Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, four from Warrington and three from Halton.

We have also used the opportunities created by the reorganisation to change how we deliver our services on the ground to local communities. By appointing dedicated staff to co-ordinate our activities in each of the four council areas we can ensure we are best placed to meet the needs of local communities. It also means we can work more closely with our partners on delivering key targets set out in Local Area Agreements (LAAs) – the new system which judges the effectiveness of all local public services.

Better partnership working is also needed if we are to protect and support our communities against the increasing challenges faced locally, regionally and nationally from both terrorism and climate change. The Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Resilience Forum is the body expected to co-ordinate our responses to major emergencies, such as flooding. A key priority for us over the next 12 months will be using our leading role in the forum to ensure plans and resources are in place to respond to major emergencies and that communities are fully aware of what they need to do.

The unprecedented global financial problems will continue to have a major impact on the budgets of families and organisations in the years ahead. While the Authority will never compromise on ensuring Cheshire, Halton and Warrington have properly resourced fire prevention, protection and response services, value for money will be an increasingly important theme. Many of our proposals involve using new ways of working or new technology so we can provide better services at the same cost or less.

While we continue to be successful in driving down the number of fires and injuries, when incidents and emergencies happen, communities rightly expect a rapid response. It is five years since we first published our own Cheshire response standards and the major independent review we commissioned has highlighted how we can simplify and improve them in the future.

We believe it is important to use independent reviews and the results of national inspections to ensure local communities continue to receive the first class efficient and effective fire and rescue service they deserve.



Steve McGuirk  
Chief Fire Officer



Tony Hooton  
Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority

# Contents

1. Introduction	1
Our vision, aims, objectives, values and targets	
2. Assessing the risks	9
National, regional and local issues	
Our role in responding to regional and national risks	
A review of our approach to risk analysis	
Our approach to local risk assessment and prevention	
Our proposals for new response standards	
3. Our response to risk	15
Reducing the risk to our communities	
Improving our response to emergencies	
4. Corporate Plan	21
Tackling the corporate challenges to the Authority	
5. Financial and performance planning (completed for final pub)	27
Headline targets to monitor progress on IRMP5	
Progress against key performance indicators	
Medium term financial plan	
6. Glossary of terms	33

# Introduction



Cheshire Fire Authority has a clear vision of 'zero preventable deaths'.

This Plan is the key strategic document which outlines how that vision can be achieved, what resources are needed and the targets which have been set so that communities can judge our progress.

The publication meets the Fire Authority's statutory duty to publish an annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which sets out its analysis of local risks and how it intends to respond. Carrying out the work needed to prevent or limit these risks, however, requires the commitment and support of the whole organisation, so we have combined our Corporate Plan and IRMP in this single publication.

We believe that having this single, key strategic document makes it clearer and easier for our staff, residents and businesses to understand:

- Our key aims and objectives
- How we have analysed and identified local risks
- How we have prioritised and allocated the funds, staff and equipment needed to respond
- The targets and standards used to monitor our performance.

## Continuous improvement

Recent years have seen major reductions in the numbers of accidental house fires and injuries and the level of arson across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. At the same time we have also visited around one third of all households through our Home Safety Assessment (HSA) programme, offering safety advice and fitting free smoke alarms. In addition, we have focused on modernising and improving the efficiency of our services

while keeping any increases in our Council Tax level among the lowest in the country.

This has helped to bring real benefits to local communities, but if we are to continue to improve our performance, it is vital that we rigorously compare ourselves against other leading services.



The Audit Commission, the national body which ensures public services deliver value for money, revealed that in 2008 Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was the fastest improving in the country. In its report on the performance of all 46 fire and rescue services it said that the Service had improved on 82 per cent of its national performance indicators.

Cheshire was one of only five services judged to be "performing strongly", and the Commission's verdict for 2009 is expected to show that it is still classed as "performing well."

These inspections are part of a programme called Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) which has involved:

- a scored assessment of the quality of frontline operational services
- checks on whether the Authority is providing value for money
- a review to see if the performance of the organisation is 'travelling in the right direction'.

While the Service will still have its own performance assessed and rated, in future the contribution it makes to improving the quality of life of local communities will also be scrutinised. This will be done by the Commission through a process known as Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). It will rate the impact and effectiveness of public services in tackling key issues which affect local communities, such as crime and the number of deliberate fires.

The Service has received national recognition for its ground-breaking work with partners in sharing information about vulnerable people. Not only has this made people safer, it has also boosted access for vulnerable people to a range of support services, including more than £2 million in vital benefits.

It is this type of work carried out by firefighters, community safety advocates and volunteers which demonstrates the significant contribution the Authority can make to the four CAAs which will be carried out in its area.



## Our vision

Delivering an effective and responsive fire and rescue service requires strong leadership and a clear understanding by staff, local communities and partners of what the organisation is trying to achieve.

So everyone is clear about the Service's vision and how that translates into our day to day

work, we have established three key aims and seven organisational objectives. We then measure our performance by setting out a number of headline targets and milestones,

with responsibility given to the Service's three functions of Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Emergency Response (ER) and Corporate Services (CS).

Our vision is about where we want to be; our mission is about what we want to do; our objectives are the actions we will take; our values are about how we do it.

### Vision

Our vision is a Cheshire where there are no preventable deaths, injuries or damage from fires and other emergencies.

### Mission

Our mission is to help create safer communities, to rescue people and protect economic, environmental and community interests.

### Our three key aims are to:

Respond effectively to emergency incidents  
(EMERGENCY RESPONSE)

Improve community safety by risk reduction  
(PREVENTION & PROTECTION)

Deliver efficient and effective services underpinned by a robust governance framework  
(CORPORATE SERVICES)

### Our seven organisational objectives are:

**ER 1**  
Identify the risks facing local communities and ensure plans and resources are in place to respond

**ER 2**  
Provide a flexible, efficient and resilient response to emergency incidents

**CRR 1**  
Prevent dangerous anti-social and careless behaviour

**CRR 2**  
Protect life, property and other interests through detailed risk analysis and assessment

**CS1**  
Develop a workforce competent and able to realise our vision

**CS2**  
Use inclusive consultation and communication to involve local communities in developing services which meet their needs

**CS3**  
Ensure value for money and maximise investment in front line services

## Our values

Having clear and consistent values helps people to know instinctively how they should act and what is required of them in their everyday work. Values underpin the decisions people make, the priorities they choose and influence the behaviours and attitudes they adopt. Values are particularly important during times of major change, and the Authority continues to support the principles behind the national Core Values for the Fire and Rescue Service.

These are:

### Community

We value service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Consulting, involving and responding to those we serve
- Aiming for excellence in everything we do

### People

We value all our employees by practising and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognising and rewarding performance
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

### Diversity

We value diversity in the service and the community by:

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Adapting our services and policies to meet the differing needs and expectations of our communities
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and development in the Service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

### Improvement

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by:

- Taking responsibility for our own performance
- Being open-minded and encouraging constructive criticism and challenge
- Learning from our experience and those of others
- Consulting and involving others

# Assessing risks

# 2

In this key section we set out how the Authority plans and manages its resources so that it can provide an effective and efficient fire and rescue service to address the risks facing its local communities.

The section covers:

- A brief overview of some of the national, regional and local influences and pressures which have an impact on the Authority's resources
- An outline of the role we have to play in responding to major risks with regional and national implications, such as terrorism
- The headline results of a major external review of our existing risk analysis framework
- A step by step guide to our updated approach to local risk assessment and prevention
- Our proposals for new focused response standards.

## National and regional influences

The Fire Authority's role is clear – to ensure there is an efficient and effective fire and rescue service to protect the communities of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. There are, however, a whole range of regional, national and even global factors which can affect the Authority's ability to deliver that local service.

In planning ahead, therefore, the Service has to assess the potential significance and influence of these issues and the likely impact on its resources. The major upheaval in the



banking sector and continuing concerns about the terrorist threat and climate change are among the obvious major external factors which will have a direct effect on the Authority's resources and planning. The economic slowdown could see more fires in empty industrial premises, an increase in arson and pressure to limit council tax increases, cut costs and restrict pay rises. Climate change continues to bring about increased flooding in many areas of the country and the national review into the 2007 floods has recommended a new statutory duty on Fire Authorities for water rescue.



Other key influences affecting the Authority's future planning include:

- Detailed fire-specific national policies such as the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008 – 2011 and the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008 – 2018
- The continued roll-out of the Regional Control Centre project
- Legislation over the enforcement of fire safety for specific national businesses
- New legal requirements to consult and involve local communities
- Specific legislation on ensuring effective internal management and political governance

The accompanying graphic sets out these and some of the other parts of the external 'jigsaw'

which have to be pieced together to inform effective future planning.

In addition, we have conducted a more detailed review which is set out in a Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental analysis (PESTLE) available on our website - [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk).

### Local influences

Local Government Reorganisation within Cheshire remains the most fundamental local issue facing the Service and later in the Plan we outline current and future work to support the new arrangements.

In addition, the Fire Authority itself has had to restructure to reflect the fact that it now manages a fire and rescue service on behalf of the four unitary councils of Halton, Warrington, East Cheshire and Cheshire West and Chester.

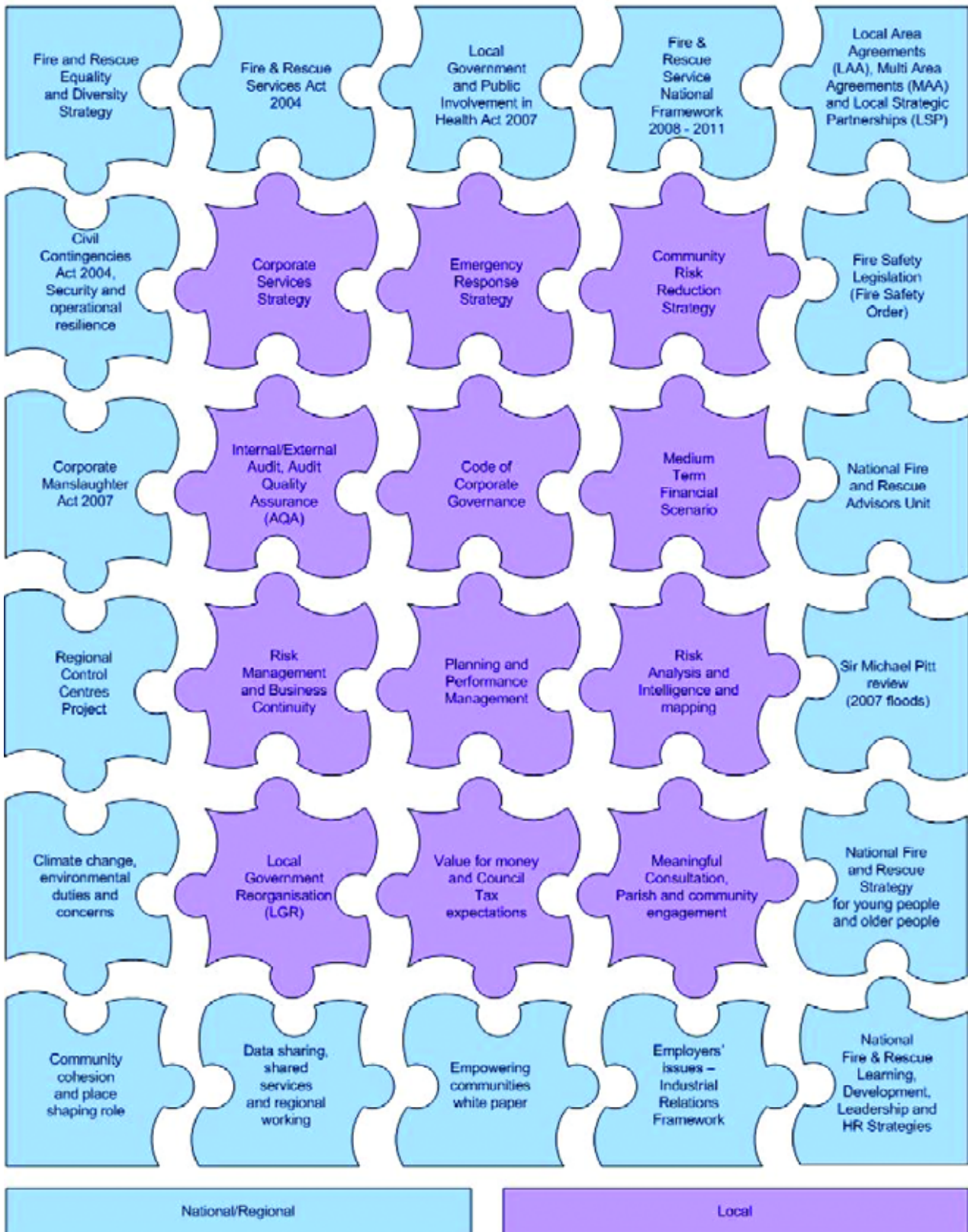
While the Authority already has an excellent track record on partnership working, ensuring we play our full part in the Local Area Agreements in each of these four areas is now one of our key objectives. We are members of the Local Strategic Partnerships in each of the four areas, while our targets for reducing arson are among the ways used to measure the performance of the partnerships in tackling anti-social behaviour.

While each agreement reflects local priorities, all have to set out how they will address four specific national themes. The contribution we make to the safer and stronger communities theme is obvious, however, projects and proposals set out later in the Plan demonstrate how we support the other themes of:

- children and young people
- economic development and the environment
- healthier communities and older people.

Our work with partners also helps in ensuring we have access to the latest information about

# National, Regional & Local Influences





changes in population. Monitoring trends such as the significant rise over the next few years in the numbers of people aged 65 or over across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington helps us plan the resources we need more accurately.

Equally important is ensuring we have up to date knowledge and information about the make-up of our local communities. The increased fire risks facing some people with disabilities is clear. However, research has highlighted that many black, ethnic and minority communities also face greater fire safety risks, so it is critical that we can make contact and provide the most appropriate advice and support. And by breaking this information down to a local level we can help our frontline staff in planning projects and proposals to meet the issues in their communities.

### Responding to regional and national risks

Legislation in 2003 removed the national standards of fire cover previously laid down by the Government. Instead, it required every Fire Authority to produce an annual plan setting out how they had analysed the risks in their area and the standards, policies and resources they would use to protect local communities.

The resulting publications are known as Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs). As

indicated already, this document incorporates both our Corporate Plan and our IRMP.

However, while the focus of an IRMP is on addressing local risks, there are still requirements on each authority to:

- help achieve national targets for the reducing fire deaths and deliberate fires reduce the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergencies
- safeguard the environment and heritage
- provide value for money
- contribute to major emergencies which cut across local boundaries, such as flooding and terrorist incidents
- support the work of local resilience forums - bodies set up under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to co-ordinate the plans and activities of all 'Category One' Emergency Response services and 'Category Two' public authorities. We are a 'Category One' emergency response service.



The Service has played a leading role in the development of the Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Local Resilience Forum (CHWLRF) since it was first established. One of the key roles of the forum is to maintain a Community Risk Register highlighting that potential hazards have been identified and assessed and emergency response plans put in place where needed. We helped to coordinate and develop the Register and continue to host it on our website - [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk).



Later in our IRMP we set out how we intend with our partners in CHWLRF to test and ensure the joint plans are robust and effective.

### A review of our approach to local risk assessment

In our previous IRMPs – copies of which are on our website [www.cheshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk) – we outlined our approach to risk management and the development of our own 'Cheshire Standards' for emergency response following the removal of the national standards of fire cover in 2003.

In our last IRMP we recognised that five years after implementing this approach, it was appropriate to carry out a fundamental review to ensure it remained robust and to identify options for further improvement.



We therefore commissioned an independent consultancy company with recognised expertise in this field. This organisation works predominantly with government and major public agencies on risk management and carried out research for the Audit Commission which led to their report "In the Line of Fire – Value for Money in the Fire Service; the National picture", 1995. It was this report which prompted the Government to abolish the national standards of fire cover and introduce local IRMPs.

The consultancy also developed the Fire Services Emergency Cover computer programme (FSEC), a toolkit used by Cheshire and other Fire Authorities in the country as part of their risk analysis and response. The company is therefore well placed to evaluate the Service's current approach to risk planning, compare it with best practice and outline proposals to strengthen it further.

The headline findings from the review are that:

- Our overall approach to risk assessment is sound
- The focus on using community safety work to drive down risks and support our emergency response service is good
- Our initial approach to response standards based on arrival times of the first appliance related to local risks is right
- Our development of sophisticated programmes and models identifies local risks and allows us to test alternative responses.

### New proposals

The report also sets out a number of new proposals, most of which involve refining and simplifying existing standards so the link between risk levels and response is clearer and easier for communities and partners to understand. In addition, the work has also resulted in the development of a new 'Cheshire Rapid Risk Calculator' which allows us to continually analyse and monitor issues



on a local ward level. This technique will make it easier to demonstrate the impact community fire safety work can have on reducing risk and limiting the demand for our emergency response service.

Other key issues identified include:

- the increasing demands and expectations on the Service in responding to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- greater analysis of previous incidents in local areas to ensure decisions about the Service's staff and resources are based on the incidents and risks they are most likely to face
- how changes in the location and flexibility of the Service's appliances and staff directly affect likely casualty and fatality levels for different emergencies
- the need to develop a new standard for major incidents
- recognition that while the chances of people in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington

dying in house or business fires is comparatively low, the Service still needs significant resources because of the range of risks in the Authority's area.

The report demonstrates how the Authority can make best use of the tools and techniques it has available to assess and evaluate risk. Ultimately, however, the final decision will continue to require both professional and political judgement.



### Our approach to local risk assessment and prevention

Our approach to risk management has always involved identifying and assessing risks, taking steps to reduce or anticipate their impact and



then monitoring and reviewing progress. This methodical approach has been critical in ensuring the Authority can make a balanced decision on any key changes to our services. It has also been an essential tool in prioritising the premises we need to inspect as part of our role in enforcing business fire safety legislation.

Our own 'Cheshire Standards' for emergency response were then developed and involved dividing our incident types into specific categories such as house fires, business fires, road traffic collisions, etc. Attendance standards were then allocated for each station area by combining the likelihood of an incident occurring against the seriousness of the outcome.

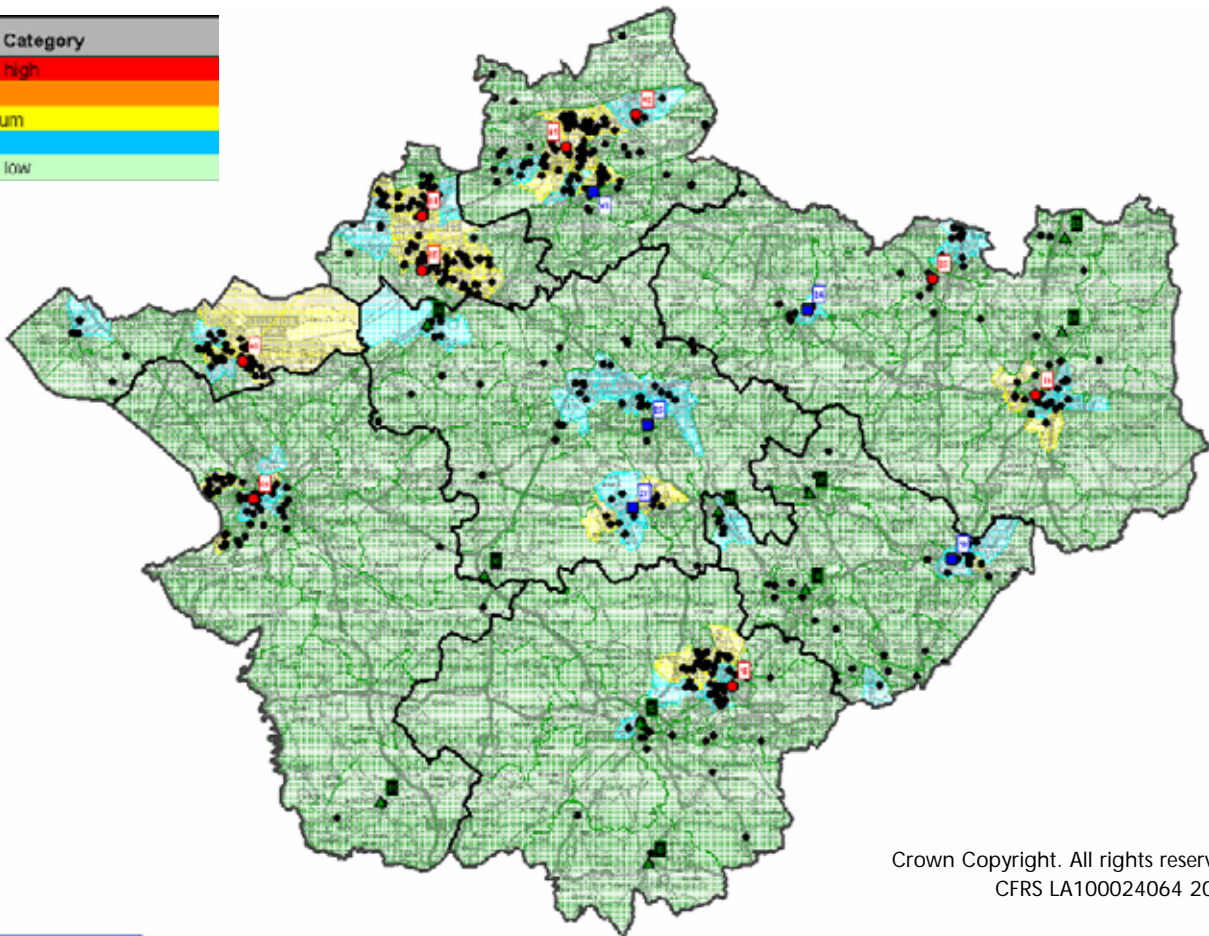
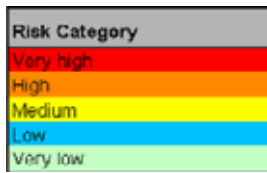
Following the external review of our risk analysis, we are now proposing to refine our approach and look at risk at a local ward level, with response standards focused on incidents where lives are at risk. Our updated approach to risk is set out below, together with a summary of the work carried out at each step.



# How we identify and assess risks and agree our response

<p><b>Identify risks</b></p>	<p>Identifying the main causes of loss of life, damage to property and the environment where the Service has key responsibilities. These range from fires in the home to less frequent major incidents.</p> <p>Information and sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• previous fire, road traffic collision (RTC) extrications and other special services incident data</li> <li>• use of computer programmes such as FSEC and Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS)</li> <li>• observations from our inspections of commercial premises</li> <li>• analysis of previous major incidents</li> <li>• the Community Risk Register from the Local Resilience Forum</li> <li>• results from the review carried by the Government's New Dimensions Project to provide resilience in the event of terrorist threats and major emergencies</li> </ul>
<p><b>Determine risk levels</b></p>	<p><b>Use of the Cheshire Rapid Risk Calculator</b></p> <p>The calculator is a tool for compiling incident and other data so risk levels for fires, RTCs and other emergencies can be approximated by ward. It aims to give a quick view of the risk in an area so the Service can then start to develop proposed emergency response time standards and priority areas for community fire safety and prevention work. Risk levels can be estimated for each part of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington and highlighted in colour coded maps – see example on the following page.</p>
<p><b>Assess risk, optimise prevention &amp; response standards</b></p>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing risk levels with public safety guidelines</li> <li>• Considering local and national community safety targets and community expectations</li> <li>• Reviewing the effect of changes in the profile of the local community</li> <li>• Determining how different mixes of Community Risk Reduction and Emergency Response work may affect community safety</li> <li>• Establishing the emergency response resources and capability needed to effectively protect life, environment and property</li> <li>• Reviewing operational and other practical restraints such as road networks and availability of staff</li> <li>• Agreeing the most effective use of resources using the funding available to the Authority</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prevention &amp; response standards</b></p>	<p>Set the priorities for community fire safety and prevention work, including enforcement of the national fire safety legislation and establishing Emergency Response standards for each risk category.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring and review</b></p>	<p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achievement of emergency response time standards</li> <li>• outcomes including loss of life, uptake of fire safety measures, size and number of fires.</li> </ul>

# Residential fire risk across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved  
CFRS LA100024064 2008

Use of the new Cheshire Rapid Risk Calculator allows us to view risk levels from an Authority-wide area right down to an individual ward. Maps can then be produced to show how at risk people are from different emergency incidents we are required to attend. The one above shows the risk of people dying or being injured from fires in their homes and demonstrates that there are no wards in the Authority's area where the risk is 'very high' with most parts 'very low' or 'low'. We can then direct our community safety work to those areas most at risk at the same time as ensuring that when emergencies do occur there, that our response standards are quicker than in lower risk areas.

## New simplified response standards

As already highlighted, our own Cheshire Standards were based on setting emergency response standards for the eight different types of incidents we attended in each of our 24 station areas. These varied depending on the likelihood of the different incidents occurring and how serious they were likely to be.

We are now proposing to concentrate on three standards for those incidents where lives are at risk – residential fires, fires in commercial premises and road traffic collisions. We will also go down to a more detailed level of analysis – local ward level.

Our proposed response standards for residential and business premises are set out below:



Risk Level	Response time
Very high	0 to 5 minutes
High	6 to 10 minutes
Medium	11 to 15 minutes
Low	16 to 20 minutes
Very low	>20 minutes

For road traffic collisions we know that risk levels often vary significantly on different sections of the same road. In addition, the speed with which we can reach RTCs, particularly those on motorways and major roads, is often dictated by travelling distances between the incident and the nearest junction.

**We are therefore proposing a response standard for all RTCs of 15 minutes.**

We know there are areas where this would currently be difficult to achieve, therefore, we will be bringing forward a number of innovative proposals to provide a faster, more flexible response.

The Authority's area includes a number of major risks including pipelines, flight paths and chemical processing companies. In fact, Cheshire has the second highest number of COMAH sites (Control of Major Accident Hazard) of any Fire Authority in the country.

**In recognition of this particular risk we are also intending to introduce a new response standard in which we aim to ensure 25**

**appliances are mobilised within an hour of us declaring a major incident.**

We are confident that setting this standard will also ensure we have the capability to deal with two 10 pump incidents simultaneously.

**There may be times during spate conditions when we will not be able to maintain our standards, however, our target is to achieve our standards on 92% of all occasions.**

To help us to respond to life-threatening emergencies quickly, it is important that we also have standards for the time it takes our control room to handle 999 calls and alert our stations. The standards are as follows:

- 50% of all calls to be handled in 45 seconds or less
- 75% in 60 seconds
- 90% in 90 seconds
- 99% in 120 seconds

### Consultation

We believe the proposed new focused response standards will make it clearer for our staff and the communities they serve by focussing on life risk in house fires, business and commercial premises and road traffic collisions, while still guaranteeing a response standard for other incidents where lives are not at risk.

We are carrying out extensive consultation on these proposed new standards which will be introduced – subject to comments – from April 1, 2009.

The next sections highlight how we use our risk analysis to direct our community safety work with local communities and businesses. They also set out how we have used our dedicated computer modelling software to put forward proposals to increase the flexibility and location of our emergency response resource so we can reach those people most at risk the quickest.

# Responding to risk

# 3

## Reducing the risks to our communities

Our dedicated Community Risk Reduction (CRR) function brings together the staff and resources we use to improve safety in local communities with those employed to advise and enforce fire safety in business and commercial premises.

The recent emphasis for CRR has been on taking a fresh look at its structure and services so that it can maximise the resources available to carry out community safety and prevention work.

In addition, there has been increasing use of both our own and our partners' specialist programmes and data to help us target our work where it will have the biggest impact on the communities and areas most at risk. This ensures the most vulnerable people in our

communities are given priority for safety advice and support as well as helping to reduce risk levels in the Authority's area where we may struggle to meet our response standards.

The emphasis for CRR in 2009/10 and beyond is about ensuring work is done to a high quality and to standards which are recognised by both staff and the communities we serve.



This will cover the standards which people can expect from us across a whole range of the services we provide from:

- our response before, during and after an operational incidents
- how we enforce fire safety legislation
- the way we deliver community safety information and services such as Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) and youth projects.

As well as agreeing, monitoring and reporting on these standards we also intend to judge our performance by submitting our work to external awards and assessment and through reviews by other fire and rescue services.

We intend to develop and implement a formal 'Hard to Target and Hard to Influence Strategy' with involvement and sign off by a range of key partners including:

- Registered Social Landlords
- Drug and Alcohol Action Teams
- Mental Health groups
- Age Concern
- Voluntary and other Third Sector partners



Other work in this area will include extending and developing our work with a range of programmes which help profile local communities such as the Mosaic suite of software.

Other key projects include:

**60:60** – Our Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) combine advice on fire and other safety issues with the fitting of free smoke alarms. We intend to carry out 60,000 in 2009/10, while ensuring that 60% of these are from defined high risk groups. It is vital that we can show we not only carry out large numbers of visits but that these focus on our highest risk premises. In addition, we aim to show that these are delivered to a consistently high standard. Obtaining data on those at high risk will be through referrals from a range of sources including our new data sharing agreements with health, social services, police, mental health, drug and domestic violence sources.

Public confidence – as we increase our use of shared public data we will demonstrate our commitment to effective and transparent systems by ensuring all front line staff are subject to checks through the Criminal Records Bureau.

Contact Assessments – these follow on from our HSAs and can provide access to a whole range of support services from a single visit. We intend to carry out at least 5,000 in 2009/10 through both our front-line firefighters and our community safety teams.

At risk groups – we will be working to identify the fire safety risks facing different sections of the community identified through the six strands of the Equalities and Diversity legislation:

- age – older people, children and young people, vulnerable adults
- sex – single parents, lone males/females potentially more at risk
- race – cultural/life-style risks eg research has shown that Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Polish communities have less awareness about fire safety
- faith – further cultural risks such as hate crime



- disability – safety issues for people with hearing, sight or mobility problems
- sexual orientation – potential issues around hate crime

We intend to develop a 'Fatal Incidents Strategy' to maximise the impact and safety

awareness which can be generated following the tragedy of a fire death. These messages will be targeted to reach specific at risk groups and to involve key influencers of public opinion such as local councillors, MPs, the media, etc.

Volunteers – we intend to increase both the numbers of volunteers and the range of activities they can become involved with across the Service. Our aim is to increase our volunteer numbers to 500 by 2010. This may include the setting up of groups to help people after a fire in their home and in developing Community Care Teams.

Online 'Viral Marketing' and social marketing – we intend to maximise the use of new and emerging technologies to help us in getting key safety messages across to specific groups. These programmes will need to be provocative, flexible and take advantage of current trends if they are to be effective in capturing people's attention and persuading them to change their behaviour.





Fire Cadets – we intend to structure our programme so that young people have the opportunity to obtain recognised skills, awards and qualifications in relevant areas. We will also ensure there are closer links to the structure and roles in the main Service. Any new Cadet schemes will be developed in areas where we have identified anti-social behaviour or other youth engagement challenges.

Youth services – we will produce a new Children and Young People’s Strategy for the Service and carry out a fundamental review of all our current programmes and initiatives in this area. Our aim will be to ensure that all future work clearly supports the delivery of our main corporate objectives, particularly in areas such as broadening the range of trainee firefighter applications. We also want to emphasise the role we can play in strengthening communities by introducing a ‘Second Chances Programme’ for young people involved or at risk of becoming involved in crime as data suggests this is likely to include arson.

Major emergencies – the Service intends to stage a ‘Shelter Day’ to test and increase public awareness of what to do in the event of a major incident.

Local area agreements (LAAs) - we are leading a regional project which will have a major role in demonstrating the contribution which different public agencies can make to improving the quality of life in their areas. It will share information on issues such as LAA delivery plans, sustainable community

strategies, impact assessments and how funding for achieving key targets will be spent.

Cheshire Safety Day – we intend to stage the biggest community safety event ever carried out in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington involving hundreds of staff, partners and volunteers. The target will be to carry out 1,000 HSAs in a single day with the support and active involvement of Councillors and MPs in a major publicity and marketing campaign.

Arson Risk Assessments strategy – we will be developing a comprehensive programme to address the impact which deliberate fires can have on businesses and organisations. It will cover:

- The action companies can take themselves to limit the risks they face
- The benefits of including sprinkler systems in school extensions and refurbishments as well as new buildings
- Proposals to limit arson attacks on buildings which are empty, derelict or under construction



Anti-crime strategy – arson is a serious crime and what starts off with small deliberate fires can escalate into incidents which put lives at risk. We will raise the profile and seriousness of fire-related crime by developing a strategy which covers all aspects including arson, hoax calls and attacks on firefighters.

Fire investigation – we intend to enhance the skills of our staff who look into the causes of fires. We want to ensure that key messages and issues they discover are promptly available to support high profile community safety campaigns.

Risk checks - we aim to further develop our visits to check on the safety of vulnerable occupants and / or high risk premises such as older people's homes, sheltered accommodation, hospitals, hotels and guest houses.

Keeping business in business – evidence suggests that 80 per cent of small firms who suffer a fire end up stopping trading. We intend to work with companies to help them limit the risk of fire in the first place, as well as providing practical support on getting them back in business if they do suffer a fire.

In addition, we have adopted a risk-based inspection programme for the 32,000

commercial premises within the Fire Authority's area which are now required to do their own risk assessment under the Fire Safety Order. This involves targeting high risk premises and working with businesses to improve their overall safety, with the ultimate use of enforcement action through the courts. We expect to have completed 1,000 of these audits in 2008/09 but expect to double this number in 2009/10 as extra staff complete their training.

Protecting our heritage – we have some major historical buildings and landmarks in our area and we are establishing a Heritage Working Group to develop and pool expertise in fire prevention and the development of specific salvage and restoration plans.

Improving our response to emergencies

As well as providing an effective emergency response service for Cheshire, Halton and Warrington, we also have to ensure we can meet a range of national statutory requirements and support key regional and national programmes.

The Regional Control Centre project requires an increasing commitment from local Fire and Rescue Services and we will ensure the



Authority has the necessary resources to meet its expected milestones. Key elements of the Authority's Transition Plan for the FiReControl and Firelink Projects include:

- Data Management - the transfer of critical data from the Authority's existing databases to the main contractor
- Ensuring the Service meets the timetable for the phased introduction of the digital radio aspect of the programme (Firelink)
- Organising the decommissioning of the existing radio system and equipment.

The delays in the original Regional Control Centre (RCC) project timetable mean that the Authority's existing mobilising system will now have to be replaced. This will be carried out in 2009/10 and will be managed to ensure integration with the new technology which will be used in the RCC.

We will also be ensuring the Authority is in a position to agree and accept the transfer of the specialist Government-provided equipment under the New Dimensions programme which aimed to increase resources available to combat the threats of terrorism and climate change.

The Civil Contingencies Secretariat and DEFRA have recently issued preliminary guidance on developing a Multi-Agency Flood Plan which will mean that Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Local Resilience Forum's existing flood plan and arrangements will have to be revised. The Service will therefore review its



own Policy on dealing with and responding to flooding events and contribute as a key responder to the review of the Local Resilience Forum's plan.

We will also undertake a comprehensive review of the Authority's existing agreements with neighbouring services for mutual cross border support.



To help us respond more flexibly and effectively to the risks facing local communities, we are planning a number of changes in the working arrangements for both our staff and our appliances.

These include:

- Conducting a further review and analysis of our working patterns with a view to introducing 12 hour shifts to increase the flexibility, capability and profile of our workforce and maximise time available to do training
- Make best use of our Retained Duty System (RDS) staff to meet staffing shortages
- Investigate options to reduce the number of supervisory staff at some fire stations to improve efficiency and simplify management responsibilities
- Use RDS staff or full-time staff on secondary contracts to crew special appliances like hydraulic platforms in Macclesfield and Stockton Heath.

Detailed consultation with appropriate stakeholders will take place prior to the implementation of any of these changes.

We will be continuing with the implementation of a revised duty system at Wilmslow Community Fire Station. This has previously been identified as one of our quietest full-time stations with activity levels lower than some of our day-crewed stations.

At Wilmslow we are planning to introduce a new 12 hour day shift system, with evenings covered by recruiting staff on the Retained Duty System. The revised arrangements will provide a more flexible service which better matches the local risks as well as providing a range of new working arrangements more likely to be attractive to groups currently under-represented in the Service. We will also be investing in an extra midi fire appliance based at Wilmslow so we improve the flexibility of how we respond.

The Service has three community fire stations in the Mid-Cheshire area, with staff on the day crewed system at Winsford and Northwich, while Middlewich is covered by retained duty system staff. In 2009/10 we will analyse current and future risks facing local communities and draw up proposals to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our emergency response service which we will consult on in our next IRMP.

Retained Duty System (RDS) – we have completed a detailed review of our existing policies and procedures used by RDS staff to improve their clarity and consistency. These improvements will make it easier for both staff and managers to provide a better standard of emergency response service to their local communities.

Major incidents – to ensure the Service has extra resilience and capability to deal with large scale incidents and periods of spare conditions, we will be finalising and implementing proposals to create a pool of staff and appliances which can be called on at short notice. This pool of staff will also be used to cover any crewing shortfalls during periods of disruption such as pandemic flu.

To improve the flexibility of our appliances we will be introducing our first Combined Aerial Rescue Pump (CARP) at Chester during 2009 - 10. Using one appliance which can do the job

of both a normal fire engine and a hydraulic platform means we can then reinvest any savings in improving other areas of our emergency response and community safety services. We will also commission a second CARP which we intend to base at Warrington – this will provide similar efficiencies. When this is in place the Service will have a total of four appliances with hydraulic platforms strategically placed to meet local risks.

Further flexibility in our appliances will be provided as we aim to introduce a further three midi fire appliances as second appliances at Congleton, Wilmslow and Northwich fire stations. We will also be carrying out a fundamental review of our programme for replacing our main fleet of operational appliances to ensure it still meets the Service's needs and objectives.

We will develop an Operational Excellence Strategy to ensure that at every stage of an individual's development they are provided with the relevant training and learning opportunities to maintain their competence against their role map. To support this we will also develop an organisational Assessment Strategy and Framework to ensure the competence of personnel is assessed on a regular and structured basis.



We also intend to expand the Authority's operational training facilities, particularly in East Cheshire. We intend to develop our existing breathing apparatus facility at Macclesfield Community Fire Station and invest in a mobile unit which can be used by staff at other fire stations. We are also intending to enter into a partnership with



Manchester Airport to make joint use of some of their advanced training facilities.

A successful pilot programme of local and short notice emergency training exercises is to be extended and we will also be establishing a rigorous programme of Incident Command Training for managers at all levels.

Animal Rescues - during 2009/10 we will review the incidents where we are involved in



rescuing animals with a view to introducing a Specialist Animal Rescue Team for the Authority.

Co-responding Schemes - we are working with the North West Regional Ambulance Service (NWAS) to introduce a pilot co-responder scheme. If this proves successful we aim to extend it to other identified retained station areas. We will also continue to improve and enhance the trauma training and skills for operational crews co-ordinated through the Authority's dedicated Medical Director.

We will implement the revised national fitness standards for firefighters and outcomes from the review of fitness facilities on stations.

Business Continuity – we will review the Authority's current business continuity plans for identified and specific disruptions to the emergency response service and ensure they remain fit for purpose and are regularly tested.

# Corporate Plan

# 4

Cheshire Fire Authority is clear that if its prevention, protection and emergency response services are to be effective, it is vital that they are supported by a range of effective central services.

This commitment is highlighted by the structure of the organisation which is made up of three functions, Community Risk Reduction, Emergency Response and Corporate Services, each led by a Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Previous sections of the Plan have highlighted the work of the first two functions in reducing and responding to risk. In this section we highlight the work of Corporate Services in supporting our front-line services as well as highlighting a number of cross-cutting projects and issues which affect all areas of the organisation.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) – to demonstrate that the Fire Authority continues to provide local communities with a

high quality, effective and efficient fire and rescue service, it will aim to achieve the highest ratings in the national assessments carried out by the Audit Commission, the national body which ensures public services deliver value for money and effective services.

We are currently one of only five services judged to be “performing strongly”, and expect the Commission’s verdict for 2009 to show that we are classed as “performing



well”, with high marks for the way we use our resources. As highlighted earlier, we will also be supporting our partners in achieving the targets set out in the local area agreements which cover Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

To demonstrate the quality of our own services we will seek independent accreditation through measures such as:

- Achieving level 4 – or equivalent - of the Local Government Standard for Equality and Diversity
- Aiming for the Chartermark in customer care
- Seeking Investors in People accreditation.

## Key corporate challenges

The Authority’s key influences in 2009/10 will continue to be the new local government arrangements in Cheshire and the national agenda to join up local services and measure their joint impact on local communities. Major corporate projects to address the opportunities and challenges we face under local government reorganisation include:

- Ensuring the effective launch of the new Cheshire Fire Authority
- Delivering effective training / induction for new Members and establishing Member/Officer relationships and political conventions
- Providing new centralised support for the revised unitary performance management arrangements in Emergency Response and Community Risk Reduction and the ‘neighbourhood arrangements’ agreed by partners
- Ensuring understanding and awareness of the Service among the new Chief Executives and Cabinets and raising our influence in key partnership groups such as the Local Resilience Forum, the Cheshire Chief Executives Forum, and the Cheshire and Warrington Improvement and Efficiency Programme
- Improving understanding and relationships with town and parish councils, now referred to as Local Councils.



We intend to play our full part in meeting increased expectations to involve and empower local residents and businesses in the planning and delivery of local services. We will aim to provide more opportunities for local people to influence the development of our services while recognising that there are limits in some areas because of our statutory emergency response duties.

### Regional collaboration

Regional Management Boards (RMBs) were created in 2004 as part of the modernisation of the fire and rescue service. The move recognised that there are significant financial and operational efficiencies to be achieved by different services co-operating and collaborating in specific areas. The most significant area of their work so far relates to the Government’s Regional Control Centres (RCCs) project and the associated Firelink radio system. The North West RMB has created a company specifically to take forward these two projects and the Service will continue to make essential preparations so we can switch over efficiently to the new systems.

Originally the North West was expected to complete the move over to RCC by March 2011, however, this may be put back following recent national announcements.

The RMB is also very active in other areas of collaboration including Fire Investigation, Procurement, and some elements of both training and Human Resources. Officers and Members are continuing to support and play a leading role in many of these areas.

## Customer focus

Our focus both internally and externally will be "customer service and satisfaction" and a number of proposals to help achieve this are set out later in this section. Particularly important will be using the information and feedback we receive from all areas of our businesses to highlight strengths and weaknesses and then changing our services accordingly. This will include monitoring potential trends which may affect sections of our workforce and our communities differently and then making necessary changes.

Equality and diversity continues to be a major priority for the Authority and now we have attained Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard, we aim to achieve Level 4 or its equivalent within the life of this Plan. Our commitment in this area has been recognised by our leadership of a sub-regional project to improve public sector delivery on equality and diversity and to co-ordinate consultation. The project is one of six to have won funding through the Cheshire and Warrington Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and we intend to ensure it receives continued support in 2009/10 and beyond.

We will also ensure the Service can meet its expectations on the new national performance management framework for equality and diversity as well as delivering positive action projects to help us meet national recruitment targets.



The Environment is another key corporate challenge and we are developing an Environment Board to co-ordinate and implement projects which help the Service minimise its environmental impact. Initial proposals include cycle to work and car sharing schemes for staff, improved waste management and recycling, the introduction of a transport plan, an environmental survey with staff and the development of environmental standards for both the Service and suppliers.

Effective management of the Authority's assets has a major impact on all areas of our Service. In 2009/10 we intend to complete an extension to our Winsford headquarters which includes the development of a dedicated new Incident Command training suite.



We are also looking to reduce costs and overheads by exploring options for:

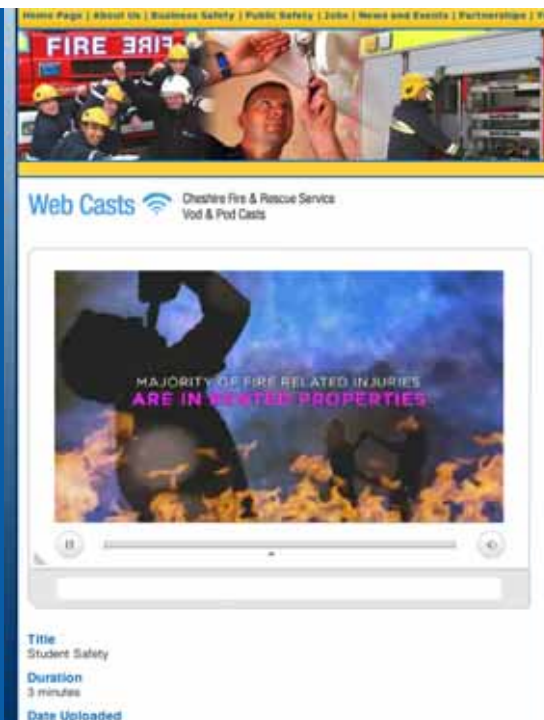
- 'Smarter maintenance' of our buildings
- Joint use of some of our premises with partners such as the police
- Establishing facilities management partnerships

The way we buy goods and services and manage contracts can realise significant savings and during 2009/10 we intend to:

- Complete re-tenders for our Occupational Health and other major contracts
- Implement an approved suppliers list and develop full e-purchase from procurement to payment
- Further improve contract management and pre-planned tendering
- Co-ordinate the development of a collaboration strategy to include commissioning and outsourcing where appropriate
- Upgrade our main financial system
- Develop our existing ICT internal customer helpdesk service to cover property and procurement issues and subsequently other areas of Corporate Services.



Effective internal computer networks and services are particularly important for an organisation like ours with premises and staff



across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. Over the next 12 months we will continue to implement our ICT Strategy as well as ensuring the Service meets its key milestones in the national Firelink radio project.

We have already highlighted increased expectations by the Government for all public bodies to improve how they communicate and involve local communities. In 2009/10 the Service's Corporate Communications department will be working to:

- ensure the organisation has the resources and structure to deliver its statutory communication and consultation requirements
- support front-line services on community engagement
- co-ordinate all customer feedback and ensure it is used to help develop services and projects
- maximise local, regional and national awareness of the Service's achievements.

Priorities for our Finance and Governance department include:

- Bringing together our planning, performance and risk analysis and intelligence teams to ensure they provide a proactive service to frontline staff

- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Service's corporate performance management programme
- Further enhancing corporate and organisational risk management and co-ordination
- Developing the Service's response to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2009 and developing community engagement in budget consultation.

**The proposed budget for the Fire Authority in 2009/10 is £42.1m which is funded by Government Grant and Council Tax. To put this into context, the proposed average Council Tax bill per household will be in the region of £64.59, an increase of 3% or £1.88 a year.**

### Developing our staff

We will be completing a major restructuring of our Human Resources department to better support our frontline staff. This will include implementing a new computerised human resources system and ensuring it maximises the opportunities for online services, including electronic appraisals. In addition, the department will be developing more flexible training packages which better meet the needs of frontline staff as well as implementing a comprehensive assessment strategy which will ensure effective evaluation of staff throughout their career with the Service.

We also intend to develop a training scheme to allow 16-year-olds to gain firefighter experience in the Service. The Authority intends to demonstrate its commitment to developing its staff by working to attain the Investors in People award.

To ensure the Service continues to develop the managers and leaders it needs for the future, we are intending to launch a high potential fast-track scheme for a limited number of



entrants. This is likely to involve a collaboration between ourselves, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and the University of Central Lancashire.

Health and safety is a critical issue for emergency services and in 2009/10 we will be implementing the outcomes of a recent in-house review of our arrangements. These will be the subject of an external peer review from other fire and rescue services in 2009 and we will be working hard to ensure a positive result at the same time as supporting a number of thematic reviews which are being carried out in 2009 by the Health and Safety Executive. Practical improvements in 2009/10 which will increase the health and safety of frontline staff include the roll out of a bar coding system which will give instant information about the maintenance and history of key emergency equipment.

Legal advice and support is a key part of Corporate Services and in 2009/10 we will be taking steps to ensure these are operated to accepted Practice Management Standards as well as developing a partnership with a private sector law firm to support our prosecution work.



# Glossary of terms

# 6

ASC - anti-social behaviour contracts

ATF - Arson Task Forces

BCP - Business Continuity Plan - sets out what the Service needs to do so it can continue in the event of a major emergency

CAA – Comprehensive Area Assessment

CARP – Combined Aerial Rescue Pump

CCA - Civil Contingencies Act 2004

CFOA - Chief Fire Officers Association

CFRMIS - Community Fire Risk Management Information System

CHAWREC - Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Racial Equality Council

Cheshire Standards – locally determined standards of emergency response

CHWLRF – Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Local Resilience Forum

CRB – Criminal Records Bureau

CRR - Community Risk Reduction, the Service's function with the key role of reducing community risk

CS – Corporate Services, the function which supports front line services

CSOs - Community Safety Officers

CPA - Comprehensive Performance Assessment

COMAH - Control of Major Accident Hazard sites  
CS - Corporate Services, the function which manages the organisation's support services

CWHIC - Cheshire, Warrington and Halton Information Consortium

DEFRA - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

DCLG - The Department for Communities Local Government

E-Fire Portal - a national project to provide online access to certain core services provided by fire and rescue authorities

ER - Emergency Response, the function which manages the Service's frontline emergency response staff and appliances

Firelink - the new national radio project to support the regional control centre programme

FSEC - the Fire Service Emergency Cover toolkit, specialist software to help assess risk and the best use of resources

Flashover - the term used to describe the phenomenon of the contents of a room simultaneously bursting in to flame

Get Up and Get Out - one of the Service's programmes which works with disaffected young people

HATOs - Highways Agency Transport Officers

HSAs - Home Safety Assessments

HSE - Health and Safety Executive

IdEA - Improvement and Development Agency

IFE - Institution of Fire Engineers

IMS - Integrated Management System, computer system to co-ordinate financial and other support information

IPDS - Integrated Personal Development Scheme

IRMP - Integrated Risk Management Plan

IRUs - Incident Response Units

Kooldown - one of the Service's programmes which works with disaffected young people

LAA - Local Area Agreements, new initiative to join up, measure and monitor the delivery of local services

LPSAs - Local Public Service Agreements, pacts between local and central government which guarantee extra funds provided key targets are met

LSPs - Local Strategic Partnerships, bodies responsible for bringing together public, private, voluntary and community groups to join up and improve local services

NFPA - National Fire Protection Association

NWAS - North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust

NWDA - North West Development Agency

NWRA - North West Regional Assembly

Outreach fire station - mobile units used by the Service which can be set up in the heart of a local community to help deliver safety projects

PDGs - Performance Delivery Groups, used by the Service to monitor performance at local level

PESTLE - an analysis of Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental issues facing an organisation

PISM - Post incident scene management, project to ensure lessons learned from fires and other emergencies are used to reduce risk in the future

RCC - Regional Control Centre, the national project for nine regional fire control centres

RRO - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, new Order brought together 100 separate pieces of safety legislation into one, with the emphasis on risk assessment

RMB - Regional Management Board - The National Framework requires all Fire Authorities to establish RMBs to assist collaboration and to deliver regional priorities.

RTCs - Road Traffic Collisions

TRVs - Targeted Response Vehicle, midi fire appliances designed to deal with smaller incidents

UKFSSART - UK Search and Rescue Team

USAR - Urban Search and Rescue Team

