

CPA Report

July 2005



Fire and Rescue Comprehensive Performance Assessment

**West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence
Authority**

Contents

Introduction	3
Executive summary	4
Summary of assessment scores	5
Report	6
Context	6
The locality	6
The Fire Authority	6
What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?	8
Leadership and priorities	8
A balanced strategy	9
What is the capacity of the Fire Authority to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	11
Capacity: governance and management	11
Capacity: resources and value for money	12
Capacity: people	13
Performance management	14
What has the Fire Authority achieved and, in the light of that, what does it plan to do next?	16
Achievement of objectives	16
Achievement of improvement	17
Future plans	18
Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses	21
Appendix 1 – Appointed auditor assessment	23
Appendix 2 – Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment	24

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Introduction

- 1 In the Fire and Rescue National Framework for 2005/06¹, published in December 2004, the Government outlines how performance management in the fire and rescue service will be assessed by the Audit Commission. This report arises from a CPA ('Comprehensive Performance Assessment') review carried out as outlined in chapter 8 of the National Framework. It gives the results from our review of the West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority. We used the CPA methodology published by the Audit Commission.
- 2 Our on-site work took place in early 2005. We received a self-assessment from the Fire Authority and a set of judgements from the external auditor. Both were taken fully into account in the course of our work. A summary of the auditor's judgement is given as Appendix 1 to this report. The judgements we have made are based on the evidence we saw before and during our visit, and on any further information supplied to us by the Fire Authority during our discussions with them in the course of preparing this report.
- 3 CPA is an assessment, at the corporate level, of how well the Authority is being run. It does not give an opinion on how well the fire service responds to emergency incidents. The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire.

¹ The Government is responsible for setting clear priorities and objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service. The Fire and Rescue National Framework does this by making clear the Government's expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service; what Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to do; and what support Government will provide.

Executive summary

- 4 West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority is rated by this assessment as **good**. CPA is an assessment, at the corporate level, of how well the Authority is being run. It does not give an opinion on how well the fire service responds to emergency incidents.
- 5 West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority (the 'Fire Authority') has risen to the challenges of modernisation. Strong leadership is driving change at every level of the service. It has firm, realistic plans and is innovative in its approach to service delivery. Members and senior managers are committed to a balanced approach that prioritises prevention and protection initiatives. The Fire Authority is achieving good quality outcomes that are increasing public safety and reducing risk to the communities.
- 6 The Fire Authority has set itself challenging targets and it is determined to succeed. It has a sound integrated risk management planning (IRMP) process which enables it to predict where the greatest risks are and target its efforts and resources to them. It is prepared to take tough decisions and tackle difficult issues such as changes to shift patterns and moving resources from areas of relatively low risk. In order to achieve its aims the Fire Authority has set a challenging agenda in terms of adopting national and local targets for emergency response.
- 7 Financial and risk management are both thorough and reliable. When preparing its strategies and plans the Fire Authority consults with its partners and local communities. From this approach, it balances local, regional and national priorities, and targets local needs.
- 8 Partnership working is both proactive and strong. This is enabling the Fire Authority to deliver real benefits to local communities, alongside building capacity, expertise and accessing external funding. Through partnership and collaboration, the Authority is tackling some of the wider social factors that impact on community fire safety, for example crime and antisocial behaviour. Work with minority groups is effective with many local initiatives that engage some of the more disadvantaged, vulnerable and excluded communities across sectors of West Yorkshire.
- 9 The main weakness in the Fire Authority is performance management. There is no coherent performance framework in place to support performance management across the Fire Authority. Although performance is reported against local and national standards around BVPI data, some aspects of performance noticeably the development of corporate targets are not integrated with other strategies, including station action plans.

Summary of assessment scores

A – What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?

Theme	Score
Leadership and priorities	3
A balanced strategy	4

B – How has the Fire Authority set about delivering its priorities?

Theme	Score
Capacity: Governance and management	3
Capacity: Resources and value for money	3
Capacity: People	3
Performance management	2

C – What has the Fire Authority achieved and, in the light of that, what does it plan to do next?

Theme	Score
Achievement of objectives	3
Achievement of improvement	3
Future plans	3
Overall CPA score	Good

Scoring key

- 4 Well above minimum requirements, performing strongly.
- 3 Consistently above minimum requirements, performing well.
- 2 At only minimum requirements, adequate performance.
- 1 Below minimum requirements, inadequate performance.

In coming to an overall CPA score, we applied the rules table set out below.

Excellent	No scores of 2 or 1. At least four scores of 4.
Good	No scores of 1. At least seven scores of 3 or more.
Fair	No more than two scores of 1. At least five scores of 3 or more.
Weak	No more than three scores of 1. At least six scores of 2 or more.
Poor	Any other combination of scores.

Report

Context

The locality

- 10 West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority covers 203,000 hectares and serves a population of more than two million in the five local authorities of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. Twenty per cent of the population is aged over 60 and approximately ten per cent of the community are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 11 West Yorkshire Fire Authority operates within one of the most deprived areas in England. Out of the 127 wards in West Yorkshire, 21 are in the 10 per cent most deprived in the country, with the situation being more marked in Bradford, where almost a third of the wards are in the worst ten per cent most. Unemployment ranges from 3 per cent in Leeds to 4.9 per cent in Bradford, compared to the national average of 3.1 per cent. The area has poor health indicators compared to the Yorkshire Humberside average, with the Bradford and Wakefield areas consistently the worst performers.
- 12 A large disparity in the age profiles is prevalent across West Yorkshire. Leeds has a large number of 20-to-29s at the expense of 30-to-59s. Calderdale and Wakefield do the opposite; both have fewer young (20-to-29s) people and correspondingly, more 30-to-59s. Kirklees has more children and fewer pensioners. The most diverse area is Bradford which has a very high proportion of children and a low number of 30-to-59s. The increasing diversity of the population both in terms of age and mix of people, brings specific challenges to the Fire Authority noticeably around risk reduction and ensuring optimum cover is available where it is most needed.
- 13 The Fire Authority area includes a busy major road network, including the M62 and M1, which offers particular challenges to the Fire Authority with some 2,800 road injuries and deaths occurring annually in West Yorkshire. The Fire Authority area also covers Leeds/Bradford International Airport.

The Fire Authority

- 14 The West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority was established on 1 April 1986 upon abolition of the former County Council and is one of seven metropolitan joint authorities in England. The Fire Authority is responsible for the provision and maintenance of an efficient and effective fire and rescue service across the county.
- 15 Membership of the Fire Authority is drawn from the five constituent councils (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield) with representation determined by the size of the voting population in each area. Members of the Fire Authority are appointed by their own council on the basis of the political proportionality. The political composition is nine Labour members, seven Conservative, five Liberal Democrats and one Independent member.
- 16 The Fire Authority's revenue budget for 2004/05 was £85.930 million and the Authority approved a capital programme of expenditure totalling £21.8 million for the period 2005/06 to 2007/08.

- 17 The Fire Authority employs 1,616 whole-time firefighters, 186 part-time firefighters, 55 mobilising and communications staff, 222 support staff and 33 fire safety officers. It has 49 fire stations, 34 are whole-time stations crewed 24 hours a day, 1 is day-crewed and 14 are retained stations, crewed by retained staff responding from home or other employment 24 hours a day, predominantly providing emergency response to smaller towns and rural areas. There are 11 dedicated community fire safety centres across West Yorkshire.
- 18 The Fire Authority is managed by a chief fire officer/chief executive (CFO) and a deputy chief officer (DCFO) with specific responsibilities for community protection, emergency response and communications. The management team also includes four other directors of service whose responsibilities incorporate fire safety, human resources, corporate services and finance. They currently manage four area managers with distinct functional responsibilities. Local delivery is through group managers.
- 19 In 2003/04, the fire service attended some 52,909 incidents. Of these 9,683 were to serious fires and 18,551 to small or minor fires. It also responded to 1,069 road traffic collisions and it received 13,202 automatic fire alarm calls and 2,321 malicious false calls.

What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?

Leadership and priorities

- 20 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 21 Strong visionary leadership is driving cultural change and positive outcomes across the Fire Authority. Given the diverse nature of the population mix there is a challenging vision, making West Yorkshire safer, supported by a mission, to reduce death, injury and property loss due to fire and other emergencies. The vision incorporates the objectives of the National Framework and the target of a reduction in fire deaths by 20 per cent between 1999 and 2010. The vision is supported by a three-year rolling corporate plan with a clear set of local priorities with identified reduction targets around four priority areas of service delivery, people, information and finance. Staff, managers and members are clear about what the Fire Authority is trying to achieve and there is broad support for the vision and priority areas. Non-priorities have been determined through a risk analysis which includes predetermined attendance and non-humanitarian rescues.
- 22 The Fire Authority ensures that the public and its partners can influence its strategies through extensive, consultation. IRMP1 and IRMP2 went through changes with the final plans incorporating directly the views of those consulted. For example, the proposal to change staffing arrangements at Garforth fire station from whole-time to day-crewing, has been deferred until further more detailed risk analysis to the impact in north-east Leeds has been considered.
- 23 It has a significant role in local partnerships, including all the West Yorkshire local strategic partnerships (LSP) and crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRP) and positive relationships exist with the other emergency services. The Fire Authority uses these connections to consult on its proposals and share information so that common aims can be jointly targeted. A positive example being work with Leeds community safety partnership and West Yorkshire Police in respect of establishing an arson task force targeting specific areas of Leeds.
- 24 Good quality research and reliable local intelligence enable the Fire Authority to be explicit about what are non-priorities as evidenced through the IRMP consultation where non-priorities are made clear. For example, individual flooding and other relatively minor domestic emergencies no longer attract automatic response from the service. Further examples of taking difficult decisions include appliance removal, changes to shift systems and use of stations.
- 25 There is good external communication which enables the public to understand the aims and priorities evidenced through all major documents pertaining to aims of the service. These are all made available through various mediums including internet and are accessible in various forms to different segments of the community. The Fire Authority does recognise that earlier and more effective consultation is needed with key stakeholders in respect of IRMP future developments. Although planned, there is no current resourced medium-term communication strategy to support and improve communication.

26 The Fire Authority's approach to engaging with staff is developing but is not yet fully effective. Local managers have been key to delivering messages and obtaining feedback. The Fire Authority recognises the importance of engaging with its staff, and has addressed this issue through developing and introducing more flexible ways of communicating. The intranet is comprehensive, available to all staff, and is supported by new focus groups with the CFO, a programme of annual station visits by senior managers and the monthly publication of 'Burning issues', the authorities local staff newsletter. The Fire Authority does not formally evaluate the effectiveness of its internal communication tools and cannot accurately assess how key messages are received by the entire workforce.

A balanced strategy

27 This theme is scored by this assessment as '4' – well above minimum requirements, performing strongly.

28 The Fire Authority has effectively prioritised protection and community safety alongside better targeted emergency response with a firm commitment to reducing deaths and injuries from fires. Its comprehensive and robust IRMP complies with government requirements, takes into account the National Framework and effectively addresses local needs. The Fire Authority has established a proactive approach to the identification of risk, building detailed station risk profiles based on five years geo-coded data, against 11 clear risk indicators. These risk profiles have facilitated the identification of the most vulnerable areas enabling the setting of local standards of response. This provides a rigorous approach to the assessment of risk and the deployment of resources to improve community safety.

29 The IRMP is driving a robust balance between prevention, protection and emergency response in all the Fire Authority's plans and projects and it is shifting financial and human resources accordingly. For example, removal of appliances in low-risk areas and redeployment of staff to community safety work. Prominent example's being recent changes to Todmorden and Batley where from April 2005, Todmorden has day-crewing rather than whole-time and Batley has been reduced from a two pump to a one-pump station based on risk. The IRMP includes challenging LPSA targets for reduction in deaths, including a 20 per cent reduction in accident fire related deaths by 2010.

30 The Fire Authority is positively addressing wider social issues that contribute to levels of risk. It works with partners to tackle crime and disorder and neighbourhood degradation, for example, through removal of potential arson targets such as abandoned cars. The Fire Authority has developed an arson task force in Bradford based on the good practice identified within Regen 2000 and the Killingbeck arson task force in Leeds. Road traffic collisions (RTCs) are an important consideration when the service plans its response standards. Last year figures reveal the Fire Authority responded to over 1,000 RTCs. RTCs are one of the key risk indicators used in relation to targeting resources. Focusing and reacting to the needs of the community as outlined has enabled the Fire Authority to effectively deliver fire safety activity.

- 31 The Fire Authority is improving its knowledge of, and works with minority groups and is successful at delivering initiatives aimed at high-risk groups. It works effectively with local community organisations representing disadvantaged and isolated people. It also works in liaison with social services and housing management associations using a single assessment process (SAP) to target those most at risk and to assist home owners with safety issues thus, reducing the risk in the home for some of the most vulnerable. However, it is not fully effective in identifying and engaging with all members of its communities as recognised by the service within its own self-assessment. However, staff from minority ethnic backgrounds have improved both access and communication with minority groups whilst assisting in the delivery of community safety activity, in particular around Bradford.
- 32 The sharing of data with partner organisations through multi-agency projects is supporting the effective targeting of resources. There is a clear willingness to share data with partners, in particular police, ambulance, and social services focused around these multi-agency projects. More routine data sharing with these organisations will support the more effective targeting of those most at risk across all communities in West Yorkshire in the future.
- 33 The Fire Authority responds promptly to changing circumstances and new challenges reviewing and revising its approach. A flexible response and willing approach to its challenges has been demonstrated through the Fire Authority's approach to working with the young, elderly and minority groups, and within deprived areas. A young firefighter's scheme targeted at disaffected young people has been successfully piloted in Wakefield and is due to be rolled out in other districts.
- 34 The Fire Authority effectively responds to national priorities. Plans exist to meet category one responder responsibilities as outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act with resources being committed and an operational risk management team established, to project manage the progress towards the requirements of the act. Robust planning and forward thinking has enabled the Fire Authority to effectively manage these new duties.

What is the capacity of the Fire Authority to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Capacity: governance and management

- 35 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 36 The Fire Authority's governance arrangements are satisfactory. They comply with the CIPFA/SOLACE code. A standards committee is in place and is independently chaired. The Fire Authority has a local code of corporate governance and relevant policies, including whistleblowing and member/officer protocols. A member code of conduct has been adopted. Reviews of governance arrangements take place with revisions reported to the Fire Authority's annual general meeting. Recent reviews have led to discontinuation of the best value sub-committee and a review of standing orders. The Fire Authority has developed a constitution, which brings together key aspects of its governance framework, however, it is too early to assess its full impact.
- 37 Officer and member decision-making processes are effective. Members play an active part in both the full Fire Authority and its committees. An executive group, made up of the leaders of all parties, regularly meets, which facilitates speedy decisions. Briefings are held prior to committee meetings to ensure members are informed and able to challenge officers. These arrangements have fostered effective and positive working relationships between senior management and members. It is clear that through the revised structures members are taking the opportunity to challenge decisions, performance information and the budget setting process.
- 38 Officer roles and responsibilities are clear and management structures are reviewed on a regular basis. The management board meet monthly and the management team (a wider group of senior officers) meet twice per month. An officer delegation scheme has been in place since 2002, which details common powers and specific delegation to senior management. Principal officers have an annual performance development review, undertaken by the CFO and there is evidence of succession planning being initiated and developed. These clear structures and effective management are supporting the Fire Authority in delivering its vision.
- 39 The Fire Authority has developed an effective support service infrastructure. Support services are predominately delivered in-house with the exception of payroll. Support services are effective and well-regarded by staff and members as evidenced through user satisfaction survey's and best value reviews. A strong approach towards e-government has been established, supported by a clear strategy and improved ICT infrastructure. Performance in relation to the national e-government target is good. Internal audit is provided through Kirklees MBC who play an active role in challenge the Fire Authority, for example scrutinising the IRMP project and methodology. Through effective corporate support the Fire Authority are able to support members, management and staff.
- 40 The Fire Authority is an active member of the regional management board (RMB) and has a high profile nationally. The Fire Authority leads for the local RMB on resilience, regional control rooms, and personnel and human resource management. The CFO is the vice-president of Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and senior officers play an active part in national and regional forums. The DCFO is the national CFOA lead officer on issues of command and control and the director of corporate services is the secretary of the RMB. As a result, the Fire Authority is well-placed and active in influencing the regional and national agenda.

- 41 Traditionally, not all elected members are fully engaged in the wider role of the Fire Authority. There has been a high level of member turnover in the past 12 months and stronger member involvement now exists, for example in relation to diversity. Although participating effectively within committee structures members are not yet providing strong visible leadership within the organisation.
- 42 Member training is not fully effective in supporting members to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Members have received generic training from their constituent authorities and specific training on Fire Authority roles, including induction training, committee-linked training and ad-hoc specialist training. Internal training is not 'needs-led' and as a result is currently not effectively targeted. The Fire Authority recognises this and is in the early stages of identifying individual training needs through a questionnaire to all members. The absence of 'needs-led' training is not supporting full member participation and ownership of priorities in respect of the governance of the Fire Authority.

Capacity: resources and value for money

- 43 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 44 The Fire Authority has an effective system of financial management and has managed its budget efficiently in 2004/05, with no projected overspend. To ensure the Fire Authority has sufficient reserves to cover any unforeseen financial risk, it annually completes a detailed financial risk matrix. Effective budget setting and the use of the financial risk matrix has enabled the Fire Authority to provide an efficient service to the community.
- 45 Financial and service planning are well-aligned, through the co-ordination of planning cycles. The medium-term financial plan links to corporate priorities and is enabling the Authority to meet efficiency targets. The extensive application of a financial modelling system means that the financial consequences of decisions are clear and easy to understand. For example, the medium-term financial plan includes a three-year budget, linked to IRMP1 and IRMP2 projects. Aligning financial and IRMP processes has enabled the Fire Authority to demonstrate that it has sufficient resources to deliver its aims and priorities.
- 46 The Fire Authority is managing its assets well. It does not have an overarching asset management strategy but does have separate asset management plans in place for each asset stream, supported by asset registers. The Fire Authority is currently formalising an asset management strategy, which will ensure a more systematic approach.
- 47 The Fire Authority promotes value for money within both its procurement strategy and approach to best value. This has been demonstrated through the ten-year vehicle replacement programme now in place across the service resulting in reduced fuel and maintenance costs. Additionally, contracts are benchmarked and tendered where appropriate to ensure competitive pricing. Specialist consultancy services and advice are procured on an ad-hoc basis to support legal decisions, ICT software development and management of large property schemes. Effective purchasing has enabled the Fire Authority to demonstrate value for money and a robust best value service review programme is effectively used to demonstrate value for money. Other noticeable areas where the Fire Authority have considered value for money include the training of managers within the foundation degree programme ensuring optimum use of time and cost within this investment scheme.

- 48 Partnership working has increased capacity to respond to the new agenda. The Fire Authority is good at accessing external funds and expertise, although there is no overall strategic approach to this. The Fire Authority is accessing external funding streams to increase the capacity of its workforce and assist in the delivery of community safety work for example funding the installation of smoke detectors and residential sprinklers in targeted areas across West Yorkshire. The implementation of IRMP2 has released more staff for partnership work. Formal agreements and protocols are in place for certain partnerships, in particular in work around arson reduction initiatives with the Police.
- 49 The Fire Authority cannot demonstrate benefit in all its partnership activities although certain projects are evaluated. It recognises the need to rationalise joint working, to ensure efficient use of its resources, and is therefore developing a partnership policy to ensure that future partnership work is better targeted. A partnership register is being introduced to enhance the monitoring of partnership arrangements. The partnerships will be categorised with statutory partnerships having the most importance. The Fire Authority does not always evaluate its joint working.

Capacity: people

- 50 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 51 The Fire Authority has a good understanding of both its operational staff and the skills required to effectively deliver the modernisation agenda. Its corporate plan 2004/07 highlighted as one of the four key priorities people and commitment to effectively train and develop staff. The personal development review and planning systems are well-embedded for operational staff within the organisation. Good resources are in place with effective workplace assessment and recording of skills are evident. ICT support of skills recording is being trialled but not yet implemented. Through a systematic approach in the implementation of the integrated personal development system (IPDS) the Fire Authority has a clear understanding of the people and skills required to achieve its corporate objectives.
- 52 Personal development reviews are not fully embedded for non-operational staff. The proportion of staff that has completed the process is low compared to uniformed staff.
- 53 The organisation has proactively implemented and utilises effectively different staff and working conditions. Based on the IRMP, the Fire Authority is reviewing working patterns, identifying good practice across all employment sectors. Staff are utilised for community safety through innovative schemes. This includes working with young people with challenging behaviour and with the police on arson reduction road shows across West Yorkshire with prevention and protection being the priority within staff roles.
- 54 A suite of flexible employment policies are available to all staff, including overtime and whole-time/retained contracts. Through the effective use of both staff and working conditions the Fire Authority can implement both the IRMP and corporate objectives.
- 55 Human resource (HR) policies, at both local and regional level, are in place and are effective within the Fire Authority. The HR strategy has an action plan and is supported by strategies for training, stress, sickness and harassment and bullying. The policies presented are both robust and are effectively impacting within the organisation. With a full suite of successful and embedded HR policies and processes, the Authority can progress and develop the modernisation agenda fully.

- 56 The Fire Authority has further strengthened its approach to managing absence and as a result is performing very well, against the family group and nationally in sickness management and ill health retirements. Sickness levels for both uniformed and non-uniformed staff are falling with the Authority being the third and fourth best performer nationally. BVPI 12, the number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence for 2003/04 was 7.33 and 7.92 respectively. Ill health retirements (BVPI 15) are also decreasing. The improved figures are a result of a robust sickness management policy and integrated counselling and occupational health initiatives.
- 57 There is a strong member and officer commitment to diversity by the Authority. This is demonstrated by the equalities and fairness steering group, chaired by both an elected member and principal officer. Level 3 of the local government CRE standard has been achieved and strong diversity policies are embedded, such as a well-established race equality scheme. All processes are supported by an ongoing training and monitoring programme for all staff, with equality impact assessments inherent across the Authority.
- 58 The workforce does not reflect the community in which it serves. There is a low representation within the workforce for both black and minority ethnic (BME) and female staff. BME staff represent 1.9 per cent of the workforce compared with a national target of 9 per cent and an ethnic population of 10 per cent in West Yorkshire. 1.8 per cent of firefighters are female. Progress has been made however, in recent recruitment initiatives, to address these imbalances. Since 2000, 6.7 per cent of uniform staff recruited are from ethnic minorities and 6.5 per cent are female.

Performance management

- 59 This theme is scored by this assessment as '2' – performing at only minimum requirements, adequate performance.
- 60 The Fire Authority has no formal or coherent performance management framework in place. There is evidence that the Fire Authority has through its three-year corporate plan elements of a performance management framework. However, there are no mechanisms in place through directorate, areas and station planning to ensure the systematic management of performance. Given that there is no overall performance management framework in place there is a real risk of duplication amongst the plethora of projects and initiatives currently been delivered. The absence of a coherent performance management framework is restricting the Fire Authority's ability to effectively manage performance and align any station or individual targets with those in the corporate plans.
- 61 Local performance management against individual objectives is not routinely established across the organisation. There are unclear links between how an individual's contribution contributes to achievement of the overall vision. Whilst there are station plans, they are inconsistent and links to corporate targets are not transparent. Without SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) the process for station plans, holding managers to account for performance remains ineffective.
- 62 Members' are not managing performance of senior management in any formal manner. There is no evidence of linking the delivery of corporate objectives to performance. Members do not formally appraise the CFO or any principal officer. Therefore member's ability to effectively monitor corporate objectives and long-term goals is restricted.

- 63 Performance measurement and monitoring arrangements are clear. Performance information is presented to officers and members on a regular basis. The Fire Authority extensively measures and monitors performance information. In addition to best value performance indicators (BVPI), station commanders are encouraged to develop local performance indicators (LPI) to support delivery of station plans, for example, percentage of dwelling fires where a smoke alarm was fitted.
- 64 Well-presented and detailed performance reports are provided for senior management team meetings and meetings of Fire Authority members. This includes 'traffic light' reporting against national and local performance indicators with project management reporting potential slippage against milestones and budgets. Performance information is also made available on the fire authorities' website and in its major plans, so that local people know the level of service to expect.
- 65 Robust arrangements are in place for identifying and managing business risk. The Fire Authority maintains a risk register and all capital projects are risk managed. Strategies to manage new and existing risks are identified and reported to senior managers and members via the risk register which is maintained for all projects identified in the corporate plan. This process is effective and conforms to appropriate business risk.

What has the Fire Authority achieved and, in the light of that, what does it plan to do next?

Achievement of objectives

- 66 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 67 The Fire Authority performs strongly in comparison to similar fire authorities (its family group being the other seven metropolitan fire authorities) in relation to the following key best value performance indicators (BVPIs): BVPI 142(i) number of calls to fires attended – total calls (excluding false alarms) per 10,000 population, third out of family group; BVPI 142iii: number of calls to fires attended – accidental fires per 10,000 population, second of family group; and BVPI 146: number of calls to malicious false alarms per 1,000 population, second of family group.
- 68 Despite strong performance in relation to its family group, the Fire Authority performance is worse than the national average in relation to the majority of BVPIs.
- 69 User satisfaction reflecting the quality and impact of services provided has improved. The number of complaints made to the Fire Authority has reduced from 92 in 2002/03 to 36 in 2004/05, whilst the number of compliments has increased. Satisfaction levels as measured by the Fire Authority's 'quality of service survey' (after the incident survey) show that 93 per cent of respondents were very satisfied.
- 70 The Fire Authority is low cost at £36.50 per head of population in 2003/04, as measured by BVPI 150, compared to its family group (2nd). This position is further demonstrated through the precept for Band D properties, which at £41.62 is the third lowest nationally. Through such low charges, the Fire Authority is demonstrating a cost effective service. The Fire Authority has achieved significant efficiency savings including work through the IRMP process, where £3.2 million worth of efficiency savings have been identified. This funding has been reallocated to assist and support other areas of service provision, including the introduction of operational support units. Effective procurement practices have also realised greater efficiencies, and savings are enabling the fire service to demonstrate it is providing a cost effective service to the community it serves.
- 71 The Fire Authority has clear aims in its corporate plan and IRMP, to improve community safety by risk reduction, respond effectively to emergencies and deliver effective corporate governance. Overall, it is performing well against targets set and is achieving positive outcomes for local people within a background of high levels of social deprivation, particularly in urban centres. Performance in relation to the first two of these aims is shown below; performance in relation to corporate governance is covered in details in theme three of this report. The Fire Authority has put in place satisfactory governance arrangements supported by effective decision-making processes and support service arrangements.

Improve community safety by risk reduction

- 72 Building on a strong history of community fire safety activity, the Fire Authority is able to demonstrate it is actively driving down risks in local communities. The Fire Authority has been delivery community fire safety activity since 1996 and fitting ten-year smoke alarms since 2002. It is meeting its own objectives and delivering tangible benefits in communities reducing fires and risk of fires but also reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Staff are delivering community fire safety work through a wide range of projects and initiatives and the strengths of its partnership working is a key factor in its success. For example, the training initiative with the youth association in Wakefield provides training to Key Stage 4 pupils in the role of the fire service and general community safety. This partnership has helped deliver improved attendance and motivation for the young people involved and clearly demonstrates that co-operative working is contributing towards the achievement of corporate objectives.
- 73 Effective community fire safety activity is supporting a proactive strategy to improve protection. From November 2004, each fire station across West Yorkshire has had a revised target for carrying out home fire safety checks (HFSC), each two pump station has a target of 28 checks per week and each one pump station has a target of 14 per week. Of the 900,000 households in West Yorkshire, approximately 15 per cent have been visited so far, to carry out a HFSC and fit smoke detection. Through meeting challenging targets by the year 2013, operational crews and risk reduction teams will be revisiting the households originally checked in 2002 to undertake a further HFSC.

Respond effectively to emergencies

- 74 The Fire Authority is able to demonstrate that it is improving the effectiveness of its emergency response. Local targets are set, monitored and benchmarked for emergency response based on the old national standard and aligned to risk profiles in the IRMP. The Fire Authority has not however, taken the opportunity to set a local response standard at this time.

Achievement of improvement

- 75 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 76 The Fire Authority can demonstrate improvement in performance in most areas. There has been a clear trend of improvement during the last three years in relation to: BVPI 142ii: number of calls to fires attended – primary fires has fallen from 55.76 to 46.55 per 10,000 population; BVPI 142iii: number of calls to fires attended – accidental fires has reduced from 21.03 to 17.56 per 10,000 population; BVPI 143ii: injuries arising from accidental fires in dwellings has reduced from 16.95 to 12.60 per 10,000 population; BVPI 146: number of calls to malicious false alarms has reduced from 1.39 to 1.12 per 1,000 population; and BVPI 149: false alarms caused by automatic fire detection apparatus has reduced from 166.71 to 130.55 per 1,000 population.
- 77 Overall, community satisfaction has declined. Performance in relation to BVPI 3, satisfaction with the way the Fire Authority is running things, has fallen from 75.1 per cent in 2000 to 61.3 per cent in 2003.

Improve community safety by risk reduction

- 78 Crucially performance is improving in line with the fire authorities' mission and aims. There was a 16.8 per cent reduction in the number of incidents attended in 2004 compared to 2003. Stations experienced a significant reduction in incidents; Slaithwaite reduced by 45 per cent, Castleford 28 per cent, Idle 26 per cent, Halifax 23.7 per cent and Garforth by 19.9 per cent. The incidents of car fires reduced by 33 per cent overall, with some stations experiencing a significant reductions, notably Gipton who have recorded a 43 per cent reduction in car fires.
- 79 The Fire Authority's performance is not improving in relation to certain local performance standards. An example is firework related injuries, which have increased for the year 2004. Nevertheless, the Authority did undertake an intensive campaign to promote firework regulation in 2004 alongside West Yorkshire Police and Trading Standards. Although a significant decrease in injuries to children were noted (60 per cent fall in injuries to children under ten and 25 per cent decrease in ten to 25 age category), this was offset by an increase of over 50 per cent in the over 25 category.
- 80 The Fire Authority has achieved a measurable increase in community safety through its proactive station risk profile. This process has enabled effective targeting of HFSCs throughout West Yorkshire with some 19,000 HFSCs carried out between April 2004 and January 2005. Targeted HFSCs are driving down the risk of fire.
- 81 Targeted arson reduction partnerships have assisted the Fire Authority in reducing the number of deliberate fires, hoax calls and injuries and deaths resulting from accidental fires. Killingbeck arson task force and Regen 2000 have been targeted on specific areas within the county, namely, Killingbeck and Bradford. Both localities have seen significant improvements, for example deliberate fires in the Killingbeck area have reduced by over 50 per cent. Effective partnership working is enabling the Fire Authority to realise its targets.

Respond effectively to emergencies

- 82 Proactive partnership working by the Fire Authority has facilitated a positive trend of reduced fire incidence in targeted areas. The Authority is able to demonstrate a trend of improvement in targeted areas, such as Bradford, as a consequence of working in partnership with a range of other public sector agencies. Single Regeneration Budget funding has been secured to improve and 'regenerate' this area of the county, which will house the new build Bradford fire station in 2006. As a consequence of the community fire safety activity, since 1 April 2003 hoax calls have reduced by 49 per cent, vehicle fires have reduced by 46 per cent and secondary fires have been reduced by 22 per cent. The Authority has good awareness of the barriers yet to be overcome and there is a clear momentum for change.

Future plans

- 83 This theme is scored by this assessment as '3' – consistently above the minimum requirements, performing well.
- 84 The Fire Authority has robust and challenging future plans which tackle areas of under development to progress its ambitious change agenda and build on its successes so far. Major plans such as IRMP2 and the medium-term financial plan link well together and reflect the requirements of the national framework and the aims of the RMB. These planning cycles have been aligned towards a more integrated approach.

- 85 The Fire Authority regularly reviews its strategies, plans and targets to ensure that they remain relevant in terms of its local, national and regional challenges. The IRMP is updated in line with national guidance and the updated plan includes a detailed overview of achievements so far, the benefits that these have brought for local communities and those areas where the Authority has not achieved its goals or has re-prioritised activities.
- 86 Future plans and strategies are being reviewed in line with external initiatives. The Fire Authority has clearly identified the need to review and assess duty systems and has initiated a research team to identify good practice in both the public and private sectors. Through reviewing and re-assessing its future plans and strategies, the Authority will be in a strong position to effectively deliver the modernisation agenda.
- 87 The Fire Authority can demonstrate a positive response to both external and internal challenge. The Fire Authority proactively seeks opportunities to learn from experiences of other fire and rescue services, and other organisations, and shares its own experiences. The Authority has responded to and made changes as a result of both recent internal audit recommendations and the SOLACE Peer review. The organisation reacts positively to other external challenge, including the HSE, HMFSI and external audit.
- 88 The Fire Authority is learning effectively as an organisation. As a consequence it takes positive action as demonstrated through partnership working in training and development. The partnership with the Institute of Leadership management and foundation degree programmes, aimed at station managers, clearly shows that the Authority is learning and working with other organisations, supporting key staff in respect of personnel and professional development. Through such innovative schemes, the Fire Authority is providing excellent training and development programmes for all staff.
- 89 The Fire Authority is developing its self-awareness and learning from stakeholders Staff from the Fire Authority have contributed to enhanced service delivery in particular around work with the delivery of home fire safety checks and the introduction of Strategic Standby of fire crews to make available 25,000 additional staff hours of risk reduction and training activity. The Fire Authority has recently demonstrated its self-awareness through the development of an improvement plan aimed at addressing self-identified weakness as a result of the this assessment process.
- 90 The Fire Authority is also being innovative in its approach to community safety initiatives and receives national recognition for its work in this field. Key fire stations and community locations are being transformed into a modern interactive community safety centres redesigned appropriately from existing stations which will present opportunities for schools and youth groups to experience an interactive fire safety learning environment. Such projects are facilitating the Fire Authority to deliver community safety messages to all vulnerable groups in the community.
- 91 The Fire Authority are continuing to invest in the development of a computer-based critical incident decision-making simulator which has resulted in innovative and positive learning for key incident control staff. Participants in its application have included other fire authorities from the region, West Yorkshire Police, and officers from Leeds City Council. The Fire Authority is actively championing its use at the regional resilience forum. This learning is being shared across the organisation and beyond the Fire Authority.

- 92 Learning opportunities from local community safety activity are not being maximised. The Fire Authority do recognise learning from community safety good practice is currently not structured and there is no formal mechanisms at station level to share and replicate good practice to the rest of the organisation. This has resulted in elements of local good practice not being replicated in other areas.

Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses

A – What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?

Theme	Strengths	Weaknesses
Leadership and priorities <i>Score 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong visionary leadership is driving cultural change. Good external consultation is influencing strategy. Tackling challenging issues and taking tough decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach to engaging with staff is developing.
A balanced strategy <i>Score 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively prioritised protection and community safety. Well-balanced IRMPs, based on rigorous station risk profiles. Positively addressing wider social issues. Improving knowledge and work with minority groups. Flexible response to new challenges. Responding to national priorities. 	

B – How has the Fire Authority set about delivering its priorities?

Theme	Strengths	Weaknesses
Capacity: Governance and management <i>Score 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfactory governance arrangements. Effective officer/member structures supporting informed decision-making. Active role and profile nationally and regionally. Effective support infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all members engaged in wider role of Fire Authority Training is not fully effective in supporting members
Capacity: Resources and value for money <i>Score 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust financial management. MTFP linked to IRMP. Increasing capacity and resources through partnership. Accessing external funding. Promoting value for money. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fully evaluating partnership activities.
Capacity: People <i>Score 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of staff and skills set. Proactive use of staff and working conditions. Strong investment in HR. Strengthened approach to attendance management. Officer and member commitment to diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce does not reflect community PDR not fully developed for non-operational staff
Performance management <i>Score 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust arrangements for risk management. Performance measurement and monitoring clear and effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No coherent performance management framework. Performance management not routinely established for individuals. Performance assessment of senior officers not undertaken by members.

C – What has the Fire Authority achieved and, in the light of that, what does it plan to do next?

Theme	Strengths	Weaknesses
Achievement of objectives Score 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong performance in comparison to similar fire authorities. • Low cost per head of population. • Continuing to building on a strong history of community fire safety activity. • A range of good local projects and initiatives delivering real impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worse than the national average in relation to the majority of BVPIs.
Achievement of improvement Score 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPIs – improving in most areas in line with mission and aims. • Significant measurable improvements in community safety. • Proactive partnership working contributing to improvements to local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance not improving in relation to some local performance indicators.
Future plans Score 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust and challenging future plans. • Plans and strategies regularly review and updated. • Good use of internal and external challenge. • Innovative approaches to community safety and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal learning and sharing of good is not effective.

Scoring key

- 4 Well above minimum requirements, performing strongly.
- 3 Consistently above minimum requirements, performing well.
- 2 At only minimum requirements, adequate performance.
- 1 Below minimum requirements, inadequate performance.

Appendix 1 – Appointed auditor assessment

93 Appointed auditors were asked to score five areas which relate to the statutory code of audit practice. When scoring each area a range of issues are taken into account. These issues and the score that has been given in each area are set out in the table below.

Area for auditor judgement	Grade	Issues included in this area
Financial standing	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a balanced budget. • Setting a capital programme. • Financial monitoring and reporting. • Meeting financial targets. • Financial reserves.
Systems of internal financial control	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of financial systems. • An adequate internal audit function is maintained. • Risk identification and management.
Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical framework. • Governance arrangements.
Financial statements	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness. • Quality.
Legality of significant financial transactions	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities. • Consideration of legality of significant financial transactions. • New legislation.

Scoring and calibration

- 4 Good.
- 3 Adequate.
- 2 Adequate overall, but some weaknesses that need to be addressed.
- 1 Inadequate.

Appendix 2 – Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment

94 This Comprehensive Performance Assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Fire and Rescue Act 2004. The Fire and rescue Act 2004 extends the Commissions powers under sections 10 to 13 of the Local Government Act to inspection of a fire and rescue authority's compliance with its duty to 'have regard to' the Fire and Rescue National Framework prepared by the Secretary of State.

95 The main elements of the assessment were:

- ◆ a self-assessment completed by the Authority;
- ◆ accredited peer challenge to inform the Authority's self-assessment;
- ◆ a corporate assessment of the Authority's overall effectiveness in supporting services to deliver improvements; assessed with the aid of the following diagnostic tools:
 - ◆ Community Fire Safety (CFS);
 - ◆ Equality and Diversity (E&D);
 - ◆ Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS);
 - ◆ Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP);
 - ◆ partnership working;
- ◆ appointed auditor assessments of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice; and
- ◆ audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments.

96 The assessment for West Yorkshire Fire Authority was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 18 April to 28 April 2005.

97 This report has been discussed with the Authority, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Authority.