

# Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Authority

**Performance Audit Report 2006**

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# Executive summary

1. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) has a clear and long-term vision for the future of its service, based on the principles outlined in the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland. The authority has put in place an operational structure which is enabling close working relationships with local authorities and other partner organisations such as the police. It is building capacity to meet its longer term challenges but has more immediate plans in place to address specific issues including performance management.
2. Strong leadership is driving change both at a strategic and operational level. Board members and the senior management team demonstrate a strong commitment to the modernisation agenda. There is however scope for the FRA to introduce a development programme for members and review the Board's structural arrangements in preparation for the May 2007 local elections.
3. The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is the key document for realising the FRA's vision and plays a major role in both policy and strategy development. Staff at all levels have been empowered to deliver community safety work and a broad range of initiatives have been instigated. There is a real sense of ownership and pride amongst staff in driving forward service improvements. Partnership working is playing an ever growing part in the delivery of the prevention and protection agenda in particular through information sharing and participation in local initiatives.
4. The FRA clearly recognises the links between its aims and the broader social agenda encompassing issues such as social inclusion but must do more to evaluate the overall effectiveness of its community safety work. The roll out of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) must also now be accelerated across the whole Strathclyde region.
5. The FRA has progressed many of the goals in its Personnel and Development Strategy and continues to invest in the development of its workforce. It is well placed to continue to deliver the Integrated Personnel and Development System (IPDS) and has adopted innovative ways of training staff. Good progress has been made on developing and implementing a range of policies to enable greater flexibility and more efficient use of resources. There is a strong commitment to the emerging Equality and Diversity agenda, but the FRA has some way to go before its workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves.
6. Operationally the FRA is continuing to deal with the challenges associated with attacks on firefighters, anti-social behaviour and crime and the degree of challenge these present is experienced by few other fire authorities. However, the FRA is not yet demonstrating optimum efficiency in its intervention work and slow progress has been made in the introduction of some key policies such as Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). The FRA has used the opportunities provided by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the national framework to enhance and develop the rescue side of its service provision. This is evident

through its development of a Technical Rescue School which will deliver a range of specialist skills to operational personnel.

7. Overall, the FRA has made good progress since the 2004 Accounts Commission Phase 2 Verification Audit, having successfully implemented rank to role, embedded IRMP and IPDS within mainstream service delivery and put in place a range of policies (overtime, mixed crewing, flexible working) which make more efficient and effective use of resources. However, there is scope for further operational efficiencies and the FRA needs to shift its emphasis towards evaluating the impact of its broad range of community safety initiatives.

# Introduction

## Background

8. Fire and rescue authorities across the UK are undergoing an extensive programme of modernisation following the National Joint Council (NJC) agreement on pay and conditions in 2003. This programme of change is intended to move authorities towards a more targeted and risk-based approach to prevention, protection and emergency response.
9. As part of the NJC agreement, the Accounts Commission undertook a verification exercise to examine whether the intended benefits of the various national changes under modernisation were being delivered locally. This was conducted in two phases during 2004 with reports on progress produced in March and October of that year<sup>1</sup>.
10. The second verification on the progress of modernisation reported that progress was being made in Scotland and that the building blocks were in place. However, the report concluded there was still a significant amount of work to be done before real change would be delivered on the ground. As a result, the Accounts Commission asked Audit Scotland to undertake a performance audit on the Scottish fire and rescue authorities during 2006 to include a review of the overall outcomes of modernisation.
11. Following the NJC agreement, new legislation was enacted in Scotland (The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005) which provides the statutory framework to enable fire and rescue authorities in Scotland to modernise their services. The 2005 Act is accompanied by a statutory Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland, finalised in September 2005, which sets out the priorities, objectives and guidance for the fire and rescue service.
12. With enabling legislation and a new statutory framework in place, the Commission agreed a project brief for a national performance audit of Scottish Fire and Rescue authorities in February 2006. The overall focus of the audit should be the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are achieving the objectives of modernisation, and in particular whether:
  - Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) are effectively supporting the change in emphasis from intervention to prevention, and
  - the progress to modernisation is reflected in the culture of the organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Accounts Commission (2004) Scottish Fire Services. verification of the progress of modernisation (March) and the second verification of the progress of modernisation (October)

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

## **Local context**

17. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) is the second largest in the United Kingdom. It covers an area of 13,625sq km (17.5% of Scotland) and delivers services to 2.4 million people, approximately 46% of Scotland's total population. The population is dispersed across a wide geographical area, ranging from remote crofts and hamlets to Scotland's biggest city, Glasgow. The area includes 23 inhabited islands and has a substantial coastline with associated risks.
18. The population of Strathclyde is set to decline by 3% by 2024. However, this overall figure hides some significant variances. In particular the population of Inverclyde is expected to drop by 14%, whereas the population of South Lanarkshire is expected to increase by 4%. This creates particular challenges for the FRA in planning the delivery of services to local communities in the future.

19. The percentage of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents in each local authority varies dramatically from 0.7% in Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire, to 5.5% in Glasgow. Overall, 31% of Scotland's BME residents live in Glasgow. The increasing diversity of population brings specific challenges to the FRA noticeably around risk reduction, in ensuring that the community fire safety message can be communicated effectively across all communities.
20. Strathclyde's area covers a spectrum of affluence and deprivation. There is a strong link between living in an area of deprivation and being at risk from fire. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Executive's official tool for identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland. The SIMD 2006 divides Scotland up into 6,505 small geographical areas (called 'data zones'), with a median population size of 769.
21. The SIMD 2006 shows that 47% of Glasgow City's population live in the 15% most deprived data zones in Scotland, compared to 2% in East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire. After Glasgow City, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and Inverclyde have the highest percentages (20% or more) of their population living in the 15% most deprived data zones in Scotland. This presents enormous challenges in terms of operational and community safety performance.

## **The Fire and Rescue Authority**

22. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Board is a Joint Board, covering the twelve constituent local authorities of Argyll and Bute, City of Glasgow, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. The Board comprises 34 elected members from across all constituent authorities. The Fire and Rescue Board is led by a convenor, supported by two vice convenors.
23. The Fire and Rescue Board's revenue budget for 2006/07 is £137.278 million with a supporting capital budget of £12 million. The FRA employs 3,620 personnel. Of these, 2,208 are wholetime firefighters, 613 are retained firefighters, 271 are volunteers, 459 are non-uniformed staff<sup>2</sup> and a further 69 work within command and control.
24. The FRA is managed by a Chief Officer (CO) and a Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) with specific responsibilities for finance. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) is the overarching body responsible for policy development within the FRA, and its membership also includes the other 5 Assistant Chief Officers (ACO), who have responsibility for the remaining Directorates of Community Safety, Operations, HR, Training and Operational Review and Strategic Planning (Exhibit 1). The

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

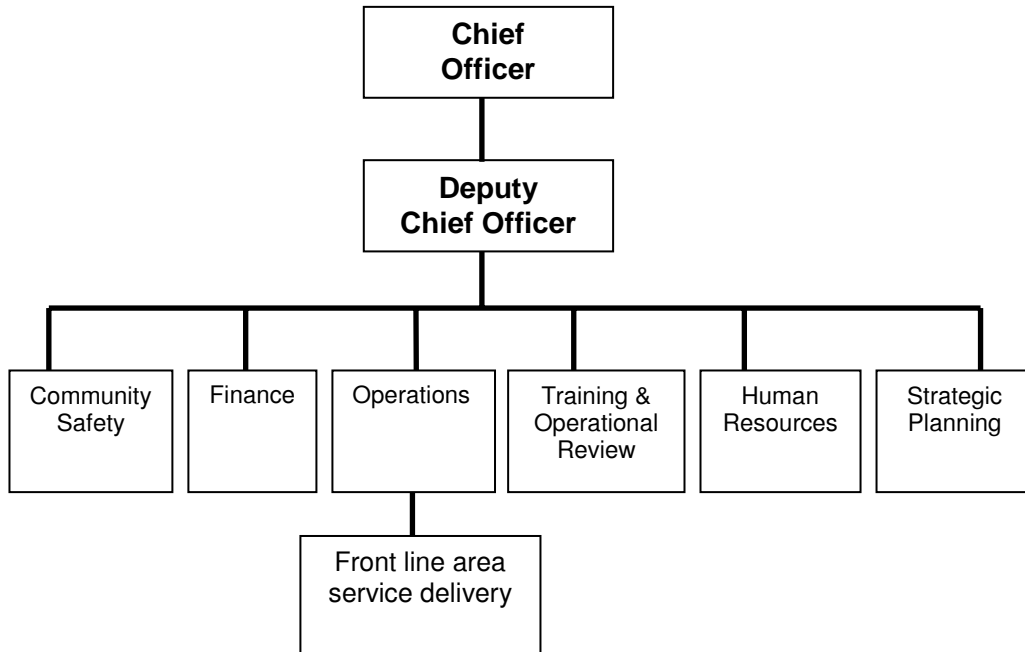
Corporate Strategy Team (CST) exists to assist the CMT with strategic planning and to support the implementation and communication of the corporate planning process to achieve corporate aims.

25. Service delivery is devolved to 10 geographical areas which are closely linked to, and in most cases have co-terminous boundaries with, local authority areas and community planning partnerships.

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**Exhibit 1:**

**Organisational structure**



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*Source: Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Authority*

26. There are 113 fire station locations providing firefighting crews. Of these, 39 are wholetime stations, 10 of which have retained units attached. There are a further 44 retained stations and 31 volunteer units. There is a fleet of 194 emergency vehicles, including a Heavy Rescue Vehicle and other specialist response and service delivery units.
27. In 2005/06, the FRA responded to 55,144 incidents—an average of more than 150 incidents every day. Of these, 32% (17,708), were secondary fires and 47% (26,171) were false alarms.

# Part 1: Strategic management

## Key findings

- The FRA has a clear strategic direction articulated in the 2015 Vision and supported by seven corporate priorities. To support delivery of the Vision, the FRA has put in place an operational structure that is promoting greater engagement with local communities. It has used the opportunities provided by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the national framework to enhance and develop the rescue side of its service provision.
- The Corporate Management Team (CMT) offers strong leadership and has the confidence and support of both staff and elected members. There is a real sense of ownership and pride amongst staff in driving forward service improvements.
- Members are supportive and participate fully in the work of the Joint Board. The FRA should use the opportunity of the 2007 local elections to review the board's structural arrangements and put in place a development framework for members.
- Performance management is currently underdeveloped but the building blocks are in place. The FRA also needs to put in place a suitable appraisal scheme to enable the monitoring and management of the performance of individuals, linked to the objectives of the service.

## Strategic direction

28. The FRA has a modern vision of “*making our communities safe places to live and work*”. This is supported by seven corporate priorities which aim to:

- actively identify, assess and reduce risks to the communities
- minimise the effects of fire and other emergencies
- effectively administer fire safety legislation
- achieve equality in terms of the treatment of all staff and service users
- promote health, safety and welfare
- communicate with stakeholders to inform and seek opinion
- make the best use of resources.

29. These priorities are based on a well-developed understanding of local needs and incorporate the requirements of the national Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities. These corporate goals are cascaded to Directorates and Operational Areas through local objectives and targets which drive staff work programmes. This approach promotes responsibility and accountability of staff in addressing and implementing the vision.
30. The vision is consistently set out in documents, policies and letters, resulting in a high level of corporate branding. Through discussions in staff focus groups, it was evident that there is a widespread awareness of this vision and the FRA's strategic direction.
31. In April 2005, the FRA agreed a corporate vision document that identified how each of the seven corporate priorities would be delivered by 2015. The vision sets ambitious targets for 2010 and 2015 and outlines how each of these will be achieved. For example the FRA aims to reduce the incidence of domestic fire by 20% by 2015, reduce the number of unwanted fire alarms by 20% by 2010 and reduce days lost to sickness by 45% by 2015. The corporate vision provides a clear direction and focus for the FRA's medium and long-term plans.
32. The FRA has put in place the staff and structures required to deliver its vision. In 2005, the FRA formed new strategic directorates and re-organised front line services from four centralised commands to ten de-centralised areas linked to local authority areas. Each of these areas has a large degree of autonomy and has responsibility for contributing to achievement of the FRAs vision while ensuring that local initiatives are based on the needs of local communities. These changes have had a positive impact on the organisation, enabling the FRA to achieve its key objectives while developing new ways of delivering services more responsive to local needs. There is a clear sense of ownership and pride amongst staff for driving forward service improvements.
33. The FRA has consciously used the opportunities presented by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the National Framework to enhance and develop the rescue side of its service provision. This has increased operational capability in certain specialist roles such as Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), the use of search dogs and water rescue functions.
34. The FRA operates within a clear business planning framework. In 2005, the FRA revised its corporate planning framework to align planning development and service delivery with the long-term strategic aims. This has now been successfully implemented, forming the basis for all planning and development activities within the FRA. The framework is driven by a corporate planning cycle, which clearly identifies the activities that the Joint Board, CMT and CST must undertake throughout the calendar year.
35. With these arrangements bedded in, the FRA is planning to progress service planning from a one year duration to a three-year planning cycle.

## **Leadership and governance**

36. The FRA has transparent governance arrangements within an established framework with clear delegation to committees and appropriate terms of reference in place. Members are aware of matters for which they are responsible and accountable. In order to support the work of the Fire and Rescue Joint Board, a number of sub-committees and forums exist. In October 2005 some changes were made to these arrangements following the implementation of the National Heads of Agreement. However, the terms of reference and standing instructions for a number of other standing committees and scrutiny forums have remained unchanged since the Board was formed in 1996. With local elections due next year, the FRA should take the opportunity to review its sub-committee arrangements to ensure that it continues to be relevant and support the new structures within the FRA and the wider modernisation agenda.
37. Members are clearly committed and supportive of the FRA. Members are active locally for example visiting local fire stations and attending long service award presentations. The support of members helps officers drive through plans for improvement and change. Whilst members recognise the professional advice that the CO provides to the Board, they do not over rely on this. There is evidence of scrutiny of policy decisions in particular in Board Sub-Committees such as the Employee and Equality Forum and the Best Value Audit Forum.
38. The FRA places reliance on the constituent authorities taking responsibility for member training. While the majority of members on the Board are highly experienced, due to length of time served, members' development has not been informed by a comprehensive training needs analysis. Some members appear unaware of the need for specific training by the FRA to assist them to work more effectively in their role as members of a Fire and Rescue Joint Board. Addressing any training needs, as well as recognising skills that members bring to their roles, is important in promoting effective engagement of members and realising their full potential for the benefit of the FRA. The FRA may wish to address this issue in preparing for and following local government elections in May 2007.
39. A role is currently being developed for a "Risk Management Champion" on the Board. There is further scope for other lead roles to be developed among members, covering aspects such as performance management reporting, and diversity and equality. The outcome of any training needs analysis could help identify suitable members to fulfil these roles.
40. There are good working relationships between members and officers and members particularly value the open and inclusive approach of the CMT. This has resulted in a constructive dialogue and common commitment by members and officers to the modernisation agenda and the FRA's vision.
41. The CMT led by the CO operates well and is clear on what it is trying to achieve as the corporate decision-making body of the FRA. The CST exists to assist the CMT with strategic planning and performance management. However, there is a significant degree of overlap between the work of

these two groups. In addition, there is limited opportunity for area commanders to contribute to the strategic direction of the FRA. Having completed the restructuring, this may now be an opportune time for the FRA to review its arrangements for corporate decision-making to ensure the FRA makes the best use of senior management resources.

42. Industrial relations between management and representative bodies have improved in recent years. However, while representative bodies have regular meetings with the ACO for Personnel and Development, there is insufficient formal dialogue with members and senior management. In recognising this, the FRA is developing a partnership forum with representative bodies and work is well advanced to achieve this aim, with the first meeting scheduled for November 2006. This is an essential development to support senior management and representative bodies in building and sustaining productive working relationships.

## **Performance management**

43. Performance management is not systematically applied throughout the FRA. Not all elements of an effective performance management framework are in place, but the FRA is aware of this and there are a number of important developments underway.
44. The use of Performance Indicators (PIs) is a key component in the process. The FRA reports quarterly on performance against Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and Local Performance Indicators (LPIs). SPIs are set out in the Accounts Commission's annual Direction and are reported on by all Scottish FRAs. LPIs are agreed by Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland) and allow fire and rescue authorities in Scotland to benchmark their performance against each other. These indicators measure performance in areas such as fire prevention, the diversity of the workforce, attacks on firefighters and Freedom of Information requests. A new suite of LPIs was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, so at present no annual comparable data is available. Historically these PIs have not been used to actively monitor or drive performance improvements. However, the FRA has recently developed a suite of 25 PIs which will be used to measure progress towards the 2015 Vision.
45. The FRA has put in place the building blocks to implement an effective performance management framework. The monthly performance reports against the SPIs and LPIs are now considered by the CST, who also examine performance over time and agree any corrective action that needs to be taken. The new suite of 25 PIs will also be monitored in this way. Within the 10 operational command areas, monthly performance monitoring meetings are now held with Station Managers. Each area has also produced a quarterly monitoring report. However, there are inconsistencies between each of these reports and a standard template is currently being created, which will also take account of the new PIs being developed to support achievement of the 2015 Vision.
46. Progress in establishing a performance management framework has been hindered by lack of an appropriate Information Technology (IT) system. This is an issue on two levels, firstly, internally within

the FRA, some work remains to put in place the necessary IT infrastructure to capture and record data gathered through the new corporate PIs. Secondly through the CFOA (S) network, the FRA is taking forward proposals for collaborative procurement and the development of a national performance information management system. This will be a lengthy process as it will take time to get the necessary agreement across all the FRAs.

47. There is no embedded appraisal or personal review system to enable the monitoring and management of the performance of individuals. This means that although staff have a good understanding of how their work feeds into station or directorate plans, it is difficult for managers to set individual targets and manage performance against these. As a result, the contribution of individuals to the achievement of the overall corporate aims is not clear. The FRA is aware of this weakness and a key action within the Personnel and Development strategy is the implementation of a personal development planning process linking individual performance and development with corporate objectives.
48. Robust project management is being applied. All projects and initiatives are now delivered using the principles of PRINCE2 project management methodology, providing a well structured and robust management tool. This structured approach to project management will strengthen the performance management framework as it develops.
49. The FRA has a well organised approach to Risk Management. The FRA makes use of a risk register and a risk management team is in place. The remit of this group is to identify areas of potential risk which if not controlled could have an adverse impact on the FRA as a whole. There are also plans to extend the role of the Performance and Audit Forum to specifically include corporate risk management and appoint a “Risk Management Champion” on the Joint Board.
50. Overall, the FRA has been slow in developing a robust performance management framework. However, a culture of measuring and managing performance is now starting to permeate throughout the whole organisation. This was evident from interviews with a wide variety of personnel across different departments and operational areas. The challenge now is for the FRA to build on the foundations that have been laid.

# Part 2: Fire prevention and risk management

## Key findings

- The IRMP is the key document for realising the FRA's vision and plays a major role in both policy and strategy development within the FRA. The IRMP is supported by robust monitoring arrangements.
- Using data from the Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) computer model and the new Community Fire Safety toolkit, the FRA is effectively identifying and targeting resources to improve the safety of its communities.
- There is a strong focus on Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities, delivered through a range of initiatives and partnership projects. The FRA clearly recognises the links between its aims and the broader social agenda encompassing issues such as social inclusion. However, given the strength of the workforce, progress on Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) has been slow.
- The FRA needs to do more systematically to share good practice among the ten operational areas and measure the impact of CFS initiatives to ensure that they are making optimum use of resources and collectively contributing to objectives identified in the IRMP.
- Partnership working is both proactive and well managed and there is evidence of good data sharing with partners. However, the FRA needs to do more to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of work.

## Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

51. The FRA has developed an IRMP that meets the requirements of the National Framework for Scottish Fire and Rescue Services but also recognises the needs of the diverse communities that it serves. It provides a clear balance between intervention and prevention.
52. The IRMP is a framework document which articulates the challenges facing the FRA and details the FRAs plans to realise the 2015 Vision. The IRMP is the corporate strategy and primary planning tool which has ensured that all the FRAs ambitions are captured and distilled into one all embracing strategy with clear corporate priorities.
53. Using FSEC, the FRA has adopted a rigorous approach to analysing data in order to develop future options for taking forward its IRMP. The identification and application of key data sets has been essential in this regard. For example, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation has been integrated with the FSEC toolkit to accurately identify priority areas of risk to target community safety initiatives.

54. Considerable work has been undertaken over the past 12 months to provide an evidence base to inform decisions on appliance utilisation and operational duty systems. For example, FSEC was used to consider the case for strategic standby. This is the practice of locating crews and appliances to specific locations close to areas of high demand at times of peak activity. The results from FSEC, identified that emergency resources were currently best placed to meet demand. Conversely, by running the FSEC model, a need to review options for remote rural areas was identified. Plans to address this have now been encompassed in the 2006/07 IRMP action plan and include proposals for extending the use of volunteer units to a larger response area.

## **Implementation of IRMP**

55. The FRA published its first IRMP in July 2004 covering the first eight month period to April 2005. This was ahead of the Scottish timetable, which required each FRA to have an IRMP in place from 1 April 2005. Implementation of the 2004/05 and 2005/06 IRMP yielded a number of tangible benefits for the FRA including:
- A major organisational restructure, which saw the move from four commands areas to 10 operational areas to allow closer alignment with local authority boundaries.
  - The achievement of efficiency gains, through the redeployment of resources—for example the decision to invest in rescue pumps released 72 posts of which 36 provided efficiency savings and a further 36 were deployed to Oban fire station and to training and community safety.
  - The development of area and station plans and the introduction of the station manager post which has improved local partnership working.
  - The introduction of a comprehensive Personnel and Development Strategy to underpin and support the objectives outlined in the IRMP and the 2015 Vision.
  - The development and introduction of a Community Safety toolkit, to allow operational staff to engage fully in community fire safety duties and target resources appropriately.
56. There are robust monitoring arrangements in place for IRMP. A performance review group was established in 2005, and meets on a quarterly basis to assess progress towards the achievement of the IRMP action plan. The group is chaired by the ACO for Strategic Planning and brings together the Assistant Directors from each of the Directorates. The group assesses progress against a traffic light system and is responsible for reporting progress (via the CMT) to the Fire Board's Performance and Audit Forum.
57. The FRA has developed a sound understanding of the safety risks faced by the diverse communities it serves and this has led to the introduction of a range of strategies, many aimed at vulnerable and

hard- to-reach groups. These include the Drive Safe Campaign, Fire Reach Initiative, and Integration through Safety (ITS) Glasgow initiative. The ITS project is particularly relevant as it emerged in response to the increase of ethnic minority groups (particularly asylum seekers moving into the Glasgow area) which often, coupled with their sometimes basic grasp of English, presented particular challenges to the FRA. The aim of this initiative was to examine and alleviate the problems faced by new communities with regards to home and fire safety. Although many of these initiatives are still in their infancy, there is early evidence to suggest that they are starting to have an impact, for example, the number of road traffic collisions attended by the FRA has declined from 1228 in 2004/05 to 821 in 2005/06, which represents a 33% improvement.

58. Targeted safety campaigns and initiatives are delivered by using operational crews, community fire safety personnel and partner organisations. Whilst there are numerous examples of local working with hard-to-reach groups, the approach across the 10 operational areas is inconsistent with no formal mechanism for sharing good practice amongst the various areas. This means that the “wheel is continually being reinvented”. The FRA is aware of this issue and, to some extent it is starting to be addressed through the Area Managers Common Practice Meetings. However, more needs to be done to deliver a consistent quality.
59. Staff are committed and willing to deliver community safety work. This is being facilitated by both empowering staff and ensuring that they are given the skills and knowledge to deliver this work. This “buy-in” from staff can in part be attributed to the introduction of the community safety tool kit which has been made available to each wholetime station. The toolkit is closely aligned to FSEC and allows station personnel to identify and target preventative resources into areas of risks. The system is also able to record and capture input, which allows the impact of local activities to be measured, offering a sense of job satisfaction and achievement to staff. This new toolkit has been well received at an operational level and it has empowered local stations to deliver the CFS activities which they have identified are most commensurate with local needs.
60. The FRA has made slow progress in relation to Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), given the relative strength of its workforce. Over the 12 month period in 2005/06, the FRA has completed 10,871 HFSVs, this equates to only 1.2% of the 930,000 households within the area it serves. The FRA has not set specific targets for HFSVs, to enable local areas to develop their own appropriate approach but this need to be co-ordinated in a more systematic manner. The FRA has however adopted a number of innovative approaches to promote this service to the wider public. These include advertising on parking tickets and a school referral scheme, whilst the website provides details of a freephone number and offers an on-line booking system.
61. The FRA is actively working with the social work departments from each of the 12 constituent local authorities in order to engage with hard-to-reach groups and deliver HFSVs to those members of the public who are most vulnerable to the risk of fire. The FRA benefited from the expertise of a social work secondee who was instrumental in piloting and delivering an initiative across a number of local

authority areas, whereby an identification of fire risks is carried out as part of the single shared assessment of an elderly person. Similarly, the FRA is engaging with forums such as Alcohol Misuse groups in a number of areas in Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire to reach other vulnerable sectors of the community. The FRA clearly recognises the links between alcohol, vulnerable groups and fire safety and this targeted approach offers great potential for risk reduction within these groups.

62. The FRA has a diverse and challenging risk profile but the move to the new operational structure has clearly brought it closer to the communities that it serves. However, the FRA needs to do much more to evaluate systematically the effectiveness of its full range of CFS initiatives to ensure that they are making optimum use of resources and collectively contributing to objectives set out in the IRMP and associated corporate plans. Many of the CFS initiatives pre-date the concept of IRMP and have not been evaluated for some years if at all.
63. Overall, there are early indications that the work undertaken through IRMP is starting to have a positive impact. Since the implementation of IRMP the number of accidental dwelling fires has decreased from 13.1 per 10,000 population in 2003/04 to 11.6 in 2005/06<sup>3</sup>. The number of incidents resulting in casualties has also decreased from 2.7 per 10,000 population in 2003/04 to 2.4 in 2005/06<sup>4</sup>.
64. In October 2006, Part 3 of the Fire Scotland Act brought in new responsibilities and workloads relating to fire risk. The new legislation puts a statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of people in their workplaces or other non-domestic premises (such as residential care homes or houses of multiple occupation) in the event of a fire for the owners or managers of relevant properties. Fire and Rescue Authorities are responsible for enforcing the new legislation and ensuring owners are adequately fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. This has implications both in knowing which premises within their area are subject to new legislation and in establishing a new inspection framework.
65. One of the challenges has been to forecast accurately the workload implications, as they will have new responsibilities for an estimated 100,000 buildings. A study conducted by the FRA earlier in the year identified that an additional 22 full time staff would be required to meet the workload demands. However the Scottish Executive has now started to produce more detailed guidance and these figures have had to be revised. The FRA recognises that there will be staffing implications and is currently considering a range of flexible working options, such as the move from a nine day fortnight to a five day week.

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<sup>3</sup> Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicator

<sup>4</sup> Accounts Commission Statutory Performance Indicator

## **Effectiveness of partnership working**

66. Partnership working is strong in the FRA. At a strategic level, the FRA has put in place the necessary framework to support and facilitate local partnership working by moving to a geographical command structure which is closely aligned to the local authority boundaries. Station managers have been given the autonomy to foster local partnerships and make best use of their resources. The FRA is actively working with all 12 community planning partnerships in a wide range of areas including anti-social behaviour, alcohol misuse, community safety and flytipping. The FRA's commitment to community planning is further evident through the creation of a new Community Planning Officer post, with the role of co-ordinating activities across all areas.
67. The FRA has worked hard to foster partnerships with local schools, providing educational information to children and acting as a positive role model. This has been particularly welcomed in areas where there has previously been a mistrust of the emergency services. Youth engagement is a key issue for the FRA. Their commitment is further evidenced through the secondment of a Strategic Youth Development Officer. There are indications that this work is starting to have an impact. Between 2004/05 and 2005/06, the number of deliberate fires decreased from 3334 to 3176, an overall improvement of 5%.
68. The FRA uses partnerships to tackle shared aims and build the capacity to deliver local solutions. For example, within East Renfrewshire and East Ayrshire, over the 12 month period between April 2005 and March 2006, anti-social behaviour accounted for 51% (1831) of incidents attended by crews. In recognition of this, the FRA began to work jointly with Strathclyde Police, East Ayrshire Council and East Renfrewshire Council through the Anti-social Behaviour Working Groups to look at ways of addressing this issue. This proactive intervention in conjunction with effective partnership working has already begun to reduce service demand. There has been a 40% reduction in the number of malicious fire alarms during the period April-August in 2005 and in 2006.
69. There is active sharing of data between partners and the FRA is proactive in exploring new sources. Information on the FRA's activities and performance geared to partners' needs is communicated on a regular basis. For example, through community safety forums, the FRA shares information on malicious fire alarms and receives relevant information from other key stakeholder such as local authorities.
70. Whilst commitment to partnership working is clear, the FRA is yet to develop a strategic approach. The FRA has not put in place measures to enable it to monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of partnership working. Without this evaluation, the FRA is not in a position to fully understand whether its partnership work is contributing effectively to the achievement of objectives. The FRA is aware of these issues and is developing ways to improve its approach which will identify clear success criteria and evaluation methods.

# Part 3: Financial management

## Key findings

- The main financial pressures faced by the FRA are the end of transitional funding and the increasing cost of pension payments. Although it holds the maximum reserves permitted under the Police and Fire Services (Scotland) Act 2001, plans are already in place to use the majority of these to absorb transitional funding. In future years, the FRA will need to ensure that it balances the pressure to restrict rises in constituent authority contribution levels with the need to hold a sufficient level of reserves to deal with emergencies.
- The revenue budget setting process is well managed and operates within an overarching corporate planning framework. Budgets are delegated to appropriate levels and sound budget monitoring procedures are in place.
- There is potential for greater integration between the corporate planning framework and budget setting processes, particularly in relation to capital expenditure.
- A corporate asset management plan requires to be developed to combine the two asset management systems currently in operation. This would enable the FRA to demonstrate best value in the use of the Board's assets and that spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

## Financial position

71. Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Board's net expenditure in 2005/06 was £134.244 million which equates to £60.86 per head of population. This is near the Scottish average of £59.31.
72. In 2005/06, net expenditure was funded by requisitions from the twelve constituent authorities equal to their GAE allocation (£133.892 million) and from reserves (£0.352 million). The percentage share borne by each of the constituent authorities is as follows:

Argyll & Bute Council	3.91%
East Ayrshire Council	4.77%
East Dunbartonshire Council	4.03%
East Renfrewshire Council	2.81%
Glasgow City Council	33.47%
Inverclyde Council	5.05%
North Ayrshire Council	6.49%
North Lanarkshire Council	10.79%
Renfrewshire Council	6.83%
South Ayrshire Council	4.79%
South Lanarkshire Council	10.56%
West Dunbartonshire Council	6.50%

73. The level of income generation in the FRA is minimal, excluding pension contributions from firefighters, amounting to 1.4% in 2005/06. Income is generated through the provision of training to outside agencies and from hiring conference facilities to other organisations. Although some additional income has also been accessed from other sources, including community regeneration funding and funding streams linked to the local community planning partnership, the FRA acknowledges the need to develop a finance procedure in relation to external funding.
74. Overall, the FRA holds the maximum reserves permitted under the Police and Fire Services (Scotland) Act 2001. The FRA holds a general fund reserve as a contingency for unexpected events or emergencies. As at 31 March 2006, this reserve totalled £7.811 million, of which £4.691 million has been earmarked to fund the future cost of fire pension entitlements accruing to those officers eligible to retire at 31 March 2006 but who have elected to remain in service. The remaining balance of £3.120 million represents 2% of the FRA's gross expenditure in 2005/06.
75. Other reserves are also held for specific purposes including for funding capital (£1.752 million) and repairs and maintenance (£1.206 million) expenditure. As at 31 March 2006, these other reserves totalled £3.467 million.

## **Financial pressures**

76. The main financial pressures for the FRA are the end of transitional funding and the rising costs of pension payments to retired firefighters. Other cost pressures identified by the FRA include the revenue implications of increased capital expenditure, costs associated with the ongoing development of IPDS and IRMP, and the impact of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.
77. The FRA was allocated £13.154 million of transitional funding for the financial period 2003/04 to 2007/08. In common with other FRAs, this has not been treated as a separate funding stream but has instead been added to the other resources available in setting annual budgets.
78. Efficiency savings are already being identified. For example, the 2006/07 budget includes a reduction of 36 posts from Road Rescue Units (RRUs) and other amendments to service delivery as outlined in the IRMP, resulting in cash savings of £1.149 million in the revenue budget. A number of options were also identified as a result of the recent review of the structure of the FRA including the possible re-deployment of a maximum of 108 posts over a 2-3 year period.

79. The FRA accepts, however, that reserves will have to be used to assist in the absorption of transitional funding. The FRA expects to use £1 million of reserves in 2006/07 and £3 million in 2007/08 to ensure that priorities are delivered. This will reduce total reserves to £2.587 million by 31 March 2008, excluding amounts set aside to fund the future cost of fire pension entitlements accruing to those officers eligible to retire but who have elected to remain in service. In future years, the FRA will need to consider how to balance the pressure to restrict rises in constituent authority contribution levels with the need to hold a sufficient level of reserves to deal with emergencies.
80. The firefighters' pension scheme is administered by the FRA. It is unfunded and therefore has no assets to be valued. The cost of existing pensions is met from serving firefighters' contributions and contributions from constituent authorities, through the revenue budget. At 31 March 2006 the present value of scheme liabilities was £919 million. The increasing cost of maturing pension liabilities is in danger of outstripping the operational cost of service provision, and this situation will worsen over the next few years as the large number of firefighters who joined the service in the late 1970's approach retirement. Firefighter pension liabilities are an increasing financial risk for all FRAs and the Scottish Executive is currently reviewing a number of different options for funding.

## **Budget setting and monitoring**

81. The revenue budget setting process is well managed and operates within an overarching corporate planning framework which aligns planning, development and service delivery with the long term strategic aims. The 2006/07 revenue budget strategy outlines the proposed principles to be adopted during the process together with a timetable for completion. Although the FRA does not use zero based budgeting, these principles include no across the board inflationary increase to be applied and pay awards to be budgeted using agreed settlements for both uniformed and non-uniformed staff.
82. There are clear lines of accountability for financial matters. The Financial Regulations, as allowed for within the scheme of delegation give authority to the CO to incur all expenditure for which the Board has set a budget. In addition, a devolved budget policy has been approved whereby revenue budgets are devolved to fire stations level unless there is a specific reason why this should not be the case. Certain budgets, for example insurance, firefighters' pensions and capital charges, are corporate budgets and these budgets are retained centrally. The capital budget is devolved to managers within key spending departments such as fleet services and property.

83. Sound budget monitoring arrangements are in place, with financial monitoring reports being presented to the CMT and CST in line with financial monitoring periods and meeting cycles. Reports are provided to devolved budget holders on a four weekly basis comparing actual expenditure plus commitments with budget to date, and budget holders are required to submit regular written explanations for significant variances within their devolved budgets. The Board meets every second month and is furnished with monitoring reports in relation to capital and revenue expenditure.
84. Training was provided to station managers ahead of taking up their new responsibilities and regular support staff training programmes are in place. Additionally, devolved budget holders have a clearly defined support organisation including a named accountant at headquarters from whom they can seek assistance. There is, however, a need to embed financial management training within all regular training programmes for staff.
85. Internal audit plays a key role in the FRA's governance arrangements, providing an independent appraisal service to management by reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the internal control system. The Board's internal audit service is provided by South Lanarkshire Council under a Service Level Agreement. The Risk and Audit manager concluded that *'reasonable assurance can be placed on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Board's internal control systems in the year to 31 March 2006'*.

## Procurement

86. The FRA recognises the value of procurement in delivering real benefits and in August 2004 introduced a corporate procurement strategy, and action plan for future development, covering the period 2004-2007. The aim of this strategy is to set a clear framework for procurement which reflects the corporate objectives and values, provides a framework for best value and which stands alongside the standing orders relating to contracts and financial regulations. The strategy and action plan require to be reviewed and updated prior to March 2007.
87. There is evidence of collaborative buying through organisations such as the Authorities Buying Consortium (ABC), and the utilisation of collaborative contracts via the office of Government Commerce.

## Capital planning and asset management

88. Capital expenditure totalled £10.979 million in 2005/06 and was funded by Scottish Executive capital grant of £8.351 million, revenue of £2.051 million, reserves of £0.5 million and other capital contributions totalling £0.077 million.

89. The capital planning process fits into the Corporate Planning Framework and involves inviting the ACOs to submit proposals for their activities over the next 3 financial years. These proposals are then considered by the CMT before submission to the Budget Scrutiny Forum and then to the Board for approval. However, in this first year of the development of the budget using the corporate planning framework, the capital programme had already been agreed in principle by CMT. The FRA acknowledges that in future years, improvements will be required to ensure better integration of capital planning within the Corporate Planning Framework and a clearer trail of decision making.
90. As at 31 March 2006, the FRA had assets totalling £162.4 million and borrowing of £51.48 million to fund these. During 2005/06, the FRA assumed direct responsibility for all debt and treasury management activities from South Lanarkshire Council.
91. In April 2006, the Board approved its Treasury Management Strategy for 2006-2009, capital programme for 2006-07 and outline capital programmes for 2007/08 and 2008/09. Approximately £9 million of these programmes will be funded through prudential borrowing.
92. The FRA has yet to develop a corporate asset management plan to demonstrate best value in the use of the Board's assets and that spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. There are currently two asset management systems in operation; the Tranman system for vehicle assets and the GVA system for property assets. A vehicle replacement programme is in place based on information held in the vehicle asset register, and the capital programme is informed by information held in the property asset register including details of the age and condition of buildings, and requirements relating to health and safety, Disability Discrimination Act and other legislation. Other asset related initiatives identified through IRMP are also built into the capital programme.

# Part 4: Workforce management

## Key findings

- The FRA has a well developed understanding of the people and skills it needs to deliver its priorities and this is articulated in the 2005-2007 Personnel and Development Strategy. An enhanced IT infrastructure would allow performance information to be captured and used more effectively.
- Training and development is effectively tailored to the needs of the FRA. The approach to IPDS is robust, underpinned by a clear implementation plan and a well-resourced team. There are also good training and development opportunities for non-uniformed staff. Training will be enhanced through the development of the Technical Rescue School which will deliver a range of specialist skills to uniformed personnel. The FRA needs to ensure that the training needs of retained and volunteer staff (who encompass 24% of the workforce) are met effectively.
- The FRA values the contribution of staff and is developing a flexible benefits scheme. A Retired Firefighters Association has also been established and the FRA is planning to apply for Investors in People (IiP) accreditation.
- The current workforce does not reflect the diversity of the communities it serves, although the FRA is demonstrating a strong commitment to the equality and diversity agenda. The FRA needs to do more to evaluate the effectiveness of positive action recruitment events and radio and media advertising campaigns to ensure that they have the desired impact and provide value for money.

## Workforce planning

93. The Human Resources (HR) Directorate encompasses the following functions—Personnel, Employee Development, Fairness and Equality and Employee Health and Welfare. The appointment of an experienced HR professional as a non-uniformed ACO to manage the Directorate in June 2004 was an impetus for change and has led to the development of a skilled, professional and strategic HR function, which can demonstrate a clear record of achievement over the last 12 month period.
94. There is a robust Personnel and Development strategy, underpinned by clear action plans and a suite of employment policies. The strategy, which covers the period 2005-2007, provides a clear strategic direction for the Personnel Directorate and is designed to meet the organisational needs identified in both the IRMP and corporate priorities.
95. The business framework within which the Directorate operates is well managed and organised. The strategy provides the framework and functional action plans have been developed aimed at driving the

strategy forward and managing the timetable and performance. These action plans are reviewed on a monthly basis. This creates a 'golden thread' that runs throughout all activities.

96. This framework is complemented by good monitoring arrangements. At a strategic level, this is managed through the Employee and Equality Forum, which is chaired by the Convenor and comprises 15 members including the two Vice Convenors. The remit of this committee is to develop and monitor the Board's policies and strategies on the full range of employee issues including maximising attendance, HR, Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity. The Forum receives six monthly updates on the FRA's progress across all these issues. These robust monitoring arrangements will provide members with an assurance that the strategy and framework is being implemented appropriately.
97. Good progress has been made in implementing the Personnel and Development strategy. A number of key policies have been introduced, for example on discipline, grievance and consultation, whilst enhancements have been made to the existing diversity policy and procedures. Other achievements include a local single status agreement and a capital commitment to take forward the FRA's Development Centres.
98. Whilst the strategy is being successfully implemented, one area of weaknesses relates to the capture and recording of performance information. An essential element of a successful and effective Personnel and Development function is a comprehensive and integrated IT application. The FRA recognises this and is actively pursuing this issue and exploring ways to obtain a suitable computerised system, which would harmonise with the existing employee-related systems such as payroll. This is a necessary development to improve the availability of key information to managers and support continuous improvement.
99. There is evidence that the FRA is addressing sickness absence. Historically, performance in this area has been comparatively poor. The Accounts Commission statutory performance indicators (SPIs) show that the percentage of rider shifts lost due to sickness during the year has consistently been the highest of the eight FRA's in recent years, at 8.1% in 2003/04 (Scotland: 7%), 8.0% in 2004/05 (Scotland: 7.4%) and 7.0% in 2005/06 (Scotland 6.4%).
100. There are however clear signs of improvement. For example, in the quarter period April-June 2004, sickness absence amongst uniformed personnel was 7.84%, but in the same period in 2006, it was 5.97%. The comparable figures for support staff are 7.38% in 2004 and 5.22% in 2006. This 2% overall decrease can be attributed to the introduction of the attendance management policy in November 2005, supported by a computerised information system which provides regular and detailed information to line managers. Continuing to manage sickness absence will offer real benefits to the FRA, as a reduction of 1% equates to £0.9m in financial terms. The emphasis must remain on sustaining improvement in attendance.

## **Support and development of staff**

101. Training and development is effectively tailored to the needs of the organisation and this position will be strengthened by the recent appointment of an Organisational Development Manager whose role will focus on the continuing link between development and organisation needs. IPDS continues to be developed in line with the national direction and is covered within both the Personnel and Development Strategy and the IRMP.
102. Most staff are well informed about the IPDS system, although there are concerns from wholetime personnel about the bureaucracy associated with the system and the amount of paper work involved. PDRpro has recently been introduced within the wholetime sector and is being used for role development, but the effectiveness of this cannot yet be gauged. A well resourced implementation team is ensuring that IPDS milestones in the action plan are being met, the most recent of these being the launch of the firefighter development programme in September. This should assist the FRA in ensuring that it has the people and skills it needs to deliver its plans.
103. The provision of facilities for training and development of retained and volunteer firefighters is less well advanced than for wholetime personnel. The pattern of station duties makes it hard for retained crews to find enough time for all the training they should undertake whether for conventional firefighting duties or new roles in delivering community safety. There are however positive developments ongoing in this area, as the Wide Area Network (WAN) is expanded and the rollout of PDRpro continues. The WAN development will provide staff with the opportunity to access a range of information and training packages from both the intranet and internet. Overall however, the FRA needs to be mindful of the relative needs of these important staff groups who encompass 24% of the workforce.
104. The FRA has undertaken a review of training and development provision to realign delivery with the identified needs to the workforce, with a view to providing realistic training. The outcome of this exercise has led to the approval for a Technical Rescue Training Centre to be developed. The aim of this centre is to deliver a diverse range of technical skills to uniformed personnel, with courses in advanced RTCs, Trauma Management and Urban Search and Rescue.
105. The FRA has successfully completed the transition from rank to role across wholetime, retained and control staff. The FRA used this opportunity to review its staffing arrangements within Community Safety. A career grade post of watch manager was created. Less experienced employees were placed on the lower 'A' grade, but supported by a development plan so in time would have the necessary skills and experience to apply for the higher 'B' graded post. There are clear benefits to both the individual and the FRA from this arrangement. From an individual's perspective it offers the opportunity for career development and from the FRA's perspective it will attract a broader range of postholders and skills to the CFS Directorate.

106. The FRA has a well managed and organised training department, part of which is responsible for non-operational training. This department delivers a significant amount of in-house courses (42 in total) and is constantly assessing and developing what it is trying to achieve through checking training plans, corporate priorities and being involved in a wide range of national forums. The FRA is attempting to integrate the key priorities of the firefighter development programme with current and future courses.
107. Plans for the future are innovative and include achieving SVQ accreditation for their own in-house courses which would be a benefit not only for the FRA staff but for partner organisations, such as the constituent local authorities, who may be in a position to take advantage of the FRA's training provision. Significant work has been undertaken to plan for the future development of both operational and non-operational staff within the FRA with a clear aim of meeting the vision articulated in the Personnel and Development Strategy which is *“to be an employer of first choice”*.
108. Other forms of development are also available to staff such as job shadowing with councils. Non-uniformed staff are encouraged to undertake management training courses and courses which may be held at the Scottish Fire Service College to assist them in their development in roles, such as the new established post of Station Manager. Staff are also encouraged to look at further education opportunities and this is well supported in terms of funding for the participant, with the FRA normally making a 75% contribution to the course fees.
109. The FRA demonstrates that it values the contribution its staff makes. An employee benefits scheme, which will offer staff a tailored package of benefits on a wide range of lifestyle products (e.g. Bikes 4 Work, discounts on holidays and flights in Europe) has been introduced. This scheme helps the FRA to recognise the diverse needs and values of the workforce by providing a choice of benefit options to employees and assists them in becoming a more attractive employer. Secondly, a Retired Employees Association has been established which produces its own monthly magazine —*“Off the Run”*. The Board have recently agreed that the FRA should apply for Investors in People (IIP) and a target date for accreditation has been set for December 2007.

## Flexible working

110. The FRA recognises the benefits of flexible working and have put in place a range of policies to ensure the promotion of family friendly arrangements and to maximise the efficiency of their most important resource. These include flexitime, overtime, job share and career break policies.
111. One of the weaknesses with the current arrangements is that there is no single overarching flexible working policy. Instead numerous individual policies exist of all which are at different stages in their life cycle (i.e. some require review and some have just been developed). Bringing these individual policies together collectively into one umbrella policy would ensure the consistent application of flexible working across the whole FRA.

## **Equality and diversity**

112. The FRA is demonstrating a strong commitment to diversity, fairness and equality in the workplace articulated through the Personnel and Development Strategy and then distilled into annual action plans. There is a dedicated diversity team whose work supports the associated equality objectives.
113. There are clear monitoring arrangements in place which are managed through the Employee and Equality Forum which receives six monthly updates on the FRA's progression in delivering improved Equality and Diversity. The FRA has made steady progress in implementing the diversity action plan over the last 18 month period. All policies and procedures have been Equality Impact Assessed and a revised Race Equality Scheme (RES) has been drawn up to cover the period 2006-2009. The FRA has also submitted an application to join Stonewall's Diversity Champion Scotland Programme. The programme has been established to assist employers in the recruitment and retention of individuals from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities.
114. A recent focus for the diversity team has been the production of a Diversity strategy. This strategy, underpinned by an action plan, supports the mainstreaming of Equality and Diversity within the workplace. The Equal Opportunities Policy is currently being updated as a result of legislative change and a shift in emphasis to diversity models of delivering the equalities agenda. The revised Equalities Opportunities Policy is scheduled to be submitted to the Board by December 2006. The implementation of these policies will support and complement the travel of direction already outlined in the Personnel and Development Strategy and underlines the FRA's on-going commitment to this agenda.
115. To date, Equality and Diversity training has not been carried out systematically throughout the FRA. This was confirmed in interviews with operational personnel. However, the FRA recognises this and has committed the sum of £100,000 to provide all staff with a comprehensive Equality and Diversity training programme. This must be a priority for the FRA, as failure to address the training needs of all staff may lead to inequality and unfairness in the workplace.
116. At the time of the audit, plans were already well advanced to respond to the Employment Equality (Age) regulations which were effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006. The FRA is also leading a working party from CFOA (S) Equalities Business Stream group to develop a best practice model for an Equalities scheme, in advance of legislative changes which will come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 (Disability) and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 (Gender).
117. Steps continue to be taken to address the diversity of the workforce. The FRA attended and participated in a number of positive action events during 2005 and 2006, including EMPOWER and Job Opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities. It has also been creative in the use of the media as a targeted advertising vehicle and have run radio adverts on Radio Ramadan and Awaz in addition to providing sponsorship for the UK Asian Football Championships. More work is

required to monitor the effectiveness of positive action recruitment events and specific media and radio advertising campaigns to ensure that they are having an impact and providing value for money.

118. Despite this sound approach to diversity, the workforce does not yet reflect the diversity of the community it serves. For example, women currently represent 3% of the uniformed workforce, whilst BME staff represent only 0.3% of the entire workforce. In recognising this issue, the FRA has set challenging targets for the future assuming that women will represent 10% of the uniformed workforce by 2010 and 15% by 2015.
119. Overall, the FRA continues to make good progress in implementing this challenging agenda which is being driven forward by the Diversity team. Interviews with both uniformed and non-uniformed staff confirmed both an awareness of the relevant policies relating to discipline and grievance and identification that key personnel such as Employee Relations Officers, Fairness and Equality Advisors and Welfare Officers were available and willing to provide guidance and support if required.

# Part 5: Management of operational business

## Key findings

- The FRA is committed to providing and enhancing the delivery of a high quality intervention service and this is reflected in the objectives within its 2006/07 IRMP action plan.
- A range of policies such as Call Challenging, Overtime and Wholetime working as Retained have been implemented, to ensure greater flexibility and more efficient use of resources. There are early indications that these are having a positive impact. The FRA also makes good use of Best Value Reviews.
- The FRA is not demonstrating optimum efficiency in its invention work, and has made slow progress in implementing an Automatic Fire Alarm Policy, which is a key issue, given that 47% of the incidents attended during 2005/06 related to false alarms.
- Health and Safety is well managed and organised. The FRA is proactively working to address the challenges associated with attacks on firefighters.

## Operational management

120. The FRA is committed to providing and enhancing the delivery of a high quality intervention service. This is clearly demonstrated through its 2006/07 IRMP Action Plan and the 2015 Vision, which sets a number of clear targets and objectives for intervention. This year's IRMP includes the following objectives:

- To improve the effectiveness of emergency intervention services including Rapid Response Units.
- To ensure that the FRA has an appropriate and sufficient emergency response to life critical water based incidents.
- To maintain a robust system of public protection in the event of a catastrophic incident affecting the FRA's region and the extended community in Scotland.
- To establish a central staffing office to manage all aspects of crewing appliances, management of leave and other issues that impact on resource availability.

121. In developing its IRMP the FRA has maintained a focus on the intervention role that it plays and has used the opportunity of the modernisation agenda presented to enhance and develop the rescue side

of its service provision. There are obvious signs of this commitment operationally. This year has seen a major extension of the FRA's lifesaving role, taking responsibility for water rescue on the River Clyde between the Weir at Glasgow Green and the Erskine Bridge. This new rapid response service employs fast and manoeuvrable launches and jet skis. The water rescue and other new developments, such as the introduction of state of the art fire engines and the Aerial Rescue Pump (ARP) reflect the determination of the FRA to improve and protect the safety of the communities it serves.

122. The FRA has successfully introduced a range of policies to make the most efficient use of resources. A call challenging policy was formally introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, following a 3 month trial. The FRA have previously used call challenging methods but the policy builds on these and brings them together into one strategy. The overall aim of the policy is to reduce the number of calls or the number of appliances attending malicious calls. There are early indications that this policy is having a positive impact. In April 2006, 235 calls were challenged whilst in August, 145 calls were challenged. This represents a 37% improvement.
123. A revised overtime policy was introduced in May 2006 to ensure that all wholetime appliances are available at all times. To support the implementation of this policy, Fire Control produce reports on a daily basis highlighting the level of availability of appliances, whilst station managers have devolved overtime budgets to allow them to make the most effective use the resources available. A wholetime/retained policy has also been introduced to reflect the reality that it can be difficult to recruit for retained posts and that existing employees can provide an experienced pool of resources. The uptake of this policy has been very limited to date and the FRA needs to do more to highlight the benefits that it can offer to both individuals and watches.
124. The FRA continues to maintain crewing levels to a minimum of five on all pumping appliances, the result of a risk assessment carried out in 1989. However, the removal of the previous national standards of fire cover and the introduction of new vehicles such as the Rescue Pump and the ARP require that this risk assessment is re-visited. The FRA has plans to carry out a further risk assessment as part of its IRMP commitment to have a "safer workforce", early in 2007. Changes to this arrangement could release significant resources for community safety and preventative work.
125. Slow progress has also been made in the introduction of an Automatic Fire Alarm Policy (AFA) with the FRA choosing instead to expand a pilot which is risk assessed and targets the worst offenders. In 2005/06, false alarms accounted for 47% (26,171) of the 55,144 incidents that the FRA attended. This figure has remained fairly static from 2004/05 when the FRA responded to 26,212 false alarms. Given the significant workload generated by these false alarms, there is clearly scope for more savings through reduced turnout to AFAs.
126. Since the national standards of fire cover were removed the FRA has continued to monitor operational response times for its own business planning purposes. It reports average response times in urban

rural areas (i.e. those relating to wholetime stations and urban retained stations) and in rural areas (i.e. for rural retained and volunteer stations).

127. The FRA makes use of Best Value Reviews to ensure that the correct balance between cost and quality has been achieved. Fleet Services and Occupational Health have both been subject to Best Value Reviews in recent years. The recommendations of the latter review are currently being implemented and include collaborating with Strathclyde Police to share the delivery of an occupational health service. A review of legal service is currently underway which will include an assessment of the service's competitiveness in comparison with other public and private sector organisations.
128. Emergency planning is strong both in terms of building resilience with other emergency services and responding flexibly to emerging challenges and threats. The FRA is a member of the Strathclyde Emergencies Co-ordination group, whose membership includes local authorities, health boards and public utilities.
129. The FRA has a robust approach to Health and Safety which is seen as an integral responsibility for all staff. The FRA has produced a wide range of policies and guidance to ensure that it meets its obligations in terms of compliance with major legislation that impacts on service delivery. The FRA has demonstrated their commitment to Health and Safety through sustained investment in training and development. Between 2003-2006, 158 and 106 members of staff respectively completed the IOSH and NEBOSH courses whilst 8 individuals completed a diploma in Health and Safety at Glasgow Caledonian University. This investment has provided the FRA with competent Health and Safety Advisors who will not only support them in meeting their statutory obligations but develop a working environment that is safe for all personnel.
130. There is evidence to suggest that the on-going commitment to Health and Safety is having an impact. Figures reported to RIDDOR are starting to show a downward trend—361 accidents were reported in 2004/05 and by 2005/06 this had decreased to 309, an improvement of 14%.
131. A major challenge for the FRA is responding to the level of attacks on firefighters. There have been a total of 619 reported incidents of attacks on firefighters since 2001. Of these 98% are attacks on operational fire crews and 48% are repeat attacks. This has resulted in appliances being taken “off the run”, personnel being on sick leave and ultimately, in some cases, resigning or retiring due to ill health.
132. The FRA is working hard to address this issue and has identified that the common perpetrators of attacks on firefighters are youths in the 12-18 age group. Each operational area is introducing initiatives (e.g. Fire Reach Project, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and media campaigns) relative to the level and type of risk that their personnel are reporting. The FRA is also considering introducing DNA collection kits, a simple but effective method of collecting samples from an employee who has been spat on, which can be positively matched to an offenders DNA. The FRA has set ambitious

targets in this area, which are outlined in the 2015 Vision, aiming to reduce attacks on fire crews by 45% by 2015.

133. A further challenge for the FRA is the increasing number of open water hydrants that it responds to as a result of vandalism. In the period April-July 2006, the FRA attended 2,133 open hydrants, the comparable figure for the same period in 2005 was 2,061. This represents a 4% increase. The FRA is clearly aware of this issue and a number of operational areas have put in place initiatives both in the community and in schools, working in partnership with Strathclyde Police and Scottish Water.

## **Collaborative working**

134. Through the CFOA (S) forums, the FRA is working with other fire and rescue services across Scotland taking forward various initiatives across each of the business portfolios. The FRA benefits from the unique position that all members of the CMT chair at least one national committee. This means that the FRA is driving a significant amount of the CFOA (S) agenda and has a clear overview of the national picture at all times. It also demonstrates the FRAs commitment to working collaboratively with the other services across Scotland.

135. The FRA can demonstrate numerous examples of collaborative working. For example, the FRA has worked collaboratively with a number of other FRAs and emergency services in the planning and execution of counter terrorism exercises. The most recent of these was a three day event in April which involved a mass decontamination exercise involving 300 casualties. Strathclyde organised this and worked collaboratively with Lothian and Borders and Central Scotland in providing a joint response on site, whilst Tayside and Grampian participated at a remote venue to exercise a national response. Within the field of community safety, recent work undertaken with Lothian and Borders and Dumfries and Galloway has supported the development of fire investigation officers within the three services.

136. The FRA also plays an active and effective role in a number of the other regional and national forums. The FRA work collaboratively with Scottish Water and local authorities to ensure adequate water supplies remain available and accessible for emergency use and are participating in an efficient government bid in collaboration with a number of local authorities across Scotland, to create a Centre of Procurement Excellence.

137. One of the major benefits of the size of the FRA is its ability to enjoy economies of scale. These economies are applied across a number of areas such as the provision of training, personnel to support specialist functions and the purchasing of equipment. It recognises this unique position in Scotland and uses it to the benefit of other stakeholders, by both taking the lead and offering the necessary resources and infrastructure to support effective collaborative working.

# Part 6: Communications

## Key findings

- There is currently no communications strategy in place, however, the FRA has embarked on a major review of communications. A lack of awareness amongst staff about this important initiative could undermine its success. The FRA is aware of these concerns and has started to put in place a number of initiatives such as briefings and open meetings, to support the implementation of the new strategy.
- The new area structure has helped improve communications both internally and externally. It has brought the FRA closer to the communities it serves.
- External communications are working well and this is assisted by a good relationship with the media. The FRA is improving its approach to Public Performance Reporting.
- The FRA has a clear understanding of its IT requirements and this has been strengthened through a recent review of ICT provision across the service, but prioritisation remains a challenge.

## Internal communication

138. Improving communications has been identified as one of the seven corporate priorities in both the 2006/07 IRMP action plan and 2015 Vision. The FRA recognises that communicating effectively with 3620 personnel based at over 115 different locations offers real challenges. Previous reports by HMFSIS, SFR Opinion Research and the CST Planning Day in 2005 have all identified weaknesses in earlier communications strategies and highlighted this as a key priority for the authority.
139. Set against this backdrop and given that new organisational structures have begun to become embedded, the FRA has embarked on a major review of communications, with the aim of developing a communications strategy by June 2007. This is an extensive piece of work, which will include broad-ranging consultation with both internal and external stakeholders, and evaluating the effectiveness of existing communication tools. At this juncture, work is at the development stage so it is not possible to comment on its effectiveness.
140. While the corporate communications strategy is a major piece of work for the future, the FRA continues to use a wide range of communication techniques and tools to inform staff of developments within the organisation. These include the Bulletin newsletter, core briefings, e-mails and intranet postings. A rolling programme of visits by the CO is on-going and to date approximately 90% of personnel within the FRA have attended one or more of these presentations within the last 18 month period. Feedback from both uniformed and non-uniformed staff reported that they found these visits to be both interesting and informative.

141. The new area structure has played an important role in improving internal communications providing clear communication channels. Station and Area Managers are the key postholders in this regard.
142. Overall, there is a general feeling amongst staff that communications have improved in recent years. However, interviews with staff identified a general lack of awareness and understanding of the on-going communications review. The FRA is aware of these concerns and has started to put in place a number of initiatives such as briefings and open meetings, to ensure the successful implementation of the future strategy.

## **External communication**

143. Communication and engagement with local communities is working well. It is supported by the new area structure which has succeeded in bringing the FRA closer to the communities it serves. Participating in local community planning provides the FRA with greater opportunities to communicate and consult more effectively with local communities, particularly with hard to reach groups as they can now be more easily identified and targeted.
144. The FRA consulted widely when developing its IRMP and acknowledges that some approaches to consultation such as the use of public meetings were both poorly attended and had a limited impact. The FRA intends to refine its communication approaches in the future, based on experience, and target these more effectively.
145. The FRA has a good relationship with the media. The media liaison officers play an integral role in developing links with television, radio and national press to report on corporate initiative. The FRA recognises the need to foster good links with the media, as an important vehicle for delivering their community safety message to the wider community.
146. At the time of the audit, the FRA was the subject of a six-part television documentary “Firefighters”. A benefit of this programme was raising awareness of the work of the FRA. Since the series commenced, the public has shown greater interest in the work of the FRA, resulting in a 35% increase in visits to their website. The FRA should consider ways to capitalise on this unique opportunity through using its website to greater effect in communicating its community safety messages.
147. The FRA has recently benefited from participating in the consultation of communities at a local level through surveys undertaken by community planning partnerships e.g. the Ayrshire Residents Survey and the South Ayrshire, Argyll & Bute and West Dunbartonshire Citizens Panel. The results of these surveys have confirmed the FRA’s approach to CFS is appropriate but has also highlighted areas which require attention and they are looking at ways to address these. The FRA has also completed a survey of their 12 local authorities to gauge the impact of the new organisational structure one year on.

148. Section 13 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003, imposes a duty on each local authorities police and fire services to make arrangements for reporting to the public on the outcomes of their performance, known as public performance reporting (PPR). The FRA continues to develop its approach to PPR as a means of reporting meaningful performance information to both communities and stakeholders. The PPR is currently being developed as an integral part of the FRA's performance management framework. It is planned in the future to report on progress against the new PI's to measure improvements against the 2015 Vision. This will assist the FRA in communicating to the public its wider goals and vision in a more meaningful way.

## **Information Technology (IT)**

149. The FRA recognises the important role that IT plays in supporting the delivery of the objectives outlined in the IRMP and 2015 vision. Against this backdrop, in March 2006, the FRA commissioned a review of the existing IT infrastructure to examine whether it was effectively supporting its requirements, in particular the expanded prevention role. The review identified a number of important recommendations including the need for an IT strategy and:

- An IT solution for improved information collection, analysis and reporting, both for internal and external use
- Computerising paper forms and data capture to minimise re-entering of data and for easy information retrieval
- An IT solution which enables users to access all systems through a simple interface, thus minimising the need to learn about different software and enhancing the Corporate 'brand'.

For the first stage of implementation, the consultants recommended the FRA hires external expertise as the IT department does not currently have the resources required to implement the recommendations.

150. In parallel to this an IT strategy is being developed. This is essential to provide a framework through which the business needs of the FRA can be met and to manage the expectations of staff around the capabilities of IT. The work that has been completed as part of the review will inform this development.

151. There have been a number of positive IT related achievements over the last 12 months, including the development of the Community Safety Toolkit which charts operational activity and permits resources to be targeted more effectively. All wholtime and retained stations have access to the Internet and each member of staff has their own individual e-mail address. PDRPro has also been rolled out to all wholtime stations to support the IPDS framework. Overall, the FRA is fairly effective in using IT in order to capture and distribute data across the service.

152. Clearly there are many challenges for the future as IT plays an integral role in supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities. This has resulted in issues having to be prioritised. The successful introduction of a personal management system to monitor staff absence has been introduced at the expense of the development work needed to support the performance information requirements. An IT strategy will ensure that issues are prioritised according to business needs.

# Part 7. Improvement agenda

153. Scottish fire and rescue authorities are undergoing a period of significant change, underpinned by new legislation and accompanying statutory guidance. Locally, elected members and FRA officers must focus on delivering more targeted and risk-based services, which should be driven by a desire to achieve the highest possible standards.

154. Continuous improvement in public services and local governance lies at the heart of the statutory Best Value and community planning policy framework. This requires a culture where areas in need of improvement are identified and openly discussed, and in which service performance is constructively challenged.

155. The improvement agenda below sets out a number of actions identified through the audit and is intended to assist the FRA in focusing on the areas where it should direct its initial efforts. These areas for improvement are designed to build on the momentum for change that already exists within the FRA and will provide the basis for review and monitoring by Audit Scotland in the Autumn of 2007.

## **Strategic management**

- Review the Joint Board's structural arrangements and put in place a development framework for members (paras 36 & 38).
- Review the arrangements for corporate management and decision-making to ensure there is no duplication and all senior managers are able to contribute to the strategic development of the FRA (para 41).
- Implement plans to ensure there are robust and comprehensive arrangements for performance management (para 45).
- Introduce a formal appraisal system which is aligned with service objectives (para 47).

## **Fire prevention and risk management**

- Promote the sharing of good practice among operational areas (para 58).
- Accelerate the delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits across the region (para 60).
- Assess the impact of community fire safety initiatives in relation to objectives in the IRMP and 2015 Vision (para 62).

- Ensure there are resources in place to meet the requirements under Part 3 Fire (Scotland) Act. (para 64).
- Develop a strategic approach to managing partnerships and make more effective use of a partnership register to assess monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this type of work (para 70).

## **Financial management**

- Improve the identification and monitoring of efficiency savings to ensure there is adequate budgetary provision to deliver the service once transitional funding has ceased (para 78).
- Ensure the reserves strategy enables the FRA to continue to hold sufficient funds to deal with emergencies (para 74 & 79).
- Embed financial management training within regular training programmes for staff (para 84).
- Develop a corporate asset management plan to demonstrate best value in the use of the Board's assets and to ensure that spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable (para 92)

## **Workforce management**

- Develop appropriate IT systems to enable information related to workforce management to be captured systematically and used to improve performance (para 98).
- Ensure that the training needs of retained and volunteer staff are adequately met (para 103).
- Develop a single comprehensive policy for flexible working (para 111).
- Continue work on creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, and evaluate the effectiveness on individual initiatives (para 118).

## **Management of operational business**

- Promote uptake of wholetime/retained policy (para 123).
- Review policies relating to attendance at AFAs and crewing levels to ensure the FRA is delivering an efficient intervention service (paras 124 & 125).

## **Communication**

- Complete the review of communications and develop a communications strategy within the agreed timetable (para 139).

- Continue to develop the approach to public performance reporting to ensure that it covers the full range of performance against the FRA's strategic objectives (para 148).
- Develop an IT strategy to ensure IT developments clearly support and enable the FRA to achieve its strategic objectives (para 150).

# Appendix 1

## Glossary

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