



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

2007/2008


July 2008

Authors: Rob Powell and Lisa Williams

Ref: 623A2008

Joint Risk Assessment

South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority



Building on many areas of improvement identified by the updated Joint Risk Assessment (JRA), South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) needs to address a number of operational and non-operational priorities, particularly managing the financial risks associated with the headquarters move.

Contents

Summary	4
The operational assessment identified a number of strengths but also highlighted risks relating to the provision of operational intelligence.	5
The non-operational assessment identified progress in a number of areas of but the Authority needs to maintain a strong focus on managing opportunities and significant financial risks associated with the move to a new headquarters.	11

Status of this report

This document has been prepared for the internal use of South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority as part of work performed in accordance with statutory functions, the Code of Audit and Inspection Practice and the 'Statement of Responsibilities' issued by the Auditor General for Wales.

No responsibility is taken by the Wales Audit Office (the Auditor General and his staff) and, where applicable, the appointed auditor in relation to any member, director, officer or other employee in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 Code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales (and, where applicable, his appointed auditor) is a relevant third party.

Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to the Wales Audit Office at infoofficer@wao.gov.uk.

Summary

1. The Wales Audit Office delivers the Wales Programme for Improvement (Fire) on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government (Assembly Government) by inspecting the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities. This inspection takes the form of an operational assessment, undertaken by a Peer Assessment Team observed by Wales Audit Office staff, and a non-operational assessment undertaken by Wales Audit Office staff. This process results in a JRA agreed by the Wales Audit Office, Peer Assessment Team and officers of the Fire and Rescue Service. The JRA is updated each year and informs the regulatory work – audit and inspection – undertaken.
2. This report summarises the key issues to have emerged from the updated JRA which we have recently developed with your officers. This updates the JRA which was presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority in July 2007. The work undertaken examined progress made over the past year and was also informed by a thematic operational assessment, which considered the preparedness of Fire and Rescue Services for major disruptive events, with a particular focus on wide scale flooding.
3. The key risks and priorities identified through the JRA process should inform the Authority's annual Improvement Plan and Risk Reduction Action Plan, as well as informing the process of determining audit and inspection work through the agreement of the Regulatory Plan which we will discuss with officers and present to the Authority.
4. Building on many areas of improvement identified by the updated JRA, the Authority needs to address a number of operational and non-operational priorities, particularly managing the financial risks associated with the headquarters move.
5. This report summarises the high-level findings of the JRA and is not exhaustive in listing every risk facing the Authority. The detailed findings are set out in the Risk Assessment Template (RAT) which will be made available to members in electronic format. Members may wish to consult the RAT for further information and detail. The RAT categorises the inherent risk and level of residual risk in each area of the WPI framework, using high/medium and low categorisations of risk which were discussed and agreed with senior officers.
6. The Wales Audit Office will continue to update the JRA annually, and will work with officers and members to actively promote improvement. This report is intended to set out some of the key issues for the new Authority in a way that will help Members and officers to deliver their Risk Reduction and Improvement Plans and to improve fire safety in South Wales.

The operational assessment identified a number of strengths but also highlighted risks relating to the provision of operational intelligence.

7. The operational assessment identified a number of strengths and progress, including:
 - The Operational Development and Review Team have provided assurance that operational policy and procedures are being consistently applied and that safe systems of work are maintained. This has contributed to a significant reduction in the total number of injuries to employees since its inception. The service should ensure that the focus of this team is maintained in order to deliver this level of assurance in the future.
 - There is a comprehensive risk identification process that uses many sources of data (e.g. incident statistics, Fire Services Emergency Cover model, local knowledge, National Framework, environmental scans). All risks and priorities are detailed in the Corporate Risk Register (including nominated responsible officers) which is reviewed by senior managers quarterly. The Service has recognised that these risks may also need to be reflected in its Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) (particularly in respect of risks identified in the Gwent and South Wales Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Registers).
 - The Service is a key player with both its Local Resilience Forums and have recognised the need to balance representation within the sub groups. (Action to address this is contained in the Operational Planning Development and Support Business Plan for 2008/2009).
 - The Service has well developed Business Continuity arrangements (HR, ICT, flood, supplies, fuel) and they have begun to test these.
 - The Service has developed a Major Incident Plan with other category 1 responders. This plan is well developed and based on the Civil Contingencies Act model principles. A multi agency response plan developed for the South Wales LRF will form the basis of a similar document for Gwent LRF. The Service is working with other responders to further develop multi agency plans specifically to address flooding risk.
 - The Spate Conditions Policy has recently been reviewed and is robust and embedded throughout the Service including Fire Control (e.g. rotas, key stations identified, crewing changes).
 - The Peer Assessment Team found that the New Dimensions assets are integrated into the Service's mobilising regime and that robust systems exist to ensure that Incident Command is effectively discharged for these type of incidents. The Service is actively engaged with the Term Capability Management (LTCM) agenda and its implications for the New Dimensions programme.

-
8. The Peer Assessment Team found that the Service has a suite of standing operational procedures (SOPs), within a document control system, and the infrastructure to communicate these is robust. Notwithstanding this the Service has identified a number of areas where it feels improvements can be made to strengthen existing operational intelligence processes and maximise the use of new technology. This will focus on further developing the current mobile data to cab arrangements together with revised SOPs and tactical plans.
 9. The JRA update and work on flooding also identified a number of key risks which had either a high or medium level of residual risks which are set out in Exhibit 1

Exhibit 1 – Main risks from the JRA update and Operational Assessment 2008

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Operational preparedness - Standard Operating Practices (SOPs)	The `PAT Team noted that Service has a suite of SOPs in place and these sit within a document control system. The infrastructure for communicating these is robust.' The FRS has identified that further quality control processes on the standard of changes to documents maintenance and compatibility with mobile data technology (MDT) is required.	Potential for operational ineffectiveness/error.	Further collaboration on sharing of intelligence and creation and maintenance of SOPs is to be progressed with other FRS in Wales to achieve a standard methodology and responsiveness.	H/H
Operational preparedness - Operational Tactical Plans	The PAT 2008 noted that 'the Service has developed a suite of tactical plans which are available to front line crews via MDT'. The Service has identified a number of initiatives to further strengthen these. The service has also identified the need to review its 7(2)d policy in order to ensure that operational crews are provided with up to date risk information.	Operational crews not provided with up to date risk information and mitigation measures.	The Operational Planning Development and Support restructure and data management project are in place to deliver improvements based on PRINCE2. Improved internal partnership to ensure risk capture, dissemination and management actions.	H/H

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Operational preparedness – Loss of Life	Recent events involving the loss of life of fire-fighters need to be reviewed and a 'lessons learned' approach adopted, and regard taken to emerging risks from new legislation on Corporate Manslaughter. There is a risk that delays in the publication of lessons learned across the country may expose fire fighters to unnecessary risks.	Risk of loss of life of fire-fighter.	The Operational Development and Review Team (ODART) collects and analyses experiences from incidents, as well as information from debriefs and health and safety to ensure that the Service can learn and, where necessary, initiate changes to improve training, equipment and procedures. This involves monitoring of national events involving major incidents for example Buncefield and Atherstone, and any subsequent investigatory report. This will enable the service to deal with issues and ensure that a "lessons learnt" approach is taken. SWFRS must ensure that it continues to lobby for the faster dissemination of risk critical information across Fire and Rescue Services within the UK.	H/M
Risk analysis – links between RRP and Community Risk Register	SWFRS self assessment (2008) recognises that future RRP should be closer linked to the risks identified within both the Gwent and the South Wales' Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Registers.	Potential failure to ensure that risks identified in the Community Risk Registers are not included (if appropriate) in the RRP and monitored appropriately.	Dedicated Civil Contingencies Team in place with good representation on all Local Resilience Forum working groups. Arrangements in place to co-ordinate actions - regular updates provided to Corporate Continuity Board. – these arrangements should ensure that the RRP is updated with appropriate Community Risk Register information.	M/M

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Risk analysis - Local Resilience Forum – (ensuring balance in representation for the sub-groups)	The 2008 PAT Team noted that there are potential opportunities and challenges presented by the intended engagement with two Local Resilience Fora (and various sub-groups) which cover the Service's statutory area.	Failure to ensure a balanced representation on the LRF subgroups and manage the impact this has on capacity.	Action to address this is contained in the Operational Planning Development and Support Business Plan for 2008/2009.	M/M
Prevention and protection - Legislative Fire Safety	PAT team 2007 noted that recent changes in Legislative Fire Safety have placed a duty upon the Service to review and develop policy to ensure it meets its new responsibility.	Failure to meet legislative requirements.	The Service is working to address this issue and has identified that it needs to consolidate enforcement protocols with housing agencies regarding houses in multiple occupation. There is a need for an improved data system to record its activities (currently evaluating potential options) and the Service are continuing to liaise with Assembly Government regarding new legislative requirements.	M/M
Operational preparedness - Multi-agency plans (Flooding)	The 2008 self assessment recognises that as flooding appears as a high risk element on both Gwent and South Wales Community Risk Registers, (and given the public expectations on SWFRS to respond appropriately to such events), the organisation is looking to further develop multi agency plans to respond to this challenge.	Risk that multi agency plans are not in place to respond to flooding incidents.	A National flood group has been established and recommendations from the Pitt & Knight. Reports will be used to inform the new plans.	M/M

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Operational preparedness – Logistical Preparedness Group	Following national events (such as last year's flooding) SWFRS have recognised the need to consider what arrangements would be needed should such a situation occur within its area (e.g. accommodation for supporting crews from other Services).	Potential risk that SWFRS is unable to host incoming resources in the event of a major incident.	PAT noted:' Arrangements for wide scale deployment into SWFRS will be developed by the recently formed Logistical Preparedness Groups (SWFRS is chairing SW LPG and sits on Gwent LPG) These will establish regional arrangements for major disruptive events i.e. rest centres, strategic holding areas.	M/M
Prevention and protection - Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS)	2007 PAT team noted that the Service would benefit from a review of its existing policy regarding its method of addressing unwanted fire signals (UFS), which is currently in progress'. AFA (automatic fire signal) statistics show a steady increase over recent years (5,223 in 2004/2005, 6,095 in 2006/2007) with some 5 per cent (334) increase between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007. A Policy was agreed by the FRA in 2004 and reviewed as part of the UFS project. Project is now in implementation stage.	Potential risk that resources are not available while crews attend incident that do not exist.	Implementation of risk based response planning to reduce impact of UFS is progressing. Business Plan for 2008-2009 includes focus on driver training and call handling.	M/M

-
10. The priorities for the Authority in the operational area will be to implement the risk reduction measures outlined for those risks which remain high or medium. The Authority's RRP and draft Action Plan (2009/2010) set out a series of actions that will contribute to improvements in these areas.

The non-operational assessment identified progress in a number of areas of but the Authority needs to maintain a strong focus on managing opportunities and significant financial risks associated with the move to the new headquarters

11. The non-operational assessment highlighted a number of areas of progress:
- A process for systematically following up recommendations has been introduced via the Action Database which is a standing agenda item at the Business Continuity Board meetings.
 - Project management arrangements have been strengthened during the year and the Business Continuity Board is updated quarterly. There are plans to use these arrangements to manage the capital programme in the future.
 - Additional resources have been provided for increasing public engagement (including two year fixed contract post).
 - The 'rank to role' exercise has been completed and further work has been undertaken to align whole time and Retained Duty System officers.
12. The non-operational assessment highlighted some priority issues that will need to be addressed to support the delivery of its Risk Reduction and Improvement Plan objectives. The key challenges are:
- Managing the significant and growing financial risks associated with the ongoing move to a new headquarters, in particular the implications of having two headquarters buildings following the withdrawal of the preferred bidder for Llanelly Hall. The Service needs a strategy to manage the disposal of this property (wider economic issues and the volatility of the property market mean that there are key risks to be addressed) and meet the costs of any additional loans and running costs for two headquarters.
 - Resolving any potential capacity issues that may arise from supporting up to 10 Local Service Boards (LSBs).
 - Strengthening arrangements for members to undertake internal scrutiny.
13. Exhibit 2 sets out some of the key non-operational risks which had either a high or medium level of residual risk identified in the JRA.

Exhibit 2 – main risks from the non-operational assessment

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Estates management and New Headquarters Project	The main issue facing the Service is managing the proposed transfer of Fire HQ to new premises and the disposal of the existing building whilst also addressing existing demands of the capital programme (i.e. refurbishments and new developments). Staffing efficiencies attributable to the HQ move.	Changes linked to new HQ.	Project Manager and Building Development Manager are already in post. Project Plan has been produced for the HQ move. A Head of Administrative Systems post has been created to lead the development of the new staffing models and potential efficiencies (at recruitment stage).	H/H
Capacity - Partnerships	There are 10 unitary authorities within the FRS area - this provides challenges in capacity which may well be further strained by the proposed LSB arrangements and the proposed changes to Local Health Boards. The Cardiff model is complex and bureaucratic which if replicated (may not be) 10 times will be unmanageable within current resources (especially as this is a non statutory requirement).	Failure to generate capacity to support 10 LSBs and related partnerships.	The Partnership department provides liaison officers to represent the Service at the various Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and related working groups. It also acts as the liaison with the relevant Fire Authority members within the constituent Unitary Authorities. The resources and demand are monitored regularly.	H/H

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Roles and Responsibilities of Members	There are clear roles and responsibilities for Fire Authority Members. The Authority has a constitution which outlines roles and responsibilities and is supported by a series of Sub-Committees. Members are provided with an information pack outlining their roles and responsibilities following nominations from Unitary Authorities (members can change annually) which is supplemented by training. There is scope to refine the current approach to scrutiny and further strengthen governance arrangements - particularly in respect of the scrutiny/challenge role and greater involvement in risk assessment as part of the WPI process.	Potential failure to ensure robust scrutiny and challenge.	Work is planned to fully understand Members development needs, taking account of the training that is available through their home authorities, to ensure the best use of public resource i.e. the Members Charter. The Fire Authority have re-established the standing orders working group and this will fully review the terms of reference for each committee whilst considering their role in challenging and reviewing strategic policy, risk and governance. An initial meeting has already been held with Wales Audit Office on this specific issue. It is planned that the first of several reports incorporating the recommendations in the Wales Audit Office Report on Member Engagement and Scrutiny will be taken to the 25 July Fire Authority Meeting.	H/M
Public engagement	The FRS has developed an incremental approach to public engagement and is well placed to translate commitment into significant implementation in the near future. There has been formal consultation re the RRP as well as the racial equality, disability and welsh language schemes. The Service's consultation process holds the Charter mark. A Consultation Strategy has been drafted and is currently being approved by senior managers.	Failure to engage with staff, partners and communities resulting in citizen's views not being at the centre of the design of services. Failure to implement the MtC agenda.	Policy to establish community fire stations has been agreed with station managers responsible for establishing links locally. Participation officer post with remit to strengthen community links established (for a two year fixed term).	H/M

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
PDR policy	The PDR system is in the process of being introduced across the service. SWFRS should review how the PDR system is applied across the organisation and the expectations of the process. The Service has embraced the Integrated Personal Development System [IPDS] ethos for developing its staff from recruitment and onto the promotion process. Staff are monitored and supported in the development of their operational skills but this needs to be more robust.	Inconsistent process across the organisation.	Relaunch of PDR forms planned 2008. Needs to be implemented and embedded, particularly for non uniform side (on uniform side there is more formal procedure regarding role maps).	H/M
Sustainability	The Risk Reduction Action Plan recognises the need to sustain the delivery of the Service through redeployment of resources. In addition the Service is improving the integration of sustainability into the overall management of the service, for example through business plans and the development of sustainable procurement (and carbon light buildings and vehicles) as part of asset management.	Potential failure to ensure that sustainability is fully embedded.	The Service needs to consider the Wales Programme for Improvement requirements for a Sustainability assessment.	H/M
Equalities	The Service is currently failing to achieve some workforce targets and the recruitment process is seeking to address this by holding awareness days, utilising website, community links and outreach co-ordinators to attract a more diverse workforce. The Race equality scheme is under review for relaunch in 2008, diversity training has been undertaken at all levels.	Risk of non-compliance with statutory duty and consequent failure to embed equalities fully.	The Service recognises the importance of equalities in meeting its legal obligations and has appointed an Equalities Officer. The Service has implemented an anti-harassment/bullying policy and a programme of diversity training has been undertaken at all levels.	H/M

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
Retirements / recruitments	Fire fighter retirements may lead to capacity issues as a large number of officers become eligible to retire on achieving 30 years service during 2008/2009. The Service is launching a recruitment drive to manage risks associated with the longer lead time for recruitment than the notice period for retiring fire fighters who are likely to be numerous.	Failure to manage risks effectively.	Recruitment process and existing Business Continuity Plan should address any potential shortfalls. Staff availability is also strengthened by a robust Retained Duty System.	M/M
Non emergency 101 number	PAT noted that there are strong links between the Service and the police, and the single non-emergency number [101] is proving to be effective in combating some anti social behaviour issues. The Cardiff 101 model is well regarded nationally and links are being used positively to tackle problem areas - fire personnel now attending daily tasking meetings to share information with police and shape services e.g. police to patrol streets where fires recently occurred.	Ability to maintain this level of input with current capacity.	SWFRS are currently reviewing the benefit given funding challenges. They have also included this within the current draft RRP.	M/M
Temporary promotions	There is some evidence of staff being affected due to a large number of temporary promotions and frequent staff transfers. Several policies have been introduced regarding work life balance, family friendly policies etc.	Potential negative effect of staff (e.g. lack stability).	Central staffing office has been created and the process of drafting protocols to manage this has commenced. This links with the need for a more robust PDR system.	M/M

Aspect	Description	Potential impact	Mitigating measures/controls	Level of inherent/residual risk
E-Fire and Rescue	The continued development of E-Fire and Rescue systems is an important improvement process of the FRS.	Potential failure to maintain effective IT systems.	Electronic Incident Recording System ((FDR1) required by Assembly Government) to be implemented by March 2009 - project manager in place to handle this. Relaunch of internet site planned.	M/M

Source: Wales Audit Office, Risk Assessment Template



Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ
Tel: 029 2032 0500
Fax: 029 2032 0600
Textphone: 029 2032 0660
E-mail: info@wao.gov.uk
Website: www.wao.gov.uk