



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
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Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Project Brief – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

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This document is also available in Welsh.

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Project brief

Background

- 1 This briefing document sets out our proposed Performance Audit programme for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) for 2019-20.
- 2 We are proposing the following integrated package of performance audits in 2019-20:
 - performance and improvement assessment work in line with the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009;
 - a review of the Authority's approach and management of involving stakeholders when proposing service changes; and
 - a light-touch verification of progress with relevant areas for improvement identified in our examination of Well-being of Future Generations in 2018-19.
- 3 In 2019-20, we will not be conducting a detailed examination of steps to meet wellbeing objectives. However, we will be considering progress with areas for improvement identified in our examination of Wellbeing of Future Generations in 2018-19.
- 4 In future years, we intend to examine the remaining aspects of the Sustainable Development Principle's Five Ways of Working (SDP 5 WOW). Progress to date and future plans are as follows:
 - 2018-19 Collaborations and partnerships (completed)
 - 2019-20 Involvement, participation, consultation and engagement
 - 2020-21 Prevention of problems occurring or getting worse, so the Fire and Rescue Authority can meet its objectives
 - 2021-22 Integration of policies and services
- 5 Long-term planning is a thread that will be integrated into all our lines of enquiry set out in [Exhibit 1](#) below.

Legislative basis for the reviews

- 6 This project is being undertaken to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. It may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act and building on our examination undertaken in 2018-19 by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

Purpose of the reviews

- 7 For 2019-20, we are undertaking a review at each Fire and Rescue Authority to help inform the Auditor General's conclusions in relation to his duties set out

above, as well as help to plan audit work in future years. The project will enable us to make an informed assessment of the risks to the Authority including:

- putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement;
- putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources; and
- acting in accordance with the five ways of working when setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them.

Focus of the reviews

- 8 The focus of the audits is threefold:
- all audits will give independent assurance that the Authority is improving in line with national requirements, the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2016, organisational need, service demand, and within the resources available.
 - each audit will provide a commentary on key aspects of service delivery. We will highlight the links between corporate planning, day-to-day service activity, and with the sustainable development principles contained in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act).
 - the audits are not merely reviewing compliance with legislation and take a wider and strategic view of service delivery and its impact on the wellbeing of people living, visiting and working in the areas served by the Authority.
- 9 Each proposed audit will now be set out in more detail. A timetable, document request, and interview schedule are included at the end of this briefing document.

Performance and improvement assessment work in line with the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009

- 10 Under the Measure, the Authority is required to prepare and publish an Improvement Plan describing its plans to discharge its duties and to publish an assessment, which describes its performance.
- 11 The Measure requires the Authority to publish its Improvement Plan as soon as is reasonably practicable after the start of the financial year to which it relates, or after such other date as Welsh Ministers may specify by order.
- 12 The Measure also requires the Authority to publish its performance assessment before 31 October in the financial year following that to which the information relates, or by any other such date as Welsh Ministers may specify by order 10. Under sections 17 and 19 of the Measure, we will carry out an audit of the improvement plan to determine if the Authority has discharged its duties.

A review of the Fire and Rescue Authority's approach and management of involving stakeholders when proposing and making service changes

- 13 We will build on and improve the audit approach we developed with you for our Wellbeing of Future Generations work in 2018-19.
- 14 The review will seek to answer the following question: **Does North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority have an effective approach to involving stakeholders when proposing and making changes to deliver service improvements?**
- 15 Our audit methods will include a review of Authority documentation. Please note we will not ask for any document we already have or which is publicly available on the Authority website.

Methods

- 16 The review will refer to Participation Cymru's national principles for engagement. We will also consider the relevant sections of the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2016¹. In particular, Sections 1.21, 1.25, 3.3 and 6.3 of the National Framework.
- 17 The review will include:
 - examination of cumulative audit and inspection knowledge and experience (CAIKE).
 - engaging with Welsh Government officials and the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor for Wales to identify any areas of overlap, common effort, and opportunities to collaborate.
 - assessment of current and recent Authority involvement and engagement activity.
 - testing the Authority website with reference to the Service and Authority website in line with the UK government's [making-your-services-accessible](#)².
 - involving the Authority in agreeing the closer examination of two recent key involvement/engagement/consultation activities.
 - survey of external stakeholders about their experiences of involvement, appraising the approaches used against Participation Cymru's national principles for engagement³.
 - this survey will integrate any relevant areas of local government national studies – for example on discretionary services, and on commercialisation – to minimise any duplication, and we will reuse the contact details of

¹ See [Fire and Rescue Service National Framework Wales 2016](#)

² See gov.uk/making-your-services-accessible-and-user-focused

³ See participation.cymru/principles

stakeholders we already have, topped up by specific contacts from the two involvement activities the FRA chooses.

- shadowing an involvement/engagement/consultation activity. This could include observing Authority participation at a community event, partner or public engagement meeting, shadowing a member of staff, or staff workshop.
 - meetings and interviews (no more than two days on site) focusing on the lines of enquiry and prompts below. We need to plan this carefully to complement other Authority internal and external activity.
- 18 At the end of our fieldwork we will provide verbal feedback to the Authority's Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer and once the outputs have been agreed we will present our findings to the relevant Authority committee.
- 19 The key lines of enquiry are indicated below in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1 – Lines of Enquiry

Lines of Enquiry
1. Has the Fire and Rescue Authority identified <u>who</u> it needs to involve in developing policies, making changes and improving services?
2. Has the Fire and Rescue Authority identified <u>how</u> it needs to involve stakeholders and service users in developing policies, making changes and improving services?
3. Is involvement making a visible and tangible impact, resulting in service improvement?

A light-touch verification of progress with areas for improvement identified in our examination of Wellbeing of Future Generations in 2018-19

- 20 This area forms the third proposal of the integrated package of performance audits in 2019-20. We have not made specific recommendations in 2018-19 and we intend to work with the Authority to develop these for 2019-20 and integrate any new recommendations we make. Our aim is threefold:
1. to ensure improvement and commitments to address areas for improvement identified in 2018-19 are delivered;
 2. to agree a credible baseline of findings and set of recommendations from which we can measure and identify improvement in the longer term, this will enable us to focus on the right things in the future and minimise any perceived burden of audit activity; and
 3. we understand and correctly identify the challenges, barriers, risks and opportunities in making those improvements.

Intended benefits

- 21 The programme of integrated audits will help to:
- establish the extent to which the Authority has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015;
 - provide assurance that the Authority has put in place the right arrangements to secure continuous improvement;
 - ensure future audit programmes are based on key areas of risk; and
 - provide insight through indicating areas that the Authority may consider focusing its improvement activities on.

Timetable

Exhibit 2: timetable

The table below sets out a proposed timetable for the review at the Authority.

Proposed timetable	
Set-up meeting	28 May 2019
Project brief issued	June 2019
Fieldwork meetings and interviews	To be arranged – likely late 2019
Outputs issued	To be arranged – likely early 2020

Fieldwork schedule

Interviews

- 22 In delivering our fieldwork we would like to meet:
- Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer(s);
 - Fire and Rescue Authority Chairman;
 - The designated lead Member for engagement and involvement and/or the lead Member for the service(s) being consulted on;
 - communications officers including social media and webmaster;
 - the designated lead officer for consultation and stakeholder involvement activity; and
 - the designated senior officer leading the service(s) being consulted on.

Focus groups

- 23 In delivering our fieldwork we would like to meet a focus group of front-line staff involved in consultation and engagement activity that does not contain senior managers.

Document request

- 24 Prior to on-site interviews and observations, we will undertake a review of the documents identified below. However, we would be grateful if you could supply us with any additional documents which you feel may be relevant to our work in this area. The list is not exhaustive and requests for additional documents may be made during the review. We are not asking for documents that are publicly available on the Authority's website.

Exhibit 3: the table below sets out the documents we would like to request initially as part of this review

Document title
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement and involvement action plans• Example(s) of recent consultation and learning and development review from the process• Evaluation of consultation responses• Equality and Diversity Strategy Action Plan and updates• A selection of responses to complaints and commendations

Keeping information private and safe

- 25 Whenever we process personal data during our work, we must comply with data protection legislation and principles. From 25 May 2018, these principles will be the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- 26 We will only collect the data we really need for our work. We will avoid collecting excessive data and will not record irrelevant or unnecessary personal data.
- 27 The Wales Audit Office has adopted the International Standard for Information Management Security Systems (ISO 27001). This means a detailed set of controls are risk assessed and regularly tested. All staff will comply with the Information Security Policy.

Wales Audit Office contacts

Exhibit 4: Wales Audit Office contacts

The table below sets out the Wales Audit Office team that will be working on this review at the Authority.

Name	Contact details
Performance Audit Director	Jane Holownia
Performance Audit Manager	Nick Selwyn
Performance Auditor	Matthew Brushett
Performance Auditor	Steven Frank
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