
MEETING

**Finance, Procurement and Property
Committee**

AGENDA ITEM

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**Performance Management and
Community Safety Panel**

Audit Committee

MEETING DATE

25 February 2008

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13 March 2008

SUBJECT

External Performance Assessment 2007

REPORT

(14.02.08) by Director of Corporate Services

Summary

This paper reports on the outcome of the 2007 external performance assessment and seeks approval to improvement actions to be taken in response to the Use of Resources judgement.

RECOMMENDATION

That action plan attached as appendix D be approved.

2007 external performance assessment

1. The 2007 external performance assessment comprises Direction of Travel, Use of Resources and a Service Assessment based on comparative performance against a basket of PIs coupled with the 2006 Operational Assessment of Service Delivery (OASD) score. The 2007 assessment results in a "scorecard" of
 - Direction of Travel: 4
 - Use of Resources: 3
 - Service Assessment: 3 (derived from 2 for PI performance and 4 for OASD)

Direction of travel

2. The Direction of Travel judgement awards the Authority the top score of '4', meaning, 'Improving Strongly'. This is an improvement over 2006 assessment which resulted in a judgement of '3: Improving Well'.
3. Just five fire and rescue authorities have achieved 'Improving Strongly' in 2007. These are London, Kent and Medway, Cheshire, Lancashire and Shropshire and Wrekin. In 2006, only West Yorkshire was judged to be 'Improving Strongly'. The Direction of Travel judgement is attached as appendix A to this paper.
4. The Audit Commission has also published a national report on the Fire and Rescue Authorities scores and a summary is attached as appendix B.

Use of Resources

5. The Use of Resources judgement is attached as appendix C to this paper. The overall score is unchanged from the 2006 outcome. However, as Members are aware, the methodology only allows for evidence in place by end March 2007 to be taken into account. The Use of Resources assessment scores the Authority across five themes: financial reporting; financial management; financial standing; internal control; and value for money. The summary scores for each theme are exactly as for the 2006 judgement, scores of '3' across the board. This however conceals a score of '2' for the key line of enquiry under the Internal Control theme covering "The authority has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business". The auditors accept that there have been improvement actions in this area taken since the 2006 assessment but, as these were not complete and embedded by March 2007, they have not contributed to the 2007 assessment.
6. Accompanying the Use of Resources judgement is feedback from the auditors together with a draft action plan for completion by the Authority. This is attached as appendix D to this paper and incorporates officers' comments on the Auditor's judgements and recommendations.
7. Approval is sought to the Action Plan. Once approved, the action plan from the 2006 external performance assessment and that from the 2007 external performance assessment will be amalgamated into a single improvement plan, progress on which is reported quarterly to the Performance Management and Community Safety Panel.

Service Assessment

8. There are two contributors to the service assessment score of '3'. The first is the outcome of the 2006 Operational Assessment of Service Delivery process (a top score of 4) and the second is consequence of a new assessment of Performance Indicator data. The result for each BVPI is compared against a pre-determined upper threshold and lower threshold. Where there are national requirements, standards or targets that have been determined or endorsed by Government, achievement or progress towards the requirement, standard or target, is used to set thresholds. In other cases where there are no such requirements the default thresholds are linked to quartiles from the previous year(s) of data.
9. The table below shows 2007 performance against the thresholds, compared with 2006. F6 (AFAs in non-domestic properties) was not included this year. It is pleasing to note that performance in respect of two of the indicators (F5 and F3) has improved since last year. Performance against all of the indicators is regularly reviewed by the Performance Management and Community Safety Panel and thematic reports on numerous of the topics have been considered or are scheduled. The Authority has thoroughly debated the issue of AFA attendance and has adopted a clear strategy on the matter.

Position in 2007	Comparison with 2006
Above the upper threshold	
F1 Primary fires per 10,000 population	As last year
F5 Percentage of accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin	Between the thresholds last year
F7 Number of deliberate primary fires (including vehicles) per 10,000 population	New
F11 Fires in non-domestic properties per 1,000 non-domestic properties	New
Between the thresholds	
F2 Accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings	As last year
F3 Deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population	Lower threshold last year
F4 Injuries arising from accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population	As last year
F9 Calls to malicious false alarms	New
Below the lower threshold	
F8 False alarms caused by automatic fire detection	New
F13 Percentage of fires attended where no smoke alarm was fitted	New

Environmental considerations

10. Improving use of resources makes a positive contribution to wider environmental considerations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of background documents	
None	
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