

YOU'RE EXCELLENT—SAYS CPA

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... following these enthusiastically.”

The Authority's strategic planning is complimented, pointing to an Authority that is “recognised nationally and internationally for its innovative approach to community safety” and has a “well developed understanding of the diversity of its communities that has led to “a range of imaginative strategies to reach the most vulnerable and excluded people.”

Financial management is described as “sound and supported by effective plans”, while adding, “ A focus on value for money underpins the Authority's operations.”

The Authority also scores well on having a clear understanding of the people and skills it needs to deliver its priorities and is seen as being “committed to developing a workforce that is well trained and competent”.

Strong performance management is seen to be enabling

the Authority to drive “greater reductions in deliberate fires, malicious false alarm calls and accidental dwelling fires”.

The Report confirms that all the

Authority's targets for emergency response times were met or exceeded for 2004/5 and more challenging targets set for 2005/6. The Authority is also achieving its objectives for prevention and protection through what is described as “a well developed approach to community safety set out in a robust strategy.”

The CPA also comments on the downward trend in fire deaths, the sharp decrease in fire injuries and how the Authority is successfully tackling major problems such as arson.

The Authority is seen as “having a clear direction of travel and a strong commitment to continuously refining its approach to maintain its impressive record of achievement”.

The report also says “the Authority makes a clear contribution to improving the quality of life of those who live and work in the area.”

The full CPA report is available on our website www.merseyfire.gov.uk



July 05

YOU'RE EXCELLENT – SAYS CPA

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is the highest performing fire service in the UK.

The Audit Commission's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of British fire services, published today, gives Merseyside its highest rating and judged it one of only two fire services to receive an Excellent rating.

The CPA process assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Fire Authorities, judging their management and performance across nine strategic categories. Merseyside received a maximum score in six of the nine categories showing it to be performing strongly, well above minimum requirements. In the other three categories, Merseyside was rated as performing well, consistently above the minimum requirements.

Tony McGuirk, Merseyside Chief Fire Officer, commented: “We're clearly delighted to be recognised as one of the outstanding fire services in the country. The CPA process highlights that we're delivering the best possible service to our local communities while at the same time modernising our operations through innovation and good practice.

Authority, said: “The CPA report is something which everyone in Merseyside should be proud of. The Report points to the high levels of deprivation in our urban centres but recognises that the Fire and Rescue Service is meeting those challenges and finding innovative ways to deliver outstanding results.



Cllr Newman

“It is a tribute to all our staff and our many partners in the local communities that we have made such great strides in recent years and our focus in the future will be to make sure that excellence is embedded in the organisation.”

Councillor Tony Newman, Chair of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue

“As a councillor, I'm proud of our work in the communities of Merseyside and particularly the ground-breaking work we are carrying out in community safety.”

The report points to Merseyside's “strong, effective and inclusive leadership” that is “transforming service delivery through translating strategic aims and objectives into local action plans.” Corporate governance is also praised as having “clearly defined roles and responsibilities and following

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CELEBRATING SUCCESS

In recognition of the contribution of all staff to the CPA success, the Chief Fire Officer has recommended to the Fire Authority that each person will be offered either half-a-day's pay or one day's leave. There will be events in each of the five districts for staff and our community partners to celebrate the result as well as a Service-wide event sometime in September. A pin badge is being designed as a memento of the occasion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service is rated by this assessment as **excellent**. CPA is an assessment, at the corporate level, of how well the Authority is being run. It does not give an opinion on how well the fire service responds to emergency incidents.

High levels of deprivation in Merseyside particularly in the urban centres are reflected in high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. The degree of challenge this presents for the Authority is experienced by few other fire authorities.

There are large numbers of deliberate fires including arson attacks linked to criminal behaviour and frequent attacks on firefighters and appliances.

Despite this difficult context, the Authority is achieving well in its priority areas and consistently improving its overall performance.

A comprehensive and innovative approach to community safety is delivering significant, measurable outcomes in some of the most deprived areas.

Work with young people is having real impact in terms of changing behaviour and attitudes, and developing



responsibility and citizenship.

The Authority has risen to the challenge of modernisation and made great strides in reshaping its organisational culture and its service delivery towards better protection of its most vulnerable communities.

Members and staff are delivering improved services that balance reliable emergency response based on challenging local standards with good protection measures and effective prevention strategies.

Good intelligence systems and reliable data sources enable it to plan well and target efforts and resources to achieve maximum benefit in high-risk areas.

A robust IRMP integrates with corporate strategies and drives clear operational plans that are well managed to achieve the target outcomes.

The Authority has a good understanding of its communities. It has developed impressive initiatives such as its community advocate scheme to better connect with those that are most vulnerable and disadvantaged.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority took place in April and was followed by the CPA Excellent rating by the Audit Commission.

Following the 28th July announcement of the CPA result, the Authority has prepared an improvement plan to identify how it will deal with any weaknesses mentioned in the report. The report will then form the basis of a round-table discussion between the Authority, the Audit Commission, HMI and the ODPM Business Change Manager.

A plan is going before the Authority on how the Service can embed excellence into its future performance through consolidating our current resources and by imaginative planning for the future.

The CPA report process attributes much of our success to "strong, effective and inclusive leader-

members and management being approached to lead conferences; action plans, mentoring sessions and external work.



ship". The Authority is, therefore, looking how we can retain and further develop the elected members through discussions with the local district authorities. The Authority will also be considering how to ensure retention of its five-man Executive Leadership team.

Embedding excellence will include continuing the radical approach to change, involving not only senior management but all staff, our partners and the local communities.

The CPA result will also significantly increase the interest in

SUMMARY OF THEME SCORES AND STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES

WHAT HAS THE FIRE AUTHORITY ACHIEVED AND, IN LIGHT OF THAT, WHAT DOES IT PLAN TO DO NEXT

THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Achievement of objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving in priority areas • Community safety prevention work is effective, targets those at highest risk • Continued and strengthened emphasis on community safety • Evaluation of community fire campaigns and initiatives • Effective approach to non-fire emergencies • Challenging local standards of fire cover • Focus on value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs comparatively high • Mixed performance against 2003/04 performance indicators - no strong areas
Achievement of improvement Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear sustained improvements over a significant period of time • Clear improvements delivered in challenging areas • Meeting the needs of vulnerable/hard to reach groups • Good analysis of barriers to improvement and resulting response • Perception - partners and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although demonstrating improvement, not meeting targets in all areas
Future plans Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to external challenge and learns extensively from others • High level of self awareness • Good collaborative relationships with other fire authorities • Innovation is encouraged, contributes to high performance of the Authority • Long term focus - future challenges to the Authority and the community are anticipated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further integration of plans - clear objectives and outcomes



Effective, well-managed partnership working is helping to achieve its own goals and tackling wider social issues.

The Authority recognises that it has an important role to play in developing safer and more sustained communities. For example, business continuity is



prioritised because of the fragile economy in some of its communities and the need to attract and sustain inward investment.

Consultation is enabling partners and local people to influence the Authority's planning and service delivery and combined with high quality communication ensure the support of local people and partners.

Leadership is strong and effective. The management of change is impressive. The inclusive approach of senior managers is inspiring confidence and loyalty in a workforce that is undergoing huge change.

A clear commitment to organisational and individual development means that staff and elected members are clear and enthusiastic about their roles.

Appropriate human resources management is in place and the Authority is making good progress on IPDS. However, the Authority is still in the process of introducing a robust individual appraisal system.

As well as planning for the medium term, the Authority anticipates longer-term challenges and is building capacity to meet them.

Sound financial management and governance arrangements are in place.

Risk management and performance management are developing well.

Costs have been comparatively high for some years but the Authority is getting to grips with this and can show clear efficiency savings achieved through a strengthened focus on value for money.



SUMMARY OF THEME SCORES AND STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES

WHAT IS THE FIRE AUTHORITY TRYING TO ACHIEVE		
THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Leadership and priorities Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, effective, inclusive leadership • Clear and consistent vision and ambitions • Clear ownership of the change agenda • Good understanding of community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation needs to be refined to take account of feedback and partnerships
A balanced strategy Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong commitment to community fire safety • Contributes to wider social initiatives - quality of life issues • Engages with diverse communities/vulnerable groups through advocates • Reflection of national framework in key plans • Responds appropriately to new risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships is variable at the strategic level



Scoring key:

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

SUMMARY OF THEME SCORES AND STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES

HOW HAS THE FIRE AUTHORITY SET ABOUT DELIVERING ITS PRIORITIES		
THEME	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Capacity: Governance and management Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and strong governance arrangements • Good working relationships between members and officers • Common commitment to the modernisation agenda and the vision of the Authority • Effective decision making and management structures • High regional and national profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee succession planning • IT infrastructure developments not yet having an impact
Capacity: Resources and value for money Score 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound financial management - 5 year medium term strategy and other financial plans • Budget supports growth in priority areas • Good financial awareness - officers and members • Progress on asset management plan and managing assets • Diverse range of procurement activity and effective processes for their management • Effective use of partnership working to increase capacity to deliver, including joint procurement • Highly positive approach to a wide range of partnership working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic context for asset management plan is still being developed • Strategic approach to managing partnerships is being further developed but does not contain an exit strategy
Capacity: People Score 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly motivated, enthusiastic workforce • Developing HR practices to fit the modernisation agenda • Making sound progress - IPDS • Flexible use of staff - work/life balance • Effective fairness and equality at work policy • Increased the diversity of the workforce - volunteers used to increase capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff appraisals not yet fully in place • Some HR strategies are in development or not yet impacting
Performance management Score 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management has high priority - risk register and risk management policy • Regular reporting of performance information - use to monitor and manage - wide range of performance information - internal and external use • Suite of LPs to help evaluate and achieve priorities • Can demonstrate improvements in delivering against priorities • Realistic and challenging targets in many areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management skills still need to be developed • Not all targets are SMART and focus on output rather than impact