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Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service

Corporate Governance Action Plan - 2007

Core Principle Six –

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

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| 6.1 | Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships. | Make clear to themselves, all staff and the community to whom they are accountable and for what. | IRMP/Corporate Plan<br><br>Internal & External Newsletters<br><br>Web-site & Intra-net<br><br>Staff attitude survey 2007. Results from the survey demonstrate a high level of understanding among staff about the services' vision and objectives and their personal contribution. External consultation demonstrates a need to continue promoting awareness of the services' responsibilities. Response Panel | IRMP/Corporate Plan<br>Website<br>Communication Toolkit<br>Community Engagement Strategy and Toolkit<br>Corporate Communications Strategy<br>IRMP6 communication timetable published on website | Issues in staff attitude survey to be addressed via action plan. | 5                              | Action plan to respond to issues in staff attitude survey.<br><b>Sept 08</b><br>All staff workshops have been completed & report on feedback together with updated action plan going to P&O September 08<br><b>Jan 09</b><br>Holding six local stakeholders meetings in the unitaries as part of the consultation programme for IRMP8. Managers received briefing packs and power point presentations for briefing staff requesting staff to complete feedback forms which are published on the intranet<br><b>July 09</b><br>New Community Empowerment Strategy presented to Fire Authority on 10 June 09<br><b>November 09</b><br>Use of the new community empowerment strategy is now part of the consultation process for IRMP 7. We will schedule a meeting with the Unitary Performance Managers to agree timescales for local consultation meetings within their Unitary Areas<br><b>March 10</b><br>High level of understanding and awareness of our services re organisational objectives within the Service. We need to further develop local communications directly with residents.<br><b>April 11</b><br>The development of a new four year strategy and consultation on IRMP8 has seen far greater engagement with stakeholders and residents than the Authority has achieved before. The adoption of a corporate Public Affairs Strategy provides a robust framework to supplement the Authority's existing | Tim Bevington         | Nov 10  |

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|       |   |  |                              |  |  |                                | Community Engagement Strategy.   |                       |                     |
| 6.1.1 | Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly | Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom the authority is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationship and any changes required |                              | CFOA, RMB, CLG, Fire Finance but also Police, NHS, LEA, Social Services etc<br>But to what extent do we formally assess effectiveness of relationships within an agreed protocol<br><br>For clarity what constitutes a local institutional stakeholder | <b>Re-establish Chief Executives Group</b> | 5                              | Jan 09<br>CFO working with other colleagues in Cheshire to re-establish Chief Executives Group | CFO                   | NFA – Annual Review |
| 6.1.2 |   | Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function  |                              | Annual Audit Letter presented to P&O by external audit<br>Agenda & minutes of P&O Committee published on website ours is a non statutory scrutiny committee and therefore not subject to the annual report requirements                                |  | 5                              |  | DCFO                  | NFA – Annual Report |
| 6.2   |   | Ensure clear channels of   | Cheshire FRS consults widely |  | Implement recommendation's                 | 5                              | New 3-year Corporate Communication and Community Engagement Strategy to be produced in         | Tim Bevington         | Annual              |

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|     | by the authority in partnership or by the community   | communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, and put in place monitoring arrangements and ensure that they operate effectively. | allowing a minimum of 6-8 weeks for local/corporate policies for written consultation.<br>The service<br>*Ensures that its consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.<br>*Gives feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.<br>*Monitors its Corporate Communications depts. effectiveness at consultation by having a designated Consultation Officer.<br>*Ensures consultation follows best practice by keeping up to date with changes |                   | for Corporate Communication and Empowerment Strategy |                                | <p>2008/09<br/><b>Sept 08</b><br/>Received new revised Government white paper. Assessing Impact.</p> <p><b>Jan 09</b><br/>Community empowerment &amp; communications strategy will deliver outcomes</p> <p><b>November 09</b><br/>Community Engagement Strategy has now been approved. The communications team has produced and published as part of the Annual Report and a communications specialist has been assigned to each Unitary to support the local areas. This has resulted in positive feedback in terms of raised profile for the Service.</p> <p><b>March 10</b><br/>Corporate Communication and Engagement Strategy has been completed and implemented. We will further develop local communications with residents of Cheshire Halton &amp; Warrington during 2010.</p> <p><b>September 10</b><br/>Agreements in place with all unitary areas for joined up communications this includes written and publishing broadband</p> <p><b>January 11</b><br/>Joint communication channels with existing public sector partners now well-established, including quarterly direct newsletters, as well as the Service's own Annual Report delivered to every household, split by unitary council. Website has been completely revamped to ensure visitors can personalise the information they receive.</p> <p>Ongoing review but now compliant.</p> |                       | Review  |

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|     |   |   | <p>introduced by the government.<br/>*Has a dedicated residents' consultation panel called Response which currently includes almost 400 members providing information and regular feedback.<br/>*Has a comprehensive community engagement strategy and toolkit which clearly sets out our objectives and guidelines.</p> <p>Specific accessibility accreditations is being sought to ensure the services' website meets the need of all users.<br/>SMS text messaging system now in place to improve contact with</p> |                   |                        |                                |                 |                       |         |

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|       |  |   | residents, particularly those hard of hearing and/or with speech impediments.   |  |  |                                |  |                       |                     |
| 6.2.1 |  | Hold meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality   | All member meeting open to public other than specific segments not deemed appropriate   | All dates, agendas and minutes available via website.  | <b>Further Development:</b><br>Consider ways of engaging/inviting public attendance for meetings of the Fire Authority | 5                              |  | Matt Maguire          | NFA – Annual Review |
| 6.2.2 |  | Ensure that arrangements are in place to enable the authority to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements should recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands. | This service has been externally accredited at level 3 of the local government equality standard which includes specific attention to community engagement and consultation. A new community empowerment strategy is scheduled for 2008/09 to update and replace the existing community engagement strategy, We continue to | Equality Advisor ToR<br>Valuing Equality and Diversity Policy<br>Disability Equality scheme<br>Equality Impacts Assessments conducted against all policy<br>UPA Plans and station Activity plans | Journey towards achieving excellence   | 5                              | <p><b>Sept 08</b><br/>Produced PDR for achievement of level 4</p> <p><b>Jan 09</b><br/>Station packs produced by end of February on E&amp;D. Project plan in place to achieve Level 4 by end of July 09</p> <p><b>July 09</b><br/>On track to achieve Level 4 – Project Definition Report in place with ongoing monitoring of deliverables</p> <p><b>November 09</b><br/>Achieved level 4 of Local Government Standard now moving towards excellence. Paper being presented to Leadership Board and then to P&amp;O Committee</p> <p><b>March 10</b><br/>Journey towards excellence – a paper will be presented to Policy Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March</p> <p><b>September 10</b><br/>Report being presented to P&amp;O in December re progress on our journey to achieving excellence, this will include an action plan for achievement with the agreement of the Equalities Task Group</p> <p><b>January 11</b><br/>Self assessment report for Excellence being developed and will be submitted by the end of May.</p> | Tim Bevington         | On-going            |

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|       |  |   | equality impact our activity and policies to ensure that any adverse impact can be mitigated  |  | .   |                                | <b>March 2012</b><br>Equalities Excellence has been achieved and a full action plan to sustain and ensure continued high standards has been approved and will be monitored through the Equality Task Group and the Authority. Along with the significant and robust consultation mechanisms, this will help to ensure high degree of transparency and accountability.  |                       |                     |
| 6.2.3 |  | Establish a clear policy on the types of issues they will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and service users about including a feedback mechanism for those consulters to demonstrate what has changed as a result | An annual consultation action plan will be produced, while the principles of the feedback to consultees are established within the community engagement strategy.                 | Consultation Panel<br>Community Engagement Strategy /Toolkit |   | 5                              | <b>Sept 08</b><br>Updating consultation toolkit as part of the new Community Empowerment Strategy<br><b>Jan 09</b><br>Started but needs revisiting to align to new strategy.<br><b>July 09</b><br>Updated Community Engagement Strategy presented to Authority on 10 June 09<br><b>November 09</b><br>Principles and refined Community engagement strategy is now in line with national best practice.   | Tim Bevington         | NFA – Annual Review |
| 6.2.4 |  | On an annual basis, publish a performance plan giving information on the authority's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements as well as information  | The service will be producing an annual report distributed to all households in Oct 2008 and will include details of its performance across all key areas including satisfaction. | Corporate Plan<br>IRMP<br>BVPP                               | Possible weakness in relation to stating the level of customer satisfaction and providing evidence. | 5                              | <b>Sept 08</b><br>PDR developed – Listening to our customers to ensure feedback consistency<br><b>Jan 09</b><br>PDR due to be delivered end of March 2009<br><b>July 09</b><br>Listening to our customers project has been delayed; this is to allow alignment to the updated Community Engagement Strategy and updated actions.<br><b>November 09</b><br>Annual report has now been distributed, for the first time this year local performance data was also | Tim Bevington         | Sept 2011           |

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|       |   | about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period.   |                    |                   |  |                                | <p>included. Local Unitary consultation meetings will be scheduled in for May 2010 with the Unitary Performance Areas.</p> <p><u>March 10</u><br/>Place survey gives us local information on customer satisfaction by Unitary Area. A further place survey is scheduled for Nov 10.</p> <p><u>September 10</u><br/>A change in legislation has removed the requirement for a place survey. Discussions are taking place with partners locally re legislation or local solutions</p> <p><u>January 11</u><br/>Annual Report now well established – customer feedback levels to be included in next report. Compliant subject to publishing Annual Report in Sept. 2011.</p> <p><u>March 2012</u><br/><b>Customer information is now included in the annual report and new requirements within the National Framework to publish an annual statement of assurance will further support the Authority in delivering against these obligations.</b></p> |                       |          |
| 6.2.5 |   | Ensure that the authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and ensure that it has made a commitment to openness and transparency in all its dealings, including |                    |                   | Against some of our process we can demonstrate openness and transparency, however, would our current perception of future CAA in terms of customer focus, engagement and accountability?<br>This is not to say we are particularly | 5                              | <p>Proposals to ensure PDGs have their own or joint public sessions when finalising their annual plans.</p> <p><u>Sept 08</u><br/>Guidance to UPA's is being revised in 2008/09 while the service is working with the joint Implementation Teams to ensure key partnerships are open and transparent as new CAA agreements are developed.</p> <p><u>Jan 09</u><br/>Involved in briefing sessions. UPA's leading on IRMP6 consultation in the communities</p> <p><u>July 09</u><br/>Community Empowerment Strategy with updated actions presented to CFA on 10<sup>th</sup> June.<br/>Communications Strategy which includes public</p>  | Tim Bevington         | On-going |

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|     |  | partnerships, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so. |   |                      | weak but are we as strong as we need to be? |                                | <p>consultation sessions to be presented to CFA on 17<sup>th</sup> June<br/><u>November 09</u><br/>We will schedule a meeting with the Unitary Performance Managers to agree timescales for local public consultation meetings within their Unitary Areas,<br/><u>March 10</u><br/>Local consultation meetings in each Unitary Area are now complete. We aim to develop further local communications with residents of Cheshire, Halton &amp; Warrington during 2010.<br/><u>April 11</u><br/>The Authority's website has been updated in line with accessibility best practice, there are a range of direct communication channels with residents in each of the four unitary council areas and the Authority continues to publish its own Annual Report delivered to every household in its area. Its FOI section on the website has been updated and all invoices over £500 are now published online.<br/><u>March 2012</u><br/><b>The Authority has already agreed a number of mechanisms by which it will adopt and adhere to the specific requirements of the Localism Act and the new Fire and Rescue Service National Framework. These include pay statement, spending and performance measures.</b></p> |                       |                   |
| 6.3 | Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff. | Develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.                       | The Trade Union Protocol sets out how the service requires staff and representatives to have meaningful dialogue at local station level, at | Trade Union Protocol | How we engage with all stakeholders         | 5                              | <p><u>Jan 09</u><br/>Feedback to be given to Unitary Performance Area Managers re guidance on TU protocol, and a concern that local issues may not be picked up and resolved if guidance not adhered to<br/><u>July 09</u><br/>Feedback to be given to Area Managers re guidance on TU protocol. To ensure that local issues are picked up and resolved. Quarterly scrutiny meetings must be carried out by AM (ER)</p>  | Tim Bevington         | NFA Annual Review |



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|     |   |   | <p>corporate level within the management of good industrial relations and at strategic level through JCNP mechanisms. The protocol also provides opportunity for dialogue between Members and staff representatives on areas of dispute.</p> |                   |                        |                                | <p>and Employee Relations Manager. Other administrative actions need to be embedded e.g. MMNB being a separate part of JCNP.<br/>Rep numbers and member numbers to be given by 31 March each year.<br/>Minutes to go out in prescribed time periods.<br/>Communications Strategy which includes staff engagement to be presented to CFA on 17<sup>th</sup> June<br/><b>November 09</b><br/>The principles re how we engage in relation to IRMP are now included in the revised communications strategy. Feedback from the staff survey is showing a positive increase re communications<br/><b>March 10</b><br/>Meetings set up in diary for quarterly scrutiny with new Unitary Performance Head of Department<br/><b>September 10</b><br/>Revised industrial relations protocol approved.</p> |                       |         |