



***NORTH WALES
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY***

***COMBINED IMPROVEMENT
AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN***

2016-17

Updated and published March 2016

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Introduction

This year's annual Improvement Plan focuses on specific improvement objectives for 2016-17.

At a time of extraordinary financial challenge, the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to continuing to provide excellent prevention services, fire safety enforcement services and emergency response to a range of incidents including fire, flooding and road traffic accidents.

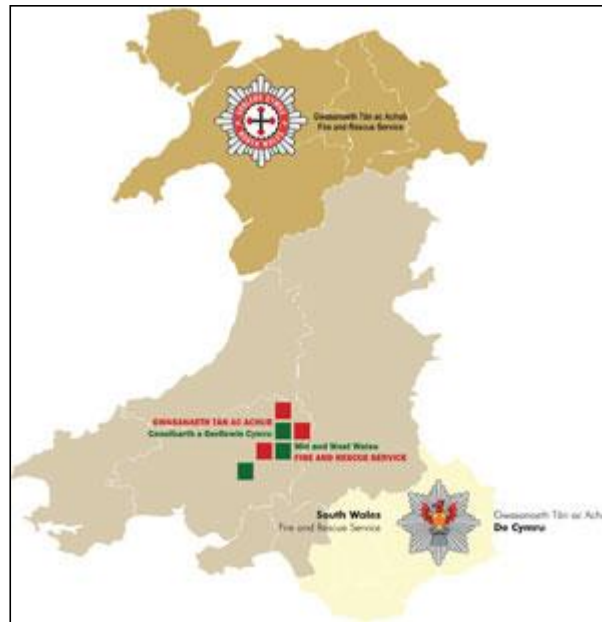
The Authority remains committed to playing its part in building stronger and safer communities, but also acknowledges that for the future the financial situation means that being able to sustain service delivery will require a great deal of flexibility and innovation.

Fire and rescue authorities have been extraordinarily successful in Wales in reducing the incidence of fires, but this cannot be taken for granted, and we do not intend to lose sight of the importance of prevention in reducing the level of demand on fire and rescue services as well as on other parts of the public sector, such as the health service.

The Authority consulted on its draft improvement objectives in the last quarter of 2015, and is grateful for the many responses it received. This document now sets out its agreed strategic improvement objectives for 2016-17.

**Our mission is to make North Wales
a safer place to live, work and visit.**

North Wales Fire and Rescue



In Wales, fire and rescue services are provided through Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is one of three combined fire and rescue authorities in Wales. These were set up in 1996 as part of local government reorganisation, and replaced the former eight fire brigades in Wales.

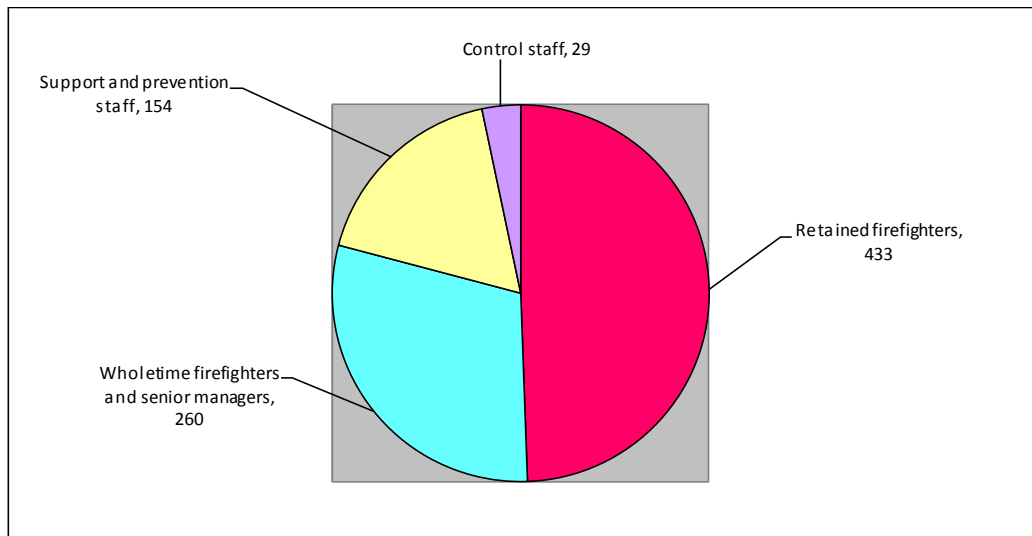
The full **North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority** comprises 28 county councillors nominated from the six unitary authorities of North Wales: Anglesey County Council (3); Conwy County Borough Council (5); Denbighshire County Council (4); Flintshire County Council (6); Gwynedd Council (5); Wrexham County Borough Council (5). The number of representatives from each constituent authority is determined according to the size of the population.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is headed by the Chief Fire Officer who has strategic leadership, corporate management and operational responsibility for the Service. He also provides professional advice to the Authority.

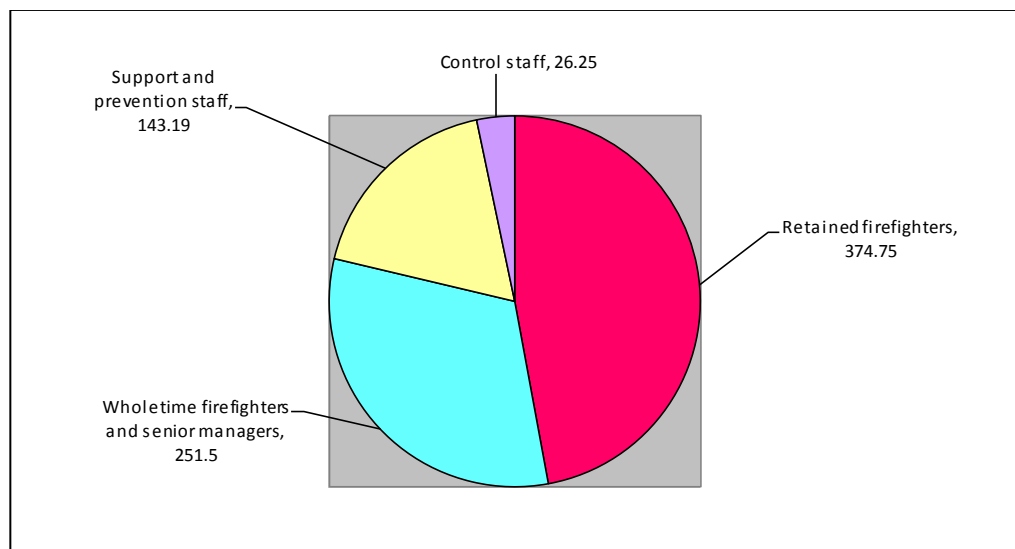
Please refer to the Appendix to this document for details of specific legislation and other information.

About North Wales Fire and Rescue – Staffing (March 2015)

Headcount of individual members of staff employed:

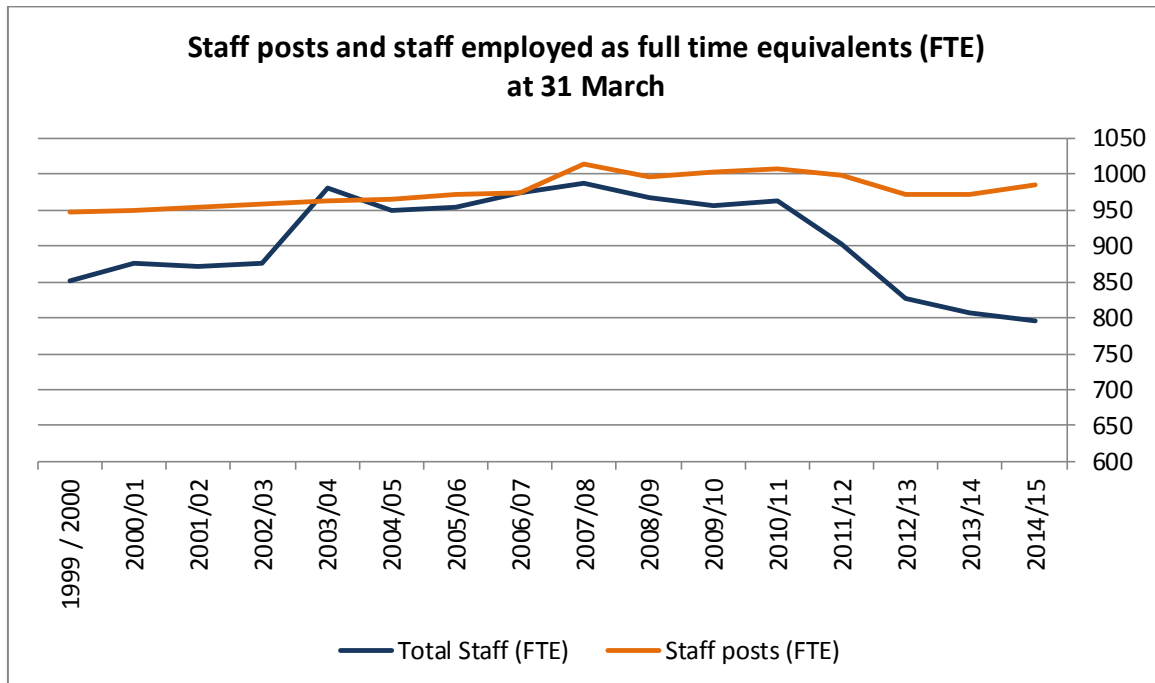


Full time equivalent numbers of staff employed:



About North Wales Fire and Rescue – Staffing

The number of staff posts and staff employed has changed over recent years. The graph below shows the extent of these changes between March 1999 and March 2015.

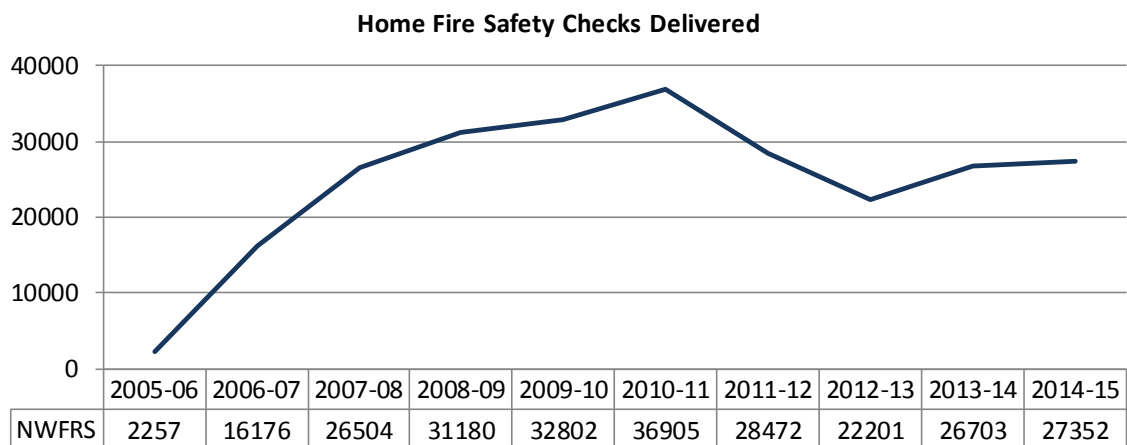


Recent financial pressures have forced a reduction in the size of the workforce, but with careful planning it has been possible to achieve that through natural wastage and voluntary redundancies.

Changes within the organisational structure have involved detailed consideration of matching work to the most appropriate sections of the workforce, bearing in mind skills sets and terms and conditions of service. This has included the transfer of community and business fire safety posts to non-operational staff.

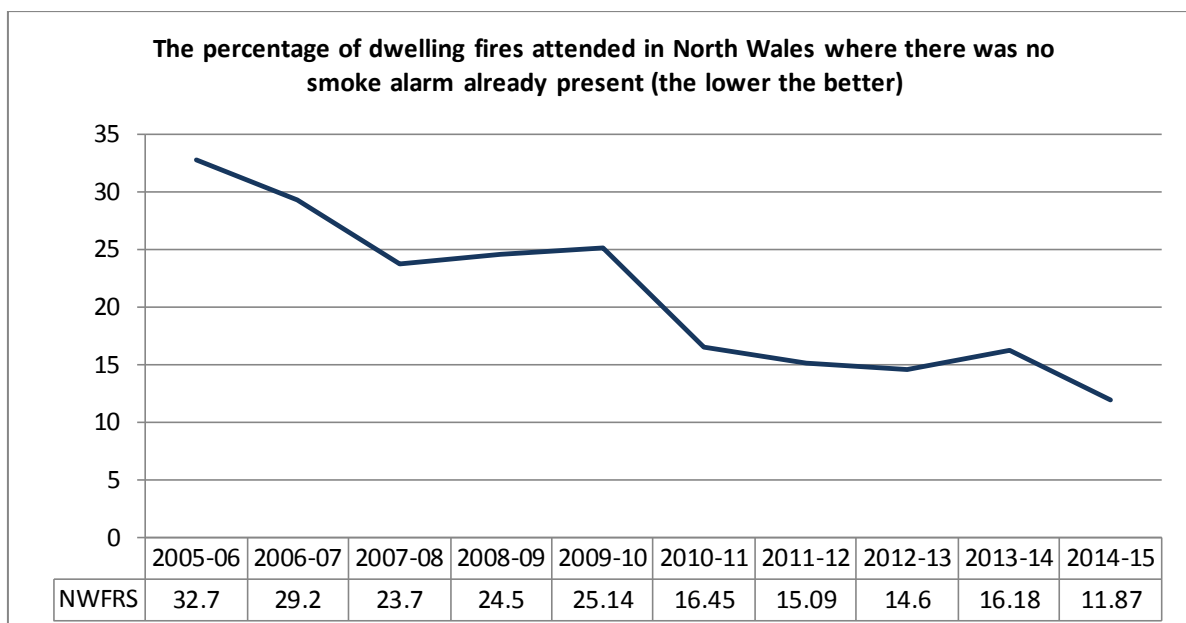
North Wales Fire and Rescue over the last ten years

North Wales's high profile programme of providing Home Fire Safety Checks has meant that 250,552 free checks have been delivered to households in the area since 2005.



According to the Welsh Government's 2013-14 National Survey for Wales¹, 94% of households in North Wales have at least one working smoke alarm.

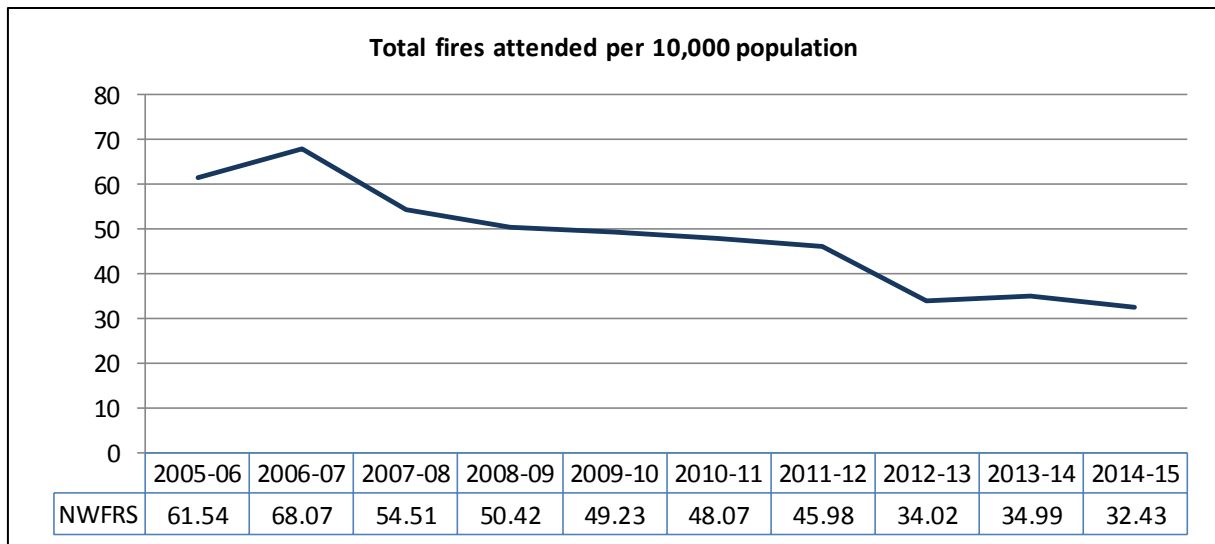
Only a minority of homes in North Wales where fire has occurred are found to have no smoke alarm already fitted.



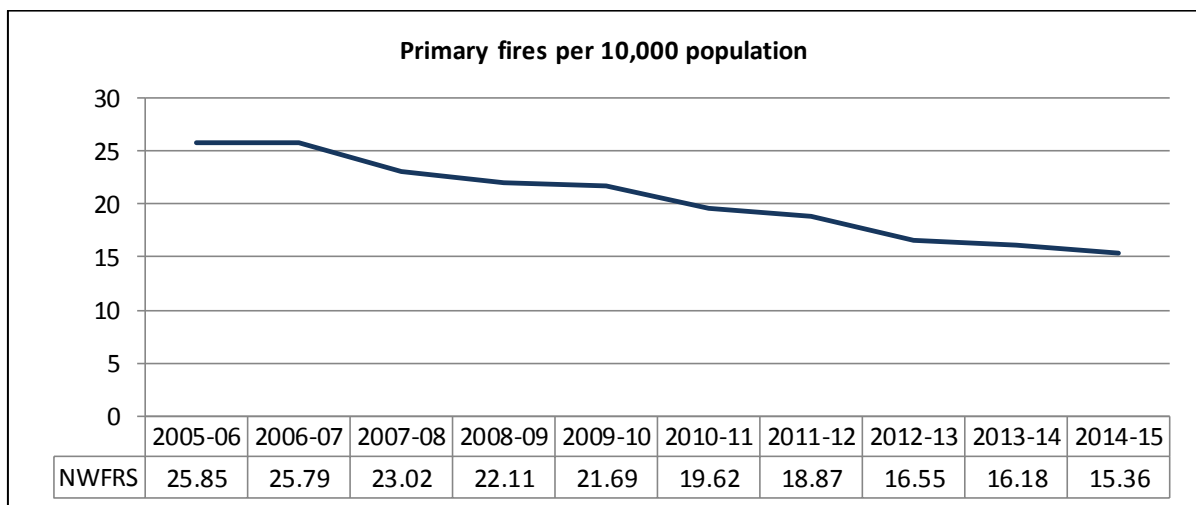
¹ Table 20.

North Wales Fire and Rescue over the past ten years

The fire prevention strategy in North Wales has been very successful. The number of fires attended in the area has fallen in most years over the past decade, with the exception of 2006-07 and 2013-14. Overall, the number has fallen from 4,143 to 2,244.

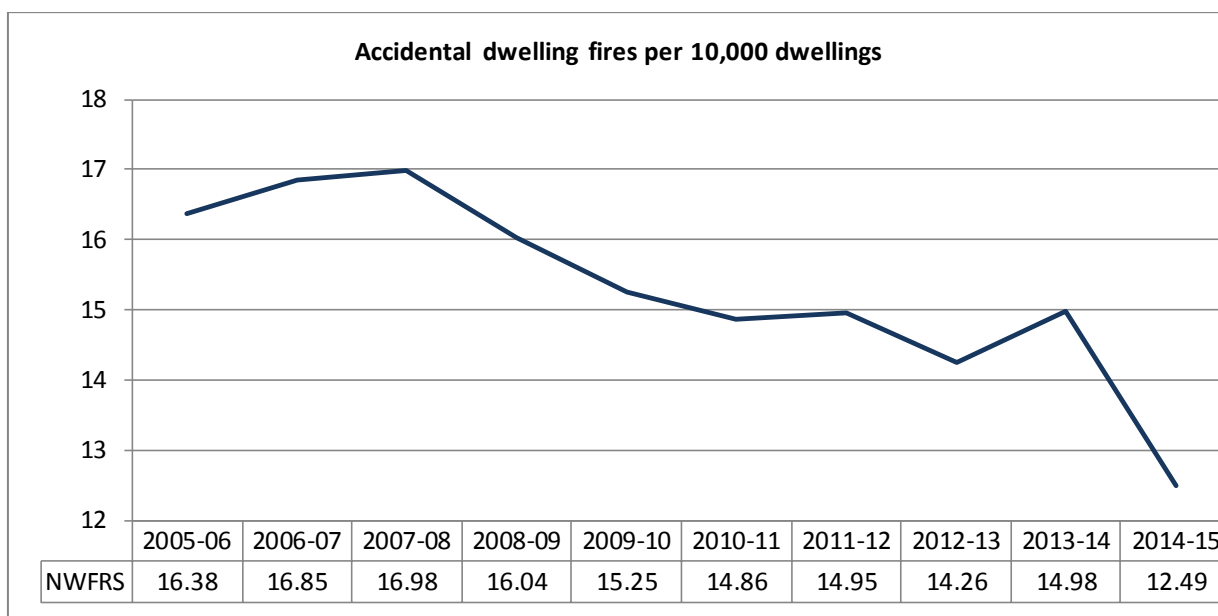


The number of primary fires (that is, the larger fires, involving property and/or casualties) has fallen from around 33 per week to around 20 per week (from 1,738 to 1,063).

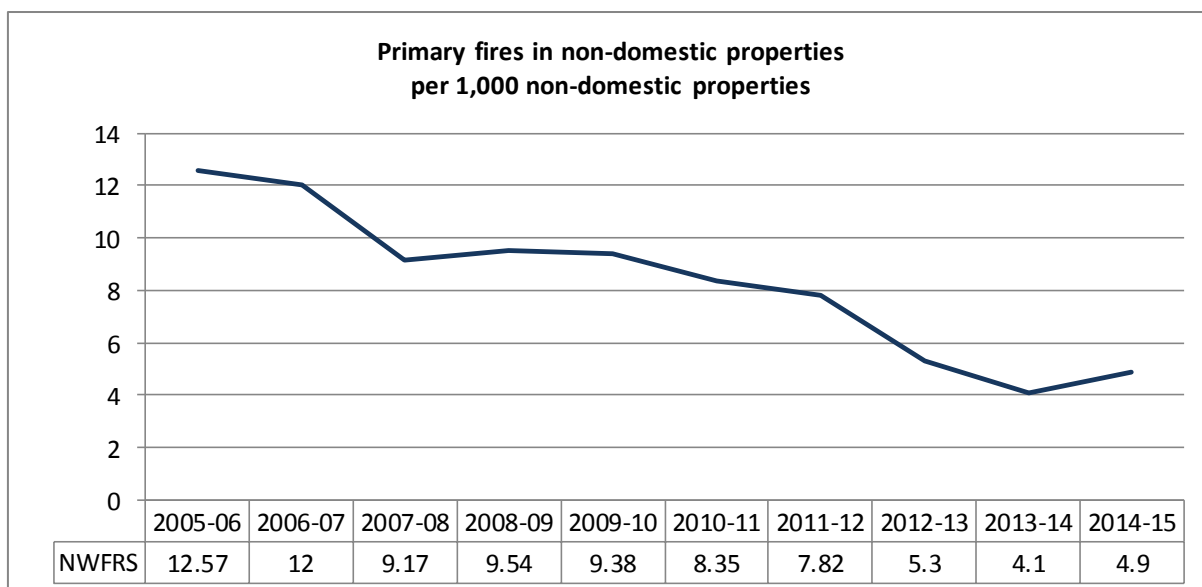


North Wales Fire and Rescue over the past ten years

The number of accidental fires in dwellings has also fallen over the past decade, although the rate of reduction has been irregular, with increases in four out of the past ten years. Overall, the number of these fires has fallen from 501 to 401.

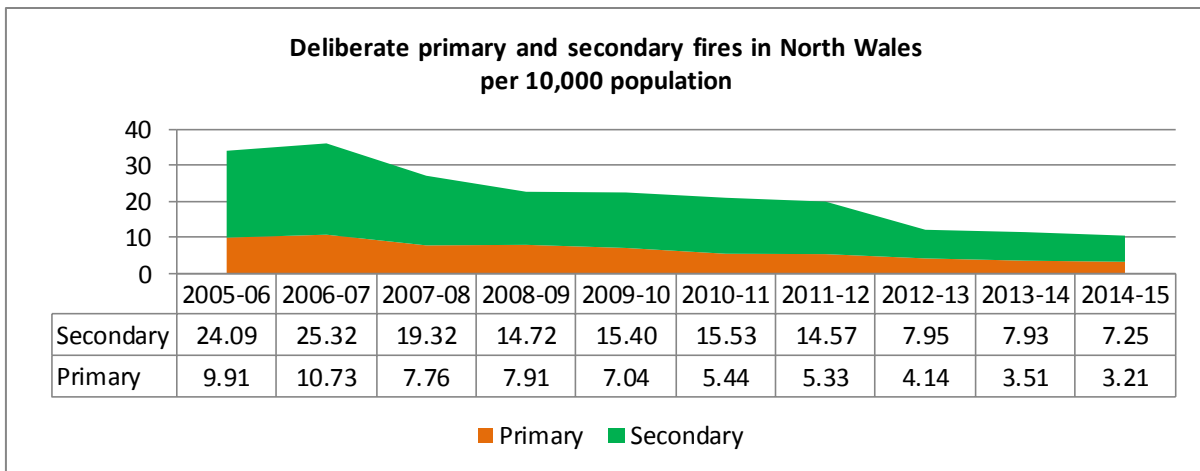


Similarly, the number of fires occurring in non-domestic properties has reduced, from an annual total of 333 to 139.

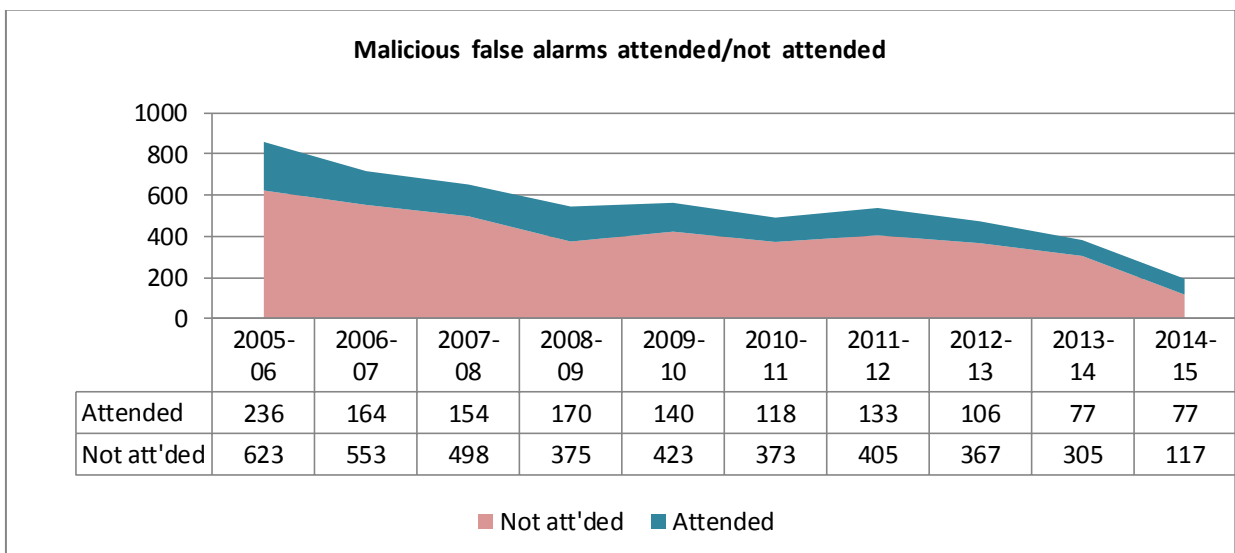


North Wales Fire and Rescue over the past ten years

Through an active and successful collaboration with North Wales Police, the incidence of arson and deliberate fire-setting has also fallen. Per 10,000 population, there have been consistently fewer deliberate fires in North Wales than elsewhere in Wales.



By challenging 999 callers suspected of placing bogus emergency calls, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has successfully driven down the number of malicious false calls being made to its Control Centre. Of those that are made, Control staff have consistently succeeded in identifying almost 80% as malicious before making an unnecessary attendance at a non-existent emergency. In 2005-06, the Service attended around 5 such malicious false alarms per week. By 2014-15 this had been reduced to fewer than 2.



North Wales Fire and Rescue over the past ten years

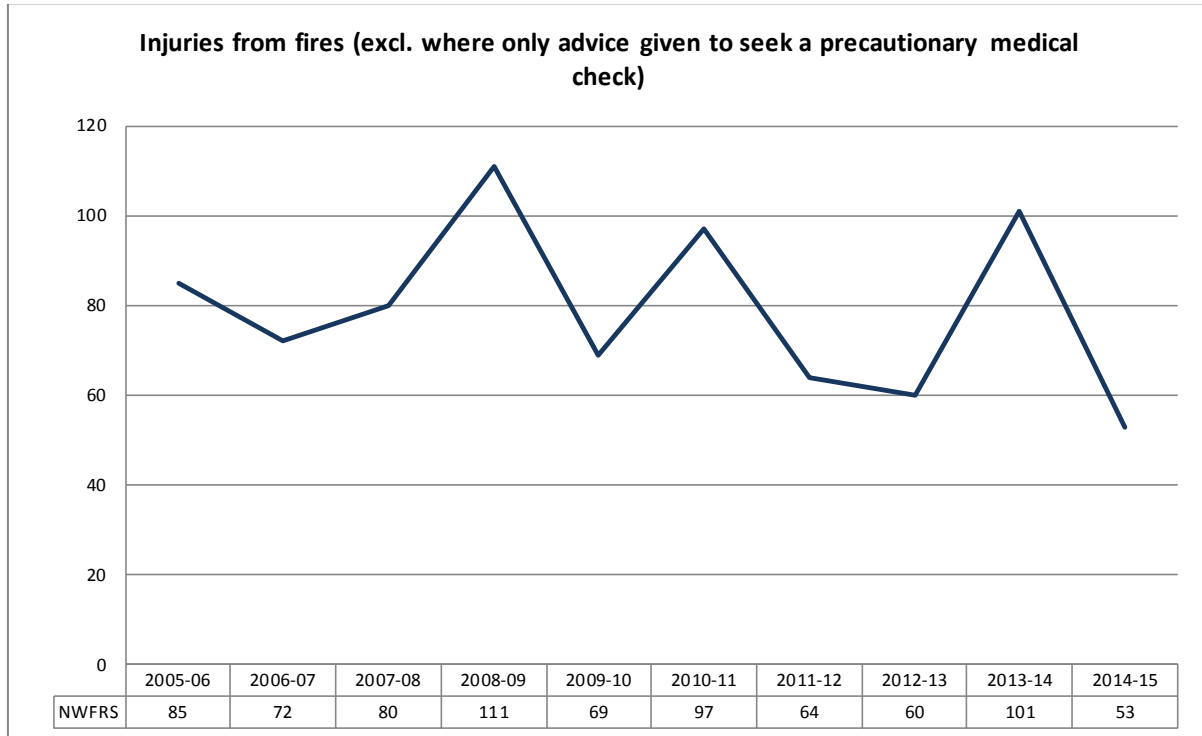
The number of people who die from fires in North Wales has fluctuated between three and thirteen per year. Some people die as a result of fires that were started deliberately (which would include suicide and arson), but the majority are the victims of accidental fires that occurred in their homes.

For North Wales, fire deaths figures as at February 2016 were:

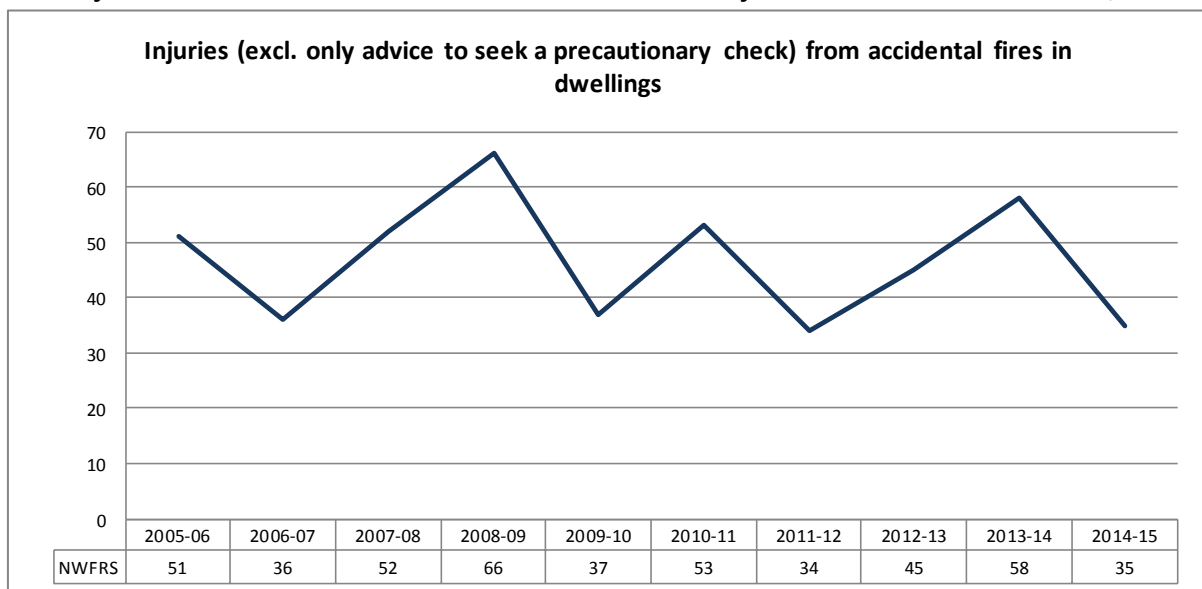
	From accidental fires	From accidental dwelling fires	From deliberate fires	From deliberate dwelling fires	Total fire deaths
2005-06	6	5	1	0	7
2006-07	10	10	3	0	13
2007-08	8	8	2	1	10
2008-09	4	4	0	0	4
2009-10	7	7	2	2	9
2010-11	10	10	0	0	10
2011-12	8	6	0	0	8
2012-13	3	3	5	5	8
2013-14	3	3	0	0	3
2014-15	4	2	1	1	5
	63	58	14	10	77

North Wales Fire and Rescue over the past ten years

The number of fire injuries in North Wales is following an overall downward trend, but the rate of reduction in fire injuries has been inconsistent and disappointingly slower than the rate of reduction in fires.



Understanding the cause of the apparently higher rate of accidental dwelling fire injuries in North Wales will be one of our Objective 1 actions in 2016/17.



Finances and Savings

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is financed mainly by contributions from the six unitary authorities in North Wales in proportion to their population. Its annual revenue budget is currently set at £32million.

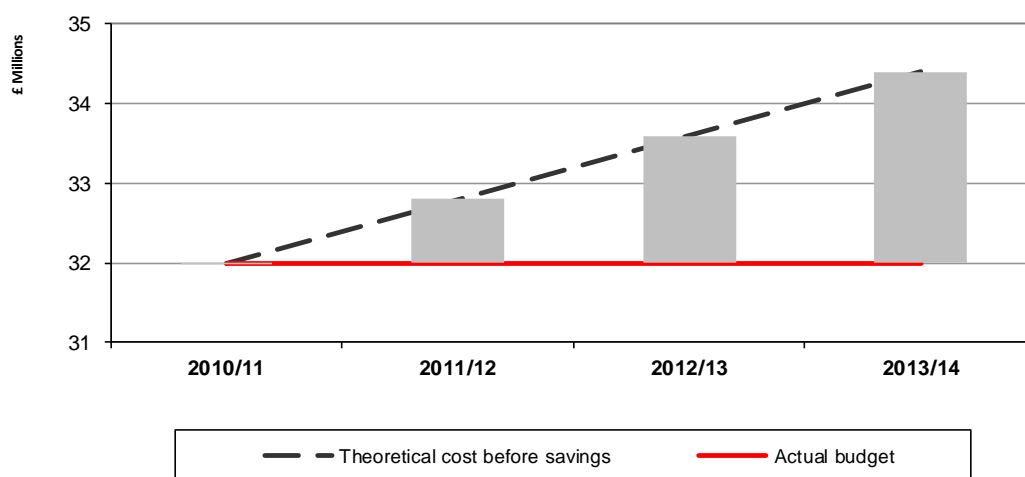
In recent years the cost per head of population has remained at £46.

£	Contribution 2012/13	Contribution 2013/14	Contribution 2014/15	Contribution 2015/16	Contribution 2016/17
Anglesey	3,219,270	3,216,231	3,198,669	3,200,523	3,190,812
Gwynedd	5,525,827	5,507,985	5,588,255	5,602,787	5,598,221
Conwy	5,206,959	5,198,570	5,283,704	5,289,891	5,277,177
Denbighshire	4,569,316	4,593,630	4,342,155	4,360,740	4,363,962
Flintshire	6,981,590	6,955,089	7,018,721	7,033,548	7,022,578
Wrexham	6,269,049	6,300,506	6,340,507	6,398,354	6,433,093
TOTAL	31,772,011	31,772,011	31,772,011	31,885,843	31,885,843
Cost per head of population	46	46	46	46	46

Finances and Savings

The Authority's first 3-year budget plan

The national economic downturn and the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2010 gave an indication of the level of cuts to public services that could be expected. Consequently, in December 2010, the Authority took the decision to freeze the annual budget available for running the Service at £32million for the next three years.



What this meant was that cost increases during those years (e.g. due to inflation or rises in fuel costs) had to be paid for from within the existing budget. Every year around £800,000 had to be taken away from some parts of the Service in order to pay for unavoidable cost increases.

In total, by the end of the third year (2013/14), annual savings of £2.45million had been achieved. The cost per head of population had been reduced from £47 to £46, and five out of the six county councils contributed less for fire and rescue services in 2013/14 than they had contributed three years earlier in 2010/11.

Finances and Savings

How savings were achieved during the first 3-year budget plan

In 2011/12 (Year 1)

- £200,000 cut from **individual budget lines**, discontinuing some completely or scaling them down.
- £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- £90,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- £460,000 cut from the **Operational Management** budget by reducing the number of officers.
- £30,000 cut from the **Control** budget by restructuring its staffing arrangements.

In 2012/13 (Year 2)

- **Individual budget lines** were again cut or scaled down, releasing a further £150,000.
- Another £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- Another £90,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- £500,000 released from the **Operational Firefighters'** budget by changing the way their shifts were rostered, so reducing the number of wholetime firefighters required by 10%.

In 2013/14 (Year 3)

- **Individual budget lines** were cut or scaled down for a third time, releasing a further £70,000.
- Another £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- Another £180,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- A further £500,000 released from the **Operational Firefighters'** budget, by changing the way their shifts were rostered (as above).

A major part of the savings involved reducing the workforce, including managers, firefighters, community safety and support staff by an overall 9%. Despite these reductions, the Authority was able to continue to successfully deliver against its objectives.

Budget Plans after 2013/14

The second (intended) 3-year budget plan

Approaching the end of its first three-year budget plan, the Authority had to decide what to do for the next three years. It knew that having already reduced its running costs the only way to achieve more savings would inevitably mean making cuts that the public would notice.

The Authority launched a public consultation in September 2013 that warned of the impact of a second three-year budget freeze. It explained that it would mean making significant changes to fire and rescue services because freezing the budget until 2016/17 would mean cutting £3.3million out of the budget on top of the £2.45million that had already been taken out over the period of the first 3-year budget plan.

The Authority was not minded at that time to embark on a programme of cuts, but it was acutely aware of the pressure on all public services to limit their spending, and that fire and rescue authorities were not immune to the effects of the harsh financial climate. The Authority therefore gave an undertaking that to help safeguard the county councils' budgets it would limit any increases in their financial contributions to a maximum equivalent of an additional £1 per year per head of population.

Towards the end of 2013, the Authority decided to maintain the current level of service provision. However, given the impact of the local government financial settlement (how much the county councils could expect to receive from central Welsh Government funds) and the reduction in the county councils' funding, the Authority chose an alternative strategy which was to freeze the budget for a fourth year (2014/15) and to use its financial reserves to cover any shortfall and so avoid introducing the large-scale cuts that would otherwise have been necessary.

However, this option would only be sustainable for one year and for subsequent years a consultation would have to be undertaken to consider the balance between budget pressures, service provision and the public risk.

Budget Plans after 2014/15

Keeping to its undertaking to limit any increase in county council financial contributions to a maximum equivalent of an additional £1 per year per head of population, the Authority decided to add only a very small increase for 2015/16 so that the total contribution would still equate to under £46 per head of population.

In order to absorb some of the estimated £628,000 of unavoidable cost increases in 2015/16 the Authority decided to make savings by:

- ceasing to provide non-statutory rope rescue and large animal rescue services, saving around £16,000 a year;
- further reducing attendances to false alarms notified through automatic fire alarms, saving around £25,000 a year;
- further reducing operational manager posts (from 32 to 28), saving around £250,000 a year;

and to allocate £223,168 from its reserves to meet the shortfall.

	£	
Budget as in previous years	31,772,011	
Unavoidable cost increases in 2015/16	+ 628,000	
Savings to be made in 2015/16	-291,000	
Total budget requirement for 2015/16	32,109,011	
Contributions from county councils		31,885,843
Allocated from reserves		+223,168
Total budget available for 2015/16		32,109,011

Budget Plans after 2015/16

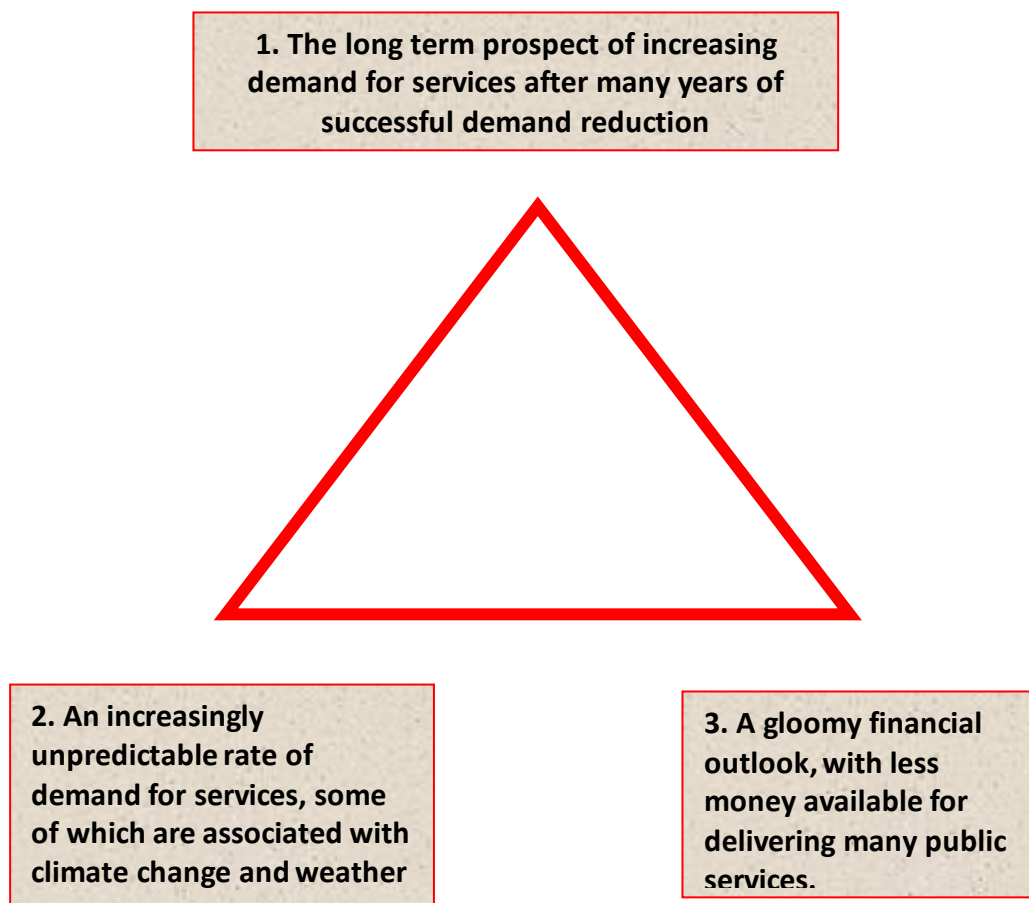
Recognising the financial pressures on the county councils, the Authority took the view that it would aim to freeze its budget at the 2015/16 level for the following three years of 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 and meet any unavoidable cost increases during that period by making savings and/or using reserves.

The unavoidable cost increases over those three years were estimated to be around £2million, but major savings could not be achieved within the first year of this three-year period. The Authority therefore decided for 2016/17 to make savings of £130,000 and allocate £760,000 from its reserves to underpin the budget.

	£	
Budget as in previous year	31,885,843	
Unavoidable cost increases in 2016/17	+ 890,000	
Savings to be made in 2016/17	-130,000	
Total budget requirement for 2016/17	32,654,843	
Contributions from county councils		31,885,843
Allocated from reserves		+760,000
Total budget available for 2016/17		32,654,843

Specific problems that the Authority is seeking to tackle

Previous Improvement Plans published by the Authority have set out its strategic priorities based on its analysis of available information.



Having successfully reduced the demand for its services in recent years, and recognising the financial pressures on the public sector over the next few years, the Authority was keen to consider the size, shape and purpose of the fire and rescue service of the future in light of its anticipated long term demand profile.

People expect an emergency response when they are in need, but providing a service ‘just in case’ costs money. Similarly, people tend to focus on the services available near where they live, and forget that they may need to call on the fire and rescue service whilst visiting other areas, or when travelling.

Public consultation – what you told us

The Authority runs an annual public consultation on its draft Improvement Objectives. In developing the 2016/17 improvement plan the Authority consulted from September to December 2015 and encouraged people to submit their views.

A consultation document entitled ‘Your Services, Your Choices’ was produced to explain what the Authority was proposing in terms of ‘How to maintain excellent, affordable Fire and Rescue Services in North Wales in 2016-17 and beyond’.

People were invited to take part in the consultation through a variety of means, the primary route being an online questionnaire, supported by social media. Bilingual messages and videos outlined the key challenges and changes facing the Authority.

180 people responded via the online questionnaire; but not everyone answered all the questions.

In relation to the proposal to continue to reduce accidental dwelling fires, over 92% of the responses supported maintaining this as the Authority’s primary objective.

Over 60% of the responses also supported the proposal to develop a 3-year financial strategy in which freezing the budget would be a central principle.

As for the proposal to introduce a new way of planning operational resources to ensure that at least twenty fire crews were available in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk and at least thirty-eight were available at times of relatively higher risk, almost 49% thought this would be a good level of improvement, 28% thought it was a good idea but were not convinced that those numbers would be enough, and 23% favoured persevering with trying to improve the existing arrangements.

Almost 84% of the responses supported the proposal to explore opportunities to diversify what firefighters do and offer additional services to the public of North Wales.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

Improvement Objective 1

To help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation.

Why has this objective been chosen?

The safety of people in North Wales is the Authority's primary concern, but also it makes much better sense to prevent incidents from happening than to simply react every time they do.

The Authority is committed to providing free Home Safety Checks² to householders in North Wales, but the demographics of North Wales and the identified behaviours mean that prevention activity must continue in order to keep pace, and that response services will need to remain available to deal with failures and the unexpected or genuinely unpreventable accidents. For many years the Authority has reminded people that prevention is better than cure, and it still believes that.

Furthermore, the Authority is clearly mandated to work in this direction through the Welsh Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016.

What is the expected outcome?

People expect to be safe in their homes. With the right support and advice, people can protect themselves from accidental fires, both by preventing a fire from starting in the first instance, and by knowing how to react quickly and correctly if one does occur.

Where that has failed, people should have confidence that the fire and rescue service will respond quickly and effectively to rescue them and limit the damage to their property.

² A reduction in Community Risk Reduction grant funding from the Welsh Government compelled the Authority to revise its long-standing annual target of delivering 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks down to 20,000 in 2015/16.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

What new actions are planned for 2016/17?

1. Seek to improve the impact and effectiveness of Home Safety Checks.
2. Aim to deliver 20,000 Home Safety Checks during the year, with a minimum of 30% of the checks undertaken following a referral from a partner organisation.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Outputs

- The number of home safety checks delivered, with a target of 20,000 during the year.
- The percentage of home safety checks delivered as a result of a referral from a partner agency, with a minimum target of 30% of the overall number delivered.

Outcomes

- The number of deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires compared with previous years and in other areas.
- The number of injuries (especially in the more serious categories) sustained at accidental dwelling fires compared with previous years and in other areas.
- The percentage of people involved in accidental dwelling fires who were able to escape unharmed without needing assistance from a fire crew to do so compared with previous years.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

Improvement Objective 2

Recognising the anticipated reduction in local government funding, the Authority will develop a 3-year financial strategy in which freezing the budget will be a central principle.

Why has this objective been chosen?

The Authority is financed mainly by contributions from the six unitary authorities in North Wales in proportion to their population. Its annual revenue budget is currently set at just under £32million.

In 2015/16, having frozen the budget for three consecutive years, the Authority increased the contributions from the county councils by £113,832 but gave an undertaking that it would aim to limit any future increase to a maximum equivalent to £1 per head of population.

That undertaking remains, but because the Authority recognised the financial pressures on the county councils in the area, it decided to do even better than that by aiming to freeze the budget again for another three years. Potentially, that could reduce county council contributions for fire and rescue services to as low as the equivalent of £45 per head of population per year – the same as it was in 2008-09.

What is the expected outcome?

That the Authority endeavours not to increase its contributions from the constituent county councils in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

What new actions are planned for 2016/17?

Having already cut £3million from the Authority's annual running costs, unavoidable cost increases over the next three years (estimated at around £2million) would need to be met through making savings (so possibly cutting services) and using reserves. More detailed work will be completed during 2016/17.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

How the Authority proposes to deliver its financial strategy.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

Improvement Objective 3

The Authority will re-balance its resources to match risk. The Authority will introduce a new way of planning to ensure that there are at least 20 strategically located fire crews available in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk, and at least 38 available at times of relatively higher risk.

Why has this objective been chosen?

This objective reflects the Authority's determination to provide sustainable and affordable fire and rescue services in North Wales.

The public response to Authority consultations in 2012 and 2015 indicated the importance of guaranteeing the availability of fire crews around the clock. However, achieving and sustaining that in an area covered primarily by retained (part time) firefighters is increasingly difficult. People generally know where their nearest fire station is located, but they would not know where the nearest *available* fire crew was at the time of their call.

By re-focusing away from where the fire stations (i.e. the buildings) are to the planning and management of fire crews (i.e. operational staff), the Service can take a more risk-based, flexible approach to availability.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

What is the expected outcome?

More closely managed availability of at least 20 strategically located fire crews available in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk, and at least 38 available at times of relatively higher risk.

What new actions are planned for 2016-17?

Detailed planning of risk-based availability of cover, aiming for at least 20 fire crews available in North Wales at times of relatively lower risk, and a minimum of 38 available at times of relatively higher risk.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Progress made in relation to planning, achieving and maintaining the expected level of crew availability across the whole area.

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

Improvement Objective 4

The Authority will explore opportunities to diversify what firefighters do and offer additional services to the public of North Wales.

Why has this objective been chosen?

Over the years the Authority has increased the amount of fire prevention work that it does alongside its fire and rescue emergency response work, but recognises that it could do more.

The Welsh Government's wish for this to occur is also reflected in its Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016: *"...there is a credible case for building on Fire and Rescue Authorities' domestic fire safety work in particular to embrace other hazards people may face in their own homes. For instance, elderly fallers account for 10% of all 999 calls to the Welsh Ambulance Service. Many of these could be prevented by providing simple advice and basic modifications. In 2014, there were 26 deaths as a direct result of carbon monoxide poisoning in England and Wales. While other organisations such as local authorities and housing associations clearly have responsibilities here, Fire and Rescue Authorities are well placed to provide awareness advice and have already done so in the past."*

The Authority's Improvement Objectives for 2016/17

What is the expected outcome?

That people are better protected in their homes and demand on other services is lower than it otherwise would have been.

What new actions are planned for 2016-17?

Continue to work with partner organisations and through the new Public Services Boards to identify new opportunities to work collaboratively to improve home safety in North Wales.

What specifically will be reported back to the public after the end of the year?

Progress in relation to agreeing a more diverse role for firefighters and providing additional services to the public of North Wales.

Appendix

This appendix contains additional background information about the Authority, the duty to continuously improve, and other general information.

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Its role is to perform all the duties and responsibilities of a Fire Authority in accordance with appropriate legislation and regulations, approve its Improvement and Risk Reduction Plans, approve its revenue and capital budgets and the contribution for the constituent councils, monitor the revenue and capital budgets and deal with any significant variations, including decisions on any revised or supplementary contributions.

The Authority's **Executive Panel** consists of 14 voting members, namely the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority and two members selected from among the members of each of the six constituent Authorities.

The Authority's **Audit Committee** consists of the 14 voting members who are not on the Executive Panel. This committee has its own Chair and Deputy Chair.

The Authority's **Standards Committee** consist of 4 independent members and 2 members of the Authority.

The **Clerk and Monitoring Officer's** role is to ensure meetings are administered in accordance with relevant legislation and regulation, to deal with code of conduct issues, overall governance and democratic arrangements and legal and procedural matters.

The **Treasurer's** role is to provide financial advice relating to revenue and capital funding issues, investment and cashflow, to keep proper accounting records and take reasonable steps to prevent and detect fraud or financial irregularities. The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices to give a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position and income and expenditure.

The North Wales Fire Services 1995 Combination Scheme Order established the Authority (replacing the former Gwynedd and Clwyd Fire Brigades), made provision for the control and administration of its finances, and defined the area it would cover.

In setting its budget for the following financial year, the Authority is required to submit an estimate of its net expenses to each constituent authority before the end of December, and subsequently, before 15th February, give notice of the actual amount of contribution to be paid by that authority in the next financial year.

Detailed information on the role of the Fire and Rescue Authority and the general guidelines which apply are set out in Standing Orders (available on the website at www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk or on request).

The Authority's specific duties and powers are prescribed in a range of legislation and regulations, but the key ones are:

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 that specifies a Fire and Rescue Authority's core duties as:

- **Promoting fire safety in its area.** This includes making the necessary arrangements for:
 - Providing information, publicity and encouragement to people about how to prevent fires and avoid becoming a casualty of fire.
 - Giving advice (on request) about how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property; the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.
- **Dealing with calls for help.** This includes obtaining the necessary information and summoning the personnel to deal with incidents of fire, road traffic accidents and other defined emergencies.
- **Fighting fires in its area.** This includes providing the personnel (and their training), services and equipment to meet the normal requirements of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fires.
- **Rescuing people from road traffic accidents in its area.** This includes providing the personnel (and their training), services and equipment to meet the normal requirements of protecting people from serious harm (to the extent that it considers it reasonable) in road traffic accidents.

- **Dealing with other emergencies.** The nature, extent and geographical area of this requirement would be set out by government and may require or authorise the Authority to secure the provision of the personnel (and their training), services and equipment to deal with emergencies other than fires and road traffic accidents.
- **Responding to other eventualities.** The Authority may take any action it considers appropriate in relation to an event or situation that might cause harm to people or the environment, including the life and health of plants and animals.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 that confers powers and places duties on a Fire and Rescue Authority as an enforcing authority for the purpose of inspecting and enforcing fire safety in relevant premises in its area.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 that defines the powers and duties of specified categories of local bodies to prepare contingency plans for, and respond to emergency events or situations that threaten serious damage to human welfare or the environment, and war or terrorism that threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 that introduced a legally-binding common purpose – the wellbeing goals – for national government, local government, fire and rescue authorities and other specified bodies. The Act details the ways in which specified bodies must work together to improve the well-being of Wales.

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND REDUCING RISK

The **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** came into effect from April 2010. It requires Welsh Improvement Authorities (county councils, national parks authorities and fire and rescue authorities) to set improvement objectives and make arrangements to achieve them.

Improvement objectives can be anything that can be shown to improve what the Welsh Improvement Authority does (its 'functions') in terms of at least one out of seven aspects of improvement, namely:

1. strategic effectiveness;
2. service quality;
3. service availability;
4. fairness;
5. sustainability;
6. efficiency; and
7. innovation.

Fire and Rescue Authorities, as Welsh Improvement Authorities, have been issued with their own specific guidance relating to Part 1 of the Measure concerned with improvement.

Their operations will be subject to an Improvement Assessment by the Auditor General for Wales (operating through the Wales Audit Office) that is undertaken through a forward-looking Corporate Assessment and a retrospective Performance Assessment in each financial year.

A copy of the guidance document is available from the Welsh Government's website.

<http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/fire/151019-part-1-guidance-fire-en.pdf>

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND REDUCING RISK

The **Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015** came into effect from April 2016. It requires specified public bodies to carry out sustainable development, defined in law as a process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development principle with the aim of achieving defined well-being goals.

Acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle has been defined as acting in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The well-being goals are described in the Act. They aim to make Wales:

1. prosperous;
2. resilient;
3. healthier;
4. more equal;
5. a country of cohesive communities;
6. a country with a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language;
7. globally responsible.

Relevant public bodies are required to think in the longer term – at least 10 years ahead, although 25 years or longer would be better in some contexts. They should focus on preventing problems from getting worse; consider how their own objectives might impact on those of others; work collaboratively to achieve their goals; and involve people and communities in helping them meet their objectives.

Fire and rescue authorities have specified duties both as individual public bodies and as statutory board members of Public Services Boards (PSBs) which have collective responsibility for improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their area.

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has made specific arrangements to support the achievement of its improvement and risk reduction strategies.

Governance Arrangements

The Authority itself is organised in such a way that its 28 elected members can maintain a proper involvement in strategic planning, in decision-making and in monitoring the service's levels of performance. The full Authority meets regularly, at least four times per year, with more frequent meetings of the Executive Panel between times. It has an Audit Committee and a separate Standards Committee that meet to consider specific issues. The Authority's correct functioning is further supported by its Clerk and Treasurer. Meetings are open to the public, and records of the Authority's transactions are available from the Authority's website.

The Service is led and managed by the Chief Fire Officer supported by the principal officer team, the senior management team, specialist advisers, and a defined organisational structure.

The Service's structure is aligned to the six North Wales local authority areas, and works in partnership through specific collaborative arrangements with a wide range of organisations including other emergency services, members of the local resilience forum, health, education and voluntary sectors, specific agencies and commissions and local service boards (statutory Public Services Boards from April 2016). Where appropriate, formal agreements are entered into for the sharing of data.

Progress against specific departmental and project plans, annual service plans and detailed budget plans is monitored and reported regularly throughout the year, with in-year adjustments to plans being agreed where necessary.

Separate assurance processes are provided through internal and external audits, including financial audits.

Arrangements to secure continuous improvement

Collaboration

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority supports collaboration with other fire and rescue services in a range of improvement activities, pooling expertise and sharing resources (e.g. joint procurement of equipment, joint recruitment of wholetime firefighters) where appropriate, at both UK and Wales levels.

National Issues Committee (NIC)

The Welsh Fire and Rescue Services' National Issues Committee (NIC) was established in 2012 to further improve collaborative working, service delivery and sustained service improvement.

The Key Collaborative Areas of the NIC are:

1. National Crewing Arrangements
2. National Community Safety Delivery Systems
3. Joint Public Service Centre Project
4. National Fire Cover Review
5. National Fleet and Transport
6. National ICT Platforms

Other Collaboration

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority also supports collaboration with a range of partner organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. This includes collaboration for the purposes of:

- realising its own aims and objectives
- local and national resilience, and
- supporting multi-agency improvement, recently through Single Integrated Plans and in future through Local Well-being Plans.

General Statement

The Local Government Measure 2009 introduced a general duty for Welsh Improvement Authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Whilst there could never be an absolute duty to improve, there is an expectation that authorities will make suitable arrangements to improve and set themselves realistic, relevant and sufficiently ambitious objectives.

Authorities are required to make a general statement outlining the nature of their intentions for discharging the general duty to improve.

In accordance with this legislation, North Wales Fire and Rescue develops and publishes an annual improvement and risk reduction plan upon which it has consulted. This plan is published as soon as possible after 31 December in the year prior to the financial year to which it relates, and itemises the improvement objectives and associated measures of success for the forthcoming financial year.

Once agreement has been reached about the level of funding that the authority will have available (by mid February prior to the start of the financial year), budgets are allocated to specific purposes. This includes revenue spending and the roll-out of the capital programme.

Departmental plans showing how the high level objectives will be achieved (with associated quantitative targets where appropriate) are developed by the end of March.

Central monitoring by senior management of spending and the completion of planned objectives takes place at quarterly meetings through the year, so that any in-year adjustments can be made if necessary. Progress reports are provided to the Authority throughout the year. External assessment of progress is provided by Wales Audit Office.

A summary of the achievement of objectives is provided through the following year's Performance Assessment, published by 31 October in relation to the previous financial year, and through the Treasurer's report to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

OTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT DETAILS

Postal address: North Wales Fire and Rescue
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Telephone: 01745 535250

Website: www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** came into effect in October 2004, replacing the previous Fire and Rescue Services Act 1947 in England and Wales.
It clarifies the duties and powers of Fire and Rescue Authorities to:
 - Promote fire safety
 - Fight fires
 - Protect people and property from fires
 - Rescue people from road traffic accidents
 - Respond to other specified risks, such as chemical incidents
 - Respond to large scale emergencies such as terrorist attacks
- The **National Framework 2016 Onwards** was issued by the Welsh Government under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It sets out the Welsh Government's vision and priorities for the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales and what is expected of them during the lifespan of the framework.
- **The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** came into effect from 1st April 2010. Specific guidance relating to the improvement element (Part 1) for fire and rescue services was issued by the Welsh Government in September 2015.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The **Fire and Rescue Authorities (Improvement Plans) (Wales) Order 2012** came into force on May 21st 2012. It requires fire and rescue authorities to publish their improvement plan as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December in the year prior to the financial year to which the improvement plan relates.
- **Previous year's Performance** - Section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish performance information relating to each financial year, by 31 October, in the year following that to which the performance relates. The Authority's assessment of its performance in 2014-15 is available from the Performance and Improvement Section of its website – www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk.
- The **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** came into effect in October 2006, replacing over 70 pieces of fire safety law. It applies to all non-domestic premises in England and Wales, including the communal parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation. It abolished the requirement for businesses to have fire certificates and put the onus on the person responsible for the premises to address fire safety in those premises.
- The **Equality Act 2010** replaced over 100 pieces of equality law. The General Duty and specific duties for the public sector in Wales came into force in April 2011.
- The **Civil Contingencies Act 2004** provides a single framework for civil protection to large scale emergencies that threaten serious damage to human welfare, the environment or to security. Fire and Rescue Services are 'Category 1' responders under this act.
- **Welsh Government Fire Branch**
The responsibility for providing fire and rescue services and promoting fire safety in Wales was devolved to the National Assembly for Wales on 10 November 2004. The Community Safety division of the Welsh Assembly Government is based at Rhydycar, Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ.

- **Wales Audit Office**

The Wales Audit Office publishes reports on behalf of the Auditor General who is required to assess the likelihood that the Authority will continue to improve and whether the Authority is discharging its duties and acting in accordance with relevant issued guidance. Auditors also work with fire authorities across Wales to deliver a programme of financial and value-for-money audits.

<http://www.audit.wales/>

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INTERVENTION IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE OR POTENTIAL FAILURE TO COMPLY

The Welsh Government has powers of intervention:

- under section 22 of the **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the National Framework. In such cases, section 23 - Intervention Protocol would apply.
- under section 29 of the **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009** if it considers that a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is at risk of failing, to comply with the Measure. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, Welsh Ministers may only intervene after they have offered voluntary support to the Authority under section 28 of the Measure.

CONSULTATIONS

	Consultation	Publication	For year
Full Risk Reduction Plan	Summer 2009		
Full Risk Reduction and Improvement Plan	Summer 2010	October 2010	2011-12
Improvement Objectives	Summer 2011	October 2011	2012-13
Improvement Objectives	Autumn 2012	March 2013	2013-14
Improvement Objectives	Autumn 2013	March 2014	2014-15
Funding and the level of Fire and Rescue Services	Autumn 2014	March 2015	2015-16
Maintaining excellent, affordable Services	Autumn 2015	March 2016	2016-17

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO FUTURE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Sections 5 and 6 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 require the Authority to consult widely before coming to final decisions about improvement.

The Authority conducts a public consultation each year when it publicises its proposed improvement and risk reduction objectives for the following year and invites comments from anyone with an interest in what the Authority does. All comments received are taken into account before finalising the following year's plans.

Anyone wishing to contribute new ideas about future improvement objectives should write to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer at the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Ffordd Salesbury, St. Asaph Business Park, St. Asaph, Denbighshire LL17 0JJ.