



Assessment and Improvement Plan

2015/16

Date: September 2015

Improvement Plan 2015/16

1. TWFRA has a longstanding commitment to continuous improvement and as part of this, welcomes and seeks to learn from independent assessment.
2. There has been significant change in Government's approach to the performance and improvement of local authorities including FRAs, with Government prescription being replaced by statements of trust in sector led improvement and local accountability. This has led to the removal of much of the national architecture of improvement - national performance indicators and targets, audit and inspection etc.
3. Since TWFRA believes it has always been responsible for its own improvement, this has not affected the organisation's commitment to improving. In June 2010, the Policy and Performance Committee resolved that:
 - They would wish to reiterate their commitment to evidenced-based decision-making
 - Continued comparison and benchmarking with other Metropolitan Authorities and sector led approaches to improvement, are desirable
 - Independent scrutiny of the organisation to assist towards making improvement should continue in a proportionate way.
4. This Improvement and Assessment Plan is linked to the last of these commitments, and has two purposes:

Section 1- the Assessment Plan- sets out the agreed mechanisms TWFRA will use to seek assessment of our progress. These will largely be independent although they may result from benchmarking or other exercises conducted by ourselves. This enables us to annually review the mechanisms that we will use, to ensure that our approach is proportionate.

Section 2 - the Improvement Plan sets out the improvement actions which have arisen through assessments or other agreed routes, to allow progress against these to be regularly monitored by Members and SMT.

5. The Improvement Plan contains only strategic, crosscutting improvement actions from a range of sources. It does not replace any other strategic documents - it is a monitoring tool bringing improvement actions conveniently into one place.
6. It specifically does not include activities which change the Service to align risk and available resources. These are contained within the IRMP.
7. The plan includes business continuity improvement but only those actions which are classed as being more significant than a minor non conformity.
8. More detailed / lower level improvement actions will normally be managed through the level 3 plans of specific teams.

Section 1: Assessment Plan

This section sets out the agreed mechanisms we will use to assess our progress. It also indicates, where appropriate, the level of improvement actions that will be included in the Improvement Plan for each mechanism. Shaded boxes indicate assessments planned for 2015/16.

Audit / Self Assessment	Frequency and date of last assessment	Future assessments	Notes	Level of actions to be included in Improvement Plan	Costs
Annual Audit Letters	Annual (last letter received October 2014)	Commencing Spring 2015 with draft letter September 2015	The AAL comprises of two elements: audit of FA financial statements and assessment of FA arrangements to achieve VfM in the use of resources. Lead officer: ACO Brindle	All <i>NB the 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 Annual Audit Letters contained no substantive improvement actions for the Authority</i>	£40, 848
Internal Audit	Annual risk based programme (last reported September 2014)	2015-16 New programme begins April 2015	Internal Audit is provided on an annual programme basis by Sunderland City Council. Internal Audit is required under good governance principles and the provision of this by a partner body provides additional independence. Lead officer: ACO Brindle	High, Significant and Medium (Low Risk, and Observation will be actioned through level 3 plans, however all actions are reported to the Governance Committee by Internal Audit). <i>NB there were no high or significant risks in the internal audits carried out in 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and (up to Sept) 2014-15.</i>	TBC

Audit / Self Assessment	Frequency and date of last assessment	Future assessments	Notes	Level of actions to be included in Improvement Plan	Costs
Operational Assessment and Peer Review	Triennial Last completed October 2014	2017 <i>TBC</i>	<p>Voluntary process developed by Chief Fire Officers' Association and Local Government Association. Based on self-assessment against 7 key areas plus corporate questions on leadership, financial sustainability and delivery of outcomes.</p> <p>All 46 FRAs nationally have agreed to undertake this during the current round.</p> <p>Lead officer: ACO Lowther</p>	Key actions agreed by Authority based on review report	n/a
Annual Governance Review (internal)	Annual Last completed December 2014, to be presented to Governance committee June 2015	January 2016	<p>The Authority has a statutory duty to prepare an Annual Governance Statement and the governance review is CIPFA good practice to prepare for this.</p> <p>The review is scrutinised by the Governance Committee</p> <p>Lead officer: AM Griffiths</p>	Key actions agreed by Authority based on review	n/a
ISO 22301 Business Continuity Accreditation	Accredited February 2015	August 2015 (Provisional)	<p>This British Standard has been replaced by ISO 22301 which the Authority successfully achieved in February 2015.</p> <p>Lead officer: AM Griffiths</p>	3 Minor Nonconformities arising from assessment	£4, 192

Audit / Self Assessment	Frequency and date of last assessment	Future assessments	Notes	Level of actions to be included in Improvement Plan	Costs
Investors in People	Triennial Last completed February 2014	February 2017	Voluntary process promoting and rewarding good practice in people management. IIP assessment site visit took place 24-28 February 2014 and TWFA once again attained the Gold Award. Lead officer: AM Robson	Key actions agreed by Authority based on review report	£11,815
Your Views Count Employee Survey	6 monthly tranches Last completed March 2015	September 2015 (reported to SMT November 2015)	This survey provides an ongoing account of staff satisfaction; a summary report is provided to SMT on a six monthly basis. Lead officer: AM Griffiths	Key actions agreed by SMT based on survey findings every 2 years	n/a
Equality Peer Review	Triennial Last completed November 2014	March 2016	Voluntary activity supported by Local Government Association. Equality Peer Challenge Action Plan agreed by SMT and the appropriate managers are now progressing actions. Lead officer: AM Robson	Key actions agreed by Authority based on review report	£7,400 'lighter touch' accreditation £4,500

Audit / Self Assessment	Frequency and date of last assessment	Future assessments	Notes	Level of actions to be included in Improvement Plan	Costs
Faculty of Occupational Medicines accreditation	Not currently accredited	Seeking accreditation during 2015	<p>Voluntary accreditation scheme (SEQOHS- (Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service) for occupational health providers.</p> <p>75% of the accreditation process complete. Improvement work continuing in preparation for assessment. Evidence will be uploaded in April 2015 and a mock assessment will follow.</p> <p>Lead officer: AM Robson</p>	Action contained in level 3 plan of occupational health team	Registration; £1,000 Assessment; additional £1,000
ROSPA Award	Annual Gold award in 2014 and previous years	Next assessment June 2015	<p>Voluntary activity supported by ROSPA to promote better health in the workplace</p> <p>In addition, an annual Industry Sector award is made to one emergency service for excellence in health and safety</p> <p>Lead officer: AM Griffiths</p>	Key actions agreed by Authority based on assessment	£845

Section 2: Improvement Plan

This section sets out the key improvement actions based on assessments as set out above. The Plan is updated every three months, monitored every six months by SMT and forms part of the annual review of corporate governance. *Due to the removal of completed actions, to ensure references are available the numbering of actions may not be consecutive.*

Source	Area for improvement	Specific action	Lead officer	Target completion	Progress
Internal Audit 2014	7. Strengthen Payroll/HR procedures	7a Where attendance records include variations to pay relating to the person authorising the form, they should be countersigned	AM HR L&D		The process is in place following recommendation from audits.
		7b Complete review/amendment of Admin procedure 1-43 to reflect that AMs do not authorise overtime			Procedure amended (July 2015).
		7c Authorised signatory list should be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate and reflects current operations and staff			The list is reviewed regularly by the Payroll team in line with audit requirements.

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Annual Governance Review 2013	11. Ensure effective Corporate Governance of the Authority	11c Review the Standing orders and financial regulations to take account of organisational changes	ACO S&P	December 2015	Finance, procurement and HR sections have been reviewed and input from Lead Authority being completed.
Annual Governance Review 2014	<i>Particularly in light of legislative change</i>	11f Review Members' learning programme	AM HR L&D	February 2016	Training with all Members commenced in July and further sessions are scheduled following FA meetings.
Annual Governance Review 2014		11g Review and update the Whistleblowing and Fraud and Corruption policies to ensure compliance with new guidance		December 2014	Completed
Employee Survey December 2014	12. Staff Engagement and Communication	12a Improvement actions identified will be addressed in the Staff Engagement and Communication Strategy	AM SPRA	April 2016	Implementation in line with staff engagement and change management programme
Corporate Governance and Internal Control Arrangements Action Plan 2015/16	13. Internal Control	13a Review the Officer Delegation Scheme	CFO / Authority Chair	April 2016	

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Source	Area for improvement	Specific action	Lead officer	Target completion	Progress
Operational Assessment 2014	14. Leadership, Governance and Corporate Capacity	14a Decide on the strategic direction of wider partnership with the Health and Wellbeing agenda, including how to improve access to vulnerable people data to further enhance targeting of resources.	CFO	January 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.
		14b Consider the benefits of formalising the Authority's involvement in longer term corporate planning at an earlier stage.	Chair / Vice Chair	January 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.
		14c Consider formalising the role and responsibilities of a Chief Fire Officer position to better reflect existing Member-Officer arrangements and relationships operating in other Fire and Rescue Authorities.	Chair / Vice Chair	January 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.
		14d Review the first and second call command arrangements to better reflect Gold (strategic) and Silver (tactical) resourcing.	CFO	January 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.
		14e Review the provision of FDOs and better utilise the capacity of Day Duty station managers.	ACO CS	January 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.

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Source	Area for improvement	Specific action	Lead officer	Target completion	Progress
Operational Assessment 2014	15. Community Risk Management and Prevention	15a Explore greater use of volunteers as part of the longer term community safety strategy.	AM CS / AM SD	December 2015	Reports to be submitted to SMT for consideration and approval.
		15b Continue to explore ways of improving data sharing protocols to enhance the targeting of the most vulnerable in community.	AM CS / AM SD/AM SPRA	January 2016	Information sharing protocol and Information sharing agreements have been developed and partner consultation is taking place.
Operational Assessment 2014	16. Health and Safety	16a Consider the introduction of senior accident investigators, and/or a regional approach to providing this level of investigative skill and knowledge.	ACO S&P/ AM SPRA	April 2016	Being addressed as part of Management and Organisation reviews.