

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL INSPECTION OF STRATHCLYDE FIRE BRIGADE 2003



HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



PRINCIPAL INSPECTION REPORT
STRATHCLYDE FIRE BRIGADE

September 2003

A Report by
HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh

© Crown copyright 2004

ISBN 0 7559 4118 7

Published by
Scottish Executive
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh

Produced for the Scottish Executive by Astron B33967 2-04

Further copies are available from
The Stationery Office Bookshop
71 Lothian Road
Edinburgh EH3 9AZ
Tel: 0870 606 55 66

The text pages of this document are produced from 100% elemental chlorine-free,
environmentally-preferred material and are 100% recyclable.



INTRODUCTION

1. The Principal Inspection of Strathclyde Fire Brigade was initially begun during August 2002. Shortly afterwards a pay dispute affecting the fire service on a national level commenced and the inspection process was suspended and subsequently concluded during September 2003. HM Inspectorate team comprised Dennis Davis, Allan Whitton, Mark Jones and Dave Boyle. Asif Haseeb from Audit Scotland (the Brigade's External Auditor) also reviewed arrangements. Firemaster Jeff Ord, with the support of the Brigade's senior managers, facilitated and was present during key stages of the Inspection.

2. Strathclyde are the last of the eight brigades in Scotland to be inspected using a refined Principal Inspection procedure. Although this was not a joint inspection with Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive, this function in part being reviewed by Assistant Inspectors Jones and Boyle, the method used was comprehensive and followed a detailed assessment criteria.

3. The inspection identified a number of areas where further improvement might be made. These included:

- ◆ **Better data management linked into a strategic plan to provide an overview of the strategic direction being sought by the Brigade.**
- ◆ **Corrections being made to the Brigade's establishment to reflect staff seconded for training purposes.**
- ◆ **Information presented to the public via the Brigade's website being improved to show wide range of activities the Brigade has undertaken.**
- ◆ **An urgent need for the provision of a brigade-wide information technology infrastructure.**
- ◆ **Improvement in the number of experienced Inspecting Officers available to meet an increase in workload and redress decline in the number and efficiency of fire safety inspections being carried out.**

4. Overall, it is assessed that the service provided is satisfactory and there is confidence that, in the general terms of the Fire Services Act 1947, the Brigade and Fire Authority are effectively discharging their duty.

5. This report highlights in bold text areas for further consideration to assist in the process of continuous improvement and those of good practice. The purpose of this approach is to enable the Firemaster and other Brigade managers the opportunity to review, together with members of the Fire Authority, the findings arising from the Inspection. Having reviewed the findings it is suggested that action is taken in a programmed and targeted way to ensure advancement of the Brigade, either through the structured service plan or a specific action plan.

6. By adopting this approach HM Fire Service Inspectorate believes sufficient time and, where required, resource can be allocated to secure the longer term progress required in some areas.



7. It should also be noted that highlighting matters for further consideration is not intended to suggest that only the need for improvement was identified during the inspection. On the contrary, since fire brigades are extensive and complex organisations, the focus for improvement commences from a position that satisfactory performance exists in all areas and that in some shows good practice.

8. Some of these good practice areas identified in Strathclyde Fire Brigade are:

- ◆ **Technical developments identified in the field of mobile data communications.**
- ◆ **Fleet management which have shown positive results both for staff and the Authority.**
- ◆ **Notable initiatives in working with the community in community safety initiatives is especially notable.**
- ◆ **The introduction of a mobile real fire training unit, which has established the principle of taking training to the personnel in remote community fire stations.**
- ◆ **The Brigade had also established a Risk Management Unit which helped draw together at an Authority level those challenges which are arising on a fairly constant basis in all brigades.**

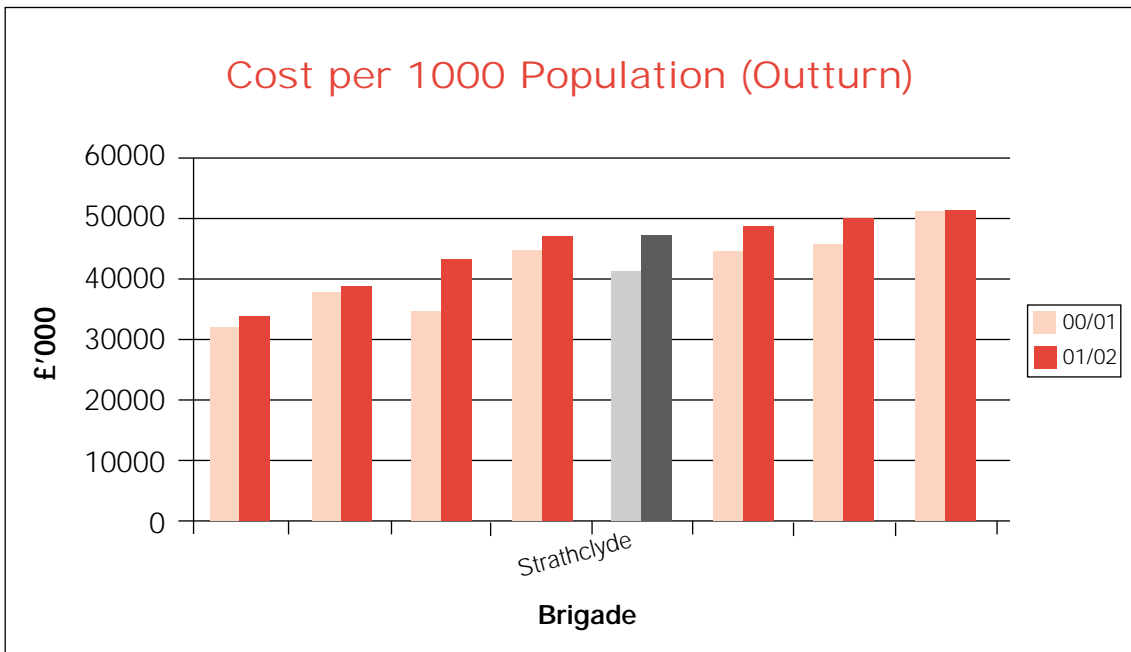


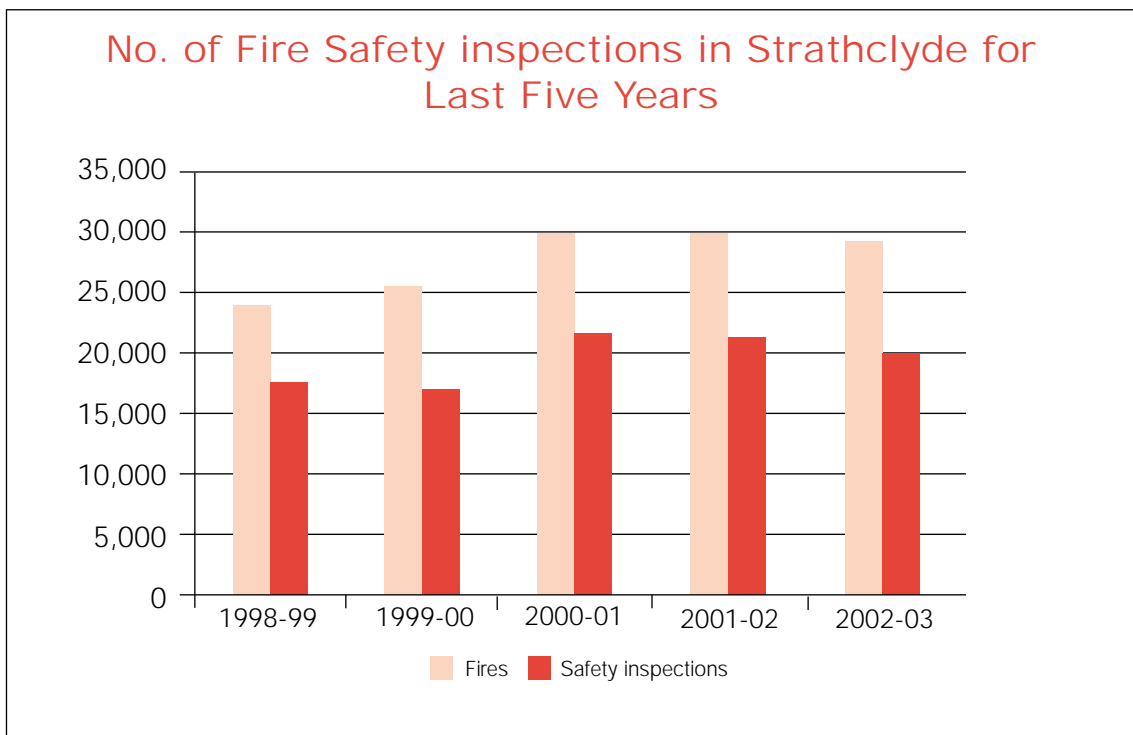
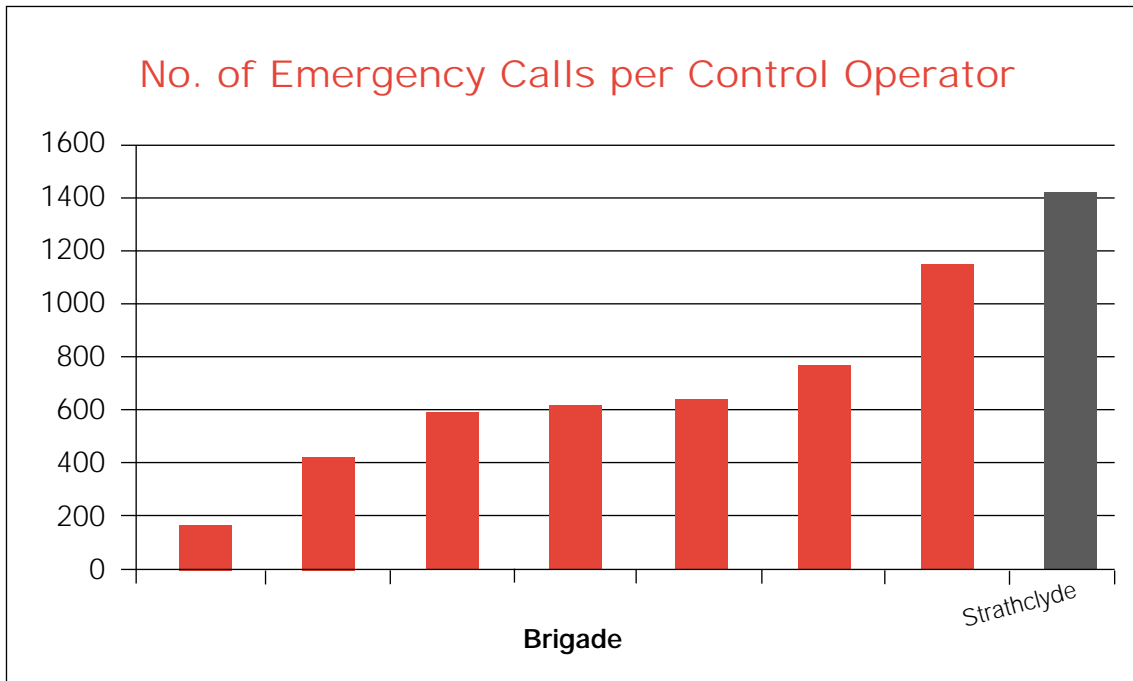
COMPARISON AND TRENDS BETWEEN ALL SCOTTISH BRIGADES

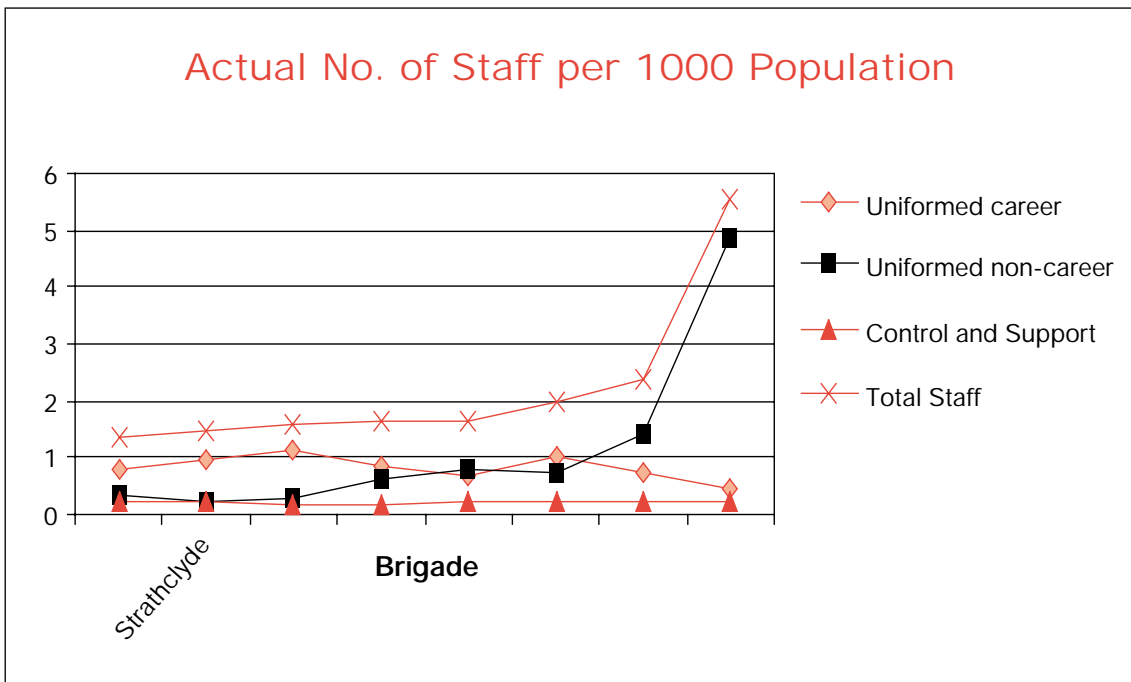
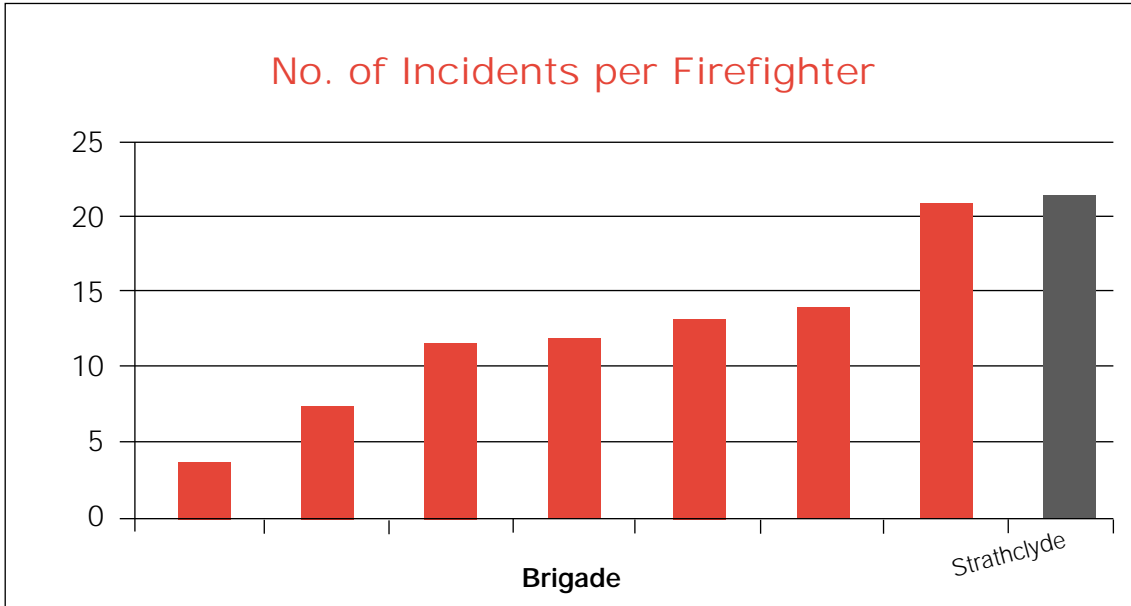
Sampling performance within Scotland

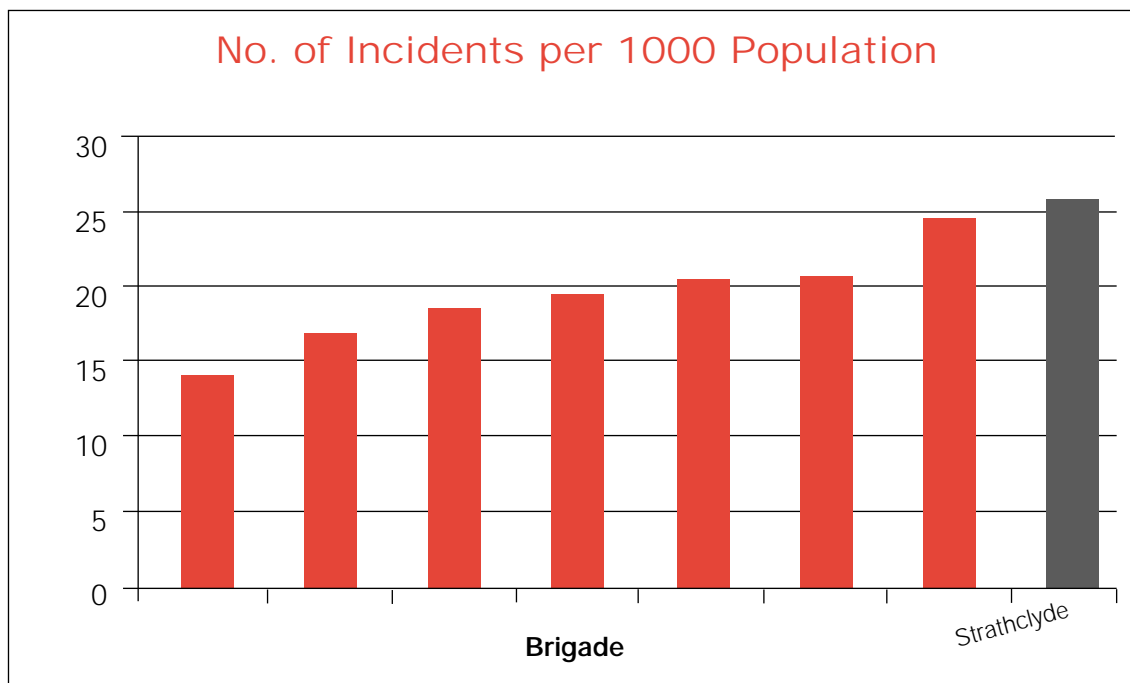
9. Strathclyde Fire Brigade deals with what is consistently the highest annual number of operational incidents per 1000 population of any fire brigade in Scotland. One of the major contributory factors to this is the high proportion of densely populated urban areas within the Brigade's boundaries. The high population density is also one of the major reasons that the Brigade can operate with one of the lowest number of staff per 1000 population. These factors are also reflected by the highest number of emergency calls per control operator.

10. The Brigade's cost of provision per 1000 population, in common with most other brigades, rose over the previous year's. However, Strathclyde remains in the middle of the range across Scotland.









STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategic Management is concerned with leadership direction and effective performance of desired outcomes.

Activities include management and planning of all resources and assets together with financial and performance monitoring. Consultation and information management are also important aspects with this activity.

Overview

11. There has been considerable ongoing development within the Brigade that has continued despite a difficult year, which involved a national fire service dispute and industrial action. The impact within Strathclyde Fire Brigade has been significant since the Firemaster held throughout the period the post of President of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association. This role inevitably involved a considerable personal workload that had to be managed alongside the internal affairs of the Brigade. Recognising this feature, it is pleasing to report that the process of change has continued within the Brigade.

12. The inspection did reveal the following improvement areas:

- ◆ **A strategic plan is not produced and it is suggested that mapping all the existing initiatives would be particularly helpful in providing an overview of the strategic direction being sought by the Brigade.**
- ◆ **In reviewing the Brigade's establishment it is noted that there has been an absorption within station establishments of staff seconded for training purposes. These should be correctly allocated to their training role.**



- ◆ **The establishment review also illustrated that the requirement to have operational command levels appropriate for various scenarios has not been clearly established.**
- ◆ **A review of information offered to the public indicates that the externally accessed website was not particularly good in terms of presenting the wide range of activities that the Brigade has undertaken.**
- ◆ **Internal communications were found as needing improvement. This was partly to reflect the number of Unions involved in the Brigade but equally to ensure that strong connections exist between Brigade managers and those responsible at station level.**
- ◆ **Appraisal systems are now being considered in some detail within the Brigade and it would be a useful demonstration of commitment if senior management undertook 360° reporting.**

13. In addition to the above improvement areas a number of areas of good performance were found. These included:

- ◆ **In community safety there has been the introduction of 13 community firefighters. It is important that they be placed in the context of the overall integrated risk management approach being developed by the Brigade.**
- ◆ **Many technical developments identified were during the inspection in the field of mobile data communications.**
- ◆ **Work has also been undertaken in fleet management which has shown positive results, both for staff and the Authority.**
- ◆ **The general approach to working with the community in community safety initiatives is especially notable.**
- ◆ **The Brigade had also established a Risk Management Unit which helped draw together at an Authority level those challenges which are arising on a fairly constant basis in all brigades.**

14. Each of these approaches has some merit and offers good practice.

Performance Monitoring Inspection 2002

15. In discussion it was obvious that many of the areas identified during the previous performance monitoring inspection conducted between 23 and 26 October 2001 had been undertaken. Steady progress was found in most areas and there had been good responses to those areas highlighted for further development. One issue that remained to be addressed, which is referred to later in this report, is the need to bring together in an integrated way information technology and communications and a firmer proposal is required as to how to manage management information systems in a more corporate way.



16. Overall, however, the Inspectorate were satisfied that the majority of issues identified for development had been undertaken against the background outlined of a difficult year for the fire service nationally. This review also revealed that although there had been considerable discussion in terms of the original *First Impressions* document produced by the Firemaster to illustrate a corporate approach, a further development was a second document *Beyond First Impressions*. The second document, however, contains many subjective comments and in discussion it was identified that this could be improved by mapping the arrangements to a strategic planning approach.

17. Concern was also expressed by the Brigade that the pension deficit likely in 2004/2005 will create major difficulties at a funding level. The Brigade estimates up to £5m will be required to manage through this process and although ill-health retirements are falling, senior ranks are likely to leave in substantial numbers.

Service Planning

18. Progress has been made in most areas as already identified. The major difficulty found was that although there is a defined management cycle which involves, in May and June, senior management discussing their requirements and likely financial bids for the following year, this is managed by an informal process. In addition, although this informal discussion is subsequently ratified through the Members of the Fire Authority discussions in Capital, Best Value and Revenue groups; the Corporate Strategy Team, to which all Heads of Department work, does not have an overview in terms of a strategic direction. This comment is made not to reflect that all planning is not well organised, but to identify an area of positive improvement. The plans seen at departmental level are well focused and organised being set against performance targets involving regular monitoring. What is missing, particularly for the outside observer, and perhaps for staff engaged within departments, is the broad overview of how these priorities are inter-linked into the Brigade's corporate strategy. The Brigade Management Team effectively controls the service plan through regular discussion at minuted meetings.

19. **It is suggested that it would be helpful if all the various initiatives and priorities were therefore mapped into an acceptable form of corporate structure to provide an overview of the clear linkages that exist between the various initiatives.** It is further suggested that this corporate overview may best be presented in a visual rather than text form given the size and complexity of the organisation. This will avoid an unnecessary bureaucratic approach but ensure that there is a clear and obvious routing for most of the activities that are being undertaken.

20. One element which was notable in terms of the overall corporate approach was the establishment of a Risk Management Unit. Effectively this unit takes an overview of all the issues that may arise and affect the Brigade's capacity to meet its commitments, either legally or through financial challenge. Risk assessment is undertaken for all key areas of the Fire Board's activities with each directorate being responsible for their analysis. The Risk Management Unit then reviews these risk analyses and provides a level of quality assurance before any commitment is made by the organisation. The Unit therefore provides a very useful organisational approach to meeting commitment and managing risk. **It was identified that the Risk Management Unit's work could be improved by providing it with a remit to take account of issues that are likely to arise externally and directly affect the Brigade and Board.** Incorporating this feature will help identify possible service failures which might be occasioned by external rather than internal influences.



Resource Management

21. The Brigade structure was last determined in 1994 and is currently in the process of being considered against the likely requirements of the coming years. In particular, internal discussions have occurred in relation to the development of integrated risk management and the Fire Board is likely to receive a preliminary outline this August of how this process will be taken forward. One issue that will arise in these circumstances will be the methods by which management is undertaken and **a new group needs to be established to look at these wider risk management issues.** This will provide a complete overview of the existing resource assessment approach.

22. There has already been a support staff review, although those **staff operating within the area of information technology remain to be reviewed.**

23. **Within the management structure considerable effort needs to be made on internal and external communications.** The Fire Board is also committed to using the quality scheme (EMQS) and other processes such as the ISO 9000 assessment standard. This work remains to be taken forward but Board Members do take into account Best Value Reviews and have worked with the Brigade Management Team, most recently in looking at issues around the workshops and fleet management. In addition, the Brigade Corporate Team undertakes the role of scrutiny on all strategic issues, although it was noted that frequently this broader reporting tends to be subjective. It was found that there is considerable information provided in a very detailed way in reviewing all aspects of the Brigade's internal work. The level of performance work management, and the tools used, is highly refined and provides considerable information for each of the Directors in terms of their responsibilities.

24. The overall approach has been to share responsibilities and seek to balance the bureaucracy against the risk likely to arise from poor performance. The Firemaster does attend the Corporate Strategy Team meetings and provides a link between that team and the Brigade Management Team. The Director responsible for the Corporate Strategy also sits within the Brigade Management Team providing the planning link.

25. Major Best Value Reviews are often initiated by the Brigade Management Team and a new management information system manager and senior manager are being appointed to undertake a review of the overall management system to help draw together the various directorate planning approaches. It was in this area, as already mentioned, that it became apparent that **it would be helpful to have better data management providing a monitoring link to Brigade strategic objectives so providing the Corporate Strategy Team members with a broad performance overview for the Brigade Management Team in terms of identified priorities.** The importance of introducing an effective management information system, highlighted in the earlier report, is therefore restated.

26. Best Value Reviews are initiated by this group and during inspection those reviewed related to fleet management and the Brigade workshops. It was identified that the Brigade's reserved fleet had been considerably reduced during a three-year programme of change. Three workshops had been reduced to two and the operational hours of those two workshops extended so that they are open between 06:30 and 22:00. The workshop service had been re-branded as a fleet service and it was hoped to go to a higher level quality assurance system working to the ISO standards next year. Options for the provision of the fleet had been widely considered, including matters such as fleet leasing. In addition, fleet managers had begun working with external providers to provide quality assurance and



audits and a near-miss reporting system had also been introduced. The Association of Public Service Excellence had undertaken the quality assurance approach and options had arisen which had provided key savings. With the effect in reductions in reserve fleet and workshops and extension of opening hours, the number of staff had also reduced whilst output had risen. **It was apparent that the efforts made to conduct this Best Value Review had been extremely positive and represented a good example of the application of Best Value principles to obtain improved performance and reduce expenditure.**

27. One further innovation by the fleet manager had been the introduction of a mobile training unit for the use of breathing apparatus. This unit provided at a cost of around £310,000 was witnessed in operation and did offer excellent mobile training facilities. It was advised that it was well received by all those stations which had access to it and that since its introduction enabled many part-time staff who would not be able to travel routinely to undertake real fire training to gain that experience within their local environment. Very few restrictions have been identified despite the size of the unit in moving it through the Brigade area and it did again appear to offer **a good example of innovation and practical performance improvement.**

28. As part of the overall inspection and examination of Best Value approaches, opportunity was taken to examine a series of information technology based performance 'wizards'. These had been created to help provide managers in various locations with active information in their areas of responsibility. One examined related to human resources and it was seen to provide a considerable amount of information in a very fast and interactive way. **The development of this tool is something again which represents good practice** and helps illustrate the level of detail Brigade managers are now able to achieve when considering the areas under their responsibility.

29. Opportunity was also taken to review establishment needs and the command staffing of the Brigade. A fire cover review had been undertaken between 1997 and 1999. This review had now been supplemented by a new approach relating to integrated risk management in which a team of around 7 staff had been appointed. The Brigade was in the process of preparing for presentation to the Fire Board an initial view of how IRM might be taken forward. This would take account of guidance issued by the Inspectorate as the process move forward across Scotland.

30. It was also indicated that the establishment at Oban had now been achieved to enable this station to go live with one whole-time appliance. Section 2 and 12 mutual aid agreements with fire brigades had been reviewed and normal resource management practices for pre-determined first attendances were within acceptable standards. The Brigade operates restricted turnouts for part-time staff to a minimum staffing of 4 per appliance with the consequential risk that in remote locations attendance at potentially life-threatening incidents might be delayed even though 3 staff were available. Likewise there are identified areas where there is a failure to meet existing standards of fire cover. **The Brigade should consider these issues in detail as part of the work already commenced relating to integrated risk management.**

31. To help improve information flow to operational staff for safety and firefighting purposes, the Brigade is part of the national Firelink mobile data trials but has already established itself well to the lead in terms of mobile data. It has begun the process of reviewing many of its special appliance requirements, including those related to dedicated height vehicles and heavy rescue. In the latter area, considerable change has already been



made to place additional rescue equipment for road traffic accidents on the main pumping fleet and so reduce the commitment to rescue tenders. Following safety evaluations, it is also determined to remove from use all-terrain vehicles.

32. **One area of operational planning and resource which did appear to require formal review and determination was that related to command officers.** It was identified that the Brigade at any time has a minimum of 2 principal officers, 3 senior divisional officers, 5 divisional officers and 10 assistant divisional officers on duty. What was less apparent was whether these officers were rostered in such a way to provide that minimum level of cover on a consistent pattern across the Brigade. This is one area that would be worthy of further examination and subsequent confirmation.

33. It was also found that within the Brigade establishment officers assigned to training functions, have been allocated to operational rider station establishments. This gives rise to a confusing picture as to actual responsibilities and duties and **it would be appropriate to exclude those officers allocated to the Brigade Training Centre or to similar supportive functions from those who are clearly provided as riders on operational appliances.** A review to undertake this task is relatively straightforward and it would help clearly identify the operational as opposed to support establishments.

34. Within the workforce generally, it was noted that considerable amounts of recording of data is done electronically. Discipline as an issue was described as not significant although at the time of the inspection it was advised 16 grievances were outstanding. Levels of sickness absence are generally falling and the Brigade has also appointed an occupational psychologist to help manage through assessment centres and work with managers on their recruitment processes which do appear to follow normal practice. It was suggested that in the development of assessment centres **the Brigade should avoid going too far in front of what are national developments relating to the use of assessment centres for all ranks throughout the service as part of the Integrated Personal Development System.** Finally, it was noted that within the human resource area that the previous director of communications had retired and considerable work was now underway to help bring forward a new specification and contract for a management information system.

Managerial Commitment

35. The Brigade has conducted an employee survey during 2001 using consultants, which did **report a negative view of the Brigade's Management.** It is now conducting a further survey into work life balance. Consultants have also been used to examine media marketing and this has resulted in a focus being made on how the brigade inter-relates and liaises with the media generally. Internal work has been delayed by the recent industrial action but it is recognised that there is a need to improve internal communications.

36. The process of staff assessment as already mentioned has started to move forward with assessment centres being developed. Since this is in advance of the IPDS assessment process it would be helpful in demonstrating commitment to the process if senior managers themselves undertook to allow 360° reporting of their own performance. How this is taken forward really rests with the Brigade but if the process of demonstrating managerial commitment to the workforce is to advance, it is possible that operating in this way may make significant change. **The Brigade may, of course, wish to follow the developing IPDS process more closely as it now advances and defines the assessment.**



37. It is notable that because of the Firemaster's present position within the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association, considerable information is available to senior brigade staff in terms of an overview of where the fire service is progressing at any particular time. This opportunity has not been missed by senior officers who have taken the opportunity to develop initiatives which do reflect a modern approach and a high level of commitment to continuous improvement within the Brigade.

38. Activities that do enable staff to work outwith the Brigade are actively encouraged and there are a number of illustrative examples where the Brigade was sought to engage with other partners, or introduce external review into its own arrangements so that it can learn and identify weaknesses with other bodies.

39. **The general view formed was that Strathclyde was a Brigade that was supportive of its staff and hoped to continuously expand the opportunities available to all those within the organisation.** Good ideas are therefore shared informally within the Brigade and it is suggested **that individual officers may wish to consider some informal processes which do allow for a wider use of the available knowledge.** How this is undertaken is something the Brigade will need to work through for its own solution given the scale and complexity of this particular organisation.

40. One activity that demonstrates the level of commitment to external activity is that related to safety. **The community fire safety programmes** which include youth schemes and firefighters fitting smoke detectors in individuals' homes do **help illustrate the breadth of commitment towards a change from an intervention to a preventative culture.** The Brigade has committed itself over the review period to some 25 such projects and although there is a need to reduce these activities in some areas, the Brigade remains committed. Consequently they have appointed 3 community fire safety co-ordinators, which it is intended to extend to a further 8 so that a relationship is developed with each local authority. Work has also been undertaken within the Glasgow Museum Transport Exhibition to help improve access for schools to gain information on fire. Similar arrangements have occurred at Pollock with the building of a 'Fire House' to provide programmes aimed at children's safety. The Brigade is clearly aware of some of the difficulties in its community and its firefighters have had to confront serious personal attacks. Nevertheless they remain committed to finding the best ways of working with the community.

Consultation

41. The Brigade states it has a high commitment to consultation and has utilised the service of external providers to gain survey information relating to public opinion about its activities such as after the fire responses. These reports have been progressed at senior level through the Brigade Management Team and on to the Fire Board. Action plans have introduced proposals such as fire leaflets and have also identified a number of areas of weakness to follow up. Leaflets have been produced to improve information about the Brigade and wide distribution is being undertaken.

42. **The Brigade has recognised that its internal communications do have some difficulties** and is undertaking a tender exercise to produce an action plan to how best to improve these arrangements. It is also working hard to rebuild relationships with internal organisations that may have been damaged during the recent industrial action. Given the work that has been undertaken by the Brigade, **it was disappointing to find that** although annual reporting with statutory performance indicators is produced in a lively format,



the Brigade's own website did not convey anything of the range and depth of activities and innovation that was seen during the inspection. Given that many people today use the Internet to access information, some investment in this area would help improve an understanding of the Brigade's activity and its current performance. Brigade managers have identified that their external communication role will largely be overtaken by the ultimate approach adopted towards integrated risk management. They have already started to work hard with partners to gain access to those groups which may be described as hard to reach. This is particularly important in a Brigade like Strathclyde which has a diverse population both in terms of social and ethnic groupings.

43. Considerable time was devoted during this inspection to meeting with representatives of the workforce and discussions were held with senior branch officials of UNISON, the Fire Officers' Association, the Fire Brigades Union and the Retained Firefighters' Union. **These meetings did indicate various tensions and also some improvements.** Some Unions, for example, were appreciative of a change in approach which was appearing to give rise to better communication between the representatives and senior management. Some described their internal communications as spasmodic or reactive and asserted that little had been achieved in re-establishing formal meetings. Others reported that they were content that the processes were now being put in place to allow more formal liaison, although they still felt they were restricted to dealing with matters of a technical nature rather than related to policy strategy or conditions.

44. Generally, when the Brigade was asked to respond to complaints, difficulties or issues relating to individual wellbeing, **it was reported that this was positive and that genuine concern was expressed by management and effort made to rectify unsatisfactory situations.** Nevertheless, some of the Unions were reporting a feeling of exclusion and effort would be needed to build stronger working relationships. One point which did emerge in general from these conversations were illustrations of where command decisions did not appear to have the same force or relationship to the original Brigade Management Team decision. **This observed weakness of communication** between different levels of management is not unusual in a large organisation but again this is something **that needs to be addressed** if the Brigade is to achieve its stated aim of good internal communications.

45. Particular emphasis was placed upon the relationship with the Fire Brigades Union and it was heartening to hear that the relationships, which prior to the dispute had been generally good, had managed to be continued after the dispute. Clearly there were areas where difficulties had arisen and to some extent these had become personalised. Nevertheless the overall view of those officials was that they were generally pleased that established systems and approaches had been able to continue and that communications had remained open. Officials also opined that the establishment of a new Fire Board, following the recent local government elections, provided an opportunity to look forward rather than back and were therefore positive in general about how the Brigade might progress. The officials reported therefore that generally the Brigade was positive in its industrial relationships when reacting to concerns and issues but were cautious of the considerable challenge ahead in terms of how the fire service nationally moved forward and how this would relate internally as matters such as integrated risk management were progressed.



EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The following section was prepared by the certifying auditor of Strathclyde Joint Fire Board, appointed by the Accounts Commission.

Financial Management

46. Strathclyde Fire Board's financial operations are governed by its financial regulations, standing orders relating to contracts, and a scheme of delegated functions to members and officers, which were all adopted in April 1996. These documents are subject to regular review with the last review taking place in June 2003. Audit Scotland's review of the Board's financial systems in 2002/2003 indicated that the internal control systems were satisfactory and there were no areas of major concern. The annual accounts received an unqualified auditor's opinion.

47. The Board is funded by 12 constituent authorities, representing the area covered by the former Strathclyde Regional Council, and Strathclyde Fire Brigade is the largest brigade in Scotland, with net budgeted expenditure of £106m in 2002/2003. Payroll costs at £94m account for 80.5% of gross budgeted expenditure.

48. It is the Board's practice to limit its net budget (excluding capital charges) to the aggregate of the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) assessment for fire services afforded to the constituent authorities by the Scottish Executive. **The Board does not produce detailed budgets on a three-year basis**, although, as it limits budgets to GAE, it can forecast the available funding over a three year period from the Scottish Executive's comprehensive spending review. The Board has, however, prepared a 10-year projection of anticipated firefighters pension costs.

49. Although the Board does not have a strategic plan, the documents *First Impressions* and its follow-ups *Beyond First Impressions* and *First Impressions – Future Progress* set out in general terms the Board's strategic objectives and progress in achieving these objectives. **In *First Impressions* the Board states that all improvements to services will be resourced from existing funding, but there is no financial information provided to support this assertion. In addition there is no formal link between these strategic documents and the budgetary process.**

50. Budgeted expenditure per head of population of £42.9 for 2002/2003 (excluding capital charges), as disclosed in Rating Review which is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), is in line with the Scottish average of £42.2.

51. The Board has a comprehensive budget monitoring system that includes monthly monitoring reports to budget holders and the Management Team. Most heads of expenditure are devolved to budget holders with the exception of wholtime firefighters, because Commands have no control over the recruitment of staff in this sector. Overtime payments for wholtime firefighters are devolved, however, as Commands are in a position to manage overtime where operational incidents allow.

52. Revenue monitoring reports are also submitted to all meetings of the Board. The reports to the Board and the Management Team detail explanations for variances, **but there is no formal process for minuting significant variances to ensure that they are subject to review at subsequent meetings.** The Firemaster and the Director of Finance conduct a joint year end review of overspends with the appropriate officers. Revenue and capital expenditure is also subject to review by a member scrutiny group.



53. Prior to 2002/2003 the Board had no powers to carry forward general balances and consequently the accumulated underspend on its operations since 1996 was shown in the balance sheet as being due to the constituent authorities. The Police and Fire Services (Finance) (Scotland) Act, however, which received Royal Assent on 5th December 2001, has given Police and Fire authorities the power to carry forward general balances, with an effective date of 31 March 2002. Since its inception the Board has maintained expenditure within budget limits and the cumulative revenue balance carried forward at 31 March 2003 was £2.349m.

54. The 12 constituent authorities received additional funding of £1.358m in 2002/2003 from the Scottish Executive for firefighters pensions. This additional funding was subsequently transferred to the Board and has been earmarked for firefighters pensions within the above balance of £2.349m.

55. As part of a strategic decision to re-equip all uniformed staff at a cost of £3.1m the Board appointed a Personnel Protection Equipment officer in August 2003 to manage the process. This officer is responsible for preparing a database which will record information in relation to costs and health and safety.

56. The Board annually submits statutory performance indicators to the Accounts Commission and provides performance information to CIPFA for provision in their annual publication of fire service statistics. The Board is also extensively involved in the development of local performance indicators under the auspices of the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (CACFOA).

Capital Finance

57. The Board's balance sheet at 31 March 2003 discloses the value of land and buildings at £110.1m (85%) out of total fixed assets valued at £128.7m. An asset register is maintained in accordance with the capital accounting rules.

58. Capital expenditure in 2002/2003 was £8.6m with £5.0m being spent on land and buildings and £3.6m on vehicles, communications, and information technology.

59. The Board prepares a three-year capital programme. A Capital Monitoring Group, chaired by the Director of Finance, and whose membership is comprised of budget holders, is responsible for monitoring capital expenditure. This group's meetings are arranged to coincide with the Board's meeting cycle and reports are submitted to the Board.

60. Responsibility for monitoring capital expenditure was transferred from the Director of Operations to the Director of Finance with effect from 1 April 2003.

61. A detailed history of all properties, including surveys, is maintained to ensure that investment in properties is prioritised on the basis of need and in line with the Board's policy objectives. Continuous assessment of vehicles, plant and equipment is made through routine servicing arrangements, periodic inspection and testing requirements.



HUMAN RESOURCES

The development of Human Resources is especially important in the Fire Service where high levels of competency and availability are a central part of an efficient organisation.

Overview

62. The Brigade is in the process of developing policies and strategies across a range of human resource subject areas. As a result, many could be said to be in production or at consultation. Examples of these are the training policy and strategy and the training plan. In other areas, such as Health and Safety, the Brigade has well-developed, mature and reliable policies that they continually seek to improve and refine. The Brigade also has considerable data related to the human resource management and it should, given the high impact and value of this function, consider how best to offer through an MIS approach relevant knowledge to its managers.

63. During the inspection a number of areas were seen where improvement was possible, the following being the main points for consideration:

- ◆ **Review of the structure of Training Department policy development meetings.**
- ◆ **Development of more visible linkage between the Training Department's planned output and prerequisite financial resources.**
- ◆ **Review of the provision of driver training with a view to adopting a more needs driven approach.**
- ◆ **Better communication to all employees of current employment standards and procedures regarding equality in the workplace.**
- ◆ **Ensuring that the current recruitment and selection system retains consistency with the national standards set down by IPDS.**

Training and Staff Development

64. The training section of the Personnel and Training Directorate continues to be active in the formation of more recognisable business links both within and externally to its structure.

65. The draft policy studied, which is currently under consultation, gives a clear indication of the Brigade's ideas and intentions in respect of the personal development of its workers. An abbreviated version has been sent to all staff, but their understanding of its intent was observed to be variable. **The Brigade may wish to adopt a more interactive briefing mechanism in future on key issues such as staff development. The policy studied gives a commitment to review and would be enhanced by some indication of what form such a review may take or what inputs will be considered as influential.**

66. The Training Department uses a series of internal meetings for the purposes of consultation when planning future training provision. One example of a change that was a result of these meetings was the internal restructure of training – no minutes were available to show what influences caused this to occur. **These meetings are clearly significant in policy development and they should be arranged and managed as such in terms of agendas and minutes being formally utilised.** However, it was demonstrated that outcomes of these meetings are fed directly into the corporate strategy decision-making forum.



67. The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is recognised and given priority in the document *Beyond First Impressions* (February 2002) as a major challenge for the Brigade. The Brigade has given good support to national working groups in terms of personnel and hosting meetings for the purposes of developing IPDS.

68. Internal restructuring has allowed resources to be identified for taking forward the implementation of IPDS and further support is actively being sought.

69. It was noted that the Training Strategy Group do not meet with the Management Team and no other visible linkage was apparent for the purposes of inter-directorate training policy-making. **The Brigade may wish to investigate methods by which inter-directorate liaison can be effected for the purposes of planning of training and policy development.**

70. In terms of financial planning, despite all departments submitting funding bids through functional heads, limited evidence was available which demonstrated that the funding given for training purposes was assessed as being that required to deliver the developmental needs of the workforce. **Development of more visible linkage between the Department's planned output and prerequisite financial resources would assist with demonstrating that Best Value is being achieved.**

71. It appears that there is an effective outward flow of information from the Personnel and Training function, but little evidence existed of effective internal consultation mechanisms for policy development. The proposed briefing system may provide a vehicle for an upward feedback loop.

72. The Training Department uses critique forms for all students undergoing training. It was indicated that the instructional team reviews these and problems are dealt with directly. The weekly team briefing is used to indicate common concerns. **Whilst using a feedback system of this type is commendable, this process would be enhanced by a laid down procedure for using the valuable feedback in a planned, non-reactive fashion.**

73. During sampling visits to operational stations, it was indicated that the current method of recording of training was onerous. The watches felt that they had reasonable flexibility within the training plan, but indicated that the need to remain available at all times occasionally compromised the value of off station training scenarios.

74. It was indicated that internal courses at the Brigade's training centre at Cowcaddens is dictated by the centre and its availability. **There may be merit in adopting a more customer-focused approach, balancing the needs of operational staff against that of organisational priorities during the planning of training.** It was indicated during sampling visits that attendance at Breathing Apparatus training refreshers was not always achieved. The commitment to these regular Breathing Apparatus refreshers is likely to be challenged by the adoption of an IPDS, risk-based approach, but in any case it is important to meet or manage the expectations of staff in terms of training.

75. **A notable success has been the commissioning of a new real fire training unit.** The principle of taking the training to the personnel in remote community fire stations is recognised as pragmatic and good value and there is much optimism for this initiative. It was noted that additional staff had not been identified for the vehicle during the planning stage and highlights a potential lack in inter-directorate liaison.



76. During the visit to the Brigade Training Centre, it was indicated that driver training is programmed, and then commands are asked to nominate trainees for courses. **The Brigade may wish to consider adopting a more needs-driven approach which seeks to firstly assess and look forward to future requirements at a corporate level, then seeks to meet those requirements.** A Best Value Review of the provision of driver training may offer innovative and alternative methods of driving skill development.

Fairness and Diversity

77. The Brigade continues to make progress in partnership with the key representative bodies on the field of policy development for equality and fairness. Interviews with the representative bodies indicated that they were satisfied with their level of influence in the policy-making process in this area.

78. Generally the workplaces visited displayed a high level of awareness of the key national issues in respect of equality and fairness, although a better level of awareness of Brigade policy would have been complementary to this basis.

79. In visits to operational stations, despite the personnel demonstrating a high level of awareness on Fairness and Equality issues, **it was apparent that a small minority felt that employment standards may have been altered for the purposes of a more diverse workforce. The existing workers are an important source of information about the service to potential entrants. It is therefore vital that they are aware of current procedures and practices.** The existing education and coaching programme will continue to assist in explaining the Brigade's employment standards and strategies.

80. It was noted that the Brigade is committed to raising awareness of its staff and training has been accessed from an external provider. All managers have received fairness, equality and diversity training and conflict resolution training has commenced.

81. The Brigade continues to make efforts to encourage applications from a more diverse group of applicants, notably in the wholetime sector. Despite some innovative and genuine attempts, limited success has been achieved in terms of achieving a more diverse range of applicants.

Recruitment and Selection

82. The Brigade is committed to utilising assessment centres for the purposes of identifying candidates suitable for promotion. As part of the inspection, the Inspectorate observed the Leading Firefighters Assessment Centre practical day. The candidates were at the second stage of the selection centre, the written tests of ability having been conducted previously.

83. This practical stage consisted of:

- ◆ A presentation (as if given to subordinates).
- ◆ Face-to-face interviews with both a serving member and a member of the public, both of whom present the candidates with situations which test their ability to react in a suitable fashion.



84. The key elements of the process are:

- ◆ Role players who are well briefed, provide realistic challenges, but play no part in the selection process.
- ◆ A small team of trained assessors (in order to maintain expertise).

85. The representative bodies are invited to observe the assessment centres in progress and have adopted a very supportive view of the process.

86. The process has evolved following feedback from previous selection centres and the modifications and subsequent full review has helped to refine the system. **One slight improvement suggested is for the process to take due cognisance of equality for both internal and external candidates.** The high degree of fairness and transparency demonstrated would be complemented by this slight modification.

87. The system is open and transparent for candidates and results from both the written tests and the practical day are given at the end of that day. Candidates are allowed to see their scores and what has been written about them. After each situational test, two markers score the candidate independently and then discuss the awarded mark and 'moderate' each other's score, the result awarded being an agreed score for the exercise. The Equal Opportunities monitoring form used previously has been amended to reflect guidance from the Commission for Racial Equality and categories used in the Census.

88. Costing of new the system has not yet been conducted, but the Brigade is confident that the new method not only offers the candidates a clear and fair opportunity, but also represents better value for money. It is intended that the process will link with the appraisal system but this is not yet fully developed and as such, is not yet integrated into the mechanism.

89. The valuable work to produce this system will be used to inform the national progress towards Assessment and Development Centres under the IPDS banner. **This is important to ensure this local system, which is progressing in advance of the IPDS national system, retains consistency with the national standards.**

Health and Safety

90. The Brigade reviewed the corporate health and safety policy at the end of 2001, following an inspection by the Health and Safety Executive. The reviewed policy is a comprehensive steering document, which shows a clear commitment by senior management and provides a clear picture of corporate responsibilities in respect of Health and Safety.

91. The job descriptions of the posts that are identified as having specific duties within the policy should reflect those duties, and person specifications designed for the purpose of filling those posts should take cognisance of the key Health and Safety responsibilities.

92. An extract of the corporate policy has been issued to all workers of the Brigade in order to update them of the revised policy. The sample Command Safety Policy studied (East Command) has also been recently reviewed and is a valuable supporting document for the Corporate Policy. Although the understanding of staff has not been directly checked, the Brigade's Health and Safety monitoring systems continue to track an improving safety culture.



93. The Brigade continues to promote Health and Safety and encourages all staff to become involved in safety initiatives. Recent actions have seen the development of a Violence at Work policy and other policies such as Lone Workers and Smoking at Work are in the development stage.

94. The Brigade incorporated Health and Safety into the assessment aspect of the recently implemented assessment centre procedure and in this way ensures the competence of all successful wholetime promotion candidates. This integration into selection processes is a good example of how to mainstream Health and Safety into management systems.

95. The Brigade relies upon the HSE's Climate Survey Tool for the purposes of gauging attitudes to Health & Safety. Health also utilises the outcomes for measurement of staff understanding of the policy. The last survey was conducted in 1999, and one reaction to its findings was the increase in training for watch-based workers. **The Brigade should seek to assess the effectiveness of its revised policy as soon as practicable and may wish to consider adopting techniques to measure the effectiveness of recent Health and Safety initiatives.**

96. The Brigade's Health and Safety annual report to the Fire Board is a comprehensive analysis of accident statistics, training of staff and other current issues. It also includes a look forward to future issues, including target setting and a commitment to increase near miss reporting.

97. **The Brigade is deeply concerned about the apparent increase in the frequency of abuse of its workers and specifically the incidence of violence against front-line crews.** A pilot has commenced of installing CCTV cameras on a number of front line appliance which respond to identified 'hotspots'. This has also been underpinned by the introduction of a 'hotline' for reporting incidents of Violence at Work and a standardised reporting format.

98. The Brigade safety officer is aware of the need to ensure that all managers with responsibility for accident investigation are competent in that role. To address this need, the current arrangements are to be enhanced to provide training for all staff involved in accident investigation.

99. The relationship between the Brigade's Occupational Health section and the Health and Safety Department is maturing. The successful completion of the pilot study on physical fitness noted in 2001's Performance Monitoring Inspection has resulted in a roll-out programme to install fitness training equipment in each wholetime fire station. This represents a significant capital investment and should prove to be a valuable long-term strategy towards improving the health of the Brigade's workers. It will be beneficial to measure the success of this strategy in terms of reduction in areas such as absence, ill health retrials, etc.

100. The RoSPA Quality Safety Auditing System is the mechanism that is used to audit the safety management systems in use. To date, two QSA audits have been completed and the intention is to perform audits of each area for which a sub policy exists.

101. **The Brigade has received recognition for its performance in the Occupational Safety field by winning a prestigious RoSPA Award in the Public Service and Local Government sector.** This reward reflects the ongoing commitment to Health and Safety demonstrated by the Brigade.



OPERATIONS

Fire service operations represent response and intervention at a very wide range of incidents requiring effective co-ordination, planning, research and development.

Overview

102. Key improvements, changes and developments have continued to be made within the field of Operations including the delivery, consideration and implementation of a Transport Review, a revision to the structure of the Operations Directorate, provision of Service Plans and the introduction of Service Standards. Overall, the Operations Directorate appears to be operating efficiently and effectively, however, further improvements could be possible in the following areas:

- ◆ **Further provision of site specific Operational Tactical Plans.**
- ◆ **The issue of revised Incident Command System.**
- ◆ **Procurement Strategy to include risk assessment criteria.**
- ◆ **Greater collaboration with other brigades and agencies regarding research, development and purchase of operational appliances and equipment.**

Operations Directorate – General Policy and Planning

103. There is evidence that there is an approach to the planning process but currently this is not of a structured or consistent basis across all Directorates. A draft Service Plan exists that aims to reflect the Brigade corporate strategy with responsibility for planning, statement of service levels and target setting being devolved to Commands and Departments. Consultation with the Brigade Management Team and other relevant stakeholders should take place prior to submission of individual plans for consideration by the Fire Board. The plans collectively are designed to complement Brigade strategies and it would be useful if these strategies were referred to in a Brigade Strategic Plan.

104. To their credit, the Operations Directorate has adopted a system described as the Draft Corporate Plan with each section of the Directorate having produced Service Plans with clear objectives covering a 3-5 year period. The plans provide details of the various functions of the Directorate that are collectively responsible for maintaining the infrastructure and operational efficiency of the Brigade. Departmental staff are involved in the development of the Plans, which form an integral part of the Operations Directorate Training Days and the monthly Operations Departmental meetings.

105. As yet, the plans are not communicated to all staff in the Brigade although it is the intention to include this information on the Brigade Intranet system. However, as a first step, the Operations Directorate produced a Service Standards document that refers to a number of the objectives contained in the Departmental Service Plans. The document sets out standards and targets of achievement for each section of the Directorate and seeks feedback from their customers on their delivery of services and also on how they can improve the levels of service. Another key element of the planning process is the ability to measure operational performance and, where necessary, to provide benchmarks.



106. In addition to utilising the Statutory Key Performance Indicators the Brigade utilises the Performance Indicators developed by CACFOA. A company has also been contracted to carry out surveys of premises that have been involved in emergency incidents to determine their satisfaction or otherwise with the level of service provided and performance of crews attending.

107. **Whilst the actions taken by the Operations Directorate and the Plans produced are commendable a prerequisite to any planning process by Departments is the production and adoption by the Fire Board of a Corporate Plan that determines the Brigade's overall priorities and strategic objectives. In addition, as each Directorate will be producing individual plan/s the Brigade needs to ensure that these are internally consistent and produced as part of a single planning and budgeting process.** This matter has already been referred to in the Service Planning section of this report.

Organisation and Structure

108. A review has recently been carried out of the Operations Directorate which, has resulted in a revision to their structure. The Directorate is now split into 7 key service groups comprising:

- ◆ Operations (General Services).
- ◆ Operations (Data Services).
- ◆ Command and Control Centre (Mobilising Services).
- ◆ Property Services.
- ◆ Fleet Services.
- ◆ Information Technology Services.
- ◆ Communication Services.

109. In addition to staff transferring to the section from Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) and Vehicle Mounted Data System (VMDS) Groups, the review also identified a need for an increase in the establishment to cope with the ongoing workload. The new structure appears to have adequate staffing with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet objectives but will be closely monitored to determine if there are any deficiencies. **To ensure Best Value is being maintained the Brigade may wish to consider introducing a more formal review process to ascertain that management functions are devolved to appropriate levels and that policies and procedures continue to be effective. There is also a need to ensure that communication and information technology services operate within the parameters of the Brigade level MIS outlined earlier in the Strategic Section of this report. The MIS will need to integrate and be in part serviced by the services provided from the Operations Directorate.**



Operations and Technical Support

Policy and Planning

110. The objectives in the Service Plan are designed to support the priorities contained in the Firemaster's Reports, *First Impressions – Future Progress* and *Beyond First Impressions*. In addition to a description of the objectives the Plan contains details of the links to corporate aims, funding issues, timescales, resources and reporting and monitoring structures.

Operational Planning

111. The Brigade, as part of the Strathclyde Emergency Co-ordinating Group (SECG), has arrangements in place for the production and revision of major incident and emergency plans for the area. The major incident plans are based on the centrally issued guidance *Dealing with Disasters Together*. The plans deal principally with the strategic and tactical functions that would require to be implemented to achieve a co-ordinated response to any emergency. **A number of Operational Tactical Plans relating to specific risks are also provided within Operational Technical Notes, however in the interests of firefighters' safety management may wish to:**

- ◆ Carry out further operational risk assessment of risks throughout the Brigade area to determine what premises may require an Operational Tactical Plan.
- ◆ Determine a prioritised workload centrally for provision of the Tactical Plans across all Commands and to be provided within definitive timescales.
- ◆ Ensure that the plans include measures for damage limitation and minimising the effects of pollution.
- ◆ Introduce a formalised procedure to monitor centrally that all operational information remains relevant, valid and accurate.

112. **The Brigade may also wish to give consideration to the link between the Home Office Generic Risk Assessments, Brigade Generic Risk assessments, Operational Technical Notes, Major Incident Plans and Operational Tactical Plans, etc. in order to avoid fragmented information being provided to firefighters.**

113. Arrangements are now in place to provide for interoperability and equipment compatibility at cross-border incidents. However, following discussion with crews at fire stations regarding radio procedure when attending an incident in the area of another brigade, **the Brigade may wish to reassess these arrangements to ensure that they accord with the nationally agreed procedures.** The Brigade also arranges joint exercises with adjoining brigades to test their procedures and equipment provision.

114. The revised Incident Command System is still at draft stage. It is understood the procedure is fully developed, that consultation has taken place with neighbouring brigades and that a decision to implement the system is imminent. **In the interests of firefighter safety this document should be issued at the earliest opportunity.**

115. The Brigade has efficient and effective arrangements for gathering operational information required for firefighting and other emergency purposes which is categorised by weighting to determine the level of information produced for each risk type. The information is now collated in a format that enables easy transfer to the VMDS. **The Brigade should**



ensure that a formal procedure exists for the relevant safety critical information to be shared with adjacent brigades.

116. The Brigade does not have in place a formal procedure to monitor and measure operational performance. This matter has, however, been identified as an objective within the Operation Service Plan. **In the interests of operational efficiency this objective should be implemented at the earliest opportunity.**

Command and Control Centre

Planning

117. A Service Plan has been produced that covers a rolling 3 year period. The objectives in the Plan are clear, are linked to Corporate Aims and include funding and staffing requirements.

General

118. The joint review between Management and the Fire Brigade's Union of the Command and Control Centre has been completed. The review considered the overall management of the Centre, training requirements and staffing levels. In assessing staffing levels the 'staffing model' referred to in Dear Firemaster Letter 6/1996 was utilised to assist the Brigade in determining the levels of staff required. The report has been submitted to the Management Team for their consideration.

119. Job descriptions are provided for all members of staff with purpose, main duties and responsibilities being clearly identified. **Currently the job descriptions are reviewed ad-hoc therefore consideration should be given to carrying out this function on a regularised basis.**

120. The Centre has carried out a benchmarking exercise with West Yorkshire Fire Service and Northern Ireland Fire Service that operate the same Command and Control System. The results to date compare very favourably with the other 2 brigades.

121. Local Performance Indicators for passing emergency calls and information to other agencies have not been determined. This task is contained within the Centre Service Plan where it is intended to utilise the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (CACFOA) Output Specifications.

122. The Command and Control Centre has been the subject of a review by Audit Scotland that considered the corporate governance arrangements in place as they relate to the systems of internal control. The report has been considered by Senior Management and overall the Auditors were satisfied that there were adequate controls operating within the Command and Control Centre.

123. The Command and Control Centre has embarked on a Work Life Balance Project that will explore team based self-rostering for watch related staff. The Project commenced in July 2003 with staff consultation. It is intended to run a pilot application commencing September/October 2003. The Inspectorate looks forward to the outcomes of this initiative.



Water Systems for Firefighting

124. The Brigade has efficient arrangements in place for the provision of water supplies for firefighting purposes and adequate arrangements exist for ensuring that hydrants are tested and examined at an appropriate frequency. Quarterly liaison meetings are held with local water authority managers and in addition the Brigade is currently liaising with Scottish Water regarding the provision of a new Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Procurement

Planning

125. As part of the restructuring of the Operations Directorate the Procurement Section now comes within the responsibility of the Finance Directorate. The Service Plan that covers a rolling 3 year period is currently being revised and ultimately will be incorporated within the Finance Directorate Service Plan. The Plan contains the Brigade strategy for procurement along with a profile of the purchasing and stores sections. It does not, however, appear to contain clearly defined risk assessment methodologies. **Risk Assessment is an integral part of the procurement process. It is therefore essential that all procurement processes be subject to risk analysis that involves identification, estimation and evaluation, all of which should be fully documented.**

126. The objectives in the Plan are clear and contain details of links to corporate aims, funding issues, timescales, resources and reporting and monitoring structures. Objective 1 is the development and publication of an electronic stores catalogue. The first phase of this development is now complete with the catalogue being available via the Brigade's Intranet to Headquarters and the Command and Control Centre. **The full benefit of this system will not be realised until access is available to all Fire Stations which is totally dependent upon the urgent need for the provision of a Brigade Wide Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure.**

General

127. Following an analysis of the Brigade procurement function in 1996 it was considered that an in-house procurement section would provide a more efficient service in terms of Best Value. The standards of service and performance are monitored and are benchmarked with other Brigades via the CACFOA Purchasing Arrangements Working Group.

128. The Brigade participates in the CACFOA Purchasing Arrangements Working Group and whilst it remains happy to share information with other users regarding research and development activities this is not undertaken on a formal basis or extended into the wider procurement arena. Given that procurement is seen as one of the more obvious Best Value functions undertaken by all organisations that, like fire boards, have the statutory duty **the Brigade may wish to consider a more formal arrangement for this function. Ongoing investigations by the Scottish Executive will also highlight the collaborative aspect between brigades and so reinforcing the value of further attention.**



129. In identifying that items purchased meet the Brigade's 'User Requirement' goods are evaluated and inspected upon receipt. Currently there is no method of gathering evidence to substantiate that this is being carried out. **The Brigade may therefore wish to adopt a more formal procedure for this purpose.**

Appliances and Operational Equipment

130. The Brigade has and continues to carry out extensive research into ensuring appropriate equipment and appliances are provided. Recent major projects undertaken by Operations and Technical Support has been the design and purchase of Rescue Pump Ladders that will accommodate the equipment required for both firefighting and rescue operations whilst meeting the requirements of the current Manual Handling Regulations. In addition, a specification and tender documentation were produced for the modification of existing Water Tender Ladders to a Rescue Pump configuration.

131. There is no evidence to suggest that the Brigade has considered the benefits of joint purchasing arrangements with other brigades or agencies for pumping appliances, special appliances and operational equipment. **The opportunity should therefore be taken to examine possibilities for joint co-operation with other brigades or agencies for such purchases.**

132. The current replacement policy for fire appliances is based upon age (12 years for pumping appliances and 15 years for high reach and other special appliances). The fleet is of a very good standard with the average age of pumping appliances at the time of inspection being 9 years. With the standard of vehicle now being purchased **it is essential that replacement is based on a dynamic age profile assessment of the vehicle and not a fixed replacement policy.**

133. The Brigade's policies and procedures for the provision and maintenance of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) have been reviewed. A Review Team carried out substantial research into the future PPE considered necessary for firefighters to carry out their tasks effectively and safely. At the time of inspection a contract had been awarded for the provision of PPE for all operational personnel. It is intended the introduction of the replacement PPE will also coincide with the implementation of a comprehensive recording system covering the issue, use, repair and maintenance arrangements that will include performance monitoring and a lasing policy for replacement.

Maintenance Arrangements

Planning

134. Both Transport and Property Sections have produced Service Plans that are clearly linked to the Brigade's Corporate Priorities. The Transport Section has set 11 objectives which are aimed at meeting the recommendations of the Best Value review that was undertaken in relation to the transport fleet and workshop facilities. **The Brigade may wish to consider enhancing the Transport Service Plan by including a policy and strategy for the efficient maintenance of the transport fleet.** The Property Service Plan covers a 5 year period that includes a profile of the Section, clearly defined reviews of specific functions each year and key performance indicators that are designed to monitor, audit and assess the performance of the Section. The Plan also has definitive strategic objectives covering station refurbishments, new build projects, volunteer fire stations, dignified facilities and elemental upgrades, etc.



Transport Maintenance

135. In October 2001, Barony Group Limited (external consultants) published their report having completed a Best Value review of the Transport Department. The report was submitted to the Fire Board where it was agreed that the majority of recommendations would be implemented. The major changes involved the creation of a new organisational structure, the appointment of a Fleet Manager and the closure of one workshop with the remaining two workshops adopting a two-shift system. A number of other recommendations centred on training, operating procedures and recording and monitoring systems which, are currently being addressed by the Fleet Manager. **The Inspectorate welcomes the positive action taken by the Brigade in addressing the operational aspects of the Transport Department**, which already is indicating an improvement in the level of service provided, and look forward to further positive outcomes in the future.

Property Maintenance

136. The Brigade has a well-established Property Section under the control of a Property Manager. The Section is responsible for the provision of property maintenance, property refurbishment, new build projects, upgrades and adaptations along with the provision of facilities management at Brigade Headquarters. Currently the Section manages 4 measured term contracts, 12 grounds maintenance contracts and 25 service contracts. Adequate control measures are in place to monitor reactive maintenance provision carried out by the term maintenance providers and the service contractors involved in the inspection and servicing of installations and items of plant and equipment. The Property Officers carry out condition surveys complemented by specialist advice where necessary and these, along with reports from service contractors, form the basis of the planned maintenance programme.

137. Although architectural and structural engineering design work, etc is carried out currently by unitary authorities, it understood consideration is being given to this matter being reviewed.

138. In order to ensure continued improvement the Section has recently completed a review of the property maintenance provision and contractual management with further reviews of various aspects of the overall property service being carried out between 2002 and 2006.

139. **The Section is to be complimented for the adoption of key performance indicators relative to property issues which, are rigorously monitored to ensure the targeted response and performance of the Section plus Contractors is being achieved.**



FIRE SAFETY

Prevention of fires requires a fully integrated programme of positive actions based upon realistic targets. Changes to enforcement regimes and the introduction of wide community safety objectives provide the foundations. Fire investigations and call reduction require similar positive action

Overview

140. The production of the Firemaster's *First Impressions* and *Beyond First Impressions* documents, which lay out the policies, aims and methodology of the Brigade's planning and service delivery, are to be commended as a most useful way to communicate with the community at large. Unfortunately a combination of a shortfall in the number of experienced Inspecting Officers and increased workloads has led to a consequential lowering of morale and a fall in standards that requires action in the short term. The following areas are highlighted:

- ◆ **There is a serious concern that, given the current development of the IPDS system, sufficient specialist officers are not available to the Brigade.**
- ◆ **The new pro-active Brigade Community Safety policies are to be commended.**
- ◆ **The Brigade needs to assess the effect of a statutory duty on Local Authorities to participate in the Community Planning Process so that it is seen as a Community Safety Partner.**
- ◆ **The Brigade may wish to address its present geographical structure given the existing Command boundaries are neither co-terminus with those of the 12 Local Authorities nor Strathclyde Police Force.**
- ◆ **The Joint Fire Investigation Protocol is seen as an example of 'Best Practice'.**
- ◆ **Despite specialist staff difficulties the Brigade continues to produce a creditable level of service delivery in the three core departmental disciplines enforcement of community safety and fire investigation.**

Fire Safety Management, Planning, Policies, Strategy, Performance Monitoring and Quality Control

Planning and Policies

141. The production of the Firemaster's *First Impressions* and *Beyond First Impressions* documents which lay out the policies, aims and methodology of the Brigade's service delivery and planning are to be commended as a most useful way to communicate with the community at large.

142. These plans and policies aim to reduce the incidence of fires, deaths and fatalities but **they cannot be fully evaluated until the information technology (IT) has been fully developed within the Brigade**. This requirement, for an IT management system that integrates into the Brigade planning and management process to monitor and so help improve performance, has been mentioned previously in this report. It is noted that the extent of planning within the Brigade has resulted in each Command having individual Community Fire Safety Service plans that are directed at local, geographical and political variances.



143. Flowing from the Brigade's main priorities, evidence is available to show that there are clear policies and planning embedded within the Director's strategic three-year plan which was introduced May 2001 and re-assessed in June 2002.

144. This strategy encompasses the three main elements of:

- ◆ A Community Partnership Process.
- ◆ An Integrated Planning Process.
- ◆ The Community Safety (Delivery) Process.

Strategy

145. To ensure that Brigade personnel understand the aims and objectives of the planning and strategy, a training seminar and local Community Fire Safety (CFS) Strategy Group meetings have been held in addition to contributing toward the Scottish CFS Strategy Forum and the national fire safety 'Toolkit' project.

146. To fully realise the objectives of the CFS strategic planning, a process mapping exercise was investigated through the Brigade Community Safety Strategy Group. This has subsequently been postponed to allow further costing and tendering in accordance with financial regulations.

147. The Brigade has an established set of policies to meet its statutory responsibilities, prioritise inspections, determine the frequency of re-inspections and standards based on the risk assessment of fire occurring. These are set out in a suite of detailed Fire Safety Legislation Procedural Guidance Notes and minutes of regular meetings.

148. The Brigade approach to the promotion of the core community safety training does not have written arrangements or systems in place and the training arrangements are mainly ad hoc.

149. There are arrangements for co-ordinated inspections with other agencies such as Building Control to avoid the duplication of inspections, although duplication does occur on limited occasions.

Staff Performance and Monitoring

150. Since the last Monitoring Inspection, it was advised that a draft report has been produced for the Director of Community Safety on the minimum number of inspecting officers required within each Command to effectively discharge the fire safety statutory responsibilities of the Joint Fire Board.

151. The draft report was stated as being uncompromising and detailed. It apparently scrutinises the issues surrounding the perceived decline in the number and efficiency of the inspections actually being carried compared to former performance levels and cites staffing skills as of concern in this discipline.

152. There is an acknowledged shortfall in the number of experienced Inspecting Officers and combined with increased workloads the view was expressed that this has led to a consequential lowering of morale and a fall in standards. **At the time of the inspection the facts surrounding this matter could not be fully verified but clearly if the views offered have credibility then this is an important matter that must be addressed in the short term.**



153. There is, for example, demonstrable evidence that the average time of approximately 2 years to issue or amend a fire certificate within the Brigade, is now almost 3 years in East Command and almost 4 years in Central Command. The average time taken for amendments of a fire certificate relates only to known and recorded amendments as it is thought anecdotally that some 75% of existing certificates may require updating.

154. In their Annual Statistical Return to HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland, covering fiscal year 2002/2003 the Brigade record a total of 16 fully qualified Inspecting officers of Station Officer rank from a total establishment of 26 (25 actual) with a further 4 having completed the Fire Safety Inspecting Officer modules.

155. The majority of the 30 Sub Officer-ranked officers who complete Brigade inspection staff training are not eligible for the central training modules at the Fire Service College (FSC). This is due to the large number of temporary ranks and the course pre-requisite that all students must be qualified by statutory examination to Station Officer rank, a rank which only 5 of those serving in Community Safety currently hold.

156. It is also noted that the staffing of fire safety has been somewhat affected by the Brigade's interpretation and implementation of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) developed by the FSC. This has had the effect that fire safety competencies are not being satisfactorily assessed prior to promotion.

157. The principle of IPDS, as a national benchmark, is to provide role-based training and development for competent officers to meet the real needs of brigades but **it is clear that at the time of inspection the IPDS system was not producing role specific specialist officers of sufficient numbers for the Brigade.**

Review of the Brigade Safety Strategy and Plan

158. Making communities safer is a strategy aimed at reducing the number of:

- ◆ fatalities;
- ◆ non-fatal casualties;
- ◆ accidental dwelling fires;
- ◆ unwanted fire calls; and
- ◆ fires due to wilful or deliberate fire raising.

159. A three-year review of the Brigade Safety Strategy and Plan covering the fiscal period 1999/2000 to 2002/2003 has revealed that the Brigade has sustained a reduction of non-fatal casualties, accidental dwelling fires, unwanted fire signals and malicious fire calls.

160. In relation to fire fatalities the Brigade has reduced this figure to a very low level compared to previous years and now face the difficulty of reducing the hard core of fire deaths that continue occur despite very the best efforts of the Brigade. These deaths should be among the new targets of the Community Partnerships formed as a result of the Local Government Scotland Act 2003.

161. However, the Brigade has a very real problem in relation to the number of secondary fires caused by wilful or deliberate fire raising. The total figure for these incidents was reported as being 19,496 at the time of the inspection. This requires special attention and new IT software, sharing of information and partnerships within the community will help the Brigade in the future to reduce the demand on vital emergency resources.



Community Safety

The Scottish Fire Service of the Future

162. The Scottish Executive's policy paper *The Scottish Fire Service of the Future* indicates the introduction of a new legislative framework for fire authorities and a flexible framework for fire brigades.

163. Similarly, Scottish Fire Service Circular Number 4/2003 reinforces the intention of Scottish Ministers to introduce Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) throughout Scotland and the fundamental change of emphasis from intervention to community safety.

164. The Brigade is committed to the process and have made a major contribution to as founder members of the UK study into the review of Fire Service Emergency Cover (Pathfinder Project). There is considerable progress in risk assessment within the Brigade area.

The Local Government Scotland Act 2003

165. Although Strathclyde Fire Brigade, fully supported by the Fire Board, are signatories to the national strategy of Making Communities Safer, the enactment of The Local Government Scotland Act 2003 deems that **it is now a necessity for the Brigade to assess the effect of a statutory duty on Local Authorities to participate in the Community Planning Process.**

166. The assessment should take into account, amongst other things, the issues facing the Brigade in attempting to co-ordinate and present a common approach on 'Fire' issues at Joint Board level under the new legislation throughout the Brigade area. Future collaboration between the 12 separate Local Authorities, all having their own community safety plans, policies and methods of delivery, would greatly assist in preventing cross cutting strategic community safety planning and would also benefit the Brigade in the cohesive delivery of community safety fire issues.

167. Given the significant contribution that the Brigade makes towards Community Safety and the need to access funding for future developments to promote Community Safety, **it is imperative that the Brigade are involved as full partners.** For example, it is anticipated that the powers of Well-Being may have a direct effect on the Brigade in terms of service delivery and the potential re-location of resources.

Corporate Approach

168. In the short to mid-term and as a further step towards the sound corporate management of the Community Planning Process and service delivery **the Brigade may wish to address its present geographical structure given the existing Command boundaries that are neither co-terminus with those of the 12 Local Authorities nor Strathclyde Police Service.**

Community Safety New Policies and Projects

169. In recent years commendable emphasis has been placed upon youth development in the Brigade area with the Brigade supported by the Fire Board and working with other services and agencies. As a result a long term commitment to community involvement and partnership working has been demonstrated.



Vulnerable Persons Policy and Operational Procedure

170. It is pleasing to observe that in January 2003 the Brigade adopted a Vulnerable Persons Policy and Operational Procedure which is pro-active in identifying those persons most at risk from fire and is aimed at reducing or minimising the immediate risk. Operational personnel can take immediate positive action by fitting smoke alarms in domestic premises and thereafter alert agencies or services responsible for ensuring the ongoing health, safety and welfare of such persons.

Station Community Safety Plans

171. Evidence of a draft Community Safety Guidance Note on Station Community Safety Plans was supplied during the inspection. Following its review it was noted that it will undoubtedly accelerate the progression of Community Safety throughout the Brigade. This again demonstrates the cornerstone of the Brigade's Community Safety strategy through the involvement of front line operational personnel in service delivery.

Juvenile Fire-Setters

172. A further draft document reviewed and found to represent good practice was the policy of the Brigade in relation to Juvenile Fire-Setters. The policy is intended to complement the Brigade policy on *Protection of Children and Young People – A Summary of Good Practice* and outlines the guidelines to be adopted by personnel when they are dealing with identified juvenile fire-setters.

Community Wardens

173. The Brigade has been pro-active in supporting the training and development of neighbourhood community warden schemes.

Fire Cadet Scheme

174. The management team identified that the Brigade could provide considerable support and benefit to communities through the creation of partnerships between young people and Brigade personnel. The Fire Cadet Scheme, supported by CACFOA, is also affiliated to the Fire Services Youth Training Association that is a registered charity whose role is to promote Youth Training nationally and to identify and encourage examples of good practice.

175. Although some successful Cadet Units are operational, through the commitment of the Joint Fire Board and dedication of voluntary cadet leaders, **there are several key issues being highlighted by these leaders that may affect the development of additional Units that require ongoing management attention and support.**

Fire House Project

176. The 'Fire House' Project is an interactive experiential learning initiative for visitors to Glasgow's Museum of Transport that receives in excess of 500,000 visitors each year. Glasgow City Council has provided the use of the premises and has invested a further £15,000 towards the facility.



177. A 'safe house' has been constructed within the Museum building to physically display both good and bad home safety practices with expert advice being offered by trained staff. In addition, there is an opportunity for visitors to experience what it is like to escape from a smoke filled room under supervision.

178. **These new and pro-active Brigade Community Safety policies are to be commended.**

Databases

179. Databases such as The Community Safety 'Wizard', Legislative Returns and the Fatalities Database are recognised as important developments within the Brigade.

180. The software 'wizards' were piloted in stations within each Command in January 2003 and, following a Headquarters demonstration, are seen to be capable of delivering essential and credible information to the interrogator who may be attending a local safety meeting.

181. The Directorate's database is now capable of producing the required legislative returns for HM Fire Service Inspectorate purposes, although it is noted that a bid for capital funds for a replacement system may have to be considered. There is also a stand alone IT system available to fire safety officers to update plans of small amendments to existing fire certificates which is proving worthwhile in alleviating the burden of outstanding certificate drawings awaiting completion by brigade Computer Aided Drawing (CAD) operators.

182. It is interesting to note that there is an existing intranet fire safety library and information system installed throughout the fire safety offices within the Brigade but due to technical reasons Central Command's Community Fire Safety Headquarters cannot be connected.

183. The possibility of the single point updating of work in hand, guidance and technical notes and improved access to Fire Safety and Health and Safety Information Systems through other departmental links is encouraged as is the future link to provide information to the Police, Local Authorities and Schools to assist with community safety planning and programmes.

Info-Engine

184. The Brigade 'Community Safety Info-Engine' developed in-house by an enterprising community firefighter in Ayrshire, is an interactive fire safety programme aimed at three levels, nursery and early primary school children, primary level and finally at secondary school pupils and adults. This is an excellent innovation well thought out and well received within the teaching profession.

Command Initiatives and Plans

185. Each of the 4 Commands within the Brigade have updated plans to tackle community fire safety issues and present a large number of local initiatives involving other agencies. These initiatives are wide ranging in their cause and effect on the local communities depending on the perceived risk and include presentations and events such as:

- ◆ 'Crucial Crew' events.
- ◆ Training junior home fire safety wardens in schools.



- ◆ Smoke alarm campaigns.
- ◆ 'Learning for Life' experiential event.
- ◆ Junior Achievement Award
- ◆ 'Clued Up Kids' experiential event.
- ◆ 'Minder' Project, Multi-Agency Intervention scheme.
- ◆ 'Fire Safe' schools project.
- ◆ Juvenile fire-setters.
- ◆ Fun-days, Gala Days and Station Open Days.

186. Allied to these events the Brigade have run a 'Demand Reduction' pilot project in an attempt to further reduce unwanted fire signals, deliberate secondary fires and have ongoing collaboration with Strathclyde Police to reduce hoax calls.

Fire Investigation

Management and Policy

187. The Fire Investigation Section (FIS) is a competent well run section of the Brigade that has matured since its inception in April 2001 to be at the forefront of providing a fire investigation service in Scotland.

188. FIS is essentially an information gathering, interpreting and reporting system and provides a constant 24 hour fire investigation service managed by senior officers working in three flexible groups based at Headquarters who can adjust the speed and number of fire investigators required to attend specific incidents.

189. FIS comprises eight Fire Investigation Officers (four Station Officers and four Sub Officers) who carry out and document the bulk of the investigative work and are based at Brigade HQ. These groups operate in four teams of two designed to complement the operational duty system. They also have additional personnel available to assist.

190. In addressing the Best Value issues of mobilising a fire investigation resource to serve the offshore and geographically remote communities there are 10 out-posted and qualified officers operating at Command level who can be deployed as a first response. To this end Commands have been issued with Fire Investigation Tool Kits and Personal Protection Equipment and have instructions to site them strategically within their Commands.

191. The managers of the section have been successful in attracting suitably qualified and motivated personnel and provide additional formal training within their allocated budget. Such is the interest that the section have a pool of pre-qualified and transferable officers at command level who can be called upon at relatively short notice.

192. The formal training is a mixture of the Fire Service College Fire Investigation course and recognised external companies specialising in fire investigation techniques. One of the section's officers is involved with a competency evaluation of a practical course offered by one such company.



Fire Investigation Protocol

193. A Fire Investigation Protocol has been drawn up in accordance with national guidelines between Strathclyde Police and the Brigade to deliver the most effective and appropriate level of response in the investigation of all serious and criminal fires. The protocol document is a suite of measures designed to reduce fire fatalities and the overall number of fires with a subsequent increase in detection of those responsible for criminal fires and effective preventative strategies for the control and reduction of fire related crime. **The Joint Fire Investigation Protocol is seen as an example of 'Best Practice'.**

Operational and Technical Procedure Note

194. As with all policy and protocols there must be a robust and detailed set of guidance for all personnel involved and a draft copy of the Fire Investigation Operational and Technical Note was provided at the time of the inspection.

195. The Policy and Note both serve to show that there is a solid link between fire investigation, community safety and risk assessment issues. Stemming from these it is also appreciated that the experimental audit form provides the missing link that demonstrates Best Value within the section. If required, a summary fire investigation report can now be generated on-site at an incident.

196. The Operational and Technical Note is considered to have been well developed and serves to assist all personnel by detailing how the fire service implement their side of the protocol. It also provides for the first time written information on the gathering and recording of personal information for storage in electronic format regulated by the Data Protection Act 1998 and the release of incident information during any interface with the media.

197. Taking this guidance into account the Brigade may wish to re-consider to whom fire report extracts should be released in the future.

Fire Fatality Database

198. Details of fire fatality reports have been electronically stored within the Brigade from April 2002 to inform national statistical analysis, Fire Board 'Safer Communities' objectives and to provide a documented record of the Brigade's attendance and activity.

199. **The very important and painstaking work carried out within the Brigade on the development of the Fire Fatalities Database since 2001 is to be commended** and is the intention for this system to be rolled out to other Scottish fire brigades to provide a commonality of approach and information gathering of fire fatalities in Scotland. Information is promulgated internally to nominated Brigade personnel who can access the information but are unable to edit or overwrite the data that is controlled by the fire investigation teams.

200. It was assessed that the Brigade has good information on both fire investigation and fatality reporting that assists the Community Safety Directorate to identify trends and issues at local and Brigade level and also to provide evidence that can be used to amend national guidance such as building standards and consumer protection.



Performance Analysis of the Directorate of Community Safety

201. Given the future national legislative scene the Brigade has demonstrated within the reporting period that they have a clear core policy on Community Safety which is well managed within the constraints of finance, personnel and the steady development of information technology matters.

202. It is seen that **the Brigade continues to produce a more than creditable level of service delivery across the three core departmental disciplines of fire safety legislation enforcement, community safety and fire investigation, despite difficulties in staffing the section with qualified specialist officers.**



© Crown copyright 2004

Astron B33967 2/04

ISBN 0-7559-4118-7



9 780755 941186