

Audit Commission Press Release

26/07/2005

Embargoed until 00.01 hours 28/7/05

Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority is rated 'fair'

Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority is rated 'fair' overall, according to its first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) published today by the Audit Commission.

Humberside is one of 47 fire authorities in England scored on how well they are run. Each is rated either 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'weak' or 'poor'.

Fire CPA is an assessment of how well an authority is being run at the corporate level. It does not judge how well the fire authority responds to emergencies or other incidents.

The CPA process was initially introduced for local government in 2002 to give people a single overall judgement on how well their local council performs and delivers services. As part of the government's national framework for fire and rescue authorities, the corporate assessment element of CPA is now being adapted to show how well fire authorities manage their service and to help drive improvement.

The assessment of Humberside found that the Fire Authority is doing well in some areas:

- . there is a clear vision safer communities, safer fire fighters which is recognised by fire authority members, officers, staff and partners;
- . management is delivering a challenging programme of organisational change in a well structured way to support delivery of services to its local communities; and
- . there is a comprehensive framework to support personal development for all staff.

But the assessment also found room for improvement:

- . it is working well with its partners but has yet to assess the effectiveness of these partnerships;
- . it has a large number of challenging plans it is working to deliver in 2005, and work is still being undertaken to prioritise these plans; and

. it is not currently performing well in comparison to similar fire authorities in a number of key areas, including numbers of false alarms, calls to malicious false alarms and accidental fires in dwellings.

Following today's report, Humberside Fire Authority will plan what it needs to do to improve.

Tim Watkinson, Audit Commission senior manager, said: 'Humberside Fire Authority is working to deliver services to its communities through dedicated fire authority members, senior managers and staff. It is working constructively with a range of partners to prevent incidents occurring and improving the environment that local communities live in.

The Fire Authority is supporting delivery of these services through developing its staff. But the fire authority has identified a challenging programme to deliver its vision in the next year and still needs to prioritise these plans to ensure it can achieve its objectives, and deliver continued improvement in services for local communities.'

He added: 'The Authority should use this assessment to help it deliver improvement with the support of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. We would expect the authority to make its improvement plans public and we will want to track progress.'

A summary and full report for Humberside is available from the authority and through the Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire/firecpa

Notes to editors

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for fire authorities was developed independently by the Audit Commission, in line with the government's national framework for fire and rescue services in England.

The methodology was developed following consultation with the fire service and its representative bodies, and eight full pilot CPA reviews. By August 2005, all 47 fire authorities in England will receive a CPA report.

Fire and rescue authorities completed a self-assessment based around key lines of enquiry. They were encouraged to use a peer organisation to challenge their draft self-assessment before submitting it to the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission carried out Fire CPA inspections using its powers under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Fire CPA reviews were conducted at each fire and rescue authority, using a team of specially trained staff. The CPA review teams include serving officers from the fire service and local councillors with responsibility for fire authorities.

In September 2004, the Audit Commission published a report into the outcome of a study to assess progress made by fire authorities in England and Wales in implementing the modernisation agenda set out in the pay and conditions agreement of 2003. The work was carried out in two stages. The report from the first stage, Verification of the Progress of Modernisation, was published in March 2004.

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local and national services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we monitor spending to ensure that public services are good value for money.

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