

County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority



Corporate Plan 2007/2008 - 2009/2010

(Including the Authority's Best Value Plan 2007/08)

'Safer People, Safer Places'



Alternative Format:

This document is available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request.

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.

এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধে পাওয়া যায়।

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Ce document est également disponible dans d'autres langues, en gros caractères et en cassette audio sur simple demande.



The Authority is responsible for the preparation of the Best Value Performance Plan and information, assessments, assumptions and estimates included within it. The Authority is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control systems from which the information and assessments in the Plan have been derived. The Authority is satisfied that the information and assessment included in the Plan are in all material respects accurate and complete and that the Plan is realistic and achievable.

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we continue to work hard to reduce the risk of damage, injury or death from fire and other emergencies

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority's Corporate Plan 2007/08 – 2009/10. The Plan launches our new vision, aims and objectives for our Fire and Rescue Authority recognising the changes we have been through over the last year and the challenges we face ahead.

We continue to work hard to reduce the risk of damage, injury or death from fire and other emergencies and to add value to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities in County Durham and Darlington. Risk management remains key to ensuring that we have the right resources in the right place to respond at the right time. Home fire safety checks remain central in our prevention work; our policy for operational personnel to carry out these checks is now paying dividends with the number increasing year on year. The recent introduction of the Fire Safety Order has changed the protection activities of our fire safety teams and we have been fully engaged with our business communities, advising on its implications. Intervention measures remain successful and provide public assurance; incident call pick up and emergency response times continue to be within our set standards.

Last year's hot, dry summer resulted in our front line crews being exceptionally busy in terms of incident activity, especially in relation to grass fires and this has reflected in the performance of many of our fire indicators. Our support service teams have been equally busy; they have, for example, dealt with an unprecedented level of inspection and assessment, participated in a series of multi - agency exercises as part of our resilience arrangements; published our Gender

and Disability Equality Schemes, developed a Community Risk Register and improved our scrutiny and performance arrangements.

The fruits of our labour have been borne out in the outcomes of the Audit Commission's Performance Assessment Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities; we achieved a top rating of 'Performing Strongly' for the delivery of our front line services and ratings of 'Performing Well' and 'Improving Well' for our use of resources and direction of travel since Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) respectively. These outcomes could not have been achieved without the sustained commitment of our professional, dedicated and enthusiastic people and the continued support of our partners.

Our new vision 'Safer People, Safer Places' will provide a focus for our future improvement agenda. We will endeavour to meet the objectives of the National Framework Document; embrace the opportunities and deal with the challenges that will emanate from the current review of Local Government and explore opportunities for people development and succession planning. Health and safety, diversity and partnership working will remain integral to our operations and best value will continue to be at the heart of all we do; as ever we will use its principles to ensure value for money for our citizens.

S Johnson
Chief Executive

C Magee
Chairman of the Fire Authority



OUR PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MODEL

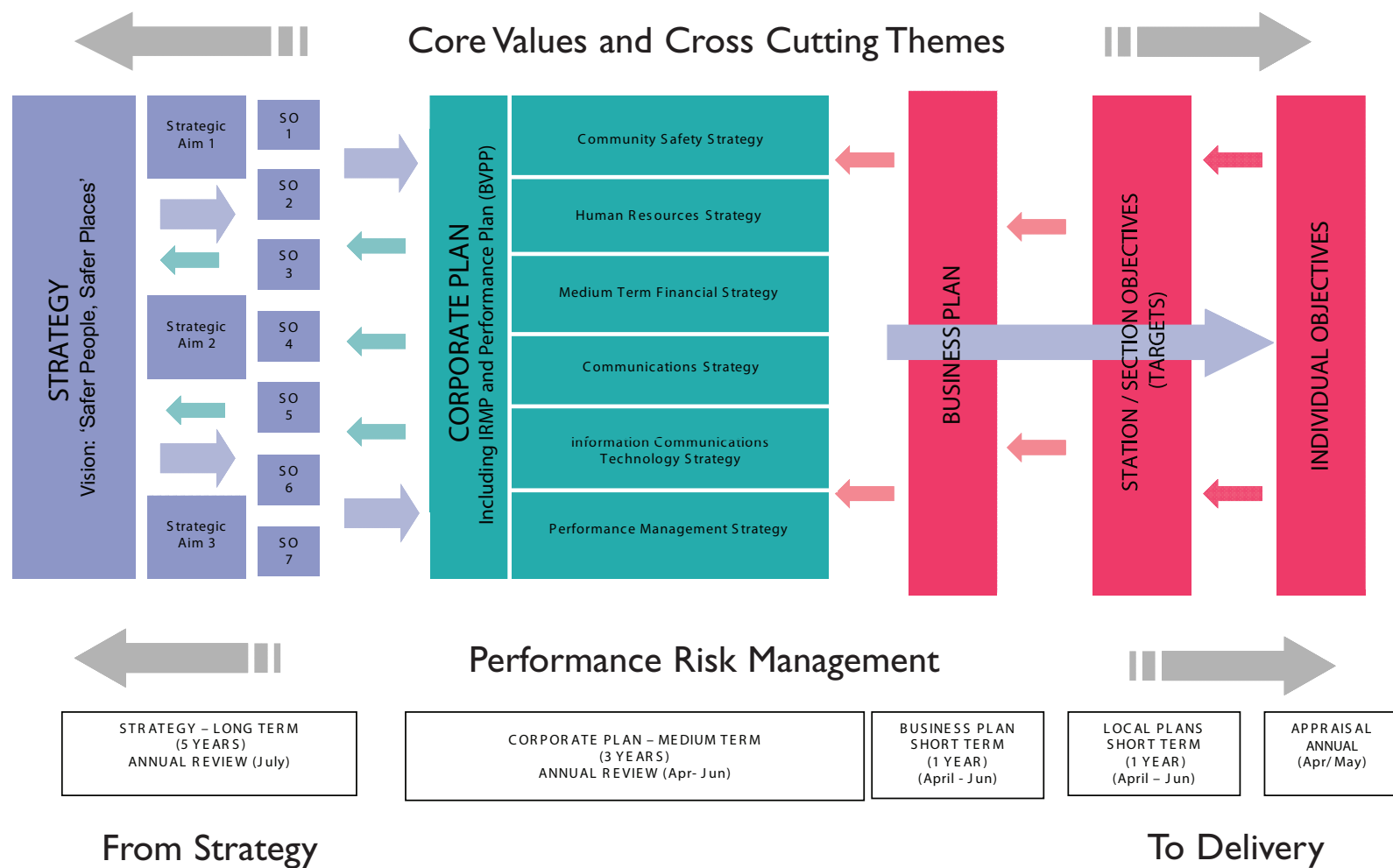
Our Planning and Performance Management Model (Figure 1) is a result of our work in 2006/07 to review our strategic planning and performance management framework. It clearly sets out our 'golden thread' of objectives that link strategy to delivery and ensures that individuals at all levels of the organisation have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and contributions to our overall vision for the Service. For the vision to be realized, however, it is important that risk and performance management; our core values (how we behave) and our cross cutting themes (how we operate) are prevalent throughout.

About this Plan

This Corporate Plan 2007/08 – 2009/10 represents our medium and short term plans and activities that will enable us to achieve our long term aims and objectives. It sets out:

- our overall **long term** Strategy (2007/08 – 2011/12) – our vision, aims and objectives and associated improvement targets;
- our performance over the last three years; and our strategies and associated improvement targets for the **medium term** (2007/08 2009/10); and
- our **short term** business plan improvement projects for 2007/08.

Figure 1: Our Planning and Performance Management Model



**it is important that
this Service is both
fit for purpose and
exceeds the needs
of our diverse
communities**

ONE VISION

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty to provide a fire and rescue service for the residents of County Durham and Darlington under the Fire Services Act 2004. It is important that this Service is both fit for purpose and exceeds the needs of our diverse communities and we are constantly

aware of the changing environment in which we operate and review our strategic direction and priorities accordingly.

In 2006/07 we actively engaged our partners, private sector businesses, members of the public and staff in such a review and this resulted in the introduction of our new vision:

'Safer People, Safer Places'

STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Supporting the vision are our three new strategic aims and seven objectives:

1. Protecting and preventing

1. identify and reduce risks from fire and other hazards to achieve safer, stronger communities
2. respond effectively and competently to prevent loss of life, injury and damage, with resources targeted to risk
3. define and deliver our role in the community to improve the well-being and quality of life for our communities

2. Developing motivated people to deliver effectively

4. invest in the skills and potential of all our people through continuous personal and professional development
5. optimise the contribution of all our people in a rewarding, challenging and safe environment

3. Value through sustainable improvement

6. develop an organisation that is fit for purpose to meet the changing needs of our communities
7. deliver value for money with prioritisation of available resources based on risk

Annex I provides details of our measures and targets for these strategic objectives.



how we will operate and behave

Our Cross Cutting Themes

define the way in which we will operate to deliver our strategy. They are:

- to work in partnership, when appropriate, with all relevant local, regional and national agencies to ensure a cohesive and sustainable service to our communities
- to ensure our work reflects the diversity of the communities we serve and deliver a service that is equitable, transparent and accountable
- to engage positively with all our stakeholders using clear and relevant communication, listening and acting upon their service needs
- to achieve a strong, community led, values driven culture that is reflected in all aspects of our work

Our Core Values

define the way in which we will behave when carrying out our day to day activities. They are:

- to value service to the community by: striving for excellence in all we do; working with all groups to reduce risk; treating

everyone fairly and with respect, being answerable to those we serve and striving for excellence in all we do.

- to value our employees by practising and promoting: fairness and respect; recognition of merit; honesty, integrity and mutual trust; personal development and cooperative and inclusive working.
- to value diversity in the Service and Community by: treating everyone fairly and with respect; providing varying solutions to different needs and expectations; promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service and challenging prejudice and discrimination.
- to value improvement at all levels of the Service by: accepting responsibility for our performance; being open minded; considering criticism thoughtfully; learning from our experience and consulting others.

AREA PROFILE

County Durham and Darlington is in the North East of England and covers an area of almost 2,460 square kilometres. Durham City and the larger industrial and commercial towns are in the east of the area; in contrast the west is predominantly rural consisting of open moor land and wooded river valleys and is sparsely populated. Darlington, our largest town, lies in the South and is undergoing significant regeneration.

With good transport networks, the area is accessible by rail via the East-Coast mainline, by road via the A1 (M) and A19 and by air via Newcastle and Durham Tees Valley International Airports.

Over the last twenty-five years the traditional industries, such as coal mining and steel manufacturing, have disappeared and have been replaced by high-tech factories and modern business parks in towns such as Peterlee and Sedgfield.

Tourism continues to grow and plays an important part in the local economy; key attractions such as Durham Cathedral, Beamish Museum, the North Pennines and the County Cricket Ground attract thousands of visitors each year.

The growing number of business and industrial developments such as NETPark also contribute to the local economy by providing employment opportunities.

Durham has a world class University; the number, range and quality of graduates are a major contribution to the area.



approximately half a million (599,000) people live in County Durham and Darlington

Demographics

Today, approximately half a million (599,000) people live in County Durham and Darlington and just over half of these (264,081) are economically active. These population figures, whilst remaining fairly static in recent years, have decreased since the 1970s in line with the national trend.

The population comprises approximately 51% females and 2.2% ethnic minorities; 21.8% are under 18 and 16.6% are over 65. (Source: Government Census 2001).

Many parts of the area have housing stock that is sub-standard, falling below accepted decency levels and this combined with lifestyles associated with the industrial past has resulted in the area also having the worst health and lowest life expectancies. In addition economic activity in the area is low – almost 10% lower than the national average and, despite real improvements in recent years, educational attainment is also below the national average. Clearly these factors contribute significantly to the alarming levels of social deprivation observed in our area:

County Durham and Darlington has 16.4% of its Super Output Areas¹ (SOAs) in the top 10% most deprived; 33.2% in the top 20% most deprived; and 49.3% in the top 30% most deprived.

The District of Easington has the most significant levels of deprivation in the North East within the top 10%, 20% and 30% categories (50.8%, 71.4%; and 82.5% respectively) and has the sixth worst levels in the country.

	Number of SOAs	Number of SOAs in Top 30% Most Deprived	Percentage of SOAs in Top 30% Most Deprived
England	32,482	9,744	30
North East	1,656	846	51.1
County Durham and Darlington	383	189	49.3
Easington	63	52	82.5



1. A Super Output Area consists of on average 1,500 persons

FOCUSING ATTENTION WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED

In the past we have kept records of every incident that we have attended and from these we have been able to establish where fires are most likely to occur and what are the most probable causes. For the past three years, we have also been using a computer modelling programme, known as FSEC (Fire Service Emergency Cover) to map a range of information including building location, special risks and road networks against our station locations and resources. Using historic incident data and local demographic information, FSEC calculates the level of risk in the area against current service provision. This information allows us to focus our attention to where it is needed most.

Key Fact:

Driving higher risks of injury in the home are the number of:

- lone pensioners;
- people with limiting long term illnesses;
- rented accommodation;
- social deprivation;
- people who are alcohol and drug dependent

As a result we continue to deliver our front line Service via six District areas; Darlington,

Derwentside, Durham, Easington, Sedgfield and Wear/Tees. This placing of our operational, community and fire safety staff in local areas enables us to provide a more integrated, cohesive and focussed approach to addressing local risks, as well improving access to services and advice for local residents and members of our business community.

Located at our Headquarters site at Framwellgate Moor are our support functions, emergency call centre and County Durham and Darlington's Civil Contingencies Unit.

Overall the Authority employs 653 personnel across its four Service Departments of Corporate Services, Community Safety, Operations and Organisational and People Development.

Staff Numbers

	2005/06	2006/07
Whole-time Fire- fighters	379	378
Part-time Fire-fighters	168	168
Control Room Staff	26	26
Support Staff	97	81
Civil Contingencies Staff	11.5	11

'PERFORMING STRONGLY/IMPROVING WELL' – A LOOK BACK AT OUR IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

In 2005 we were rated as a 'FAIR' authority by the Audit Commission (AC) in the first ever round of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for Fire and Rescue Authorities. This assessment looked at how well we were being managed.

Since then we have been subject to three further assessments under the AC's new performance framework:

- **Service Assessment:** to evaluate how well we deliver our front line services.

Result: 'Performing Strongly'

Comparisons: One of the top thirteen Fire and Rescue Services² nationally

- **Use of Resources Assessment:** to establish how well the Authority manages and uses its resources; and delivers value for money.

Result: 'Performing Well'

Comparisons: thirty seven Fire and Rescue Services² nationally received the same outcome of 'performing well'; only three received the 'performing strongly' outcome with seven achieving the minimum requirement rating of 'adequate performance'.

- **Direction of Travel Assessment:** to determine the level of improvement since the original CPA assessment.

Result: 'Improving Well'

Comparisons: twenty three Fire and Rescue Services² nationally received the same outcome of 'improving well'; with only one receiving the top rating of 'improving strongly' and twenty three being assessed as only 'improving adequately'.

Full details of the outcomes of these assessments and comparisons with other Fire and Rescue Services can be found on the Audit Commission's website: www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

Service Assessment and Use of Resources Scales:

Inadequate performance - below minimum requirements
Adequate performance - only at minimum requirements
Performing well - consistently above minimum requirements
Performing strongly - well above minimum requirements

Direction of Travel Scales:

Not improving at all - below minimum requirements
Improving adequately - only at minimum requirements
Improving well - consistently above minimum requirements
Improving strongly - well above minimum requirements

² CPA assessed 47 Fire and Rescue Services nationally

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2006/07

Strategic Priority One: Protecting the Community

- community safety strategy:** we have developed a new community safety strategy that will allow us to embrace avenues of new work within the modernisation agenda such as the promotion of road safety; community cohesion and well-being; and neighbourhood management.
- partnerships:** we have established a leading role in both County Durham's and Darlington's Local Area Agreements (LAA) to engage partners in the reduction of nuisance fires; and have been working in partnership with Durham County Council, in the form of a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA), to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries. Our involvement with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) remains central in ensuring that we take account of other local authorities' priorities and vice versa.
- resilience:** we have participated in a series of multi - agency Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) exercises as part of our resilience arrangements – a first for the Authority. A community risk register has been developed in line with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- educating people:** over 1,000 members of the local business community and other community organisations have been briefed on the implications of the Fire Safety Order; over 8,000 Year 6 students attended our community safety carousel; 'Home Safety Awareness' booklets have been produced for Carers and Home Visitors; arson reduction training has been delivered to police officers in Durham Constabulary;
- vehicles and appliances:** we have acquired six new water tenders; received a 'mass decontamination disrobe unit' from the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) as part of risk and resilience planning arrangements; installed close circuit television equipment on fire appliances to assist in the identification of those who make attacks on fire-fighters, fire investigation and road safety issues; and fitted mobile data units to front line appliances to provide vital operational information to officers at incidents.
- beyond the call of duty:** two of our retained fire-fighters from Sedgefield earned a nomination for the 'Pride of Britain' Bravery award and won the UK's National Fire Service Award 'The Spirit of Fire' for showing amazing determination and bravery as they rescued a lady who had fallen through the ice on a frozen lake at Bishop Middleham.



Strategic Priority Two: Valuing our People

- **health and safety:** we have implemented our health and safety training strategy; provided comprehensive training to nominated accident investigation staff and delivered manual handling training courses linked to the Health and Safety Executive's 'Better Backs' campaign. We believe these initiatives have contributed to the 30% reduction in personnel accidents in 2006/07 compared to the previous year.
- **Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS):** we have assimilated the principles of IPDS and workplace assessment, including monitoring, audit and review into all learning and development activities through the annual training delivery plan.
- **diversity:** we have produced and published Disability and Gender Equality Schemes; set up links with Action for the Blind to provide assistance on Service documents and publications to ensure they are fully accessible on the website for members of the community with sight impairments; established an Equality and Diversity Development Strategy and created a network of advisors to ensure that the Service tackles bullying and harassment effectively.
- **working for health:** 'Working for Health' is a local award scheme run by the Durham Primary Care Trust which is designed to encourage employers to improve the health of the workforce and to build a healthy organisation. There are three stages - bronze, silver and gold and the Service has attained the Bronze Award.
- **attendance management:** we have achieved a reduction in all sickness indicators showing a significant improvement on 2005/06.
- **People Development Strategy:** we have established a People Development Strategy comprising of seven key policies; monitoring, reviewing and audit; leadership development; management development; role specific development; incident management development; targeted development and graduate entry.
- **job evaluation:** we used an independent analytical job evaluation tool to develop a fair and transparent new pay structure for non-uniformed staff.
- **Wellworker':** we rolled out a 'Wellworker' web-based occupational health and safety management system to improve our ability to gather information, conduct investigation, analyse trends and manage performance in relation to health and safety.



Strategic Priority Three: Striving for Quality and Value for Money

- **best practice:** our site specific survey risk procedures have been recognised as best practice and adopted by BOC Gases regionally with a view to developing protocols nationally.
- **decision conferencing:** implemented a resources allocation model which allowed our objectives and priorities to drive budget setting.
- **value for money:** an estimated 27% reduction in unwanted fire signals from automatic detection systems due to the continued adoption of our 'Call Challenge' policy by Control staff and the proactive approach of our fire safety teams in liaising with premise managers/owners.
- **information communications technology (ICT):** with a view to increasing productivity, we have procured 'tablet style' computers and improved our server capabilities to allow staff to access back office systems remotely. In order to improve access to our community and fire safety services we have also signed for the integration of our website to the National e-fire portal.
- **performance management:** we have procured an electronic performance measurement system; restructured our IRMP, Corporate Policy and Performance Review Teams into one cohesive unit (Corporate Planning and Performance)

to ensure a closer link between risk planning and performance management activities; revised Station/Section performance measurement activities ensuring that Station/Section Plans are at the centre of performance management; and introduced Station specific targets for fire station personnel based on local risk.

- **corporate governance:** in order to improve scrutiny and performance management the Authority reviewed its governance arrangements and introduced a new committee structure with responsibilities for appeals, audit and finance, human resources, performance and policy review and standards.
- **corporate risk management:** we have reviewed our corporate risk management arrangements and have agreed finances for the appointment of a Risk and Audit Manager for 2007/08 to develop risk management across the Service.
- **awarded well:** we attained a 'Gold' payroll giving award for our commitment to promoting charitable donations through payroll.
- **environmentally friendly:** we have been awarded a certificate award for 'Environmental Accomplishment 2006' for our commitment to re-cycling and a renewable green energy certificate award for our contribution towards sustainability.

we have introduced Station specific targets for fire station personnel based on local risk

PLANNING AHEAD - CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY

CORPORATE PLAN Including the IRMP and Performance Plan (BVPP)	Community Safety Strategy
	Information Communications Technology Strategy
	Human Resources Strategy
	Medium Term Financial Strategy
	Performance Management Strategy
	Communications Strategy

Corporate planning is essential to realising our strategic objectives over the medium term; and medium term strategies are essential to ensuring that all key aspects of the organisation are planned for and resourced appropriately.

Clearly risk reduction and performance management are also central to corporate planning. Our integrated risk management planning process considers the hazards that have the potential to cause damage, injury and harm, as well as the lessons to be learned from the risks evident in past fires and emergency incidents. Our performance figures identify where we are doing well and where we need to do better.

Together these processes inform our decisions, help us to predict where things are likely to go wrong and make sure that we allocate resources in the most effective way to improve public safety. And for the everyday risks that form part of everyday life – we can ensure we have the right resources in the right place to respond at the right time. Each year, as part of our corporate (medium term) planning activity, we:

- consider statutory requirements;
- review national, regional and local priorities;
- review our corporate risk register;
- analyse and re-evaluate our local risks as part of our integrated risk planning processes;
- consider identified improvement actions from internal and external reviews;
- review progress against strategic objectives in terms of performance against target, compared to others; and year on year; and
- audit and review existing plans.



We have undertaken our corporate planning activities for 2006/07 using our current and historic **performance measurement information, full details of which are given on Pages 26 to 39** of this Plan. The key emerging themes emanating from this corporate planning activity were:

- an **increase in accidental dwelling fires and associated deaths and injuries**, attributable in the main to kitchen fires.
- an **increase in secondary fires attributable in the main to nuisance fires** which are occurring in the station areas of High Handenhold, Darlington and Peterlee where combined figures account for nearly half of all the Service's secondary fires.
- the need to **develop, audit and review arrangements** for all policies, systems and procedures.
- the requirement to **understand the full context and cost of the Service** and be able to **demonstrate value for money**.

Clearly then our main priorities will be to focus on addressing these emerging themes; in addition to fulfilling statutory requirements and further developing the Service. Using a strategic choice model we have therefore prioritised our workloads and improvement actions for the next three years, to be delivered at all levels of the service through our planning and performance systems. Accordingly, our methodology for improvement delivery depends on of the nature and /or size of the improvement project:

- **Business Plan Projects** – where the project is significant in nature and/or size, requires a dedicated team and some aspect of project management.
- **Section/Station Projects** – usually where the project can be resourced and undertaken by a specific section or station as part of their annual planning arrangements.
- **Individual Projects** - usually where the project can be undertaken by a specific individual as part of their section/station annual planning arrangements or as an individual target from their appraisal.

Key Improvement Projects 2007/08 – 2009/10

Objective	2007/08 Plans	Status
1	Re-focus resources to positively impact upon the most significant risk areas for accidental dwelling fires	SP
	Develop a methodology for the improved investigation and analysis of the cause of nuisance fires	SP
	Devolve the responsibility for the development and delivery of local risk planning to District Teams	BP
2	Prepare for the merger of Controls as part of the FireControl project, to include transition arrangements	SP
	Review the provision of special appliances to deal with heavy rescue, hazardous materials and water rescue	SP
	Progress the Regional Management Board Work Programme - Resilience (inc.FiReControl, Firelink and New Dimensions)	SP
3	Carry out a baseline review in respect of community safety activity and education linked to elderly people within our communities	BP
	Introduce an arson monitoring and forecasting system as part of an anti-social behaviour strategy	SP
	Re-prioritise the fire safety inspection and enforcement regime for non-domestic premises	SP
4	Implement a Role Specific Development Procedure into the Service	BP
	Implement a Leadership Development Procedure into the Service	BP
	Implement a Management Development Procedure into the Service	BP
	Implement an Incident Management Procedure into the Service	BP
5	Develop & implement a succession plan to include a protocol for changing roles from uniformed to non-uniformed	BP
	Work towards the 'Silver' Health Award	BP
	Achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard	SP
6	Undertake a cultural audit/staff attitude survey	SP
	Review and revise the Service's structure and establishment	BP
	Consider the integration of the Legislative and Community Safety Teams	BP
7	Implement a New Corporate Identity	SP
	Establish audit and review arrangements for the Service	BP
	Develop an Overarching Information Security Policy	BP
	Review the Authority's governance arrangements	BP
	Develop a mechanism to determine annually the context and cost of the Service and be able to demonstrate value for money	BP
	Establish Information and Data Quality Management Arrangements	BP
	Best Value Review of the Service Level Agreement for Legal Services	BP
	Best Value Review of the Service Level Agreement for Financial Services	BP

Key	
Community Safety Strategy	
Performance Management Strategy	
Human Resources Strategy	
Communications Strategy	
External Audit	
National, Regional, Local Initiatives	
BP	Business Plan Project
SP	Section/Station Plan Project

Key Improvement Projects 2008/09

- consider alternative response options for reported small/ secondary fires
- review the joint arson reduction strategy
- undertake a feasibility study into the building of a youth engagement academy
- implement a targeted development procedure into the Service
- implement a graduate entry procedure into the Service
- best value review of the service level agreement – Occupational Health
- develop the 'consultation' strand of the communications strategy
- prepare for the Audit Commission's 'area assessment' regime
- implement a revised financial management information system solution
- evaluate devolved budgeting to district and station level
- introduce quality management systems into community safety
- best value review of the service level agreement – Environment & Technical Services
- achieve the 'Silver' Health Award

Key Improvement Projects 2009/10

- develop the 'resources' strand of the communications strategy
- introduce quality management systems into Operations
- implement a new Race Equality Scheme
- obtain external accreditation for Community Safety Quality Management Systems (ISO 9001:2000)
- carry out a fundamental review of the Authority's vision, aims and objectives

Full details of all business plan projects and key station/section plan projects for 2007/08 and associated resources are outlined in Annex 2.

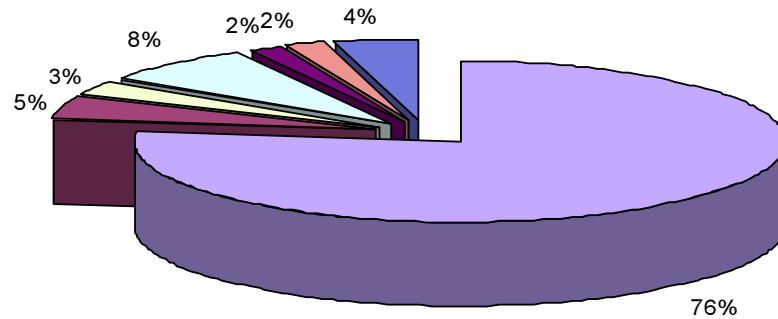
All of our plans are included in our document 'Driving Improvement'. Any known costs or savings associated with carrying out or implementing these plans is fed into our Medium Term Financial Strategy. Plan progression is reported on a quarterly basis to the Service Leadership Team and the Fire Authority. You can view our 'Driving Improvement' document on our website. Alternatively you can obtain a copy from our Corporate Planning and Performance Team at our Headquarters (0191 3324297).

FINANCIAL PLANNING

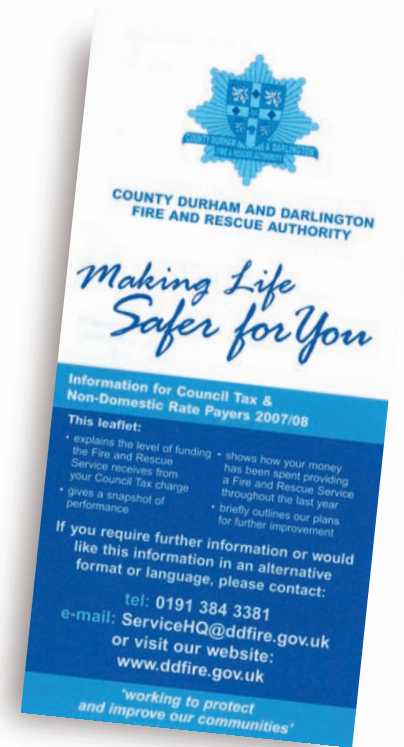
Revenue Budget

We have a revenue budget requirement of £28.057M for 2007/08. The budget requirement is the amount that is required to be funded from grant and council tax after taking account of income and use of reserves.

An analysis of the gross expenditure budget is shown below:



■ Employees	■ Premises	■ Transport	■ Supplies
■ Support Costs	■ Contingencies	■ Capital Charges	



How we set our budgets – listening to your views

Budgets are set by following a structured process that allocates resources to service areas that have a best fit with the Authority's strategic objectives. This process, known as Decision Conferencing, ensures that financial resources are directed to areas that will provide maximum benefit for our communities.

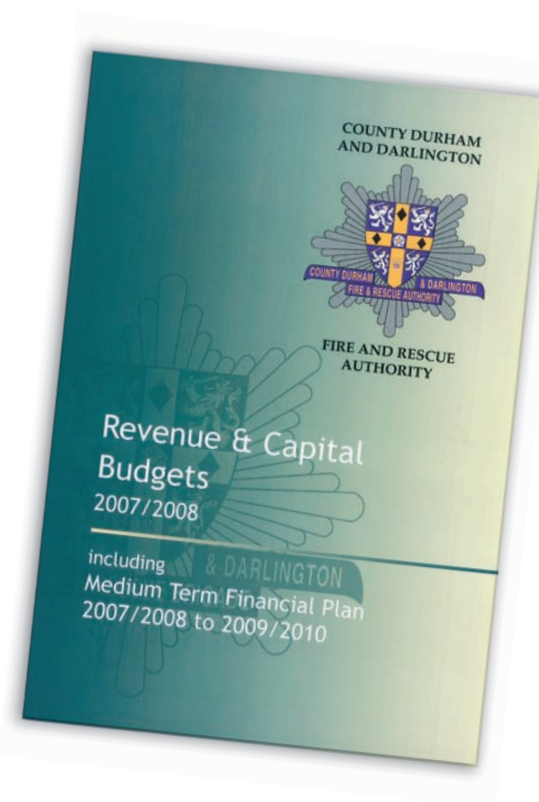
We consult extensively on our proposed budgets prior to consideration by the Audit and Finance Committee and the Fire Authority. The citizens' panel provides the opportunity for citizens to inform the budget setting process and to inform future direction. Meetings are also held with the business community to take on board their views prior to setting the budget.

These consultative processes ensure that our budgets are transparent and take account of the views of users of our services.

How the Budget is Funded

We receive our funding from central government grant and local council tax. The amount to be met from these sources is shown below:

	£000
Budget Requirement	28,057
Funding	
Revenue Support Grant	1,876
Non-Domestic Rates Grant	11,182
Council Tax Precept	14,851
Surplus on Collection Fund	148
Total Funding	28,057



we are progressing a number of modernisation initiatives, aimed at improving community safety and making life safer for our citizens

Medium Term Financial Strategy

We have an approved medium term financial strategy that sets out the expected budget position over a three year period.

Capital Budget

The acquisition of assets such as buildings, vehicles and equipment is funded from capital which is financed through a number of sources including contributions from revenue, loans and operating leases. The annual cost of financing the capital programme is included in the revenue budget.

For 2007/08, the capital programme totals £2.153M. Within this programme, we are progressing a number of modernisation initiatives, aimed at improving community safety and making life safer for our citizens. As part of our estates strategy improvements are being made to Consett and Darlington fire stations; we are investing in our fleet to ensure we have the most up to date vehicles that provide operational resilience for the broad range of incidents that we attend.

We are also investing in a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project to provide two new community fire stations at Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor. This is a joint project with Tyne and Wear and Northumberland Fire and Rescue Services. These stations will provide state of the art community safety facilities and further enhance our commitment to safety.

Key Elements of Medium Term Financial Strategy

Funding the Budget Growth and Efficiencies: Growth within the budget can only realistically be achieved by releasing efficiencies from existing patterns of expenditure. The strategy moving forward therefore needs to concentrate on identifying growth areas and realising efficiency gains that can fund these areas. The decision conferencing approach to setting the budget provides the vehicle for achieving this strategy.

Council Tax: Future budget setting rounds will consider the balance between increasing expenditure and low council tax increases.

Modernisation and Service Improvement: This strategy sets out the areas of modernisation that have been budgeted for and assumed over the medium term. Any significant changes arising from modernisation or Government policy will be assessed and the strategy amended as required.

Reserves: The Authority has a reserves policy, and this will be further built upon by identifying means of maintaining reserves at acceptable levels whilst providing value for money to the taxpayer, and considering future budget risks.

Funding Streams: The Authority receives the majority of its funding from central government and local taxpayers. All relevant funding streams will be examined to ensure alternative funding opportunities are realised.

Partnerships: The Authority will review its partnership arrangements via the partnership strategy to ensure they provide value for money. Any significant financial implications arising from partnerships will be included in the medium term financial strategy.

Value for Money: The Service is in the process of reviewing the cost of services (as measured against BV150 and other performance indicators) to ensure that value for money is achieved in the use of resources. This review will inform future medium term plans and strategies.

Policy Changes: The significant change in emphasis to ensure the Service is pro-active (in areas such as community safety, road safety, community cohesion etc) will require redistribution of existing spending patterns. Any new duties arising from the national framework will also be considered in future strategies (e.g. co-responding). This redistribution can only be achieved by specifically targeting existing financial resources into key service areas. Future budget rounds will emphasise this requirement.

Civil Contingencies Unit

The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) is administered on behalf of Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council. The Unit is funded from income from the local authorities within County Durham and Darlington, who utilise the civil contingency and planning services provided. The budget of the Civil Contingencies Unit for 2007/08 is as follows:

Expenditure	£'000
Employees	463
Premises	15
Transport	14
Supplies and Services	51
Support Services	10
Contingencies	15
	568
Income	£'000
Local Authority Contributions	559
Other	9
	568

Efficiency Gains

The Fire and Rescue Service as a whole has been set a target of achieving £105M in efficiency gains by 31st March 2008. This represents approximately 5% of the overall Fire Service budget nationally.

The efficiency targets that have been set relate to 'cashable' efficiency gains, and therefore the efficiency gains must relate to budget savings that are either used to re-invest in front line services or used to reduce the budget.

We have implemented a number of efficiency initiatives across the services that we provide. We have set a target of 5%, approximately £1.5million cashable efficiency gains to be achieved by 31st March 2008, and we are on track to deliver these gains. Details of our efficiency gains are available on line by visiting www.ddfire.gov.uk

BEST VALUE

Best Value Reviews (BVR)

The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on local authorities to demonstrate Best Value. To do this the Fire Authority must show that its services meet the needs and address the priorities of the people of County Durham and Darlington in the most efficient, effective and economic way.

At the heart of Best Value lies a series of performance reviews which the Authority is required to undertake, to show its commitment towards continuous improvement in service delivery. Each review must fundamentally examine the service provided in accordance with the Government's criteria of Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete.

Our Review Programme

Our BVR Programme focuses on reviewing our existing Service Level Agreements with Durham County Council:

• 2007/08	Legal Services Financial Services
• 2008/09	Occupational Health Services Environment and Technical Services
• 2009/10	Personnel Services

Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2006/07

Section 7 of the Act requires that our BVPP is audited by independent external auditors. This audit was undertaken by the Audit Commission and subsequently reported in October 2006. We are pleased to announce that the auditors concluded that:

'The Authority's BVPP was prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements; there were no matters to report to the Authority and no recommendations made on procedures in relation to the Plan'.

Contracts

Information Communications Technology: We have awarded a contract to Knowledge IT for the provision of a managed ICT service and one member of staff has been transferred to the Company in compliance with the requirements in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts (ODPM Circular 03/03).

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

We use performance indicators to monitor progress against our targets for service provision. They help us to see where we are doing well and where we need to do better; they inform our decision making. Our performance indicators are, in essence, divided into:

- **Best Value Indicators (BVs)** which have been set by the Government and are of two types:
 - **Best Value Corporate Health Indicators**, which provide a snapshot of how well the Authority is performing overall; and
 - **Best Value Service Delivery Indicators**, which reflect the national interest in the delivery of local services and are designed to enable comparisons to be made between the performances of different authorities over time.
- **Local Performance Indicators (LPIs)**, which reflect local circumstances and assist in the day to day management of the Service.

The following pages of this Plan show our performance against our targets for the year 2006/07³. These figures have not been validated by DCLG at the time of publishing this Plan. We have also included performance figures from the previous two years to show

our direction of travel. Our final outcome figures for 2006/07 will be published on our website by the end of June 2007.

Some of the figures used in this Corporate Plan for 2005/06 are different to those stated in our Best Value Performance and Business Plan 2006/07; this is due to us being provided with updated population and dwelling data. For clarity those indicators affected by these changes are marked with an asterisk (*) after the title.

Our targets have been set taking into account national guidance, local circumstances and our priorities for the coming year. In almost all cases they have been aimed at continuous improvement in service delivery. Of particular influence is the National Framework Document 2006/08, which sets specific targets in relation to certain aspects of the Service. For example, there is a requirement to reduce by 10% the number of deliberate fires by the 31st March 2010 from the 2001/02 baseline.

Annex 3 shows comparisons of our performance for the year 2005/06 against regional, national and family group fire and rescue services.

we use performance indicators to monitor progress against our targets for service provision. They help us to see where we are doing well and where we need to do better

³ These figures have not been validated by CLG at the time of publishing this Plan.

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

BV2: i) Level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority Conforms; and ii) Duty to Promote Race Equality

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(i)	>1	2	2	2	3	3	4	5	5
(ii)	42%	47%	79%	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

There is now a requirement for authorities to be externally verified before they can achieve Level 3 and 5 of the Equality Standard. We are confident that we will progress to level 3 following external verification in 2007/08.

The improvement in the quality of our Race Equality Scheme is a result of consultation with our ethnic communities and whilst we are short of our target for 2006/07, we are confident that following further consultation we will achieve 100% (19 criteria) by 2007/08.

BV3: The Percentage of Citizens Satisfied with the Overall Service Provided by the Authority.

	Performance		Targets		Objective Link
	03/04*	06/07	06/07	09/10*	
BV3 Percentage of Citizens fairly/very satisfied	The question asked in the previous survey differed to that asked in the current survey and therefore direct comparisons are not applicable	71	90	76	6
a Percentage of Non-White People fairly/very satisfied		56	92	61	
b Percentage of White People fairly/very satisfied		70	91	75	
c Percentage of Females fairly/very satisfied		71	91	76	
d Percentage of Males fairly/very satisfied		70	90	75	

* This survey is undertaken once every three years

The 2006/07 targets were calculated using limited historical data based on the results from the question asked in the 2000/01 and 2003/04 surveys which are different to the one asked in this survey. Therefore it is not appropriate to measure the current performance against these targets. Targets have now been reviewed in light of these results.

Over the last two years we have re-structured our Service into District teams putting our community and fire safety officers into local areas to improve accessibility and provide advice on specific local issues. We believe that this visual presence at local level, combined with the initiatives included in our recently revised three year community safety strategy will assist in the improvement of future public satisfaction levels.

BV8: Percentage of Undisputed Invoices which were Paid in 30 Days

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
	96.5	98.2	97.5	98.9	100	100	100	100	7

We have systems in place to produce the number of invoices paid outside the target of 30 days and we will continue to be proactive in chasing up late invoices.

BV1 I: Percentage of Top 5% of Earners that are: i) Women; ii) from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities; and iii) disabled

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(i)	0	0	2.8	7.8	14.4	10.5*	13.2	15.8	5
(ii)	0	0	2.8	2.6	2.8	5.2	5.2**	5.2**	
(iii)	Not Applicable		0	0	2.2	2.6	5.3	7.9	

*There have been no vacancies in this category in 2006/07 therefore the targets have been reviewed to reflect this

**Our performance level already more than reflects our current BME population (1.4%). This combined with our current succession planning situation for this category means that we will maintain this target for the next three years but will re-visit on an annual basis.

Although the target has not been met we have completed the non-uniformed job evaluation process which has increased the number of women within the top 5% of earners. The number of ethnic minority employees remains the same; however, due to the increase in the number of posts which fall within this category there is a slight decrease in the percentage figure for 2006/07.

BV12: Proportion of Working Days/Shifts Lost to Sickness by: i) Whole-time Uniformed Staff; and ii) All staff

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(i)	9.9	9.7	7.7	6.3	6.5	6.5	Target to be reviewed in light of 2007/08 performance		5
(ii)	9.4	9.7	7.8	6.3	7.6	6.3			

The target for 2006/07 has been exceeded by virtue of a revised attendance management policy; health promotions, e.g. flu, alcohol, prostate cancer; training on manual handling and our rehabilitation programmes.

BV15: Ill Health Retirements as a Percentage of the Total Workforce: i) Whole-time Fire-fighters ii) Control and Non-Uniformed Staff

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(i)	1.0	1.5	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.7*	0.7*	0.7*	5
(ii)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

*This target equates to 2.5 retirements per year and, based on historical evidence, is very stringent for our Service.

Our performance has improved significantly since last year and it is anticipated that the changes to the Fire-fighter's Pension Scheme will have a positive effect on the level of retirements in the future. In addition the use of modified duties has enabled some members of staff to return to full operational duties following long periods of sickness absence.

BV 16a): Percentage of Employees with a Disability: i) Whole-time and Retained Duty System; and ii) Control and Non-Uniformed.

b): Percentage of Economically Active People who have a Disability.

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(a) i)	Not Applicable		1.7	0.7	6.3	2.6*	5.2	7.7	5
(a) ii)	Not Applicable		4.9	9.3	6.4	11.4	13.8	15.5	
(b)	15.6	15.6	15.6	15.6	Not Applicable				

*The results of our survey in 2006 were not as we predicted i.e. that more people would declare a disability therefore we have had to re-visit our targets for 2007/08 onwards.

We will emphasise the importance of declaring a disability to staff as part of our induction procedures.

BV17 a): Percentage of Uniformed Staff from Ethnic Minority Communities; b): Percentage of Economically Active (18-54) Population from Ethnic Minority Communities in the Fire and Rescue Service Area.

	Performance				Targets				Objective Link
	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
(a)	0.5	0.5	0.7	1.5	3.6	5.4	7.0	7.0	5
(b)	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	Not Applicable				

The number of ethnic minority employees has increased as a result of recent recruitment. The Regional Equality Group will produce a Positive Action Plan for 2007/08 which will include work with the black and minority ethnic community.