



Performance Audit - Response

The local report published by Audit Scotland following its performance audit of the Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service has been welcomed by the Fire Board and senior managers of the Service.

The audit was undertaken on behalf of the Accounts Commission and was designed to “examine the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are achieving the objectives of modernisation”. The study, carried out between June and September 2006, entailed a review of the Fire Board’s performance in 6 key areas:

- Strategic Management
- Prevention and Risk Management
- Financial Management
- Workforce Management
- Management of Operational Business, and
- Communication

The report states that Highland and Islands Fire Board “has a clear strategic direction which reflects the requirements of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and accompanying National Framework”.

It acknowledges that the geographical area in which the Board operates and the high proportion of part-time staff creates challenges, but that “the fire and rescue authority has been proactive in tailoring the modernisation agenda to meet the needs of the area.

The level of engagement with Board members and partner organisations was praised, stating that the Service had “strengthened its capacity to deliver its strategic vision by working in partnership with other organisations,” the outcomes of which are managed through a “robust service planning and performance management process.”

The report also identified that the shift in emphasis from intervention to prevention brought about by the Fire Board’s Integrated Risk Management Plan “has resulted in tangible benefits for the fire and rescue authority”.

The report concludes that the Fire Board “has made good progress since the 2004 Accounts Commission Verification Audit”.

Commenting on the report, the Fire Board Convenor, Drew McFarlane Slack said “I am delighted by the findings of the Performance Audit, particularly as the Service is consolidating its position after a period of unprecedented change. This extremely positive report justifiably recognises the unstinting efforts of our staff, managers and Board members as we strive to meet the further challenges and opportunities that lie ahead”.

Chief Fire Officer Brian Murray was equally delighted by the report. He said “This report gives national recognition to the fantastic efforts of our staff, managers and Fire Board Members and we can all be justifiably proud”.