

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA)

1. POLICY

It is the policy of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority to comply with the Government's requirement to be externally assessed by the Audit Commission through Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). This process will determine whether the Authority is providing a service to the public that is excellent, good, fair, weak or poor.

2. STRATEGY

The aim of CPA is to assist with the purpose of service improvement. The **output** of a CPA review is a report setting out a series of judgements and an overall rating. The **outcome** of a CPA Review should be useful input to planning and implementing service improvement.

CPA is an independent assessment of the Fire Authority and Corporate Board which provides an analysis of our performance, strengths and weaknesses, a baseline for future development and an opportunity to drive through improvement.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 The CPA Process

West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority will be required to undertake the CPA process as detailed below:

- Self-assessment
- Peer Review to support the self-assessment
- Corporate assessment, carried out by a team of assessors including a Fire Service representative, informed by the peer review, the self-assessment submission and a report from our external Auditor.

3.2 Self Assessment – Key Lines of Enquiry

The self-assessment process, which informs the Corporate Assessment, is based on the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE).

The purpose of the self assessment is to invite the fire authority to examine its own achievements in performance and to consider whether its own existing performance plans can be enhanced.

The purpose of the KLOE is to help structure, direct and contain this assessment. The CPA assessors must use the KLOE and must cover everything in it; the fire authority has the option to use the KLOE to whatever extent it sees fit.

The KLOE is not a questionnaire; however, it is useful if each theme in the KLOE is addressed in the self assessment by the fire authority.

3.3 Structure of the Key Lines of Enquiry

The KLOE is structured into three sections, following three principal questions:

- A. What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?**
- B. What is the capacity of West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority to deliver what it is trying to achieve?**

C. What has West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority achieved and in light of that, what does it plan to do next?

Within the three questions there are then nine key themes.

A. What is the Fire Authority trying to achieve?

1. Leadership and priorities
2. A Balanced Strategy

B. What is the capacity of the Fire Authority to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

3. Capacity – Governance and Management
4. Capacity – Resources and Value For Money
5. Capacity – People
6. Performance Management

C. What has the Fire Authority achieved and, in light of that, what does it plan to do next?

7. Achievement of Objectives
8. Achievement of improvement
9. Future Plans

Every theme is then further sub-divided into more questions, to drill down to the essential components of each theme. Each sub-question is then supported by further questions to be used as guidance on the issues that anyone using the KLOE should consider in coming to a decision on the sub-question.

3.4 Diagnostics

In addition to the nine themes, CPA review teams will use five diagnostic tools (guidance designed to assist the teams) to help assess the evidence put forward by each Fire Authority. Like the KLOE, the diagnostics assist CPA review teams in their examination of the Fire Authority's performance and ability to improve. The five diagnostics tools being used are:

- Community fire safety
- Equality and diversity
- Integrated personal development system
- Integrated risk management planning; and
- Partnership working

3.5 The Self Assessment Document

The structure and format of the document is a matter for the Fire Authority but a brief and clear document, with detail in supporting appendices, or cross reference to existing papers, is recommended.

The document includes a short written description, setting out the environment in which the Fire Authority operates, the challenges and opportunities faced and anything else necessary for the CPA Assessment team to be able to understand the circumstances in which we work.

The document also includes a strategic summary action plan which describes the actions that the Fire Authority is going to take over the next three years to meet its priorities and realise the outcomes it aims to achieve.

The document is signed off by the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Fire Authority.

3.6 The Corporate Assessment

Corporate assessment is central to CPA. An assessment team will focus on and test the capacity of the Fire Authority to deliver against national and local priorities, lead and manage performance, work effectively with partners and the community and make best use of resources and workforce skills.

The corporate assessment is a judgement about the Fire Authority's ability to improve services for local people and to deliver positive change for those communities. This judgement is based mainly on the 'self assessment', which is recognised as essential if CPA is to work effectively as a basis for improvement planning in each Fire Authority.

The assessment process is driven by evidence, review and through interviews and focus groups with specifically selected staff which could include:

- Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority
- Selected elected Members including lead Members for Performance Management
- Chief Fire Officer
- Clerk to the Authority
- Treasurer
- All Corporate Board members
- Department Heads
- Section Heads
- Station based personnel
- Representative Bodies

Interviews with external partners will include:

- The Chief Constable
- The Chief Executive - Ambulance Service
- Local Strategic Partnerships stakeholders
- Local Government Officers 

3.7 Improvement Planning

Following assessment by CPA review teams, priorities and existing action plans will be reviewed in light of CPA outcomes. Changes may be made to our performance plan, IRMP Action Plans and other business planning processes as required.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) will facilitate a 'round table' meeting approach involving Business Change Managers, appropriate officers from the Fire Authority and the Chair of the Authority, a representative from Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, a representative from the CPA Assessment team and ODPM to formulate a programme to assist improvement and modernisation.

4. CROSS REFERENCES

Standing Order 23/01 Performance Management Framework

5. RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

5.1 Responsible Director/Department

This Standing Order is the responsibility of the Director, Performance & Planning Department.

5.2 Created/Reviewed/Fully Amended

Created by the Service Delivery Improvement Manager, Performance & Planning Department, January 2005. Review due January 2006.