

The Audit of Best Value

Tayside Fire and Rescue



Prepared for the Accounts Commission
February 2012



The Accounts Commission

The Accounts Commission is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, requests local authorities in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has four main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit, including the audit of Best Value and Community Planning
- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions
- carrying out national performance studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government
- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils and 45 joint boards and committees (including police and fire and rescue services).

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

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Commission findings

1. The Accounts Commission accepts the report of the Controller of Audit on the Best Value audit of Tayside Fire and Rescue.
2. The Commission finds that through its strong focus on prevention, Tayside Fire and Rescue is making substantial progress in its transition from a fire and rescue authority to a fire prevention authority for the people of Tayside. This has been reflected in the significant falls in the numbers of fires and fire casualties in Tayside.
3. The service has many of the essential elements of Best Value in place and is able to demonstrate good improvement since the Commission's performance audit of fire and rescue services published in 2007. The Commission is particularly encouraged by the progress made in developing a comprehensive approach to Integrated Risk Management Planning.
4. The Commission commends the strong culture of continuous improvement seen throughout the service. There are many good examples of this, including self-evaluation, information sharing and performance reporting.
5. The Commission urges Tayside Fire and Rescue Board to contribute more to the improvement of the service. The board should develop a more strategic role to governance, with more effective scrutiny and challenge of the service, a clearer role in shaping the service's strategy, and prioritising its use of resources. To this end, constituent councils have a role in developing board members' capacity. There is also scope for better partnership working between the board and senior managers in leading the organisation.
6. The Commission notes that any substantial issues arising for the service will be considered as part of the annual audit process.
7. The Commission will review its findings from this audit alongside those of the forthcoming audit of all other fire and rescue services in Scotland, with a view to producing in 2012 a national overview of its work in fire and rescue.

Introduction

1. Local authorities in Scotland, including fire and rescue, have a statutory duty to deliver best value in their services. This requires them to establish management arrangements, aimed at securing continuous improvements in their performance while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost.
2. Since 2004, Audit Scotland has carried out audits of Best Value in each of the 32 councils in Scotland and in most police authorities. These audits have helped to improve performance and accountability in local government and have brought unsatisfactory performance to the public's attention through the public reporting process.
3. The responsibilities of fire and rescue services have changed significantly over the past decade. In 2003, all Scottish services were required to produce Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP), identifying the level of local risks and determining the appropriate allocation of resources. The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced further changes, placing a strong emphasis on prevention rather than simply emergency response.
4. Some aspects of Best Value in fire & rescue have been covered in earlier Accounts Commission reports, particularly the *Scottish Fire Service: verification of the progress of modernisation*, published in 2004, and *Review of Service Reform in Scottish Fire and Rescue Authorities*, published in 2007. So far, however, there has not been any dedicated audit, covering all key aspects of Best Value.
5. Following a formal consultation with stakeholders in late 2010, the Accounts Commission decided that the audit of Best Value should be extended to fire & rescue. With the Scottish Government signalling a potential restructuring of the services, however, it was recognised that the audit needed to be proportionate, seeking to identify the key strengths which should be retained in a future structure and any significant weaknesses which needed to be resolved. Subsequently in September 2011, the Scottish Government announced its commitment to deliver a single Fire and Rescue Service for Scotland and published its outline business case. Between October and November 2011 it published a further consultation paper, *Keeping Scotland Safe and Strong*, on how the future service will work in practice. The outcome of this consultation process is not yet known.
6. During 2011, audits are being carried out at each of the eight Scottish fire and rescue services and authorities. These are seeking to focus on core issues, such as strategic planning, the role of members, financial management, and service performance and costs. These local reports, which will support improvement and local accountability, will be followed by the publication of a national overview report in 2012. A number of best value issues, including equalities, sustainability and procurement have not been covered directly in the scope of the local audit work. These, along with a range of other issues, will be covered in the national overview report.

7. We carried out the Best Value audit of Tayside Fire and Rescue (TFR) during September 2011. We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided to the audit team by the chief fire officer, Stephen Hunter, the convenor of the joint board, Councillor Bob Band, and all other elected members and staff involved.

Summary

8. Tayside Fire & Rescue provides an effective emergency response service. Its operating costs are above the Scottish average, but it has managed to reduce costs over the past five years, whilst providing a much greater volume of fire prevention activity.
9. Over the past ten years, there have been significant falls in the number of fires and in the number of fire casualties within Tayside. In line with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, Tayside Fire & Rescue's emphasis is on fire and accident prevention, reflected in its high level of home fire safety visits and other community safety prevention work. More than half of its home fire safety visits are targeted at high risk, vulnerable individuals and it is actively striving to target ninety per cent of its preventative work towards these people to maximise its impact.
10. In delivering its services, particularly those focused on prevention, Tayside Fire & Rescue works very effectively with its partners. It is making progress in sharing information with other agencies to ensure that its fire prevention activity is best targeted to vulnerable individuals and has actively sought to evaluate the impact of its partnership activity.
11. The service has a clear strategic direction, consistently applied over many years. It has a strong focus on prevention which is clearly reflected in all of its plans and strategies. Through its well structured business planning process, Tayside Fire & Rescue's approach to Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) helps determine its annual priorities and its use of resources in reducing community risks. On occasions, however, elected members have not approved proposed changes to services that were designed to make best use of resources for Tayside as a whole.
12. Tayside Fire & Rescue has a strong culture of performance improvement. It has demonstrated continued improvement since Audit Scotland's performance audit work in 2006 and Best Value principles and practices are now well embedded throughout the organisation. It has established a performance orientated culture amongst its staff and supports this through self-evaluation, comprehensive performance monitoring, a well-structured approach to operational audit and clear public performance reporting arrangements. It has also developed systems to make most effective use of its key resources, including its asset management system and targeted asset replacement strategies.
13. Over time, Tayside Fire & Rescue has managed to deliver a wider range of emergency response services and a significantly increased programme of prevention work without increasing its workforce. Its focus on developing managerial and leadership capacity amongst its staff is a key strength. It also supports staff with high quality information and communications technology and provides a good range and quality of personal protective equipment (PPE) to enable staff to provide quality services and ensure their safety.

14. Tayside Joint Fire and Rescue Board does not always effectively fulfil its governance role. While there are some good aspects to the current governance arrangements, such as the ability of officers and members to engage outwith the committee structures through the Service Delivery and Service Support Forums, members' role in helping shape the organisation's strategic direction and prioritising its use of resources has been variable and their scrutiny of performance in delivering objectives is weak.

Part 1. Context

15. Tayside Fire and Rescue serves a population of around 392,000 across 2,896 square miles in the Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross council areas. This represents around 7.7 per cent of Scotland's population and 9.7 per cent of its area.
16. This area is diverse, covering densely populated areas such as Dundee and Perth and sparsely populated areas in parts of Angus and Perth & Kinross. As well as containing comparatively affluent areas, it contains significant pockets of deprivation with heightened fire risks. The area also contains two universities which increase its population by approximately 23,000 for a large part of the year.
17. Tayside Fire & Rescue spent £24.4 million on its running costs in 2010/11, employing 718 staff, including 379 whole time and 247 retained firefighters. As well as its headquarters in Dundee, staff are based in 24 fire stations throughout the area. Of these, four are staffed by whole time fire crews (Blackness Road, MacAlpine Road and Kingsway East in Dundee, and Perth), two through a combination of whole time and retained crews (Balmossie and Arbroath), 15 by retained fire crews and three by volunteer crews ([Exhibit 1](#)). It has 50 fire appliances, including two aerial rescue pumps (ARPs), and a range of specialist units, such as water rescue and urban search and rescue.

Exhibit 1: Staffing and fire stations in Tayside



	Tayside		Scotland
	No.	%	%
Whole time	379	53	50
Retained	247	34	34
Other	92	13	16
Total	718	100	100

Source: Tayside Fire and Rescue

18. Tayside Fire and Rescue is governed by a Joint Fire and Rescue Board that comprises 18 councillors from Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross councils. The Board meets five times per year, and is supported by a Performance Monitoring sub-committee. All members of the board and senior officers also meet outside of the formal committee arrangements in the Service Delivery and Service Support Forums. These informal planning and discussion forums take place as and when required at appropriate times in the year, for example, in advance of the IRMP consultation process.

Part 2. Governance and management

Vision and Strategic Direction

Tayside Fire and Rescue has a clear vision covering prevention, intervention, people and performance that links all its activity. Its emphasis is firmly on prevention and this is reflected in its high levels of prevention activity. Tayside supports delivery of its vision through a comprehensive IRMP process, although this could make clearer the nature of specific risks across Tayside. The Joint Fire and Rescue board's role in influencing strategic direction has been variable and it has not always effectively fulfilled its governance and scrutiny role.

19. Tayside Fire & Rescue's strategic vision is clearly set out in the annual *Towards a Safer Tayside* action plan. Its mission is to provide the highest standard of community safety and emergency response services to all the communities it serves. In support of this mission, activity within the organisation is undertaken under one of its four longstanding corporate aims: Prevention, Intervention, People and Performance ([Exhibit 2](#)).

Exhibit 2: Tayside Fire & Rescue's four corporate aims

Prevention

Work with local communities to reduce risks to life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

Intervention

Respond promptly and effectively to fires and other emergencies when they occur.

People

Ensure that services are delivered by a well equipped, skilled and highly motivated workforce which is able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse communities it serves.

Performance

Monitor performance to ensure continuous improvement and delivery of best value.

Source: *Tayside Fire & Rescue*

20. In line with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, the emphasis of Tayside Fire & Rescue's vision is on fire and accident prevention. This is reflected in practice through its high level of home fire safety visits and other community safety prevention work. More than half of its home fire safety visits are targeted at high risk, vulnerable individuals and it is actively striving to target ninety per cent of its preventative work towards these people to maximise its impact.

21. Tayside Fire & Rescue's Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) framework incorporates its annual consultation document, *Towards a Safer Tayside* action plan, departmental plans, station plans and public performance report. Its IRMP framework and the proposals on which it consults widely each year are clearly underpinned by a detailed risk analysis using Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) and other complementary risk profiling tools. This is used to develop proposals to shift resources towards areas of greatest risk.
22. Station plans introduced in 2011 provide a useful addition to Tayside's IRMP framework. They highlight risks relevant to the area, for example, hospitals, shopping areas, etc, but the nature of the specific risks facing each station and how they determine local priorities is not clear. Station plans outline relevant objectives under each of the four corporate aims, with desired outcomes, supporting actions and targets tailored towards the specific local context and risks.
23. Collectively, members of Tayside Joint Fire and Rescue Board provide limited leadership in setting the strategic direction of the organisation. Through the Service Delivery and Service Support Forums, board members are provided with a good opportunity to work with senior officers outside of the usual committee arrangements to influence the strategic direction for the coming year. Some members engage constructively in discussion both through these forums and board meetings. More generally however, board members focus on specific, typically operational issues, with little evidence of more high level policy and strategy issues being examined.
24. Board members have supported Tayside's approach to IRMP, and have agreed the IRMP proposals that are consulted on each year to better align resources and activity to community risks. On two occasions, in 2008 and 2009, the board agreed to consult publicly on a proposal to change night time crewing at Balmossie fire station from wholetime to retained, in line with its relatively low levels of activity and risk, and use these resources to provide a wholetime day crew in Forfar, which was identified as having a greater level of risk. This proposal would have better aligned £0.5 million of resources to risk. A range of views on the matter were received as part of the consultation process, the vast majority of which were from members of the Fire Brigades' Union who were strongly opposed to the proposal. Following the consultation, the board voted against the proposal on both occasions.
25. Elected members represent the views and needs of the community and are not obliged to automatically follow the advice of officers. However, they need to balance local concerns with wider corporate and regional considerations. Given their endorsement and promotion of the principles of IRMP, and the compelling evidence to shift resources to better match the needs of Tayside as a whole, it is difficult to see that in its decisions over Balmossie the board has met its best value responsibilities in its use of public resources.

Partnership Working

Tayside Fire & Rescue is an active partner in a range of community safety initiatives and its input is highly valued by its community safety partners. It is proactive in examining opportunities to share services with partners and other fire and rescue services. It has actively sought to evaluate the impact of its partnership activity to make best use of its resources. Members of the joint board need to play a more active role in coordinating and scrutinising partnership work.

26. Fire and rescue services work through a range of partnership arrangements. They plan for civil contingencies with public and private sector partners through Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCGs). Prevention activity is typically delivered through community safety partnerships, working with local authorities, police, health, social landlords and the voluntary sector and sharing information on individuals at risk is key to ensuring prevention activity is most appropriately targeted. Fire and rescue services also deliver their response services in conjunction with other emergency services such as police, ambulance service, coast guard and mountain rescue. Individual fire and rescue services also work with other fire and rescue services, typically to provide cross-border response services or contributing to national resilience for major incidents.
27. Tayside Fire & Rescue is an active participant in the Tayside SCG, which carries out high level risk planning for major incidents which could disrupt the area. All of this activity is summarised in the Tayside Community Risk Register (TCRR), setting out the major risks facing the area and the action taken by each partner to manage these risks. At an operational level however, the risks identified in the TCRR do not yet clearly inform resourcing decisions across Tayside Fire and Rescue.
28. Tayside Fire & Rescue works very effectively with other local organisations, particularly through its local community safety partnerships in the Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross council areas. Its commitment and input into these partnerships has developed positively over time and is highly valued by the relevant community safety partners.
29. Tayside Fire & Rescue can demonstrate an extensive range of partnership initiatives and practices that are focused on the delivery of fire and rescue prevention and intervention. For example, in Perth and Kinross, under the Healthy Homes initiative it employs a partnership-funded Home Safety Officer to carry out comprehensive home safety visits. In Angus, it has a firefighter located within the joint services team. In Dundee City there is a community safety sub-group focused on fire related antisocial behaviour and firefighters have also worked with community wardens on identifying general fire hazards to reduce secondary fires.
30. Consistent with the national report, *Scotland Together*¹, Tayside is engaging partners in the third/voluntary sector, such as the Salvation Army, Hillcrest Housing Association, Positive

¹ 'Scotland Together' (September 2009) is a Scottish Community Safety Fire Study examining fire deaths and injuries in Scotland.

Steps and Angus Volunteers to deliver preventative work. To date, these partnership agreements have delivered 53 home fire safety visits and have helped target 'hard to reach' groups.

31. Tayside Fire & Rescue recognises that it does not have the capacity to enter into all possible partnerships and therefore seeks to assess that its involvement in partnerships is adding value to local communities. To this effect, it has a partnership register to monitor the work it is involved in. It has evaluated some of its partnership initiatives, such as *Safe Drive Stay Alive*, but recognises that it can use its partnership register to more proactively assess and evaluate its partnership arrangements. In addition, the board needs to strengthen its scrutiny of Tayside Fire and Rescue's partnership work and play a more active role in helping to coordinate work through local community safety partnerships.
32. There are also other examples of successful partnership working at a more operational level. Some of these are aimed at generating efficiencies, for example, sharing local stations with the Scottish Ambulance Service, Tayside Police and Tayside Mountain Rescue Team. Others include drawing on the skills and specialism of other partners, for example, Mountain Rescue providing rope training to firefighters and developing an 'asset register' for water rescue across Tayside-based organisations. It also worked closely with SCG partners during the severe weather to enable access to sites with high risk and in the near future plans to run a severe weather exercise to reinforce some of the learning points.
33. There are no significant shared services with other fire and rescue services. Detailed assessments were carried out on 19 areas of possible collaboration, such as a shared human resources service with Fife and Central Scotland Fire and Rescue services. Despite the significant investment of management time and resources by all parties, this work has not been implemented, largely as a result of it being overtaken by work on the national reform agenda.

Scrutiny, performance management and improvement

Tayside Fire and Rescue has a strong culture of performance management and improvement. Its performance management framework provides a clear link between strategic objectives and operational targets. It demonstrates clear accountability for its performance through good quality reporting to the joint board and its annual public performance report. It has also recently strengthened its approach to self-assessment by adopting the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF). Despite these strengths, there is limited scrutiny of performance by the joint fire and rescue board.

34. Improving performance is one of Tayside Fire and Rescue's core values and this is reflected in a strong culture of improvement throughout the organisation. This is demonstrated in the attitude of staff and the systems and processes in place to manage performance.
35. Tayside Fire & Rescue has a well structured performance management framework that clearly links strategic objectives to operational targets. It has underpinned this with an

effective performance monitoring system that integrates with its key information systems and allows managers to easily interrogate and analyse performance data in various ways. Performance data can currently be broken down to station level but Tayside is working on managing performance on a geographic basis, aligned to local authority boundaries to improve local accountability and to provide better links to Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs).

36. There is a strong approach to public performance reporting through the detailed *Towards a Safer Tayside* reports, which have been published annually over the last six years. Tayside Fire & Rescue also monitors a very broad range of performance indicators covering the important aspects of its business, and reports its performance in a good level of detail to members on a quarterly basis. However, within this very strong approach, there are some gaps in the issues covered. For example, there is very little benchmarking information provided to help compare performance with other fire and rescue services.
37. Tayside Fire & Rescue also seeks to assess the impact of its work. For example it has carried out formal evaluations of the impact of its home fire safety visits and its *Safe Drive Stay Alive* initiative. In addition, it has developed a stakeholder survey to measure the effectiveness of its community safety, legislative fire safety and emergency response activities, with the first survey implemented during April 2011.
38. Tayside Fire & Rescue has also recently embarked on self-assessing its performance using the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF). It has six trained assessors and is rolling out a systematic programme of self-assessments throughout the organisation. Once all departmental assessments have been completed, Tayside is planning to produce a consolidated corporate improvement plan.
39. There is a strong approach to performance management at an operational level. Tayside Fire & Rescue has a programme of station performance audits that involves all senior managers conducting thematic audits at stations to assess the application of policies and processes. Like all other fire and rescue services, it also carries out incident debriefs, seeking to identify weaknesses and using these lessons to further improve operational effectiveness and firefighter safety. Tayside Fire & Rescue has a particularly well-structured approach, with the results of this work being summarised and reported to senior officers and members.
40. Despite the good range of performance information available, scrutiny of performance by board members is limited. Members provide very little challenge on achievement of targets and performance trends or on more strategic issues, such as the implementation of IRMP or the deployment of resources to match identified risks. They also do not appraise the performance of the Chief Fire Officer and other principal officers.

Part 3. Use of resources

Tayside Fire & Rescue manages its resources well, demonstrating aspects of good practice. It is also generating greater efficiency from its resources to deliver better value services. The joint board's oversight and scrutiny of the use of resources is underdeveloped.

41. Tayside Fire and Rescue has a strong focus on reducing cost and improving efficiency. This is supported by effective financial controls and well-established processes for setting and monitoring budgets. It is also complemented by plans and strategies to manage its workforce and assets within the budgets available.
42. Members of the joint board approve and monitor the service revenue budget and capital programme. The board's scrutiny of financial performance is greater than for other resources, although there is scope for it to be more actively involved in monitoring savings and efficiencies achieved across the service. This is a significant area for development given the board's Best Value duties and the importance of savings and efficiencies for Tayside Fire and Rescue as funding reduces across the public sector.

Financial management

Tayside Fire & Rescue has a sound financial position and has managed a programme of budget cuts effectively.

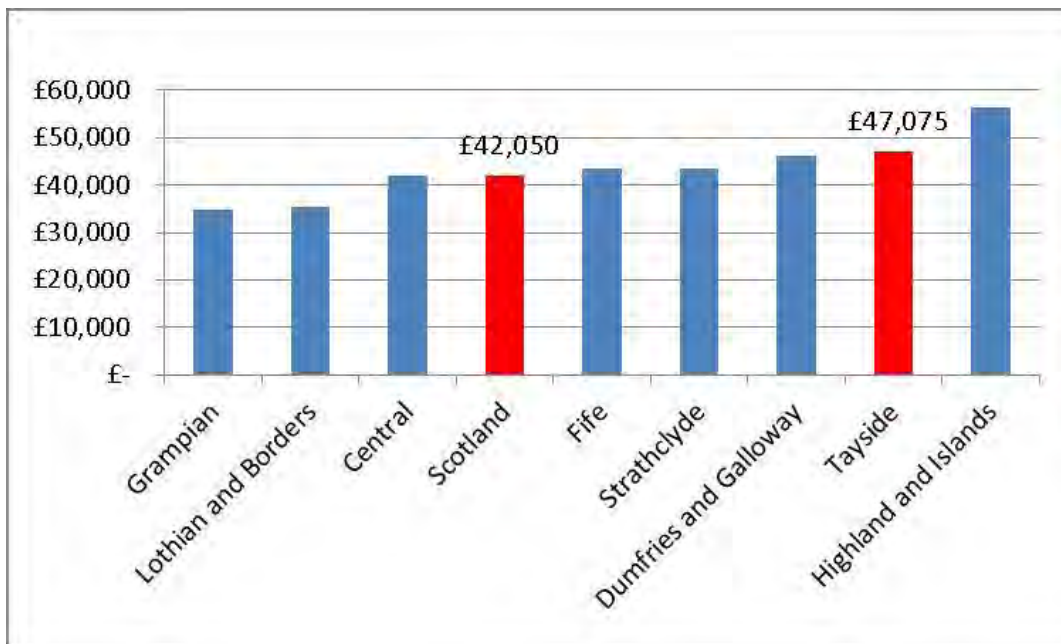
43. Tayside Fire & Rescue manages its budget effectively. In 2010/11, it under-spent on its revenue budget by 1.4 per cent and carried forward a general fund balance of £1.2m into 2011/12. Its revenue budget for 2011/12 is £24.1 million which represents a 2.6 per cent reduction from the previous year, in line with the national reduction in grant funding for local government.
44. Over the last five years Tayside Fire & Rescue has responded positively to budget pressures by making cashable efficiency savings of £914,000, largely through staff reductions. It has also reported non-cashable efficiency savings of £2.3m, through reviewing work routines, redeploying staff and reducing pre-planned overtime.
45. In previous years Tayside Fire & Rescue has carried out medium-term financial planning, with two or three year budgets updated annually. However, because of the national restructuring in fire and rescue services, it is currently working to a one year budget. During the transition period to the creation of a single fire and rescue service in 2013, it is important that there is a clear approach to managing resources and that the joint board maintains appropriate financial oversight of Tayside Fire & Rescue.

Workforce management

Tayside Fire and Rescue demonstrates good practice in managing and supporting its workforce. It has recently achieved the Investors in People standard, reflecting the overall strengths of its approach. It operates a staff appraisal system although it does not yet apply to principal officers or retained firefighters. There is a strong emphasis on training and staff development and robust arrangements to ensure the health and safety of its staff.

46. Through its People and Development Strategy 2011–14, Tayside Fire & Rescue has clear objectives for succession planning, reviewing its organisational structures and developing the skills of its staff in line with its corporate goals. It supports its People and Development Strategy with a range of other human resource strategies and plans through which it manages its workforce.
47. Tayside Fire & Rescue demonstrates a strong commitment to developing its workforce. All wholetime and retained firefighters complete a three-year SVQ and the training department tests that firefighter competence in core skills is being maintained through on-going training programmes. There is an executive development programme, aimed at developing leadership capacity amongst its senior officers, and there is also access to the police development programme and the Mentoring Scotland programme. Tayside's investment in and development of its workforce has resulted in it having 43 members of staff having passed assessment development centres (ADCs) for promotion at supervisory, middle and senior manager level, supporting effective succession planning. The benefits of this have been recognised and used by other fire and rescue services. For example, a small number of firefighters having passed the ADC for crew manager have been seconded to promoted posts in Grampian Fire and Rescue.
48. Tayside Fire & Rescue's effective management and development of its workforce has been validated in 2010/11 through its Investors in People (IIP) and Healthy Working Lives Bronze award. It is actively working towards achieving a Healthy Working Lives Gold award over the next two years.
49. Tayside Fire & Rescue's staffing costs are relatively high when compared with other Scottish fire and rescue services on a per population basis ([Exhibit 3](#)). These are heavily influenced by a combination of deprivation levels and the geography of the area, particularly the boundary of the river Tay which increases the number of stations required to provide emergency cover in Dundee. Despite this, Tayside Fire & Rescue has demonstrated efficiency in its workforce management over time.

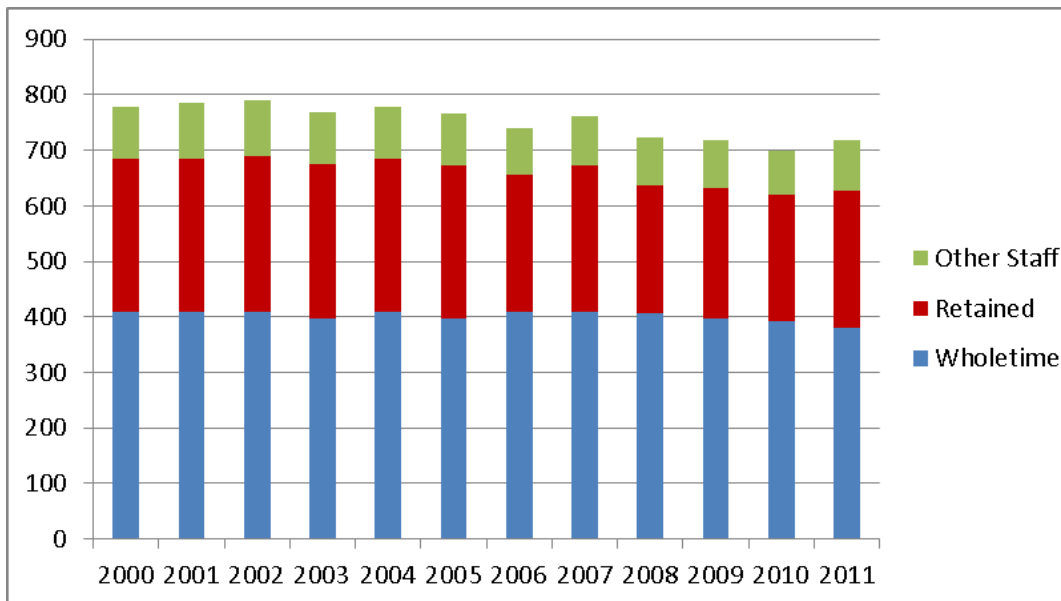
Exhibit 3: Tayside Fire & Rescue, staffing costs per 1,000 population (excluding pensions)



Source: Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

- 50. Over the past five years, there has been a significant reduction in the size of the workforce. Since 2007, the workforce has fallen from 762 to 718 (Exhibit 4). Despite a large increase in its preventative work, Tayside Fire & Rescue has achieved these reductions through a series of efficiency measures. This includes reducing its firefighter establishment by 18 posts, aided by the successful introduction of two aerial rescue pumps (ARPs). Further efficiencies will be realised in 2012 through the introduction of a third ARP.

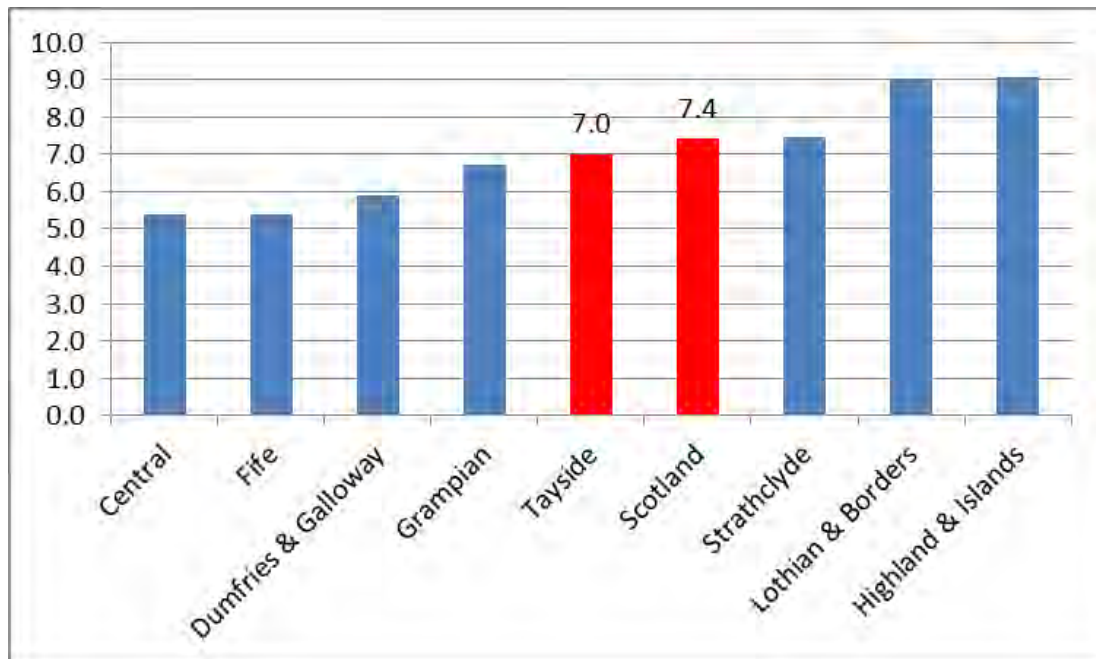
Exhibit 4: Tayside Fire & Rescue, staff numbers (full time equivalent)



Source: Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

- 51. Tayside is reviewing its payment system for the retained duty system (RDS) as it recognises that its current remuneration system is not fully consistent with its focus on prevention. These issues have been identified by other Scottish services, but Tayside Fire & Rescue is actively exploring alternative models for attracting and remunerating RDS firefighters that aligns rewards with its organisational emphasis on prevention.
- 52. Staff appraisals link training needs with the performance of individuals and with service and business objectives. This aims to cover all staff, but it does not apply to the Chief Fire Officer and other principal officers and has yet to be rolled out to retained duty firefighters.
- 53. Tayside Fire & Rescue has a strong commitment to health and safety. It has a dedicated health and safety manager and an Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Unit to review and revise occupational safety policies and procedures and record and investigate injuries and incidents. The latest report for 2009/10 shows that the number of personal injuries and near miss accidents has levelled out at around 50 per year, over the last three years, but is less than half the 126 reported a decade ago. Operational incidents account for the highest proportion of personal injuries and accidents, although there were a number sustained while carrying out routine activities and training. Health and safety work closely with the training and operational assurance departments, to ensure action is taken to address these issues.
- 54. The overall level of sickness absence within Tayside Fire & Rescue is slightly below the national average. It recorded an average of 7.0 days per employee in 2010/11, compared with a national average of 7.4 days ([Exhibit 5](#)).

Exhibit 5: Average number of sickness absence days per employee, 2010/11



Source: Audit Scotland Statutory Performance Indicators

Asset management

Tayside Fire and Rescue has a strong approach to asset management. Its strengths in asset management are reflected in staff satisfaction with equipment and assets and its more efficient use of assets to generate savings, including the successful introduction of aerial rescue pumps (ARPs). It has a strategic partnership with Microsoft, and this is reflected in the particularly effective use of ICT to help manage its business and deliver efficiencies.

55. Tayside Fire & Rescue demonstrates good practice in managing its assets. It has introduced an electronic asset management system that allows it to better manage the whole-life costs of assets and to streamline the operations of its Resource Centre. It estimates that its asset management system will deliver total savings of £48,000 over five years.
56. Tayside Fire and Rescue's asset management system has improved management information on personal protective equipment (PPE) which is allowing a more efficient replacement strategy. For example, through the system tracking requests for repairing, cleaning and replacing items of PPE along with details of regular testing, Tayside is able to extend the life of PPE through a tailored replacement strategy based on risk. It is also using its asset management system to manage its operational equipment in the same way it manages its PPE. By risk rating all operational equipment it estimates that it can make substantial savings in its capital replacement programmes.
57. Tayside Fire & Rescue has introduced a rescue pump strategy to ensure that its fleet of pumps all carry a more versatile range of equipment than standard fire appliances. Unlike some other fire and rescue services, it has also successfully introduced two ARPs into its fleet which it estimates to have delivered savings of £75k in vehicle costs on top of staffing efficiencies. Due to the success of these two pumps, it has invested in a third which is due for delivery in early 2012.
58. In managing its buildings, Tayside Fire & Rescue carries out conditions surveys every 10 years. Since 2002, it has had a strategic construction partnership which is based on the shared risk and reward principles in the Egan report *Rethinking Construction*². This has been influential in its regular under spends in its capital programme.
59. It is also using its full range of assets in a much more energy efficient way. Through energy efficiency measures introduced and reducing its fuel use, despite covering more vehicle miles to deliver its increasing HFSV programme, it expects to make financial savings of £197,000 over five years as well as reducing its carbon footprint.
60. In comparison with other fire and rescue services, Tayside makes very effective use of ICT to deliver a range of business benefits. Its three-year e-strategy and comprehensive ICT asset register, which are overseen by its Information Strategy Group, inform its rolling ICT

² 'Rethinking Construction' (Sir John Egan, 1998) was a report of the Construction Task Force to the Deputy Prime Minister on the scope for improving the quality and efficiency of UK construction.

replacement programme and ensure that appropriate resources are available to provide agreed improvements in service quality.

61. Through a strategic partnering arrangement with Microsoft, Tayside Fire & Rescue has adopted video conferencing facilities through all PCs. In 2010, it found that an average of 63 meetings per week were being conducted on-line. This has not only saved significant staff time, but reduced travelling requirements by around 1,200 miles per week, has reduced CO2 emissions by around 16 tons per year and saved around £12,000 in fuel.

Part 4. Service Performance

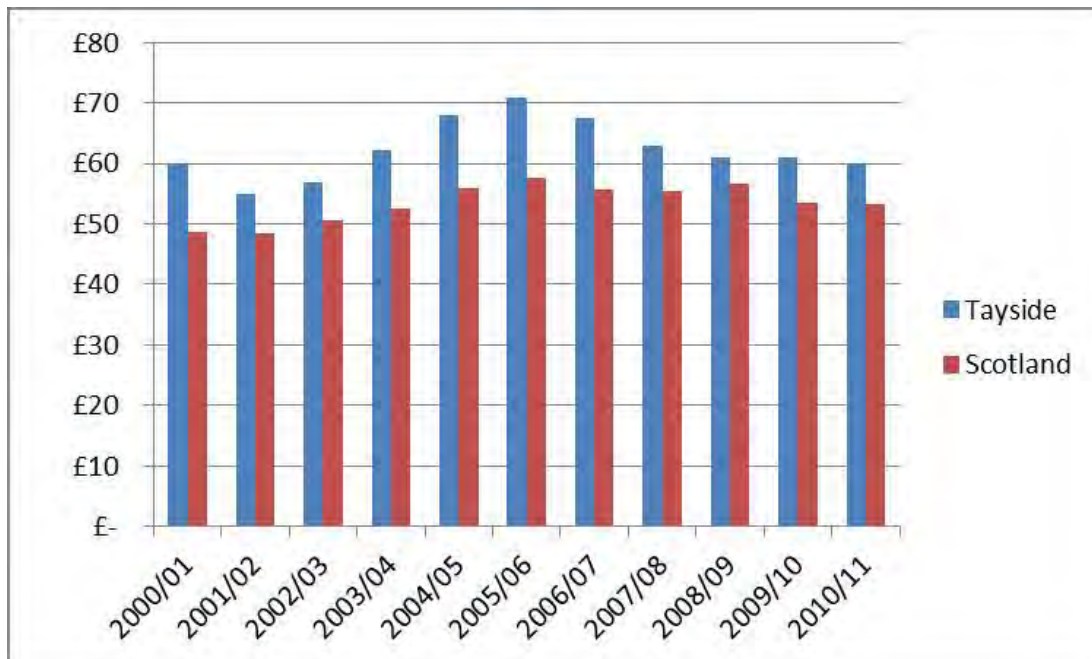
Tayside Fire & Rescue provides an effective preventative and emergency response service. It has a very strong focus on prevention, with the most intensive programme of home fire safety visits and statutory fire audits of any Scottish fire and rescue service. There is evidence that this has had an impact in reducing community risk. Despite a small increase over the past year, the past decade has seen a marked fall in the number of fires and casualties within Tayside. While its costs are comparatively high, these have fallen by around 15 per cent since 2005/06.

Service costs

Due to a range of efficiencies, Tayside Fire & Rescue's operating costs in real terms have fallen by around 15 per cent since 2005/06. However, its costs still remain above the Scottish average.

62. Tayside Fire & Rescue has the second highest operating costs in Scotland. In 2010/11, excluding pension costs, it spent £59 per head of population, noticeably above the Scottish average of £53 (Exhibit 6). This is thought to be at least partly influenced by the geography and the relatively high levels of deprivation within the city of Dundee. However, as a result of a series of efficiencies, it has reduced its real term costs by around 15 per cent since 2005/06, a significantly higher rate than other fire and rescue services in Scotland.

Exhibit 6: Real Terms Costs per 1,000 population, 2000/01 to 2010/11

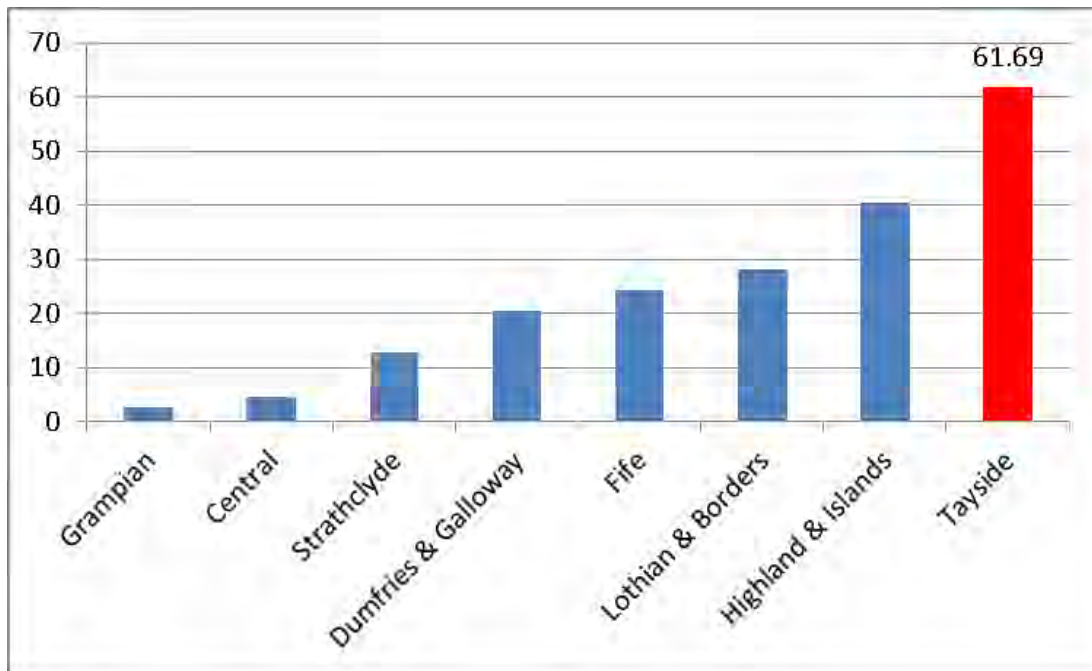


Source: CIPFA data adjusted by HM Treasury GDP deflator

Prevention

Tayside Fire & Rescue places an extremely strong emphasis on its preventative work. Proportionately, it carries out significantly more home fire safety visits and statutory fire audits than any other Scottish fire and rescue service. In addition, it seeks to target this preventative work, particularly by better accessing information from partner organisations on high risk and vulnerable individuals. There is evidence to show that this is having an impact, with the number of fires and related deaths and injuries falling at a faster rate in Tayside than in other parts of Scotland.

63. A key feature of the introduction of IRMP and the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 was an increased emphasis on preventative work. Tayside Fire and Rescue places an extremely strong emphasis on its preventative role, seeking to meet its responsibilities through a combination of home fire safety visits, statutory fire audits, and a range of community safety education projects.
64. Home fire safety visits (HFSVs) form a core element of Tayside Fire & Rescue's preventative work. Its programme of HFSVs has grown from 3,313 in 2008/9 to 13,388 in 2010/11, with targets for further increases. Proportionately, Tayside now carries out by far the highest number of HFSVs in Scotland ([Exhibit 7](#)). In addition, it targets over half of all visits towards high risk groups. As highlighted earlier in this report, its partners are also contributing to the HFSV programme.
65. Along with its partners, Tayside Fire & Rescue provides community safety advice and carries out a range of preventative initiatives, through school visits, public events, diversionary programmes and other initiatives, such as *Safe Drive, Stay Alive*. It demonstrates a range of good practice in its approach, including: training community wardens on fire hazards to look out for and employing a partnership funded Home Safety Officer in Perth and Kinross to carry out a detailed prevention assessment for vulnerable people that includes slips trips and falls, electric blanket checks and portable electrical testing (PAT) in addition to a standard HFSV. In Dundee, community planning partnership meetings include, specific groups looking at fire related antisocial behaviour and broadening out HFSVs to be multi-risk checks.

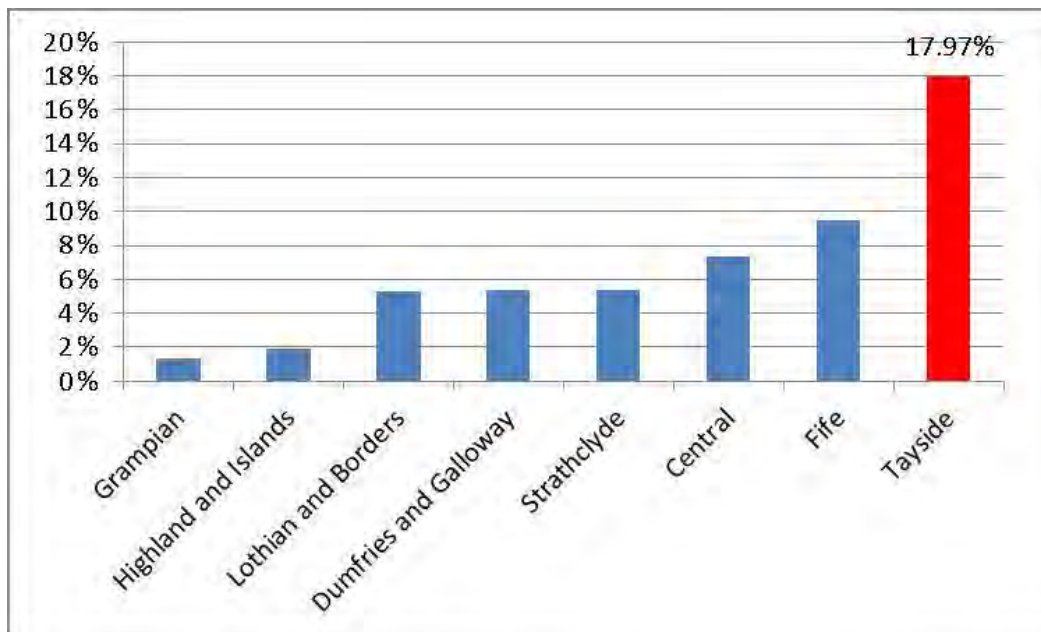
Exhibit 7: Home Fire Safety Visits per 1,000 dwellings, 2009/10

Source: Chief Fire Officers Association Scotland (CFOAS) Performance Indicators 2009/10

66. A key challenge in targeting prevention activity for all fire and rescue services is sharing information with partners to identify those people most vulnerable to fire. Many of Tayside's recent victims of fire were known to other public agencies. Tayside Fire & Rescue has therefore been developing information sharing protocols with community care and health and are beginning to get better information on vulnerable people, including those discharged from hospital, to target prevention activity. It is still too soon to see what impact this may have.
67. Tayside Fire & Rescue is also using increasingly creative and innovative ways of getting its prevention message across through engaging with young people and vulnerable people. For example, to promote its young firefighter programme, it worked with the local publisher DC Thomson to develop a young firefighter related comic strip featuring Dennis the Menace and Gnasher that featured in the June 2010 edition of the Beano.
68. Tayside Fire & Rescue has evaluated the impact of its HFSV programme. This clearly indicates that the implementation of the HFSV strategy and target setting methodology has greatly influenced organisational performance and the cultural behaviours of firefighters. The impact of its prevention work is also reflected in casualties from domestic fires having fallen around twice as fast as the Scottish average, as highlighted in paragraph 73 below.
69. Statutory fire safety audits of non-domestic premises are an important part of preventative work. Landlords and business owners are responsible for ensuring fire safety in their premises through, for example, carrying out self-assessments. However, a programme of fire audits is essential to provide guidance and to help enforce fire safety standards. In 2010/11 Tayside Fire & Rescue carried out 2,732 statutory fire audits. Proportionately, this

is around double that of any other fire and rescue service in Scotland. This work was also targeted, with a focus on higher risk properties such as care homes, hotels and houses in multiple-occupation (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Percentage of non-domestic properties subject to fire safety audits, 2010/11

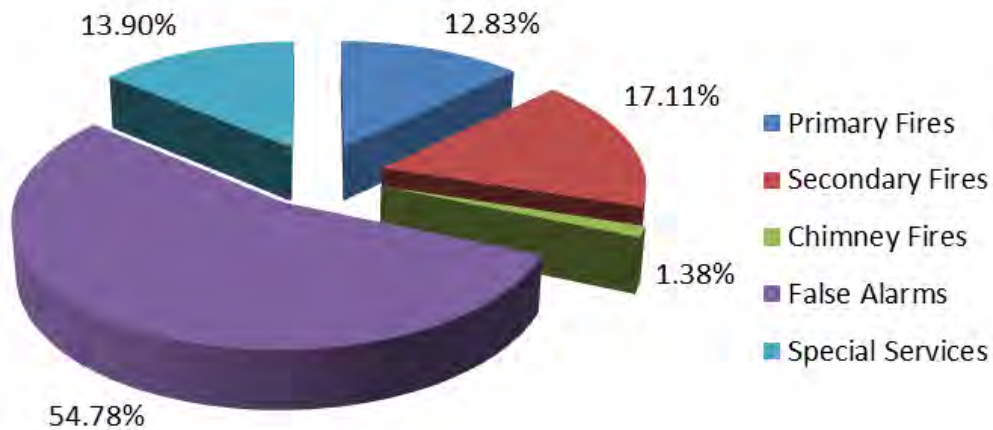


Source: Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin

Emergency response

In line with national trends, there has been a long-term decline in the number of fires in Tayside. There has been some increase in the number of false alarms, but changes in Tayside Fire & Rescue's mobilisation policy has minimised the impact of this on the use of resources. Emergency response times have remained consistent over the past decade and are in line with other fire & rescue services, but it is not known how they compare to the locally-retained National Standards of Fire cover.

- In 2010/11, Tayside Fire & Rescue responded to just under 8,000 incidents. In line with the national pattern, about an eighth of these related to primary fires (those in buildings, vehicles or involving casualties). However, the proportion due to secondary fires (typically outdoor fires in heathland, rubbish bins or derelict buildings) was lower than the national average of a quarter of calls; with the proportion due to false alarms and 'special services' (primarily road traffic collisions and flooding) being a few percentage points above average (Exhibit 9).

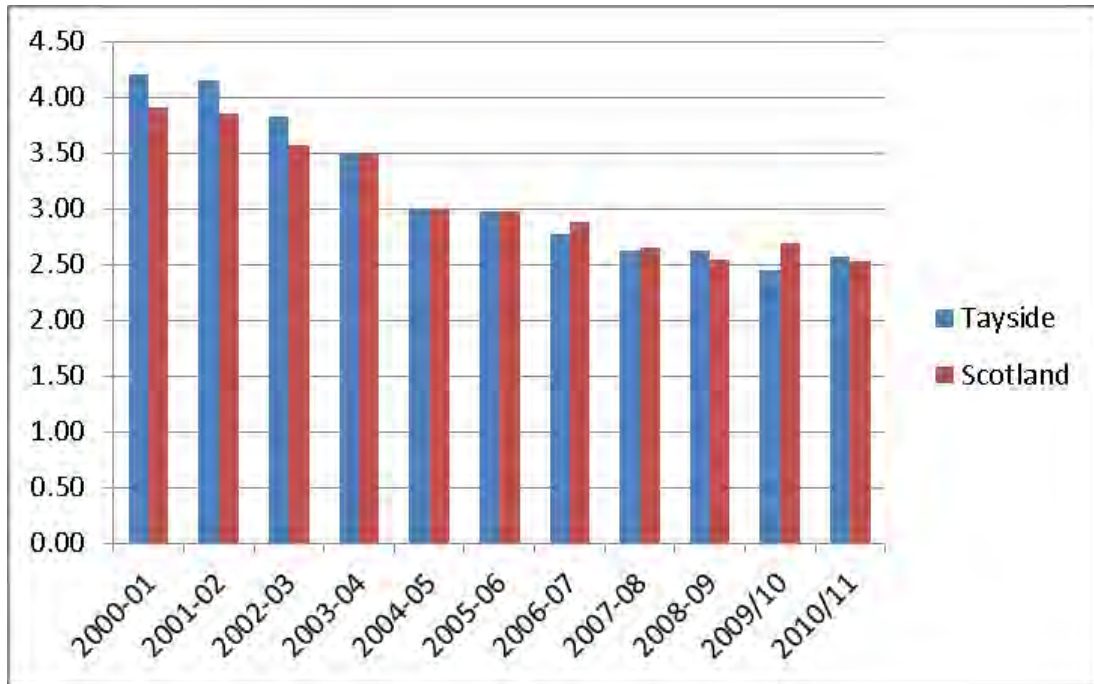
Exhibit 9: Analysis of emergency responses in Tayside, 2010/11

Source: Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin

Number of fires and casualties

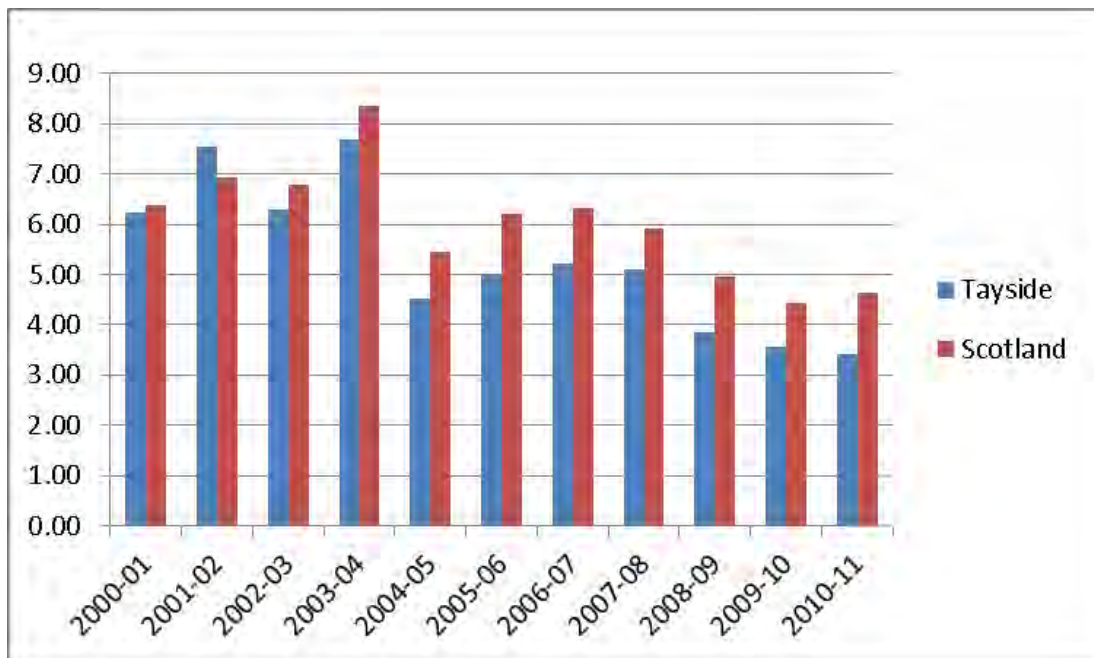
71. Historically, the level of fires within Tayside has been around the Scottish average. In line with national trends, there have been significant falls in the number of primary and secondary fires (Exhibits 10 and 11). This can only act as an indirect indicator of Tayside Fire & Rescue's performance as these trends are likely to be influenced by wider social issues, such as improvements in the housing stock or a decline in the number of people smoking. The spike in secondary fires during 2003/04, for example, was due to a dry summer and an increase in grassland fires. Nevertheless, the rate of decline in the number of fires, particularly secondary fires, has been greater in Tayside than in Scotland as a whole.
72. Within this overall decline, however, there has been a small increase over the past year in the number of primary fires within Tayside. This may be influenced by the current economic conditions or a simply a short-term statistical anomaly and it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions on this change.

Exhibit 10: Number of primary fires per 1,000 population



Source: Audit Scotland

Exhibit 11: Number of secondary fires per 1,000 population

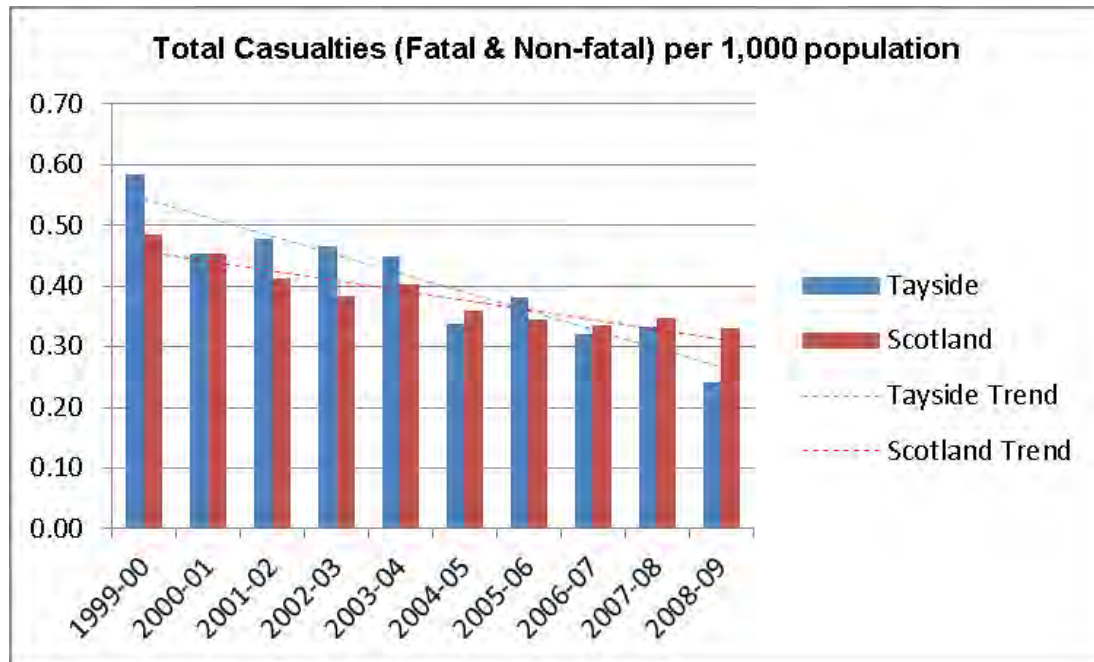


Source: Audit Scotland

- 73. Over the past decade casualty rates in Tayside have fallen by almost two thirds, around double the rate of decline across Scotland. There appears to be a correlation between the most significant drop in casualties from dwelling fires in 2008/09, with Tayside Fire &

Rescue significantly increasing its programme of home fire safety visits in 2007/08, suggesting that its preventative work is having a positive impact (Exhibit 12). Since 2008/09³, casualties in Tayside have fallen by a further 20 per cent and are noticeably below the Scottish average.

Exhibit 12: Casualties per 1,000 population



Source: Audit Scotland

Special Services

74. Tayside Fire & Rescue responds to an increasing number of 'special service incidents', such as flooding and road traffic collisions. These now represent around 14 per cent of its emergency responses. There are no performance measures available locally or nationally to assess the standard of this work. However, it is clear that Tayside Fire & Rescue has increased its capacity to deal with these incidents. For example, it has introduced dedicated water response vehicles, a boat rescue response and trained personnel in enhanced rope rescue techniques. It is also the only Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland to equip all its personnel with wet weather Personal Protective Equipment.

False alarms

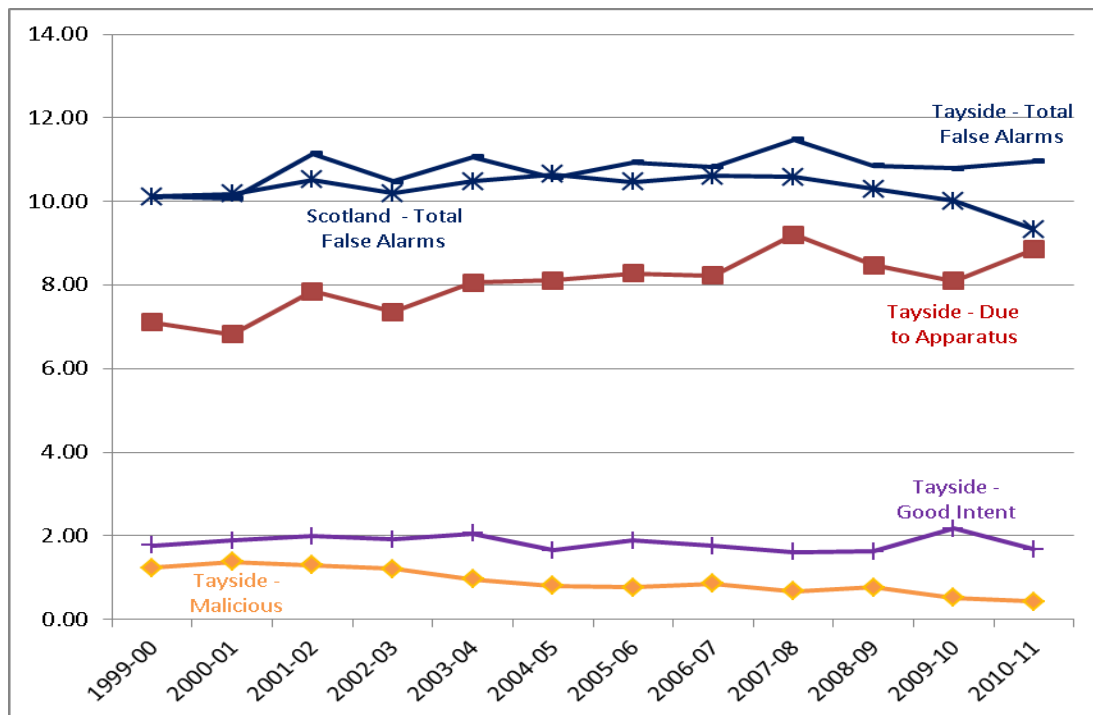
75. False alarms can be caused by a range of factors, such as malicious hoax calls or faulty automatic alarms. They account for around 55 per cent of Tayside Fire & Rescue's emergency calls. This represents a significant use of resources on non-productive work

³ In 2009/10, the Scottish Government changed its definition for casualty statistics, meaning that it is not possible to compare data from 2009/10 with that for previous years.

and, perhaps more importantly, means that there may be delays in responding to genuine emergencies.

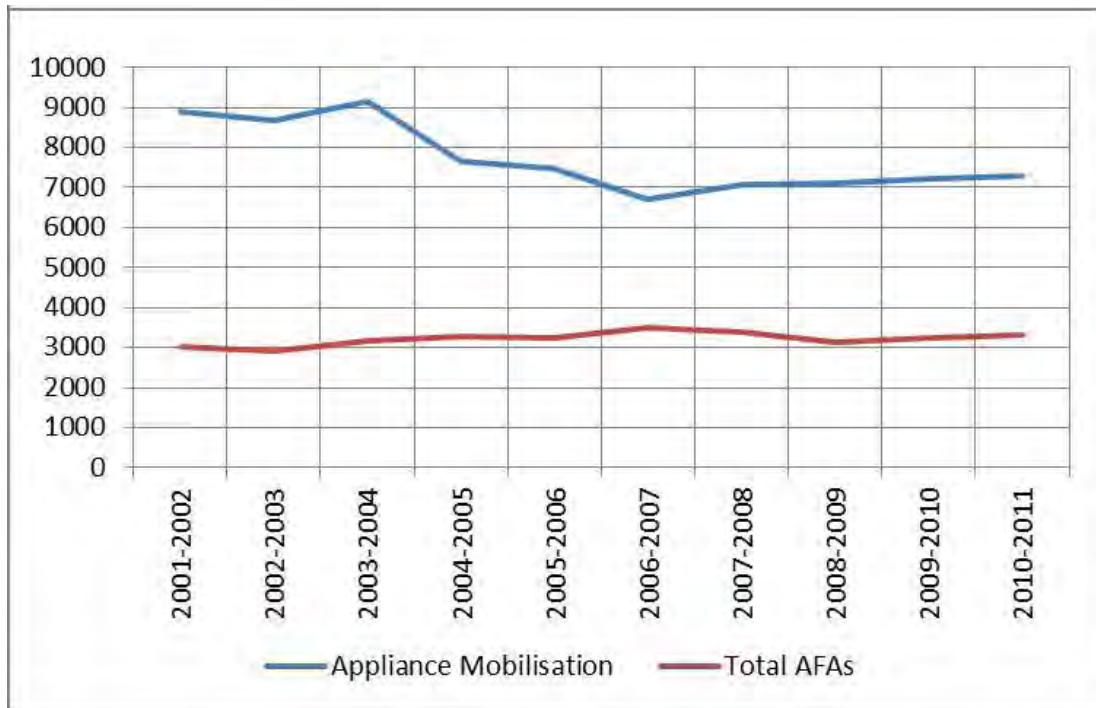
- 76. Tayside Fire & Rescue's overall level of false alarms is above the Scottish average (Exhibit 13). Through a number of measures, such as call screening and community safety initiatives, it has successfully halved the number of hoax calls. However, this has been more than offset by increases in the number of automatic false alarms (AFAs). Over the past decade, these have increased by almost 30 per cent, the largest increase in Scotland. This is influenced by the drive within Tayside to increase the number of premises with fire alarms and to its intensive programme of fitting smoke detectors through its home fire safety audits.

Exhibit 13: False alarms per 1,000 population



Source: Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin

- 77. Tayside Fire & Rescue has responded to this increase in AFAs. It has reviewed its predetermined response to AFAs and now uses a risk assessment to help prioritise the mobilisation of fire appliances. As a result, despite the increase in false alarms, it has actually reduced the overall number of fire appliances being called into action (Exhibit 14). As well as improving efficiency, the reduction in vehicle movements under blue light conditions also reduces Tayside Fire and Rescue's own road risk.

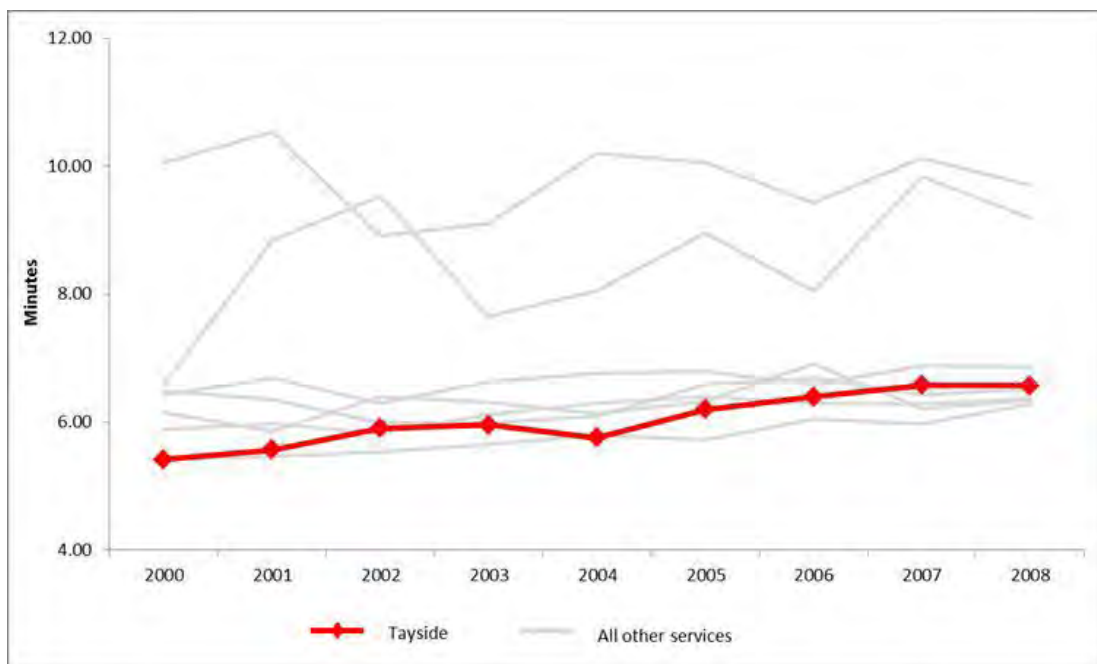
Exhibit 14: Appliance mobilisations to automatic fire alarms

Source: Tayside Fire and Rescue

Emergency response times

78. The speed of emergency response and number of vehicles and firefighters mobilised can be important factors in securing positive fire and rescue outcomes. Prior to 2005, standards of emergency response were set out in the National Standards of Fire Cover, with standards varying according to risk factors associated with different types of buildings. With the introduction of IRMP, these national standards were withdrawn. This allows individual fire and rescue authorities to determine their own speed and level of response to meet the specific level of risks identified in their IRMP.
79. Similar to a number of other Scottish services, Tayside Fire & Rescue has not developed its own local risk-based set of response standards. Despite this, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Advisory Unit (SFRAU), as part of its 2011 report, *Review of the Implementation and Impact of Integrated Risk Management Planning in Scottish Fire and Rescue Services*, showed that Tayside's Fire & Rescue's average response times for primary dwelling fires have remained consistent over the past decade and are broadly in line with the national pattern (Exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15: Average emergency response times



Source: *Review of the Implementation and Impact of Integrated Risk Management Planning in Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRAU 2011)*

Part 5. Improvement Agenda

Strategic planning

- Station plans can be further developed to more clearly identify specific local risks and how these determine local priorities.

Role of members

- Board members need to ensure that they carry out their strategic leadership role effectively and that policy decision making processes are consistent with principles of good governance.
- Tayside Joint Fire and Rescue Board members need to provide more effective scrutiny of performance, including the individual performance of its appointed principal officers.

Performance management

- The performance management framework in place can be further enhanced by use of comparative data and clearer links to local SOA performance to strengthen accountability and aid better scrutiny for members.

Workforce management

- Staff appraisals need to be extended to retained duty system (RDS) firefighters and principal officers.

Tayside Fire and Rescue

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