

23 NOVEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: NATIONAL RESILIENCE AUDIT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the outcome of a recent audit, undertaken by the National Resilience Advisory Team, which examined the effectiveness of this service's strategies, policies and procedures that underpin the New Dimension programme, with specific reference to the Mass Decontamination (MD) function and the Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) function.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members are aware the events of 11th September 2001 led to a transformation in how the emergency services of the UK respond to large-scale emergencies through the New Dimensions programme. This programme was designed to enable the Fire and Rescue Services in England to provide an effective response to incidents not just of a terrorist nature, but also to other disasters such as flooding and chemical incidents. This Authority hosts a number of these specialist vehicles.
- 2.2 One ongoing challenge presented by the New Dimension programme is that central government needed an assurance process which validates the policies and procedures in place to support the efficient use of New Dimension assets to a uniform standard across the country.
- 2.3 In order to achieve this operational assurance a National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) was established in June 2008 with the remit to examine how the New Dimension resources are being utilised by those Authorities that host them.
- 2.4 To this end, the national team conducted an audit within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service in August of this year and their report has now been published. The key findings of the report are set out below for the consideration of Members.

3 NATIONAL RESILIENCE AUDIT TEAM KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 The assurance team visited several locations, including Service Headquarters, five Community fire Stations and the Technical Services Centre in Gateshead. The overall result of the audit confirmed that the service is able to mobilise the MD and DIM capabilities with sufficient resources/attributes and within timescales to meet reasonable response requirements of the Tactical Guidance Document Fire and Rescue Service response to Chemical, Biological,

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Radiological and Nuclear events and the Home Office Model Response (HOMR).

- 3.2 The team also noted that, throughout the assurance process, it was evident that there exists a significant commitment to supporting Regional and National Resilience and that this is underpinned by key strategic documents such as the Integrated Risk Management Plan and the Strategic Community Safety Plan.
- 2.2 Furthermore, the audit also identified some key areas of notable practice in relation to the subject areas under review. In particular, it was noted that that recall to duty exercises had been undertaken without notice to off-duty staff which provided a very robust test of the effectiveness of such arrangements. The central role of the Technical Services Centre in controlling the movement of vehicles and equipment between the service and the maintenance contractor, Vosper Thorneycroft, was also deemed to be of a very high standard.
- 2.3 The audit team also identified a small number of areas that require further development to enhance the delivery of the ND programme within TWFRS, this included improved access to a specialist training course at the Fire Service College, the NRAT are assisting TWFRS in achieving this.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The formal findings of the report have been supported by personnel from the team who commented upon the professionalism of the Authority's staff throughout the review
- 3.2 The audit report, assessing the Mass Decontamination function and the Detection, Identification and Monitoring function undertaken by this Authority by NRAT staff, has demonstrated the high standards to which the service operates.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Members are asked to;
- b) Consider the content of this report, and;
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- National Resilience Assurance Process; Final Report for Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service; September 2009.