

**MEETING: 29 MARCH 2010**

---

**SUBJECT: INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN ANNUAL ACTION  
PLAN 2010/2011 – REPORT OF CONSULTATION**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE  
AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR**

---

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report outlines, the results of the consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Annual Action Plan 2010/2011.
- 1.2 Members are requested to consider the content of the report and, subject to any changes they may wish to make, endorse the action plan for the 2010/2011 year.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, since April 2004, all Fire and Rescue Authorities have been required to produce a local IRMP that sets out their risk assessment and reduction strategy in collaboration with other agencies with the specific intention of:
  - Reducing the number and severity of fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents occurring in the area for which it is responsible.
  - Reducing the severity of injuries in fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents.
  - Reducing the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergency incidents.
  - Safeguarding the environment and heritage (both built and natural).
  - Providing value for money.

2.2 In essence, each Fire and Rescue Authority must have in place an IRMP which reflects local needs and which sets out plans to tackle effectively both existing and potential risks to communities. They should also:

- Produce annual action plans on which they have fully consulted their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for the consultation.
- Have regard to central government guidance in producing their plans.
- Make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the Annual Action Plan, including using more efficient working practices where appropriate.

## **2 IRMP ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2010/2011**

2.1 The Authority has complied with this requirement and produced a draft IRMP Annual Action Plan covering the period 2010/2011.

2.2 This document was presented at the Authority meeting held on 21 September 2009 where Members considered and subsequently approved the 2010/2011 Draft Action Plan for public consultation (Minute 41 (ii)/2009 refers).

2.3 As Members will recall the draft action plan contained four proposals, namely:

- Examine Low Level of Risk staffing models (LLAR) currently used by some other fire and rescue services to see whether there are any benefits from using them at our quieter stations, for example Sunderland South Community Fire Station.
- Carry out a full evaluation of the value, or otherwise, of maintaining the retained fire appliance based at Gateshead South Community Fire Station.
- Carry out a review of how our community fire safety resources are used and look at whether there are any efficiency savings which could be made through smarter working, improved targeting, increased partnership work and greater use of data.
- Carry out a review of the efficiency of back-office (support) functions to see what improvements and efficiencies can be made ready for 2011/2012. This work will follow on from the benchmarking review that is being undertaken this year.

## 3 CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 3.1 Subsequent to Member approval the public consultation exercise commenced on 28 September 2009 and ran for a period of 15 weeks. During this time consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders in order to seek their views on the proposals contained within the draft plan.
- 3.2 A number of different consultation approaches were undertaken and, for the first time, a short summary document and presentation were produced to support the consultation process. The intention of this was to give partners and members of the public a firmer basis on which to make comments. The consultation methods used are listed below for information.
- 3.3 **Public Focus Groups.** Two public focus groups were carried out in early December with a sample of members of the Northumbria Police Authority Citizen's Panel. These were carried out at Sunderland West Community Fire Station (3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009) and Gateshead North Community Fire Station (7<sup>th</sup> December 2009), and were facilitated by SMT members (AM Lowther and ACO Capeling).
- 3.4 **Public Meetings.** Given that one of the IRMP proposals concerns evaluating the value, or otherwise, of maintaining the retained fire appliance based at Gateshead South Community Fire Station, three additional public meetings were held in the Birtley and Kibblesworth areas. The purpose of these meetings was to allow the local members of the community to comment and voice any concerns relating to the IRMP action plan proposals and, in particular, the withdrawal of the retained appliance from Gateshead South Community Fire Station. A presentation for elected members was also carried out with Gateshead Council.
- 3.5 **Presentations to Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).** Building on our strong relationships with stakeholders through LSPs, District Managers delivered the IRMP presentation and took the views of four of the five LSPs (South Tyneside was unable to accommodate the agenda item within the consultation timeframe on this occasion).
- 3.6 **Surveys.** The summary of IRMP proposals was sent to all partner organisations, ward councillors, MPs and local organisations along with a survey. Both were also placed on our website.
- 3.7 The summary and survey documents were also left in selected doctors' surgeries to be completed by patients waiting for their appointments. Each District Manager nominated a surgery in their local authority area for this survey to be carried out.

- 3.8 **Employee Focus Groups.** Three employee focus groups were carried out to obtain staff views on the IRMP proposals.
- 3.9 **Representative Bodies.** The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Unison and the GMB were invited to comment on the proposals.

#### **4 FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS**

- 4.1 A total of eleven people attended the Citizens Panel focus Groups and sixteen members of the public attended the meetings arranged in the Birtley and Kibblesworth area.
- 4.2 Feedback from the Citizen's Panel Focus Groups was generally positive. In relation to the Low Activity Stations proposal, after a full discussion the attendees agreed with the proposal on the understanding that the review was conducted fairly and that unions were involved, and that findings of the investigation into Low Activity Staffing were made public.
- 4.3 When the proposal of evaluating the value of the retained appliance from Gateshead South Community Fire Station was discussed, the attendees welcomed the fact that the Authority wanted to hear views on how taxpayers' money should be spent and where efficiencies could be made. Overall the Citizen's Panel endorsed this proposal after receiving reassurance that the delivery of our services to the public would not be adversely affected by the outcome of the review.
- 4.4 At the public meetings held in Birtley and Kibblesworth, the attendees asked questions about the level of operational cover if the wholetime appliance from Gateshead South was already out on a call and if there was the possibility of making the retained appliance a wholetime appliance. The group also expressed concerns over the loss of retained firefighter jobs.
- 4.5 The proposal to review how community fire safety resources are used with the objective of identify any efficiency savings was welcomed. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to consult with other fire services to determine good practice. The group also stressed that they were happy with the overall reduction in incidents and the prevention work that is undertaken by the service.
- 4.6 Some caution was expressed over the proposal to review back-office (support) functions as there were concerns over possible job losses but the group felt that if savings could be made it makes sense to explore these avenues.

## **5 FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

- 5.1 Presentations were carried out at Gateshead, Newcastle, Sunderland and North Tyneside LSPs and full feedback was received from Sunderland and North Tyneside LSPs. The briefings generated a lot of debate and the investigation into different ways of working was broadly welcomed.
- 5.2 Questions were asked about the potential impact of LLAR staffing on the family lives of firefighters. At North Tyneside there was discussion of the potential impact on response if the retained fire appliance is deemed to be no longer required, while at Sunderland partners asked whether savings would have to be made from every station area, and what operational cover was available from neighbouring fire and rescue services.
- 5.3 The LSPs felt that the final two proposals presented opportunities for further partnership working. It was suggested that resources could be saved by working jointly with the Police in the prevention arena, and the potential for projects such as Phoenix to support the wider community cohesion agenda was discussed at Sunderland. The potential for shared services was also raised.
- 5.4 Partners also expressed some concern over potential job losses and the impact of these on the local economy and on front line services.

## **6 FEEDBACK FROM EMPLOYEE FOCUS GROUPS**

- 6.1 Fifty three members of staff attended three employee focus groups. Those who attended were generally supportive of the proposals and agreed that the proposed actions would help make their communities a safer place to live in.
- 6.2 There was some caution about the LLAR staffing proposal. The main concern raised was about the detrimental effect changes to shift patterns may have on personal lives. Attendees received reassurances from the Chief Fire Officer that the proposal was to carry out a review into staffing options and that no decision had been made.
- 6.3 Most staff can see the rationale for the proposal to review the requirement for the retained fire appliance based at Gateshead South Community Fire Station.
- 6.4 Staff acknowledged that the proposal to review how our community fire safety resources are used is a good idea, as it may lead identifying new ways of working as well as achieving efficiencies.

## **7 FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS**

- 7.1 24 completed surveys were received, 10 from stakeholders and 14 from patients at Doctor's Surgeries. Of those who responded to the survey:
- 92% agreed that we should look at the LLAR staffing model.
  - 88% agreed with the proposal to examine the viability of maintaining the retained appliance at Gateshead South Community Fire Station.
  - 66% agreed that we should review our risk prevention work.
  - 92% agreed that we should review our back office functions.
- 7.2 No comments were made that suggested any changes to the draft IRMP or the Action Plan.

## **8 FEEDBACK FROM THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION**

- 8.1 Understandably, of the written submissions received, the Fire Brigades Union's (FBU) response was the most detailed and it raised a number of points. A précis of their submission is outlined below for consideration by Members:
- General comment was made about the difficulties of integrated risk planning against a background of nationally imposed funding restrictions on the public sector
  - The FBU is opposed to the introduction of any alternative shift patterns, and to the review of the retained appliance at Gateshead South Community Fire Station
  - There is an awareness of the need to constantly evaluate performance and the FBU supports the review of how our community fire safety resources are used. However, they add that although any improvements would be welcomed there is a hope that any savings would be reinvested into risk prevention.
  - For the review of the back office functions the FBU requests that all those within the organisation irrespective of role or location are subject to the same level of scrutiny and that any action taken by the Authority is taken in a proportionate manner.

## **9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The 2010/2011 IRMP Action Plan has proposed four specific reviews. Part of the overall review process will include a consideration of any potential health and safety implications that may arise from any proposed changes that may result from the review work.

## **10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The financial implications arising from the IRMP are taken fully into account in the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is worthy of note that the IRMP has generated efficiency savings for the Authority that have allowed reinvestment into service provision, thereby increasing the resources available for achieving the vision of 'Creating the Safest Community'.
- 10.2 Close monitoring of the IRMP will continue be undertaken to ensure that associated elements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy are delivered.

## **11 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Authority will continue to monitor all aspects of its service in order to rapidly identify any significant unforeseen issues arising from the implementation of the 2010/2011 IRMP Annual Action Plan.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The Chief Fire Officer has taken time to carefully consider the issues that were raised by the FBU and other stakeholders, including members of the public attending meetings in the Birtley area. Furthermore, Members who attended the briefing session held on the 22 February 2010 have also been able to fully consider the results of the consultation exercise.
- 12.2 Having taken into account the views that have been expressed during the consultation period the Chief Fire Officer proposes that the four actions should still be undertaken and, subject to any changes they may wish to make, requests that Members approve draft IRMP Action Plan for 2010/2011.

## **13 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- i) Endorse the four actions contained in this report, subject to any changes they may wish to make, and;
  - ii) Receive further reports as necessary

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- i) Tyne and Wear IRMP 2010/2011 Consultation File