

**MEETING: 28 FEBRUARY 2011**

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**SUBJECT: INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2011-2015**

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

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the findings of public, partner and staff consultation on the proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2011-15, and to seek Member approval to begin implementation of the IRMP from April 2011.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The IRMP is the vehicle we use to make significant changes to the shape of the service, ensuring that services are planned, designed and delivered in a way that balances efficiency and community risk.
- 2.2 In November 2010, Members agreed a draft IRMP for 2011-15, for consultation with the public, partners and staff. This was developed through consideration of the risks facing the community; service objectives and performance; statutory duties and the wider local and national context in which we work.
- 2.3 A key part of the context at the current time is the significant (25% over 4 years) reduction in Government grant to FRAs under the Spending Review, the consequences of which are detailed in the proposed capital and revenue budgets included on today's agenda. Members will be aware that the Spending Review impact on TWFA is more challenging than originally expected, due to changes to the formula for allocating grant between FRAs.
- 2.4 The IRMP is a key part of how we will manage the impact of the Spending Review, along with continued good financial management and ongoing work to improve efficiency, procurement and effective use of assets and other resources.
- 2.5 The draft IRMP makes a clear distinction between actions we definitely propose to take, which should be deliverable in a way that minimises impact on the frontline service; and two potential actions which could impact on the quality of service experienced by the public, or our ability to deliver shared objectives through collaboration. These potential actions- reducing/ceasing diversionary activity, and reviewing frontline appliances- would only be considered should circumstances make this unavoidable.
- 2.6 The consultation covered all actions and we therefore have a view from consultees on the acceptability or otherwise of all the proposals.

### **3 SUMMARY OF PROPOSED IRMP ACTIONS 2011-15**

- 3.1 The draft IRMP action plan contains the following proposals. Appendix A, which is based on the paper Members agreed in November 2010, gives more detail on each. If these actions are agreed, separate reports will be brought to Authority prior to the implementation of each.

#### **Proposed new actions**

- Review of Management Structure
- Review of Protection and Technical activities
- Review of staffing profiles
- Review of Aerial Ladder Platform provision and crewing
- Review of Mobilising

#### **Actions to implement the 2010/11 IRMP**

- Review of Prevention and Education activity (agreed by Authority December 2010).
- Review of the retained appliance at Station 13 (Gateshead East) Community Fire Station (on today's agenda)
- Review of potential for a low activity staffing models at some less busy stations (Agreed by Authority January 2011)
- Review of back office functions

### **4 FURTHER AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1 Because significant spending reductions in these areas may have direct service impact, it is not proposed to include them as proposed actions in the IRMP at this time, but to include them as potential actions should the need arise. Any proposals to implement these actions in the future will be subject to further reports to Members.

- **Potential Action A – Cessation of specific diversionary and education activities**
- **Potential Action B – Review of the type, number and location of Category 01 and 02 appliances**

## **5 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

5.1 Following Member approval in November 2010, a twelve week consultation period commenced, supported by a short summary document and presentation. These set out our overall priorities (protection, prevention, response and resilience); how we deliver these in broad terms; and our proposals for reconfiguring the service with reference to the Spending Review. Consultees were then asked 4 questions:

- Do you have any general comments about our approach to realigning the service?
- Do you think we should be seeking to maintain our level of service over the next four years?
- Do you feel the service's priorities- response, resilience, prevention and protection- are right?
- What are your views on the five specific proposals for realigning the service?

5.2 Consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders as set out below.

**Public Focus Groups.** Two public focus groups were carried out with a sample of members of the Northumbria Police Authority Citizen's Panel. These were carried out at North Tyneside East (23 November 2010) and Sunderland Central Community Fire Station (2 February 2011) and were facilitated by SMT members (AM Stokoe and AM Robson). Informal consultation discussions were also carried out with the workers at the Asda Distribution Centre in Washington. 16 members of the public took part in these discussions.

**Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).** Building on our strong relationships with stakeholders through LSP, District Managers delivered the IRMP presentation and took the views of all LSP.

**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. 10 surveys were returned.

**Representative Bodies.** The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Unison and the GMB were invited to comment on the proposals.

5.3 Consultation findings are summarised below; full details are available as required.

## **6 FEEDBACK FROM FOCUS GROUPS/PUBLIC MEETINGS**

6.1 In terms of general comments, there was concern that **reductions in staff would affect service quality**. A number of participants made comments about the level of cuts being unacceptable; there was a general view that the front line service should be protected, and that reductions should come from the back office.

- 6.2 In terms of service levels, participants felt that we should **maintain levels of service to the public over the next four years**, with some concern that “the cuts could ultimately lead to increased incidents, then all the good work that has been done over the last few years will be undone”. One participant was concerned about terrorism and sought assurance that resources for this should be protected.
- 6.3 The service priorities of response, resilience, protection and prevention were felt to be right. However there were **different views about the balance between prevention and response**, with several participants feeling response is most important and “now you have educated the public, should you take the risk and stop doing it as much”. Others, however, felt that “cutting diversionary activities would be short sighted”- Safetyworks and general work with children were mentioned as being valuable.
- 6.4 The level of comment on specific proposals was relatively low, but included:
- “If LARs are adopted in rural areas and it works, I can see it being adopted in more urban areas which could cause more deaths.”
  - “Couldn’t you have more stations with one whole time and one retained appliance?”
  - “You’re already down to 4 people on each fire engine- in a lot of cases, two people in a van could suffice.”
  - “Have you ever thought about charging for the inspections you do on commercial premises”?
  - Is there any scope to combine fire and ambulance services?”
  - “Would it be sensible to have a joint back office with other emergency services”?
  - “You have too many senior officers.”
  - Do you work with the ward based community, eg going out with wardens?”
- 6.5 The proposed approach to reductions (seeking to avoid compulsory redundancy) was supported.

## 7 FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- 7.1 Feedback was received from all of our Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) following presentations by District Managers. These discussions were held in the context of widespread cuts across the public sector, and how LSPs could work together to minimise the impact of these. The comments tended to be more general, as summarised below.

## Gateshead

- 7.2 In Gateshead there was a strong focus on opportunities to take a **partnership approach to commissioning** in areas where there could be a cumulative impact of partners' budget cuts. Diversionary activity to prevent anti social behaviour was felt to be one such area; it was felt that taking a partnership approach to this could maintain public confidence and also allow TWFRS to retain a focus on frontline services.
- 7.3 There was discussion of the need to maintain **balance** and minimise public impact where some services had received front loaded cuts (eg local government) and others, on paper at least, back loaded cuts (FRAs); it should be noted that these discussions were carried out before the final settlement was announced, and we are in continued dialogue with LSP partners on the changing situation.
- 7.4 Whilst no comments were made on the specific proposals, there was some discussion of wider issues relating to the duty to carry out safety checks in Gateshead Housing Company's high rise buildings, and the need to maintain involvement with disabled people to ensure safety knowledge for building evacuations.

## Newcastle

- 7.5 The Newcastle Partnership commented that our overall approach is "sound and is guided by a coherent set of principles". As with Gateshead, the back loading of FRA cuts was mentioned as offering us time to plan for future years.
- 7.6 The Partnership supported the **maintenance of service levels to the public**, and felt that this, and striking the correct balance between response, resilience, prevention and protection is the key challenge for the service over the coming years.
- 7.7 Response is felt to be critical in the event of a fire, and it is considered that the public will always consider Response to be most important, so any reduction in stations or appliances will be met with opposition. However, the Partnership felt that Protection and Prevention are also critical if we are to **minimise the number of incidents for which a response is required**. Even greater targeting of these activities may be needed in the future.
- 7.8 Regarding specific proposals, the Partnership was supportive of all 5 proposed actions, noting that many of them were based on reducing costs by delivering differently. Regarding the management review it was suggested that opportunities to **share** some back office functions and possibly strategic management roles should be explored in the future.

## North Tyneside

- 7.9 The discussion focused on diversionary activities and risks associated with reducing these. It was proposed that the Partnership should build a picture of what diversionary activities are currently being commissioned across North Tyneside, so that partners understand the risk and the impact of future decisions they might make.

## South Tyneside

- 7.10 The South Tyneside Partnership felt that our approach to realigning the service through IRMP was very forward thinking and a good method of targeting and achieving efficiency savings.
- 7.11 In relation to specific proposals, the discussion focused on diversionary activities and in particular the Phoenix programme. The Partnership felt that such programmes were valuable and made a commitment to provide funding to commission a new Phoenix pilot in South Tyneside.

## Sunderland

- 7.12 The Sunderland Partnership noted that our proposals were necessary and that we were taking a measured approach and being consultative, which is felt to be important.
- 7.13 The partnership supported the maintenance of frontline services and expressed the view that business re-engineering can reduce costs without reducing service levels.
- 7.14 Regarding the balance of services, the partnership highlighted the importance of **response** activity. No comments were received on the specific IRMP proposals.

## 8 FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS

- 8.1 10 surveys were received, 3 from organisations and the remainder either from members of the public or anonymous.
- 8.2 95% of respondents stated that we should maintain our current level of service, and 95% also said that stakeholders feel the priorities of response, resilience, prevention and protection are right.
- 8.3 In terms of the proposed actions, there were few specific comments with the majority feeling that the proposals are sensible. Two respondents commented that prevention is important as it is more cost effective to prevent incidents than to respond to them. Two respondents also commented that ALPs should not be removed, one noting the large number of tall buildings in the area; whilst three added comments about staffing levels, one commenting that there are too many senior officers, another that there are too many firefighters, and a third that some work, such as fire safety, could be done by volunteers.

## **9 FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**

9.1 The **Fire Brigades Union** raised a number of points regarding the proposals, and a précis of these is provided below:

- General comment was made about financial situation in which the FRA and other public sector organisations have been placed, and the unfairness that some FRAs have been tasked with finding unrealistic savings whilst others have been unaffected or had modest increases in funding.
- The FBU notes that the proposed actions are reviews and they would therefore expect to be fully consulted and make detailed comments on any detailed proposals at the appropriate time.
- In relation to proposal 3 (staffing profiles), the FBU noted its support for the “swap a shift” scheme which if implemented and managed appropriately should yield beneficial results for the services and watch based staff, giving the service the flexibility it requires.
- In relation to proposal 4 (review of ALPs), the FBU has concerns about any proposals for dual staffing which it is felt leads to delays in responding.
- In relation to Proposal 5 (review of mobilising) the FBU notes that it considered the Regional Control Centre project ill thought out and expensive, though the FRA now has to pick up the pieces.
- The FBU expressed extreme concern at the real threat to the current disposition of fire appliances. While acknowledging the stark financial position it is urged that any reduction in appliances be resisted and efforts made to ensure that every alternative avenue is explored both for additional funding and possible efficiencies.
- The FBU noted that while it is disappointed with the potential action to review diversionary/educational activities as these activities have proven to be of great benefit to the service and the community, it recognises that the service will have to withdraw from certain initiatives due to the severe financial position, to protect its ability to carry out core service functions.

9.2 **Unison** noted with dismay the severe cuts faced by the Authority and said that it recognised that this is being implemented by Central Government rather than on a local level and sympathised with the difficult position the Authority is faced with. Unison noted the need to make savings and commented that these will hopefully not have a detrimental effect on front line services. Unison representatives expressed that they expect to be consulted on all of the reviews proposed, both in terms of members’ terms and conditions, and in terms of members’ rights as citizens.

## **10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Although this report has no direct financial implications, the implementation of specific actions within the draft 2011/15 IRMP will be significant as they support the requirement to reduce spending in line with the Spending Review. Although financial implications are not yet finalised, provisional figures have been built into the Authority's draft Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## **11 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The impact of the Spending Review has been recognised as a significant corporate risk and is part of the Corporate Risk Register. Risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure that the risks to the Authority relating to these specific actions are minimised as far as practicable.
- 11.2 Should the actions be agreed, a further risk has been recognised in the Corporate Risk Register that the IRMP actions will not realise the required level of savings to meet the reduced budgets. This risk is mitigated by the Authority's track record of focused action to realise efficiency savings in the past, but realising the savings will require a significant amount of work, project management and timely decision making.

## **12 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 Equality and Diversity implications have been considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process for the proposed 2011/15 IRMP actions. Equality Impact Assessments will also be undertaken on each specific action contained in the final plan, and fed into any decision making process relating to these.

## **13 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 Health and Safety implications have been considered in the development of the proposed 2011/15 IRMP actions. The Health and Safety implications of each specific action will also be considered.

## **14 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 Legislative implications have been considered in the development of the proposed 2011/15 IRMP actions.

## **15 CONCLUSION**

- 15.1 The consultation on the IRMP has been conducted against a background of significant cuts in public spending across a wide range of services. It is clear from responses that this situation is well understood by consultees, whether they be members of the public or strategic partners in LSPs.



- 15.2 The approach has attempted to set out for consultees the priorities of the FRA, and the impact on these of the proposed IRMP actions, and the two Further Areas for Consideration (diversionary activity and whole time appliances) which we have set out as potential actions should circumstances make them unavoidable. A face to face approach has enabled consultees to ask questions.
- 15.3 Generally speaking the feedback is broad and qualitative, but does give some indication of how our proposals have been received. Although the number of members of the public engaging in the consultation is quite small, there is overall support from the public and partners for the FRA's proposed approach of **maintaining its frontline service to the public** over the next four years. The 5 proposed IRMP actions have not received any adverse comments from the public or partners, with the majority of discussion being about the two Further Areas for Consideration (diversionary activity and whole time appliances).
- 15.4 Regarding these, there has been some debate about the **relative value of Response and Prevention/Protection**, with some consultees firmly favouring a focus on Response should the financial situation dictate ("We can't be losing fire appliances- deaths and injuries will increase"- public focus group); whilst others note the value of Prevention/Protection in "minimising the number of incidents for which a response is required" (Newcastle Partnership). The balance between Response and Prevention/Protection is a key issue for ourselves and the FRS nationally, and we will need to take these different views into account, and consult further upon them, should we need to consider implementing these two options.
- 15.5 There is a level of support for diversionary activities in most LSPs, with Gateshead suggesting a commissioning/shared approach to these; South Tyneside undertaking to commission a further Phoenix pilot and North Tyneside LSP seeking to understand the range of diversionary activities taking place in the area.
- 15.6 The Chief Fire Officer has carefully considered the issues raised and the views expressed during the consultation period and having taken these into account, it is proposed that:
- the five new actions, and the implementation of the 2010/11 actions, should go forward to the implementation stage, subject to any changes Members may wish to make
  - full reports should be brought to Members on each of the actions prior to implementing them
  - the Authority should give further consideration to diversionary activities and wholetime appliances in the light of the financial position for 2013 and beyond, as it emerges in the coming months. This will be subject to further reports in the future.
  - TWFRS should remain in dialogue with partners so that any collective opportunities to minimise the impact of cuts on the public can be explored

## **16 RECOMMENDATIONS**

16.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- Approve the actions in the draft IRMP 2011-15 on the basis set out above
- Receive further reports as necessary as actions are implemented.

## **Appendix A**

### **Proposed actions and areas for consideration in draft IRMP**

*This reproduces the relevant sections of the IRMP report agreed in November 2010*

#### **Action 1 – Review of Management Structure**

As a number of reviews in recent years have allowed the organisation to redesign services and determine their future resource requirements, it is timely to review management structures required to give leadership to these services. It is proposed to conduct a review of all management structures from Principal Officer up to and including Station Manager level and equivalent. The review will take account of the findings of earlier reviews and provide proposals for management which is balanced and proportionate.

It is proposed that this review be carried out in Year 1 (2011/12) with implementation in Years 2 and 3 (2012-14).

#### **Action 2 – Review of Protection and Technical activities**

Following on from the review of community safety activity in 2010/11, it is proposed to review the risk based inspection programme within its statutory framework. This review will seek to ensure the most efficient model of delivering this service against the level of risk present in the protected environment.

It is proposed that this review be carried out in Year 1 (2011/12) with implementation in Year 2 (2012/13).

#### **Action 3 – Review of staffing profiles**

It is proposed to undertake a review of the current staffing profiles to ascertain whether arrangements can be made more efficient through greater flexibility. This will include consideration of the flexible duty officer system, ridership factor and opportunities for greater flexibility within shifts.

It is proposed that this review be carried out in Year 1 (2011/12) with implementation from Year 2 (2012/13).

#### **Action 4 – Review of Aerial Ladder Platform provision and crewing**

Building on work carried out in the 2009/10 IRMP, it is proposed to review the level of provision and staffing of our aerial ladder platforms to ascertain the future requirements for these balanced against community risk and utilisation patterns.

It is proposed that this review be carried out in Year 1 (2011/12) with implementation in Years 2 and 3 (2012-14).

## **Action 5 – Review of Mobilising**

By 2014 our existing mobilising and associated sub-systems will be approaching the end of their sustainable life, therefore this project is proposed in order to meet the Authority's statutory duty in terms of call taking and mobilising resources. This links with the possibility for needing to review the service's approach to mobilising and control depending on the future of the national RCC project.

It is proposed to undertake a fundamental review of the staffing and systems required to deliver an effective mobilising function for the next ten years.

It is proposed that this review be commenced in Year 1 (2011/12).

## **Further areas for consideration**

### **Potential Action A – Cessation of specific diversionary and education activities**

TWFRS delivers a number of youth diversionary activities including Phoenix, Young Firefighters, Princes Trust, HotShots, boxing clubs and activities with firesetters, as well as the Safetyworks interactive safety centre based in Newcastle but available to communities and partners across Tyne and Wear.

Many of these activities are valued by partners as helping to deliver wider community objectives, and there is some degree of commissioning associated with Phoenix and Safetyworks in particular (approximately half the annual operating costs of Safetyworks are currently covered by Northumbria Police; other partners support delivery in kind though funding has not been associated with this).

These activities have been shown through evaluation to have positive impact on participants, particularly those at risk of anti social behaviour with whom other partners may find it difficult to engage. The numbers involved are, however, relatively low and the cost of delivery relatively high. The impact on our own performance is difficult to quantify, and the value added is at least as much for other organisations/the wider community (in terms of reduced anti social behaviour) as for ourselves, while in many cases our contribution to this agenda is not recognised or funded.

The implementation of the review of Prevention and Education proposes continuation of diversionary activity, but with a streamlined and consolidated structure to mitigate issues with lack of sufficient/sustainable funding. However, should partners' own responses to the Spending Review undermine their ability/commitment to supporting collaborative diversionary work, TWFRS should review its ongoing capacity to deliver diversionary activities and the Safetyworks project.

Alternatively, should a commissioning approach to diversionary activity develop in the future in any of the areas in which we work, opportunities could be afforded to the service to be directly commissioned to deliver these or similar activities. Such an approach would be likely to deliver efficiencies to the area as a whole and place TWFRS' engagement in such activities on a clearer footing. TWFRS is well placed to promote and engage in partnership discussions of this nature.

**Potential Action B – Review of the type, number and location of Category 01 and 02 appliances**

The service's network of 17 fire stations and 31 appliances (plus specialist equipment) is strategically situated taking into account population, known community risk and transport links, to allow the best possible deployment of resources across the five council areas. Appliances operate across council boundaries and the same level of service is offered to all council areas regardless of the number of fire stations and staff based within the area.

Value for money figures provided by the Audit Commission (*Rising to the Challenge* 2008) point to the fact that TWFRS has the most utilised fire stations, and the second most utilised appliances, of any FRS nationally. This indicates that the number of appliances/stations is more likely to be providing value for money- *"Station utilisation varies (nationally)...the least busy stations are almost three times more expensive per incident to maintain"*.

TWFRS has undertaken reviews of appliance provision in previous years, including an exploration of the retained appliance at Station 13 (Birtley) in 2001/11. Should it be necessary, it is proposed to carry out further analysis of risk and utilisation to ascertain whether there is any scope to further reduce the provision of appliances.

