



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 10**

**MEETING: 8th June 2015**

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**SUBJECT: OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT PEER CHALLENGE 2014**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report informs Members of the Operational Assessment Peer Challenge which took place from September 30th to October 3rd 2014 and presents Members with an action plan based on the review.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 Operational Assessment (OpA) is a sector led approach to assessing operational effectiveness, designed by the Chief Fire Officers' Association, it is a voluntary process that is managed by and delivered for the sector. It is a mechanism to provide Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

2.2 Before the 2014 review TWFRS last undertook an OpA in 2010. The process has been reviewed and updated since 2010, including taking into account 'Taking the Lead', the LGAs approach to self-regulation and improvement which aims to help councils and FRAs strengthen local accountability and revolutionise the way they evaluate and improve services.

**3 OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

3.1 The process consists of a self-assessment against seven Key Assessment Areas (KAAs), followed by an on-site peer review. The process is rigorous and has been accepted by the Audit Commission as evidence of organisational effectiveness. The process of completing OpA is a useful exercise in self awareness, understanding of achievements and areas for improvement.

3.2 The KAAs for OpA are:

- Community Risk Management
- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Health and Safety
- Training and Development
- Call Management and Incident Support.

3.3 TWFRSs OpA Self-Assessment against the KAAs was completed and each Member was issued with a personal copy.

3.4 The OpA peer review focused on specific areas identified from the self-assessment. The areas of focus were on the following KAAs:

3.4.1 Protection – with a particular focus on how the FRS engages partners and stakeholders effectively in its protection activities. How does TWFRS support and enforce?

3.4.2 Response – with a particular focus on the assurance of operational effectiveness and improving performance to ensure firefighter safety and improve operational response.

3.4.3 Training and Development – looking at the way that TWFRS delivers its whole organisational training including organisational development, leadership and succession planning.

3.5 The OpA also covered all the other KAAs but did not provide as much in depth analysis of these areas as the KAAs identified in 3.4.

3.6 In addition to the areas of focus the peer team also considered three core questions under the theme of Leadership and Corporate Capacity:

3.6.1 How well are outcomes for local citizens being achieved?

3.6.2 How effective is the leadership and governance?

3.6.3 How effective is the organisational capacity to meet current requirements and future needs?

## 4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PEER ASSESSMENT REPORT

4.1 The full Peer Assessment report is appended for Members (appendix 1). The Executive Summary is presented in this section to give Members the headline findings of the review team.

4.2 Tyne and Wear FRS clearly focuses on understanding risk and planning to ensure that resources are targeted effectively and efficiently. This is reflected in the Service's IRMP where there is a clear commitment to ensuring that any changes to the shape and operation of the Service recognises the importance of investing in prevention and that the organisation has a clear commitment to

maintaining a high level of response in terms of quality and speed.

- 4.3 The Service can demonstrate clearly how its work with partners and communities is based on achieving common goals and adding value. There is a consistent backdrop for this aspiration, which is firmly founded on continuing to improve performance and efficiency whilst valuing the Service's staff and keeping them safe. The stated vision for the Service is 'Creating the Safest Community' and it is evident that this provides the reference point for all it delivers.
- 4.4 The Service demonstrated that it uses its knowledge of its diverse communities (and risk) in targeting campaigns and resources towards the most vulnerable. TWFRS is highly regarded by its partners who welcome the opportunities to work with the Service in delivering the best possible outcomes for communities in a collaborative fashion.
- 4.5 There is high regard for the political and professional leadership of the organisation and there is obvious synergy in how these two elements of the organisation's leadership drive the organisation forward. The relationship is very much a supportive one and the stability in the political leadership allows for the Service to plan for the future with some certainty. The relationship with the Fire Brigades Union is a positive one based on pragmatism and a willingness to work collectively in the interest of what is best for the Service moving forward
- 4.6 Staff attest to the positive experience of being employees of TWFRS and there is effective buy-in to the future direction and the choices which have to be made along the way. This has been achieved in no small part due to the proactive efforts to communicate as clearly and effectively as possible with all staff about the stages of the journey. TWFRS is very self-aware and enjoys capable and engaged middle management input to the organisation's future direction. Community risk management and Fire Protection are particular areas of strength for TWFRS.
- 4.7 The Authority has shown a willingness to take difficult decisions, based on options developed in an evidence based way. Given the future challenges facing the Authority, this approach will continue to be needed and developed further, through a strong collective focus on the longer term strategic direction. The Service will continue to benefit in the Authority developing the strategic direction and options at an early stage.
- 4.8 In relation to Community Risk Management, the team would encourage TWFRS to ensure that in addressing its capacity to continue delivering and maintaining performance it continues to encourage new ways of working. There remain some challenges in accessing and sharing data with key agencies such as Health and this would be an area for focus moving forward.
- 4.9 Whilst there is a clear commitment to communicating with staff as clearly as possible, it will be important to ensure that key messages from the leadership are readily understood by staff. There may be more to do to fully engage senior management outside of SMT.

## **5 PEER ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN**

- 5.1 An action plan has been created based on the peer assessment and is appended to this report (appendix 2).

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The OpA is delivered by the sector at no cost to the receiving authority, although there is recognition that this comes at an opportunity cost to FRAs in the provision of peers

## **7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- a) Note the contents of this report and;
  - b) Note and support the implementation of the action plan;
  - c) Receive further reports as appropriate.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit
- TWFRS: OpA Self-Assessment 2014