

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES 1 FEBRUARY 2010

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE'S IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS AND DRAFT INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

**Report by the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and
Chief Fire Officer**

Introduction

1. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 22 July 2004. Part 3, Chapter 21 of this legislation requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework to which Fire Authorities must have regard when discharging their functions.
2. The Secretary of State initially published the latest Fire and Rescue National Framework in May 2008. The purpose of the Framework is to provide strategic direction from central government whilst ensuring that authorities continue to make local decisions. The Framework sets out the Government's objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service and what Fire and Rescue Authorities should do to achieve those objectives.
3. The 2008-11 Fire and Rescue National Framework requires each Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a publicly available Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP) covering at least a three year time span which:
 - is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up to date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes;
 - has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (RRs) and internal risk registers, to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in the IRMP;
 - reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders;
 - demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost effective way;
 - provides details of how Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners;
 - has undergone an effective Equality Impact Assessment process.

4. The Framework states that Fire and Rescue Authorities should review the effectiveness of 'cross-border' integration arrangements with neighbouring authorities and set these out appropriately in their IRMPs. Such reviews may best be carried out jointly and Regional Management Boards provide a potential forum for this to be taken forward.
5. All Fire and Rescue Services in England are covered by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which includes in its legislation, a section (section13) allowing fire authorities to enter into agreements whereby they will provide mutual assistance across borders to respond to emergencies. Such an agreement exists between Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) and Warwickshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service (WCCFRS). In effect this means that should Oxfordshire have a large incident in the northern part of the county, (which borders Warwickshire) we can call on Warwickshire's assistance. The same would apply if there was a large incident in Warwickshire whereby Oxfordshire would assist.
6. In September 2009, as part of Warwickshire's Draft IRMP proposals, a series of improvement plans were issued by WCCFRS covering the following areas which are extracts from their intended plan:

(a) **Step One - Duty Systems and Resources**

The 12 Station Plan includes operational response options being delivered from the following locations:

Atherstone	Leamington	Stratford
Coleshill	Nuneaton	Shipston
Henley	Polesworth	Southam
Alcester	Rugby	Wellesbourne

Stations not required under the 12 station plan for operational response are:

Bedworth	Kenilworth	Warwick
Bidford	Studley	Fenny Compton
Brinklow		

(b) **Step Two - False Alarm Policy**

On average 30% of calls received by Warwickshire are false alarms. WCCFRS can release significant capacity by aggressively reducing attendance at the number of automatic false alarm calls in-line with the risk profile for Warwickshire. This project will draw on best practice examples/approaches implemented by other UK Fire and Rescue Services, e.g. Oxfordshire.

(c) ***Step Three - Smoke Detector Ownership***

There is now emerging clear evidence of the relationship between Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC), smoke detector ownership and significant reduction in fire deaths and injuries. WCCFRS will significantly increase the number of HFSCs through the use of both operational firefighters and external agencies including voluntary groups, to ensure that all sectors of our most at risk communities are targeted.

(d) ***Step Four - Hot Fire Training – Impact Statement***

WCCFRS need to double parts of their operational and Incident Command System training on an annual basis for all operational staff. A new contract was awarded to the Fire Service College in July 2009 to fulfil this priority in the current year.

(e) ***Step Five - Performance Management – Impact Statement***

Significant capacity can be released within WCCFRS by reducing the number of times that staff are absent; they intend to implement proactive management measures and other actions to bring about a reduction in sickness absence and improve health and fitness.

(f) ***Step Six - Enhanced Flood Response – Impact Statement***

WCCFRS will seek to procure a second boat unit and locate it in the south of Warwickshire to enhance the response to flooding events, which is to be crewed on a recall to duty basis. It will include an upgrade to the water response equipment on front line appliances.

(g) ***Step Seven - Deploy Road Traffic Collision Units – Impact Statement***

WCCFRS will seek to deploy Road Traffic Collision Units in lieu of major pumping appliances to busy roads and motorways linked to the risk profile (Gaydon, Henley). This project will be dependent upon the establishment of a fifth watch system.

(h) ***Step Eight - Deploy Small Fires Units – Impact Statement***

Small fires comprise a relatively high percentage of all incidents at predictable times of the day. WCCFRS will deploy Small Fires Units/Targeted Response Vehicles in response to small fires and anti-social behaviour linked to the risk profile. This project will be dependent upon the establishment of a fifth watch system.

7. Step one consists of proposals to close several of their retained duty system (RDS) fire stations and replace them with new wholetime stations. Similar to Oxfordshire, Warwickshire are suffering from an increase in the non-

availability of their RDS stations. One of the stations identified for potential closure is Fenny Compton which is located in south Warwickshire and provides operational cover to the southbound M40 entering Oxfordshire. Fire engines from Oxfordshire also form part of the pre-determined attendance into Warwickshire to the geographical location around Fenny Compton. This mutual operational response is formally agreed between Oxfordshire and Warwickshire via a section 13 agreement signed by both Deputy Chief Fire Officers.

8. In November 2009 OFRS formally responded to the WCCFRS proposals by asking a series of questions to clarify their position, as we consider that the effectiveness of our current 'cross-border' integration arrangements may be reduced. This reduction may have a negative effect on the public passing through Oxfordshire and may place our firefighters attending accidents on the M40 at an increased risk.
9. OFRS has specifically asked questions around the following areas:
 - Concerning the closure of Fenny Compton; evidence as to the potential effect and impact on the southbound carriageway of the M40 which enters Oxfordshire from Warwickshire and in particular incidents between junctions 12 to 11;
 - The role and likely attendance times of the Road Traffic Collision Unit, its proposed location and the provision of associated safe systems of work, particularly in relation to junctions 12 to 11 of the M40;
 - The location and role of the small fire unit.
10. In December 2009 OFRS received a reply from Warwickshire's Chief Fire Officer acknowledging our questions and indicating that our concerns will be considered as part of the consultation process. WCCFRS' letter does not provide specific clarification relating to our operational concerns and the potential reduction to the effectiveness of our current 'cross-border' integration arrangements.
11. If Fenny Compton was to close, and dependent on the role and location of the small fire unit referred to in paragraph 14 (Step 8), there are potential resource implications for OFRS as attending fire engines into Warwickshire would have a different operational role, which may place an increased risk on our operational personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. **The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **acknowledge the content of this report and the correspondence between Oxfordshire and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Services concerning their proposals;**

- (b) **request that the Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer report back to the Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities should the outcome of Warwickshire's consultation process result in a reduction of Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service's 'cross border' operational effectiveness.**

JOHN PARRY

Director for Community Safety & Shared Services and Chief Fire Officer

Background papers:

1. Warwickshire's Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan - published for consultation in September 2009.
2. OCC/OFRS Response to Warwickshire from Councillor Mrs J. Heathcoat.
3. OCC/OFRS Response to Warwickshire from Deputy Chief Fire Officer Dave Etheridge.
4. Response from Warwickshire to OFRS from Chief Fire Officer Graeme Smith.

Documents available from DCO Dave Etheridge.

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