

SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 5 JULY 2010

DRAFT ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE INSPECTION OF OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Introduction

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) conducted inspections of eight Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) across the UK, including Scotland and Wales. Oxfordshire was one of the eight and was inspected by a team of four HSE inspectors during November 2009. An initial report was provided to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee on 10 May 2010. At this meeting a request for a further report including a GANNT chart of actions was requested. This report fulfils that purpose.

Report Summary and Conclusions

2. Quoting directly from the report:

“The findings of this inspection lead us to believe that Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has a positive health and safety culture which it is striving to improve. The Service has a particular strength in the area of communication of information and had already started to introduce quality systems to improve consistency.”

3. The, HSE made 18 recommendations. They indicated the following key recommendations needing improvement were:
 - (a) Implementation of the training policy in a more coordinated and consistent way;
 - (b) Ensuring the competence of those delivering operational training;
 - (c) Ensuring that the new BA refresher training programme achieves the same outcomes as those envisaged by CLG Fire Service Circular 17/1970, which gives detail about training course content and duration; and
 - (d) Undertaking health and safety planning at a more strategic level.

National Progress

4. The HSE intend to produce a national report summarising the findings for the 8 inspections. This is an important resource as it would be imprudent for Oxfordshire to merely focus on the actions identified in our own plan. Awareness of other Service’s inspection reports and action plans will assist in

ensuring that the Service undertakes a targeted and proportionate response which adds true value to the organisation. However, the report publication has been delayed from the intended publication date of May 2010 due to a significant reduction in the resources provided to undertake this work. It is not yet known when the report will be published.

5. Meanwhile staff from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have attended national FRS meetings to undertake comparisons between the various reports to identify common areas of interest and potential collaboration in approaches to discharging the action plans. Information from this source is being used to ensure our action plan is appropriate. However finalisation of the action plan will be slightly sub optimal without the National Report being published.

Detailed Recommendations

6. The report has eighteen specific recommendations within it. These are summarised in Annex 1 within the FRS action plan.
7. Of the eighteen recommendations:-
 - 6 have been closed (subject to agreement of the HSE)
 - 7 are on target for completion within the OFRS timeline
 - 3 are indicated as an “Amber Risk” as they have complications that may threaten the proposed timeline. Additional mitigating actions are underway in these areas to bring them back on course.
 - 2 are currently awaiting information our output from a third party and therefore remain outside of the control of OFRS at this time.

Risk Analysis

8. As discussed in the earlier report, the HSE will be formally monitoring activity and progress against their recommendations. They considered formal enforcement action against the requirements of recommendation number eight during the inspection. If they feel it is necessary because of managerial avoidance or lack of progress then there is the risk of future enforcement action. This would have reputational consequences and would require the immediate allocation of finances and prioritisation of activity to the identified areas. It would effectively remove control of the discharge of the action plan away from the Authority.
9. The likelihood of this risk occurring is considered minimal, subject to active management of the action plan. Arrangements for this are fully developed with the Assistant Chief Officer reporting to the Strategic Leadership Team at pre identified times. Discharge of the action plan is reliant upon sufficient resources including finance and experienced staff to complete the necessary actions.

Financial and Staff Implications

10. Some activities that are required to close out the recommendations were already underway prior to the inspection and will be met from existing budgets. However, there are some recommendations where additional resources are required to ensure effective discharge of the action plan to the satisfaction of the HSE.
11. The recommendations with the most significant financial impact are;
 - Recommendation 5 – the introduction of a training competency framework
 - Recommendation 7 – addressing the outcomes of the IRMP review
 - Recommendation 8 – the additional training required to address circular 17/1970
12. Some of the details around the work associated with these recommendations is not yet known fully but the financial impact is being considered during the planning process. Indications remain that the gap in funding, including internal adjustments to budget prioritisation, could be in the region of £200k. However, we will need to develop options for achieving the necessary outcomes whilst minimising costs. Part of this will involve on-going discussion with the HSE to balance risk against the gain obtained from additional expenditure.
13. Some non recurring costs have been met by agreement to allow carry forward funding from 2009/10.

RECOMMENDATION

14. **The Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to:-**
 - (a) note this further report on the draft action plan; and**
 - (b) note that whilst internal reprioritisation of activities will minimise overall financial effects that a residual financial effect is anticipated which will appear as part of the budget setting process for 2011/12**

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