

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-12 2009-10 ACTION PLAN – CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Fire and Rescue Authority with detail of the consultation process for the IRMP 2009/12 and the 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan, and provide a summary of the feedback received and the Service's response to this feedback.
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Background

2. In order to comply with the Government's adopted code of practice for consultations during the 12 weeks from 16th June to 5th September 2008, the Authority consulted a wide variety of individuals, groups and partnerships from across the two counties to get a view on the proposals outlined in the 2009/12 IRMP and the 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan. The scope of consultation undertaken was proportionate to the nature and extent of the changes proposed.
3. Over 60 responses were received in writing, directly responding with the questionnaire provided with the plan. As well as this, a series of seminars, focus groups and presentations were delivered across the Service to different staff groups, as well as other partner agencies and stakeholders. Appendix 1 to this paper details the consultation schedule.
4. The focus of most responses was on the 2009/10 action plan, which contained some key proposals. Appendix 2 to this paper summarises the feedback received from all sources. The key issues raised are detailed below.
5. **Recommendation 1: Adopt the new proposed response standard for fires in buildings. Maintain current standards for Road Traffic Collisions, but continue to monitor and report against the draft standard introduced last year. Review this standard again in 2010/11 in light of emerging evidence from the Road Safety Partnership.**

The overwhelming response to this recommendation was in support of the new attendance standards as long as our current levels of service are not compromised. During the trial of these proposed response standards we made it clear that many of our communities already received a first attendance in much less than the 10 minutes proposed. This is a reflection of the fact that most of our fire stations are situated in areas of higher risk, so that the major part of those areas already receive a response in 5 minutes or less. In addition, the new standard reflects our current performance for the full attendance of two pumping appliances. This performance level is likely to be adversely affected if resources are reduced or moved to locations well away from their current position. There is no intention to use the introduction of this new reporting standard to reduce the level of service provision to any of our communities.

6. **Recommendation 2: Reduce the Firefighter establishment by 12 posts that is a reduction of 1 post from each watch at Redditch, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster, resulting in efficiencies of approximately £420k.**

The overwhelming response to our consultation was not in favour of this recommendation. The main concerns were that seven personnel on a watch was not sufficient to keep pumps on the run when you take into account the number of staff on leave, off sick and on training courses.

We have investigated this issue in some detail looking at the attendance profile for each shift lost per day to leave, sickness, modified duties and training from 2005/06 – 2007/08. With the implementation of planned changes to management systems and increased investment there will be sufficient resources available per shift to provide cover for unplanned absences over and above anticipated leave and training.

In addition the proposal to employ seven people on a watch to guarantee the availability of 5 crew members would bring the Service in line with the majority of other FRS who operate this system. It should also be noted that this will be further supported by management changes and flexible working arrangements.

We are confident that if we reduce the Firefighter establishment by 12 posts our standard crewing levels of 5 and 4 will be maintained. This will be enough to ensure the safety of our Firefighters and maintain an efficient operational response.

7. Recommendation 3: Streamline back-office services to achieve efficiencies of approximately £200k.

There was overwhelming support for this proposal although some concerns were expressed over the pressure that our support services are already under which may be exacerbated if further cuts are made, and the impact that this may have on our emergency response and frontline services.

A recurrent question during the consultation was regarding the increase in the number of back office staff from 82 staff in 2003 to 127 in 2008. One reason for this is the need to meet the increasing corporate demands placed upon the Service through increased legislative requirements, performance assessments and the need to meet internal stakeholder expectations such as improves HR and financial support. Additionally a number of posts previously carried out by uniformed staff are now carried out by non uniformed professionals. This is a much more cost effective way of providing support to our front line services.

8. Recommendation 4: Review arrangements for the management of leave and the management of sickness absence to support the reduction of operational posts

To ensure that our standard crewing levels are maintained new leave procedures have been implemented, new sickness absence procedures have been devised and will be implemented this year. In addition we will introduce robust central coordination of all training provision to ensure optimum crewing levels are maintained. The IRMP and performance management processes will continue to monitor attendance to support standard crewing levels.

9. Recommendation 5: Make an investment of £100k to support the cost of cover arrangements to enable the release of staff for risk critical training.

The Service has reviewed its arrangements for providing cover to release staff for risk critical training and developed a Flexible Staffing model that will allow competent personnel to be utilised when off duty to ensure Service delivery.

The flexible staffing model will be implemented in accordance with Grey Book Conditions of Service i.e. only to be used for unplanned deficiencies, and will be used to support safety critical training.

£100k used as a flexible resource on a need only basis would provide cover

equivalent to 4.6 Firefighters compared to 3.0 if used to fund Firefighter posts.

10. **Recommendation 6: Continue to examine further opportunities to deliver efficiency savings and service improvements, including collaboration/ combination with another Fire and Rescue Authority.**

There was considerable support for this proposal provided that standards of Fire Cover and service levels are not compromised. There were some concerns expressed regarding the costs of carrying out such a combination when compared the possible efficiencies to be achieved and the possibilities of job cuts.

There were also concerns regarding the lack of detail available to support these proposals.

These concerns will be addressed by the work currently ongoing to produce a business case and options appraisal for the possibility of a combination with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue.

11. During the consultation a number of direct suggestions were made for delivering improvements to the Service. These are detailed in Appendix 2 and are currently being considered. Progress will be reported to the IRMP Steering Group in January.
12. PMM recognise that due to the nature of the proposals in the 2009/10 Action Plan it is essential that this consultation is followed by a comprehensive feedback process to our stakeholders. A communication strategy is being prepared to ensure that both staff and the public are reassured.

Recommendations

- **The Fire and Rescue Authority is asked to note the report**

Appendices

Appendix 1 IRMP 09/12 Consultation Plan

Appendix 2 IRMP Consultation Feedback

Background papers

Draft IRMP Action Plan 2009/10

IRMP 2009/12 Consultation Document