

The Highland and Islands Fire Board

Minutes of Meeting of the **Integrated Risk Management Planning Working Group** held in Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Harbour Road, Inverness on Friday, 20 March 2009, at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Representing the Highland Council: Mr R Durham
Mr D Mackay
Dr A Sinclair
Mrs I Campbell
Mr D Henderson
Mr R Balfour
Mr J Ford
Mr E Hunter

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: Mr P Carlin

Representing Orkney Islands Council: Mr A Drever
Mr B Leslie

Representing Shetland Islands Council: Mr A Duncan

Officials in attendance:

Mr J Donaldson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr T Johnson, Area Manager, Community Risk Management (CRM)
Mr M Jenks, Finance Manager, Fire and Rescue Service
Mr S Hay, Group Manager, Deputy Community Risk Manager
Mrs M Grigor, Treasurer's Office
Ms M Morris, Clerk
Mrs L Lee, Clerk's Office

Mr R Durham in the Chair

1. Apologies

All Board Members having been invited by the Convener to attend the meeting, apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr G Rimmel, Mr D Flear, Ms M Smith, Mr J Gray and Mrs H Carmichael, the Highland Council; Mr C Nicolson, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; and Mr A Cooper, Shetland Islands Council.

2. Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Draft Action Plan 2009/10

There had been circulated Report No. IRMP3/09 dated 11 March 2009 by the Chief Fire Officer seeking Members' agreement to recommend to the Board that it adopt a revised capital programme based upon a risk based methodology. An updated version of the report, containing minor changes to the recommendations, was tabled at the meeting. A document entitled "IRMP Risk Review: Future Capital

Build Programme Proposal” by the Chief Fire Officer had been circulated separately.

The Area Manager, Community Risk Management (AMCRM), gave a presentation expanding on the information contained in the document. He explained that data covering a wide range of factors had been collected and this information had been collated into four main data sets:

1. the impact of the Station / CRU on Lives Saved – an estimate as to how many years a given station/CRU would need to be in operation, for one life to be saved
2. an estimate of the size of the potential recruitment pool able to provide emergency cover during the day – these figures considered the numbers of people under 18 or over 65, those involved working in sectors which were likely to mean them being away from the locality, those working more than 5 kilometres from the Station / CRU, and those already on the crew
3. the establishment history of a Station / CRU – whether there were sufficient numbers of persons on the crew, and, where numbers were low, whether the recruitment trend over the past six years had been positive or negative
4. crew confidence levels – the numbers of crew who responded to an incident, and the number of times when the appliance could not run due to insufficient turn-out

The data in the four data sets was presented as a score, and each of the four sets had been given a weighting. The highest weighting had been given to data relating to the saving of life, as this was seen as the main priority. The figures from the four data sets had then been combined to derive an Overall Sustainability score for each Station and Community Response Unit (CRU). It was stressed that the methodology applied could not be exact and it was possible that minor adjustments to the Sustainability score could be argued; however, the broad station order was not expected to change significantly. The Sustainability score would be used to inform decisions on the capital programme. Members were encouraged to question the data, and to bring to officers’ attention any local factors which could impact on the scoring.

The AMCRM then advised the Group that High Pressure Hose Reel (HPRH) equipment was of vital importance in fighting structural fires. Members were shown maps illustrating the time taken for HPRH equipped appliances to reach locations across the FRS area. Whilst most life critical incidents in the past 5 years had been reached by an HPRH equipped appliance within 30 minutes, there were some areas away from population centres where an HPRH capable appliance could not attend in this timescale. Light Fire Appliances, as used in many smaller stations, were unable to carry the equipment. The use of alternative appliances, adapted specifically to the needs of local communities, was being investigated. Safety was the paramount consideration in this regard. When the HPRH information was added to the Station / CRU scores derived from the data sets, clear priorities for capital build became apparent.

The AMCRM concluded by pointing out that the simplified data sets used provided transparency to the risk review process, as they provided a method to simplify complex data, and also that, when looking at the whole service, the data would not be the only factor taken into consideration.

In discussion, information was provided to Members on the Fire Service Emergency Cover toolkit (FSEC). This software, which had been provided by the Department of Communities and Local Government, considered many factors impacting on the probability of fire, (e.g. the numbers of vulnerable people in an area, the history of fire incidents at that location, whether a person lived alone, etc). This information was analysed to give a probability rating for life-critical fire incidents in any given area. The FSEC toolkit had been used to compile the first data set outlined above.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that:

- the minimum operational requirement for a crew was 6, with a minimum turn-out of 4, for the appliance to be able to respond effectively to an emergency incident – there had been a number of incidents in the previous year where an appliance had failed due to less than 4 crew responding to a call-out
- if an appliance was unable to respond on an island, then alternative arrangements to mobilise an appliance from adjacent stations would be implemented; the Maritime and Coastguard Agency would assist if the incident was life-critical
- recruitment methods could include using the local press, notices in shops, notice boards, profile raising at local events, door-to-door calling, a scheme to involve school pupils, contacting Community Councils and elected Members, and word of mouth; in the previous year, 150 crew members had been recruited to replace those leaving – recruitment was a major task
- it took around 2 years for a retained fire fighter to complete initial training
- at this stage of the Risk Review process, only the capital build programme was being considered and there were no proposals at present to close stations; during the later stages of the review the role of stations would be considered and, ultimately, a station could close if the Overall Sustainability rating was not considered appropriate
- populations were monitored – it was recognised that there could be increases or decreases locally
- the inter-relationships between stations was important; the data on this was not yet ready but would be incorporated in the final stages of the IRMP Risk Review analysis

In discussion, Members commented that this was impressive, pioneering work, which they fully supported. They expressed confidence in the figures. However, as the data was likely to be used to support major decisions in the capital programme, an independent verification of the statistics and the weighting should be carried out, and the methodology validated, to ensure that the figures were robust should there be future public challenge. It would also be advisable to keep the Head of the Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit in Scotland informed of progress.

The AMCRM summarised that the three factors which most influenced the capital build programme were (i) the station / CRU sustainability, (ii) the life saving impact of a station / CRU, and (iii) the provision of high pressure hose reel equipment. Having heard the Deputy Chief Fire Officer stress that the sustainability data formed one layer of the decision-making process, but that professional judgement and political considerations would always be required in addition to the data, the Working Group **AGREED** to recommend to the Board that it agree:

- i. to progress the allocation of vehicles with high pressure hose reel equipment, currently owned by the Service, into current stations which could physically accommodate the appliances;
- ii. as an interim measure, in order to achieve the required capital build spend for 2009/10, to progress the most appropriate build from those sites currently owned by the Board, based upon risk;
- iii. that the future upgrading of stations be prioritised upon the combined Sustainability score and the aspiration of the Board to provide high pressure hose reel equipment for all stations;
- iv. to support a project to explore the potential to provide alternative types of appropriately equipped appliances, and, following this investigation, agree to implement a phased programme to provide, on a risk-based approach, appropriately equipped vehicles (with high pressure hose reel equipment) into current stations able to accommodate new physically smaller appliances;
- v. that an independent verification of the statistics and the weighting used in compiling the combined Sustainability score be carried out, to provide validation of the methodology; and
- vi. that the Head of the Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit in Scotland be kept fully informed as to progress.

The Working Group also **AGREED:**

- i. that a presentation be made to a future meeting of the Working Group on the Fire Safety Emergency Cover toolkit (FSEC); and
- ii. that a short presentation summarising the main points considered by the Working Group be made to the next Board.

The meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.