

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2004 AT 10.00 A.M.**

Agenda Item No.
3

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1. Purpose of Report

To consider the proposed Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for Hertfordshire.

2. Summary

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) recently released its White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service" which set out the agenda for the reform and modernisation of the Fire Service.

As part of that agenda the County Council is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and this report provides an overview of the IRMP process and the draft plan recently compiled by Officers. The Draft Plan was considered by the Fire Panel at its meeting of 22 October 2003, approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 10 November 2003 and subsequently released for consultation on 11 November 2003. The date for completion of the consultation process is 28 February 2004.

As a result of the work undertaken so far opportunities for the improvement of service delivery have been identified and the resultant action points set out within the IRMP document.

Copies of the IRMP document are enclosed for Members of the Committee only. The document was published as part of the agenda for Cabinet in December 2003. (Further copies are available by request to Committee Services 01992 555562)

3. Conclusion

Members are asked to consider the content of the Fire Authority draft IRMP and determine how further scrutiny will be undertaken.

1. Background

1.1 Integrated Risk Management Plan

In May 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) issued guidance to assist Fire Authorities in preparing and producing an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The aim of this plan and the process is to emphasise a proactive approach to service delivery.

In June 2003, the ODPM published a white paper proposing the modernisation and reform of the Fire Service. One of the main themes was to ensure that Fire Authorities allocated their resources on the basis of risk.

An effective IRMP will do the following fundamental things:

- Identify existing and potential risks to the community
- Evaluate the current effectiveness of current arrangements
- Identify opportunities for improvement and determine appropriate policies and standards
- Determine the resource requirements

The aim of the IRMP is to bring about improved community safety and use of fire and rescue resources by:-

- Reducing the incidence of fires;
- Reducing loss of life in fires and accidents;
- Reducing the number and severity of injuries occurring in fires and other emergencies;
- Safeguarding the environment and protecting the national heritage;
- Providing value for money.

This will be achieved by making an informed assessment of the risks in the area and the best ways to manage them, looking at prevention, enforcement and response. To be effective, the Service will need to co-ordinate its plans and aspirations with those of other relevant agencies.

2. Action Plan

A vast array of evidence is detailed within the strategic document from which an initial Action Plan has been compiled. In total 11 Action Points have been identified and these are detailed in Appendix 4 of the strategic document. The Action Points have emerged as a result of the Service adhering to guidance documents provided by the ODPM. The guidance clearly indicates that any call for change must be supported by factual evidence. The Service was able to provide this as a result of work completed early in the information gathering phase of the project.

These Action Points have been grouped under the headings of Prevention, Protection, Intervention and Management. In some cases they are aimed at improving our collection and use of data, performance management and general management arrangements for the IRMP process.

There are a number of key action points which will/may impact on service delivery within the first year, these are set out below.

The consultation period will enable the Service to consult widely with the key internal and external stakeholders. In addition to this the views of the Panel are sought on our proposals.

2.1 Automatic Fire Alarm Response Policy

Each year the service responds to an average 3,500 calls originating from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems (AFA's). This figure represents 26% of all emergency calls received and provides for a major impact on the Service. The vast majority of these 3,500 AFA calls (94%) turn out to be false alarms where the attendance of the service is not required.

The service will be seeking to introduce a policy whereby the financial and time losses of these calls are reduced to a minimum. Based on evidence available from other services there is the potential for efficiency savings in the order of £30k, plus substantial savings in the time of operational personnel which can be redirected to other areas. During the consultation phase members are asked to consider a variety of options which are available to the Service. These include:

- Reduced attendance to premises with automatic fire alarms
- Attendance to premises only when unoccupied.
- No attendance to any premises with a fire alarm
- Continued attendance to life risk premises, i.e. hospitals and residential homes

2.2 Building Risk Profiles

At present buildings in the county are inspected according to their use and not necessarily to the life risk they present. New legislation in the form of the imminent Regulatory Reform Order, will require us to inspect/protect buildings on a risk management basis. The service will be developing a policy which will identify the built risk within the county. This will enable us to identify the appropriate responses for prevention, protection and intervention.

2.3 Establish a cadre of day duty personnel

It has traditionally been difficult to recruit and retain Retained firefighters in a number of locations throughout the county. This has had a direct impact on the availability of Retained units and, in turn, the level of response that can be provided. It is intended to introduce a corps of day duty staff, working on a flexible basis, to cover these shortfalls.

The establishment of the cadre will provide opportunities and freedoms for the use of overtime, part time and other more flexible approaches to maintaining resource levels.

2.4 Home Risk Assessment Toolkit

The fitting of smoke detectors is a reactive initiative which does not prevent fires or provide for an escape plan. A preventative approach is to initiate a Home Risk Assessment Policy. It is intended to develop and implement such a policy within Hertfordshire. In partnership with a variety of agencies with particular emphasis on the Care Sector. This will assist residents, in particular those identified as being most “at risk”, to prevent and prepare for fire.

3. Consultation

The Integrated Risk Management Plan process requires a period of consultation with the public and key stakeholders to be completed by 28 February 2004. The consultation plan has been developed and as a result amendment for consideration will be included in the future report to Cabinet prior to the publication of the IRMP by the required date of 1 April 2004.

Consultation with the community we serve and our staff is an essential element of the IRMP process. There is a plethora of guidance and advice available to the Service. Due to the “low key” slant of our initial IRMP it is considered appropriate to adopt a measured approach to the consultation period. The process is still far reaching and provides access to all sectors of the community. The IRMP has been released for consultation utilising the following media:

- Press releases – programmed for duration of consultation
- Hard copies to key stakeholders and libraries
- CD Rom copies for others requesting copies
- Herts Direct website and publication
- Herts Connect
- Precised document produced indicating access to main document
- Call Centre, e-mail and postal addresses for requesting copies
- Staff consultation meetings programmed
- Business community briefings programmed
- E-mail and postal addresses for comments.

Financial Implications

A core IRMP project team will be required to undertake the work required to embed the process into the normal working of the Service. Work is now being undertaken to determine the time, people and other resource requirements necessary. It will then be necessary to consider if this is resourced by reprioritising existing work programmes or additional funding. Funding to support the modernisation programme is promised from the ODPM.

Background Papers:

Government White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service"

Integrated Risk Management Plan Guidance Notes issued by ODPM

Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for Hertfordshire Fire Authority