

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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Agenda Item No.

8

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP)

Report of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Topic Group

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1. Purpose of report

To report the work and conclusions of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Topic Group established by Community Services Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2004. Membership of the group comprised Peter Channel (Chairman), Michael Colne, Jane Hobday, Gerald Game and John Usher.

2. Summary

The County Council is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) as part of the agenda for the modernisation of the Fire Service, as set out in the Deputy Prime Minister's White Paper "Our Fire and Rescue Service". Cabinet approved the draft IRMP at its meeting on 10 November and it was subsequently released for consultation.

As part of the consultation process, the Community Services Scrutiny Committee established a Topic Group to consider certain aspects of the IRMP. The areas considered were the response policy for Automatic Fire Alarms, establishment of a day duty shift system, building risk profiles and home risk assessments, each of which is the subject of an Action Plan within the IRMP. These plans state that the AFA policy should be implemented from April 2004 and that policies for the three remaining items should be established by March 2005.

The Topic Group scrutinised the proposals on these issues, ensuring that each of the four policy areas is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. The building risk profile and home risk assessments are designed to identify risk so it can be reduced. The day shift policy is aimed at having the right people in the right place. The AFA policy is designed to help with the proper use of resources and that these resources are in the right place to help reduce risk.

3. Conclusion

The Community Service Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the recommendation of the Integrated Risk Management Topic Group (see Appendix 4). That is, officers complete proposals and policies as discussed in the report in relation to:

- Automatic Fire Alarm response policy
- Establishment of a day duty shift system
- Building risk profiles
- Home fire risk assessments

Final policy proposals to be reported via Fire Service Panel.

4. Background

Requirement for Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs)

The two major pieces of fire safety legislation both require the consideration of means for giving warning to occupants in case of fire. For the vast majority of premises where people are employed this will mean an automatic fire alarm. Buildings that require a fire certificate under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 (as amended) are required to consider means of giving warning in case of fire. The Workplace (Fire) Regulations require premises where people are employed to carry out a fire risk assessment. This assessment must include the detection of fire and warning in case of fire.

New and refurbished domestic premises will have hard wired smoke alarms fitted under building regulations. The occupiers of all other domestic premises are encouraged to fit smoke alarms to give early warning in case of fire.

Automatic Fire Alarm Response Policy

In 2002/3 Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) attended 4,248 calls originating from Automatic Fire Alarms. Of these, 932 calls were to private dwellings. The total number of AFA calls resulted in over 7,500 appliance movements. The vast majority of these mobilisations were to false alarms with a variety of causes including faulty signals, dust, break glass points being broken, and insects in detectors.

Efforts to reduce the number of unwanted AFA calls can be successful when the building is the focus of HFRS efforts. The trend is often reversed when the management of the AFA system is left solely to the occupier. In light of this, HFRS have in the past looked to reduce the number of appliances attending AFA calls. Until the end of the recent dispute central government guidance was that operational response to AFAs should be in line with attending a fire in the risk categorisation for that area. For example one appliance in 5 minutes and one in 8 for B risk areas (Appendix 1). This type of attendance is current policy for HFRS with some higher attendances for 'special' risks such as hospitals.

HFRS has a commercial and industrial training unit that provides training which highlights the requirement to manage and maintain a fire alarm system. Attendance at this training is voluntary. The Service also has a policy of visiting premises that have three or more unwanted fire alarm actuations to discuss with occupiers the premises management.

On strike days during the dispute the procedure was for non-attendance to Automatic Fire Alarms unless supported by a 999 call verified as an emergency. In this period there was no evidence of an increase in fires or the severity of fires. Automatic Fire Alarm calls actually dropped as building managers anticipated that there would be no emergency attendance. Call levels to AFAs are now back to pre-dispute levels.

Attending this number of unwanted AFA calls has a major disruptive effect on the work of the Fire and Rescue Service. A very conservative estimate of the time

taken to attend and deal with unnecessary AFAs shows that at least 8000 person hours were wasted in 02/03. A brief analysis of these AFA calls is attached at Appendix 2.

Although there may be no immediate cash savings for wholtime stations (stations which are crewed 24 hours a day, seven days a week on a four-watch system), the disruption to daily activity can be large and frustrating. Training, fire safety education visits, inspections, administration, meetings and personal development sessions are all abandoned to attend AFA calls. There is also the added potential risk of a road traffic accident when attending emergency calls.

In addition to the waste of wholtime hours there is the additional cost of attendance from the retained side of the service. Apart from direct retained costs there are savings to be made in a number of other areas, such as fuel, administration, accounting, wear & tear on appliances and equipment.

There is also the wider cost to the local community through other employers, self-employed and individual firefighters as people leave their normal activities to attend emergency calls.

Options for change

There are a number of options for Automatic Fire Alarm attendances

- No change – Maintain the current attendance policy for all premises.
- No change in the response to domestic premises.
- Full response – one or more fire appliances will respond to a known life risk regardless of the time of day. This means no change to the current attendance to sleeping risk no matter what the time of day.
- Reduced response – an operational resource reflective of the nature of the risk and time of day will be mobilised in response whether the building is occupied or not. This will mean a differing response dependent on the type of building and whether it is occupied or not.
- Time based response – an operational resource reflective of the nature of the risk and the time of day will be mobilised in response to the call. That is, the response changes for say, an office depending on whether it is during working hours. This relates to Reduced Response as the attendance will be adjusted to account of risk related to the time of day.
- Response based on confirmed fire situation – No response or reduced response will be made to certain calls unless a fire situation has been confirmed via a 999 call.
- Change in attendance times – Extend the time to respond to an AFA

Impact Analysis

There will be differing scales of impact depending on the policy adopted. Any change in the policy that reduces the number of appliances attending will probably result in both cashable and non-cashable savings. Cashable savings are likely to accrue through reduced retained attendance and non-cashable through wholetime firefighters being able to spend more time on community safety and training.

Work will be required to implement any changes agreed by the Fire Authority and any savings arising from a new AFA policy will be part year savings in 04/05 and have already been identified in the most recent budget process. As discussed later in the paper the Service would wish to re-invest a proportion of these savings into other roles such as community safety.

Any reduction in AFA calls on retained stations will have an affect on the income of retained personnel. The current system is to pay retained Firefighters a 'Retainer', with additional payments for each time they turn out to an incident. Each member is paid a turnout fee of about £14 if they go out with the appliance and an attendance fee if they don't. If we reduce the number of incidents they are turning out to, this will reduce their income. This may have a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention. It will not be possible to determine the exact affect until officers have completed work on the policy.

This should not be seen in isolation and some of these efficiencies could be used to support the day duty shift system and community safety activities by retained personnel. As HFRS moves more and more to risk based service delivery it will be desirable for retained personnel to carry out more fire safety activities in their communities. Some of the resources freed up by the new AFA policy will be invested in this safety work.

Members should also be aware that a successful policy will require some form of call challenge by control staff where they will be able to ask more detailed questions on whether there is a fire or something else has activated the alarm. This would be restricted to premises and times of day where we would differ our response. For example, commercial premises during operating hours.

External Stakeholders

Further consultation with external stakeholders will be required. Occupiers of premises would have to take a more responsible approach to the maintenance and management of their premises and alarm systems. Evidence from other Fire Services such as Oxfordshire, who have instigated radical policies for handling AFA calls, is that occupiers vastly improve their procedures on preventing false alarms in the first place, respond better to them when they do occur, and provide better training to their staff in matters of fire safety and awareness.

Representative Bodies

The formal view of the local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and Fire Officers Association (FOA) is unknown at this stage. However the national Executive of the FBU is currently mounting a campaign of general opposition to changes in attendance to AFA policies. It can therefore be assumed that locally the stance of FBU officials will be the same. FOA response appears to be more in line with Service aspirations but until a formal approach is made to both on an agreed

policy their actual position is unknown. Contact will also be made with Unison and the Retained Firefighters union.

Further work

Any change in the AFA attendance policy would require further work and it is anticipated that actual changes in attendance would be planned for 1 October 2004. This work would include:

- Final Hertfordshire legal opinion on Service proposals
- Consultation and advice to commercial occupiers
- Consultation with the Alarms Reception Centres on proposals
- Consultation with representative bodies.
- Development of follow up procedure to AFA calls for high offending buildings.
- Production of guidance for stations on how to deal with occupiers
- Pre-prepared position statements on changed attendance to AFAs
- Proactive media Strategy and information to stakeholders and the public
- Internal communications strategy
- Improve data collection
- An agreed means of evaluation for future IRMP.
- Change to mobilising system and training of Control personnel.

Attendance Policy

Extended commentary on these recommendations is included in Appendix 3.

The Topic Group recommended the following proposals in relation to Automatic Fire Alarm response policy:

- No change to the attendance to private dwellings
- No automatic attendance to commercial premises during operating hours unless backed up by a 999 call.
- Reduce attendance, i.e. a single appliance, to commercial premises outside operating hours.
- Reduced attendance, i.e. a single appliance, to sleeping and current 'special' risk premises during office hours.
- Appropriate level attendance to sleeping and 'special' risk premises outside office hours.
- Full current attendance to any premises following a 999 call and confirmation of a fire situation.
- Control operators to challenge 999 calls to commercial premises during the premises operating hours to confirm a fire situation exists.
- Maintain the current first appliance attendance standard for that area.
- Follow up visits to premises that have three or more unwanted AFA calls.

Members should be aware, however, that it is likely that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will issue central guidance on AFA attendance some time in April. Officers and Members will need to re-examine the policy following the publication of this guidance.

Communications

The following areas will be covered.

Fire and Rescue Staff:

- Open forum at selected sites
- Regular in house information bulletins
- Updates through team meetings
- Herts Connect

Media

- Positive proactive press releases
- Availability of Principal Officers for interview
- Information on advice to occupiers
- Position statements in response to any suggestion of reduction in service

Business and External Stakeholders

- Meetings with representative trade organisations, e.g. Chamber of Commerce.
- Meetings with major stakeholders – ASDA, Tesco etc.
- Meetings with representatives of primary care trusts, residential care etc.
- Letters to all premises which currently have a fire certificate.
- Advice leaflet for fire crews to provide to business premises.

Legal Opinion

The Service has been provided with initial legal advice from the County legal department. The advice is in agreement with the broad principles of legal advice provided for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. That is, the Fire Authority was not unreasonable to reach a decision to reduce the level of response to calls from Alarm Receiving Centres which are not corroborated as an actual fire. The Executive Member and Members of the Topic Group have been made aware of legal advice.'

Day Duty Shift System

This and the following two policy areas are to be developed for implementation on 1 April 2005. For a number of reasons Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue service has been finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and keep retained personnel. These reasons included the nature of residents' working patterns in Hertfordshire i.e. a lot of people commute; the reluctance of some of employers to release people from work; and the caring commitments of those who are at home during the day.

Prior to the Firefighters dispute in 2003, the Service undertook work in this area and a number of HFRS personnel registered their interest in providing day duty cover. Within the 'Heads of Agreement' which was signed by all parties at the conclusion of the dispute, was a recognition that different duty systems and pre-arranged overtime were now options that could be explored. This IRMP proposal will explore those options and develop a more efficient use of resources.

Options for change

Each option would be used to provide operational cover (possibly including resilience), cover for training activities and community safety activities.

- Increase the establishment to provide a day duty shift system
- Changes to establishment to provide a core of day duty personnel.
- Changes to establishment to support the introduction of part-time firefighters
- Use of Overtime to provide day duty cover
- Review the use of wholetime retained to provide day duty cover

Future work

- Establish what number of supplementary crew members will be required
- Project the costs of:-
 - Employing supplementary day duty personnel.
 - Covering shortages by overtime.
 - Establishment of a revised retained pay and fire cover system to improve recruitment and cover.
- Examine what the Working Time Directive implications are for various options
- Contractual arrangements
- Training and competency level requirements
- Transport, fire kit and equipment issues
- Work patterns for supplementary day duty staff
- Risk assessment of any proposed revised team working
- Line management and co-ordination issues
- Performance standards

Building Risk Profile

There are two reasons for developing building risk profiles. Firstly, the IRMP process will need to clearly identify risk, plus changes in fire safety legislation. Secondly, current central Government plans state that in mid 2005 the extant Fire Precautions Act and Workplace (Fire) Regulations will be replaced by a Regulatory Reform Order (RRO). This Order will place the responsibility for fire safety in buildings with the owner or occupier. The Fire Authority will be the enforcing authority. The Order will cover many more buildings than the extant legislation, therefore the Service will need to develop a risk based inspection regime to discharge its duties.

A number of actions are required to provide useful building risk profiles:

- To carry out research and adopt an appropriate building risk profile policy for Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- The creation of a building risk database. Investigation will be required to determine whether the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) software provided by ODPM to assist with future IRMP profiles will provide the database.
- A programme to categorise buildings within the County into risk grades. Some of this work can be concluded using a desktop methodology but will require resources to provide all the necessary information.
- Following the building risk profiling a risk based inspection regime will need to be introduced. This type of methodology may rate a high risk office the same

as a medium risk hotel and therefore require similar re-inspection periods. This inspection regime will commence based on the initial responses from the early building risk profile analysis. The building risk profile work will continue and information and data from this process will feed future amendments and changes to the risk based inspection programme. Information for this programme will also be needed from the IRMP project, operational crews and National statistics.

- Using a risk based inspection regime following the owner's risk assessment is a different method of working from that used for the Fire Precautions Act (FPA). This will require training for all staff carrying out inspections. In order to free up time for this training it is proposed to reduce the amount of FPA work and be reduced to a minimum some months before the introduction of the RRO.

Home Fire Safety Risk Assessments

HFRS have a well established Community Fire Safety function. Present activity is diverse but can be split into 4 main areas: -

- Increasing the numbers of homes protected by working smoke alarms through Quick strikes, Safe Havens, Silent Waking schemes and other local initiatives combined with the lobbying of District Councils and housing associations into fitting hard wired systems into their properties.
- Arson related initiatives through District Council Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, the Hertfordshire Arson Task Force and Juvenile Firesetters Scheme.
- Support for specific campaigns both local and national, and social cohesion initiatives such as our cadet schemes, our involvement with the Prince's Trust and the work done by our outreach worker.
- Our extensive use of partner organisations and initiatives such as Caring Together (a simple home risk assessment package) used by some Adult Care Services staff.

The HFRS draft Integrated Risk Management Plan has identified that the Service requires a more focussed and pro active prevention strategy designed to prevent fire deaths and injuries in the home should be introduced. The introduction of The Home Risk Assessment (HRA) is designed to meet this need.

Using historic fire data and data sets from a variety of other agencies, we can start to build up an accurate profile as to whom, in our community, is most at risk. We propose to use the HRA tool to visit these people in their homes to assess the level of risk, educate them as to the dangers and precautions they should consider, fit smoke alarms where appropriate and forward details to partner agencies to provide a holistic approach to Community Safety.

The Home Risk Assessment will also serve as a data collection tool for the following:

- The FSEC dwellings risk assessment toolkit allowing us to identify and predict the risk for emergency response purposes.
- Link to the mobilising system to provide Site Specific Information for operational purposes (e.g. occupants on home oxygen or disabled).

- To help further refine our prevention campaign activity and identify which issues are of greatest concern.
- To share information with partner organisations.

It is proposed that the HRA will be suitable for use by both HFRS staff and a wide variety of partner organisations.

The use of HRA is established in many fire services for community safety and we do not anticipate opposition to its introduction. Any training required will be provided by the district fire safety co-ordinators.

It is anticipated the HRA will be the pre-eminent policy for increasing community fire safety in Hertfordshire and its use should expand in future years. Data gained from these visits will be stored to help provide data for future IRMP. The data will also be used to evaluate the success of such a policy by comparing fire statistics against the records for HRA.

The adoption of HRA will provide two possible further benefits:

- Further partnership working in areas such as The Hertfordshire Compact, Local Strategic Partnerships, Primary Care Trusts, Accident Prevention Groups and Crime Reduction Partnerships.
- Linking to the reduction of time spent on attending unwanted automatic fire alarms this can provide focused work for wholetime firefighters. It would also provide a policy for increasing community safety in predominantly retained areas through the use of retained personnel in a more pro-active role.

Access to Services

A reduction in wasted time attending unwanted automatic fire alarm calls should result in fire service staff being available for community safety and other emergency work. With risk identification and then reduction through the building risk profiles and home risk assessments, plus the day duty shift the result should be improved access to services. As stated, there will be further information provided to the business community on any new AFA policy. Business will be informed of any changes in current policy through the communication strategy.

Financial Implications

It can be seen from the work described in this paper that there are a number of resource requirements that will need to be met, mainly from existing resources. It is clear, however, that there are increasing workloads arising from the modernisation agenda particularly in relation to IRMP, the Integrated Personal Development System and Regional working. Therefore future planning will need to be extremely accurate in order to detail resource requirements and achievable projects.

Background papers used by the author in compiling this report

Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan

Current Standards of Fire Cover

Category	Description	Maximum time for Fire Engine attendance		
		1st	2nd	3rd
A	Major cities and conurbations	5	5	8
B	Smaller cities and larger towns	5	8	
C	Suburban areas, smaller towns and urban residential	8-10		
D	Rural village areas	20		

Urban areas in Hertfordshire are mainly classed as C with some small areas of B categorisation. The rest of the County is D risk. Hertfordshire has a policy of sending two fire appliances to every property fire.

This prescriptive approach to providing fire cover is being replaced by the Integrated Risk Management Plans.

Unwanted Automatic Fire Alarm Calls 2002/03

Analysis of the 4,248 calls to AFA premises in 2002/3 indicates that only 207 (4.6%) were actual fires. Of that 207, 110 (2.5%) required no firefighting action at all, only 18 (0.4%) required the application of water by a hosereel, and only 1 (0.02%) by means of a main jet. The remaining 97 were extinguished by a variety of means including being allowed to burn out, disconnecting the fuel supply, smothering and removal from the heat source. On six occasions people were reported as 'injured'. Details of those six are listed below.

Premises	How extinguished	Injury (minor)	Cause
Dwelling(House)	Bucket of Water	Smoke inhalation	Accidental
Home(Elderly)	Out on Arrival	Smoke inhalation	Accidental
Dwelling(Flat)	Removal from Heat	Smoke inhalation	Accidental
Home(Handicapped)	Disconnect Fuel	Smoke inhalation	Accidental
Hospital(Psychiatric)	Allowed to burn out	Smoke inhalation	Deliberate
Dwelling(Other)	Out on Arrival	Smoke inhalation	Accidental

All of the above 'injuries' were at small fires and are recorded as injuries because resuscitation equipment was used following inhalation of smoke. None of these fires required water pumped from an appliance and each fire was confirmed by a 999 call. Also, in the procedure proposed below each of these calls would attract the same first appliance attendance as now.

Attendance to Automatic Fire Alarms Options - Extended Comments

- No change to the attendance to private dwellings – For a number of years the Fire Service has encouraged the installation of domestic smoke alarms. This campaign has met with a large degree of success but with a knock on of increased calls to dwellings that turn out not to be fires. Until the correct installation and maintenance of domestic fire alarms is better established with the public and Service data is more refined, the Service would not recommend a change in attendance to private dwellings.
- No automatic attendance to commercial type premises such as, office, shops, factories and railway premises during operating hours. A large number of the automatic fire alarm (AFA) false alarms are to occupied commercial premises. The building occupier is responsible for fire safety in the building including the maintenance of any fire alarm equipment. The Service recommends that no attendance is made to an AFA at a commercial premises during its operating hours unless the AFA is backed up by a 999 call confirming that there is an emergency situation. If there is such a 999 call then the current fire cover attendance will be sent as a minimum (Appendix 1). With premises with appropriate management controls outside operating hours, such as on site security, it may be possible to include a time delay unit. This allows the building occupier to investigate the need for fire service attendance before putting in an emergency call. Reduce attendance, i.e. a single appliance, to commercial premises outside operating hours. When commercial buildings are unoccupied it is recommended that the Service sends the nearest fire appliance to confirm whether or not a fire situation exists. If at any time a 999 call is received confirming an emergency situation exists then the current fire cover attendance will be sent as a minimum. The fire appliance crew will carry out a risk assessment of the situation and request further resources if required.
- Reduced attendance, i.e. a single appliance, to sleeping and current 'special' risk premises during office hours. During office hours whilst staff are at the premises it is recommended that a reduced attendance of one fire appliance will be sent to confirm the situation. If at any time a 999 call is received then the current fire cover attendance will be sent as a minimum.
- Appropriate level attendance to sleeping and 'special' risk premises outside office hours. As a minimum response, sleeping risk and special risk premises will receive the current fire cover response i.e. A, B, C or D risk. To most property fires HFRS send two fire engines and this would continue in this situation. Each premises will be risk assessed during the work on building risk profiles and the attendance adjusted if necessary.
- Full current attendance to any premises following a 999 call and confirmation of a fire situation. As discussed above, a 999 call confirming an emergency situation will attract the current fire cover attendance, for example, A, B or C.
- Control operators to challenge 999 calls to commercial premises during the premises operating hours to confirm a fire situation exists. Control operators will be able to confirm with the caller whether an emergency situation exists

and so whether a full attendance was required. If the control operator has reason to believe that a fire situation exists then a full attendance will be made.

- Maintain the current first appliance attendance standard for that area whether wholetime or retained. The nearest appliance will attend for any reduced attendance or full attendance. If the attendance is a single fire appliance then the attendance standard will be the current fire cover standard e.g. 5 minutes in B risk areas and 8-10 minutes in C risk.
- Follow up visits to premises that have three or more unwanted AFA calls. Officers from HFRS will attend these premises to discuss fire alarm maintenance and the need to reduce false alarms.

Glossary

HFRS -	Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
IRMP -	Integrated Risk Management Plan
AFA -	Automatic Fire Alarm
ARC -	Alarm Receiving Centre
RRO -	Regulatory Reform Order
FPA -	Fire Precautions Act
WPR -	Workplace (Fire) Regulations
HRA -	Home Risk Assessment
FBU -	Fire Brigades Union
FOA -	Fire Officers Association
FSEC -	Fire Services Emergency Cover