

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item

1 July 2010

Annual summary of Station Audits

Report of the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 During 2009/10, year 2 of the three year station audit programme was undertaken at each of the 51 fire stations within HFRS. The audits tested for compliance against a number of policies, procedures and activities, and these are set out in paragraph 4.1 below.
- 1.2 It is pleasing to note that the audits identified an overall good standard of compliance, with only relatively low risk areas identified for future improvement. Local station managers have been made aware of the areas identified as being non compliant on their stations, and performance management arrangements have been instigated to ensure these areas are addressed. Additionally, cross cutting areas of non-compliance have been passed to relevant departmental heads if there are organisational issues that need to be addressed.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report highlighting how the station audit process is improving compliance against identified policy, procedures and activities on fire stations.
- 2.2 That the Committee note the steps taken by Service Delivery Management Team to commission HCC Internal Audit to test the entire station audit process and provide critical feedback to ensure the process is operating effectively.
- 2.3 That the Committee supports proposals to explore how the station audit process can be broadened to encompass operational areas that have become the responsibility of Service Delivery following the directorate review.

3 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Service Delivery Performance Management Group introduced the fire station audit programme in April 2008. The audit programme contains a total of 55

separate policies, procedures or activities that are key to the successful performance of fire stations. In order to ensure manageability the 55 topics are contained within a risk based three year rolling programme. Each fire station is audited annually to test for compliance against a number of key policies and procedures by a small number of trained auditors who are experienced managers within HFRS.

- 3.2 The focus of the year 2 audit was on policies, procedures and activities that were identified as being medium risk. In addition a small number of year 1 topics were carried over and repeated for new activities where they were found to be not fully embedded.

4 Topics audited in 2009/10 (Year 2)

- 4.1 The following topics were included in the year 2 audit programme:

- Information and record management
- Employee relations
- Leave
- Capability Support
- Discipline & Grievance
- Smoke free environments
- Station plans
- Station defecting system
- Vehicle accidents
- Standard testing of operational equipment
- Incident Recording System (IRS)
- VIEWS commentaries
- Elected Member engagement
- Premises information boxes

As previously mentioned in paragraph 1.2 the overall standard of compliance was good, with only relatively low risk areas identified for future improvement. The cross cutting organisational areas are set out in greater detail below.

4.2 Information and record management;

Auditors findings were of high level compliance across the board. A minor recurring theme was highlighted about the need to ensure hard copy documents were removed and destroyed following an agreed transfer to electronic copies only. This issue has been passed to Service Delivery Administration to progress.

HR policies including capability support, discipline and grievance, employee relations and leave;

Compliance was generally good, however people consistently requested additional refresher training. This issue has been passed to HR Business Partners to progress.

Smoke free environments;

Compliance was generally good, with exceptions identified at a number of sites

that didn't have a clearly identified smoking point, including the correct signage. This issue has been passed to the Property Services Manager to progress.

Station plans;

Compliance was generally good on WDS Stations, however it was clear that a number of RDS Stations were not familiar with their plan. This issue is being taken up within Service Delivery.

Station defecting system;

Compliance varied considerably from site to site, however there was an underlying problem identified with reporting in the dated manual recording system which often led to confusion and duplication. This issue has been passed to Property Services to follow up.

Vehicle Accidents;

Compliance was generally good and this has resulted in a significant reduction in vehicle accidents in the recent past. Generally staff were aware of the procedures, however when questioned in more detail became vague when asked about specific manoeuvring. This issue has been passed to Driver Training to follow up.

Standard Tests;

Compliance was good on most sites, however there were a number of instances where equipment was out of test date, or incorrectly marked. This issue has been passed to the Response Support team who are exploring potential asset tracking solutions which would solve this matter.

Incident Recording System (IRS);

This new system was introduced in April 2009 to replace the hard copy fire reporting system. The process has been problematic since introduction and a number of software and process changes have resulted in improved performance and reliability. This topic has been included in the year 3 (2010/11 audit programme) to test if the changes have resulted in greater compliance and a summary of progress will be included in next year's summary.

IEWS;

Compliance was inconsistent across sites, and less prevalent on RDS stations. There were some examples of excellent practice where local managers used IEWS as an integral component of their performance management arrangements. In particular, commentaries were weak or non-existent, particularly on RDS stations. This issue has been passed to the Service Delivery Performance Management Group to progress.

Elected Member engagement;

Compliance was generally poor apart from specific sites where staff had identified their local Fire Authority Member and taken steps to build strong relationships. Generally there was a lack of understanding about the Fire Authority and the important role that elected members play in the Service. This issue has been forwarded to the Head of Training and Development to progress.

5 Developments to the audit scope

- 5.1 Following the directorate review and the combination of Service Delivery with Specialist Response there is potential to broaden the scope of the station audit process to incorporate aspects of specialist response including Urban Search and Rescue (USAR). Work is underway to explore how best this can be achieved and we anticipate this review will be completed by September 2010.

6 Improving the effectiveness of the audit process

The audit process was originally developed based upon the HCC internal audit model prior to being introduced in 2009. The process appears to be operating effectively, however Service Delivery believe it is important to seek opportunities for improvement and consequently have commissioned HCC internal audit to test the process. Any feedback from the internal audit team will be considered and incorporated into future arrangements.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 The audit process positively addresses the risks stemming from non compliance of policy, procedures and activities within Service Delivery.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 Human Resources

The audit team undertake their work in addition to their core role so there are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

9 People Impact Assessment

- 9.1 A People Impact Assessment (PIA) was originally undertaken when the performance management policy, of which station audit is a part, was prepared. The policy and PIA have recently been reviewed and there are no significant issues arising from it to draw to the attention of Members.
- 9.2 The proposals within this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 There is no information relating to consultation that needs to be brought to the attention of Members.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The Service Delivery station audit process continues to operate effectively in identifying and addressing areas of non compliance against key policy, procedures and activities.
- 11.2 Steps are in place to develop the scope and improve the effectiveness of the audit process which should assure Members that it will continue to be fit for purpose in the future.

Background Information (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

None

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.