

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Item 9

29 July 2011

Business Continuity Management Update

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority with an update on the Service's Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements and recent related activities.
- 1.2 During 2010 the Audit Commission (AC) were tasked by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to undertake a survey of all fire and rescue authorities in England to ascertain how authorities deal with periods of disruption to normal business. HFRS responded to the BCM survey in July 2010 culminating with the AC reporting to CLG in September 2010.
- 1.3 The survey concentrated on mass staff absence and the findings by the AC reported that all fire and rescue services have satisfactory business continuity plans in place albeit further improvements could also be achieved across the sector.
- 1.4 Further to this, HFRS responded positively to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) in December 2010 who requested additional information relating to how fire and rescue services had progressed since the Audit Commission report.
- 1.5 HFRS have recently successfully conducted a full evacuation exercise of our service headquarters site and undergone a robust peer assessment of its' BCM arrangements within which we received positive feedback.
- 1.6 HFRS have suitable and sufficient BCM arrangements in place to deal with disruptions to 'business as normal' including periods of mass absence of staff and for ensuring that it discharges its' statutory duties and core business functions. Our BCM arrangements have been rigorously tested through simulations and real life incidents recently such as adverse weather (snow), swine flu pandemic and the Shirley Towers incident as well as several exercise scenarios.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Finance and General Purposes Committee support the content of this report and acknowledge the suitability and sufficiency of HFRS' BCM planning arrangements.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 During 2010 CLG commissioned the AC to conduct a detailed survey of BCM for fire and rescue authorities in England. The survey concentrated on disruption to normal business processes caused by mass staff absences due to industrial action, flu pandemic and adverse weather.
- 3.2 HFRS duly completed a robust assessment of our BCM arrangements against the criteria within the survey and responded accordingly. HFRS Directors agreed the survey response content prior to electronic submission.
- 3.3 Subsequently the AC reported that: *"All fire and rescue services have satisfactory business continuity plans in place. Some services are good at business continuity management and can ensure their services can continue when disrupted. Those services having more experience with disruption are learning a lot and are better prepared."*
- 3.4 HFRS were identified in the report within a case study that identifies notable good practice around the use of new technology to good effect to inform the public (warning and informing) during emergencies.
- 3.5 Further to this HFRS are well represented on the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) (particularly concerning business continuity) and we have a fully qualified business continuity auditor/peer assessor within our Contingency Planning department. This provides us with a high degree of organisational resilience.

4 Recent BCM Activity

- 4.1 On 3rd May 2011 we conducted a full evacuation exercise of our Service Headquarters site and robustly tested each department's relocation and recovery plans simultaneously. As an integral part of this process the Service Management Team (SMT) relocated to the new Winchester Fire Station site and continued to lead the Service effectively. As a testament to the effectiveness of our planning arrangements HFRS relocated all departments and was up and running as normal within two hours. Other than the time spent in relocating our departments there was no disruption to the business and we continued to operate as normal.
- 4.2 A full debrief has subsequently been conducted and we have learned from the exercise, which was a success. The learning outcomes are being incorporated into our BCM plans to improve even further.

4.3 Our BCM arrangements have also recently been peer assessed as part of a South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) funded assessment of all fire and rescue service's in the region in terms of their BCM System.

4.4 The outcomes of the peer assessment, which took place on 17th & 18th May 2011 were very positive and reports that:

“HFRS has demonstrated very positive progress with the implementation of a Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) into its overall day to day business. HFRS has demonstrated that it has the capability to maintain its mission critical services and is acting on lessons learned to improve the resilience of its service. It is clear that business continuity is understood by senior managers and embedded within the service.

Overall HFRS has made very good progress in embedding BCM into mainstream business. HFRS has met the statutory requirements under the CCA and many of those in BS25999. There are good foundations upon which further enhancements to BCMS can be readily made.”

4.5 Naturally there were recommendations within the report and, as a learning organisation, we will respond accordingly and performance manage the outcomes via our Service Resilience Forum.

4.6 HFRS considers that we are well placed to deal with disruption to 'normal' business caused by mass staff absence or other significant events and that it can maintain core business and deliver on its' statutory duties adequately.

6 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

6.1 Contingency planning is a duty placed upon the authority by the 2008 National Framework Document.

7 Risk analysis

7.1 None identified

8 Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 None identified for this report. However, full Equality Impact Assessments are in place for business continuity arrangements.

8.2 The proposals in 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.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Subsequent consultation between senior management and the representative bodies has taken place following submission of the survey. The representative bodies were satisfied with the approach taken by the service and the responses made.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 HFRS are well positioned to deal with any periods of disruption to normal business but we will regularly review our position, processes and procedures so as to ensure adequate horizon scanning, pre-planning and preparedness to optimise performance during difficult times.
- 10.2 HFRS will continue to foster positive working relationships with representative bodies to mitigate the potential of mass staff absence.

11 Background papers

- 11.1 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:

Business Continuity Management – The Fire and Rescue Service – Local Government Report, September 2010, Audit Commission
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/fire/rescue/firebcm/Pages/default.aspx>

SEFIP Peer Review Report

HFRS Peer
review.pdf

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