

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Finance and General Purposes Committee

Item 5

23 October 2012

Provision of Marine Fire Fighting

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory responsibility under the Fire Services Act 2004 to be able to respond offshore within what is defined as the county boundary. For the past five years this has been supported by the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG), of which HFRS was a member.
- 1.2 Following the cessation of funding for MIRG by the Department of Transport, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency withdrew the nationally declared resource on 31 March 2012. Whilst no longer declared as a national resource, the HFRS MIRG team is still maintained to deploy to a maritime incident in support of the Solent and Southampton Marine Emergency Plan (SOLFIRE).
- 1.3 The withdrawal of MIRG funding has acted as a catalyst for the Service to review the number and location of designated coastal stations, the skills and knowledge of operational staff in respect of a marine incident and the geographical area to which HFRS would respond within the SOLFIRE Plan.
- 1.4 This report highlights the need to expand the total number of designated coastal stations, formalise marine fire fighting training provision and maintain an offshore fire fighting team.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the requirement to adapt our previous maritime response with the cessation of the national marine response arrangements.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory responsibility under the Fire Services Act 2004 to be able to respond offshore within what is defined as the county boundary, which includes vessels within Southampton Water, Portsmouth Harbour and some of the Solent area. The Service also supports the multi-agency SOLFIRE Plan which is used to coordinate any marine emergency or non-routine incident occurring within the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth, the Port of Southampton Provision and the wider Solent Coastguard co-ordination area. HFRS has an integral role within this Plan, with primary areas of responsibility being to save lives, rescue trapped people and fight fires.

- 3.2 HFRS has always maintained an offshore response capacity and capability, and for the last six years this has been as part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency hosted Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG).
- 3.3 The MIRG was established in 2007 following a review by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Department for Transport (DfT) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA). This review, the "Sea of Change Project", supported the need for a Maritime Incident Response Group which was supported by 15 fire and rescue services around the U.K. including HFRS.
- 3.4 Following the Government comprehensive spending review in October 2010, the MCA reviewed the provision of MIRG and in September 2011 the Shipping Minister announced that the DfT would cease funding support for MIRG. On 31 March 2012 the MCA withdrew this nationally declared resource and, as a result, the UK fire and rescue services (including HFRS) withdrew from being able to offer a nationally declared resource to assist with fire fighting, industrial accidents or chemical incidents at sea.

4 Current Maritime Provision

- 4.1 A recent review of the training requirements for attending a maritime incident highlighted that the majority of HFRS operational personnel require merely an awareness of ship fires and their associated hazards, whilst wholetime coastal fire station personnel should have an opportunity to attend practical training with no individual requirement to participate.
- 4.2 Currently the stations providing coastal support consist of eight wholetime fire stations (Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Cosham, Southsea, St. Mary's, Redbridge and Hightown), which allow a maximum of twelve wholetime fire fighting appliances to be available from these stations.
- 4.3 HFRS continues to provide (as an interim measure) a fire fighting at sea response, utilising the existing team of MIRG volunteers.

5 Proposed maritime provision

- 5.1 To meet the statutory responsibility to respond offshore within the county boundary, support the SOLFIRE Plan and enhance the level of training currently offered to personnel, the following measures are proposed:
1. Increase the number of designated coastal stations and personnel;
 2. Introduce four levels of skills and knowledge for marine incidents; and
 3. Introduce a 'fire fighting at sea' boundary within the SOLFIRE Plan.
- 5.2 Number of designated coastal stations and personnel

The following arrangements are proposed:

- Commencing April 2013 the number of personnel trained to Coastal Station (Level 2) standard be increased to include all retained personnel serving on the existing eight coastal stations.
- Commencing April 2013 a further five fire stations be designated as Coastal

Stations (Eastleigh, Totton, Hythe, Hardley and Portchester).

- By April 2016 the number of personnel trained to Level 2 be increased from 383 to 544.

Skills and knowledge:

5.3 To supplement the loss of MIRG for HFRS offshore fire fighting and ensure that the level of training is commensurate for the requirement to undertake marine fire fighting when a vessel is alongside, it is proposed that four levels of training are introduced:

- Level 1 – Awareness only
All response personnel, supported with a revised suite of lecture packs (to include ships construction, hazards and risks, fire fighting, HFRS Service Order and Policy).
- Level 2 – Nominated Coastal Station personnel
As per Level 1 plus practical ship fire fighting.
- Level 3 – Offshore fire fighting team
As per Level 2 plus sea survival, helicopter transfer and specialist theoretical training.
- Level 4 – Officers
As per Level 3 with enhanced training for commanding marine incidents.

Offshore fire fighting

5.4 Previous MIRG arrangements facilitated the use of HFRS MIRG personnel to respond by air and ship to vessels on fire within the SOLFIRE command areas which included waters south of the Isle of Wight.

5.5 To maintain a Level 3 offshore fire fighting team it is proposed that the model previously used within HFRS to support MIRG be amended to support the SOLFIRE Plan with an airborne and ship-borne response.

5.6 It is proposed that the offshore fire fighting team will be reduced from forty two to thirty six members. An evaluation team of two officers would be deployed to allow for an assessment of an incident in its early stages or where conditions do not require the full deployment of the team. A full team would be deployed to a confirmed fire.

5.7 It is proposed that the area within the Solent currently identified within the SOLFIRE Plan be amended to identify the boundary supported by HFRS when undertaking offshore fire fighting activity. This boundary would include SOLFIRE West, SOLFIRE East and a portion of SOLFIRE South (see Appendix B).

6 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

6.1 The provision of maintaining an offshore fire fighting capability ensures that HFRS has the ability to respond to emergencies at sea, particularly within the Solent, whilst also supporting the assurance that suitable preparations addressing risk management and operational tactics are undertaken prior to any vessel docking

alongside.

7 Risk analysis

- 7.1 As one of the busiest shipping lanes in the country, the Solent includes two of the UK's largest ports, Portsmouth and Southampton. With around 150,000 ship movements annually, vessels using the Solent range from the largest cruise ships in the world, bulk oil and gas tankers and warships to local ferries and small craft.
- 7.2 The risks associated with cessation of MIRG will be added to the HFRS Strategic Risk Register. This will include the risks of incidents outside the newly defined boundary. A response outside the boundary cannot be guaranteed and would need to be on the basis of an agreement in advance to full recovery of costs.

8 Resource implications

8.1 Human resources

Thirty six volunteers will be recruited from the previous HFRS MIRG team to provide the Level 3 and Level 4 offshore fire fighting team.

The number of personnel trained to Level 2 will be increased from 383 to 544. This will involved an appropriate training programme.

8.2 Physical resources

The existing equipment supplied by Maritime and Coastguard Agency for the HFRS MIRG team will be used.

8.3 Financial implications

The offshore fire fighting team will cost approximately £63,700 per annum as detailed within Appendix A. This will be met from existing budgets

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Fire Brigades Union.

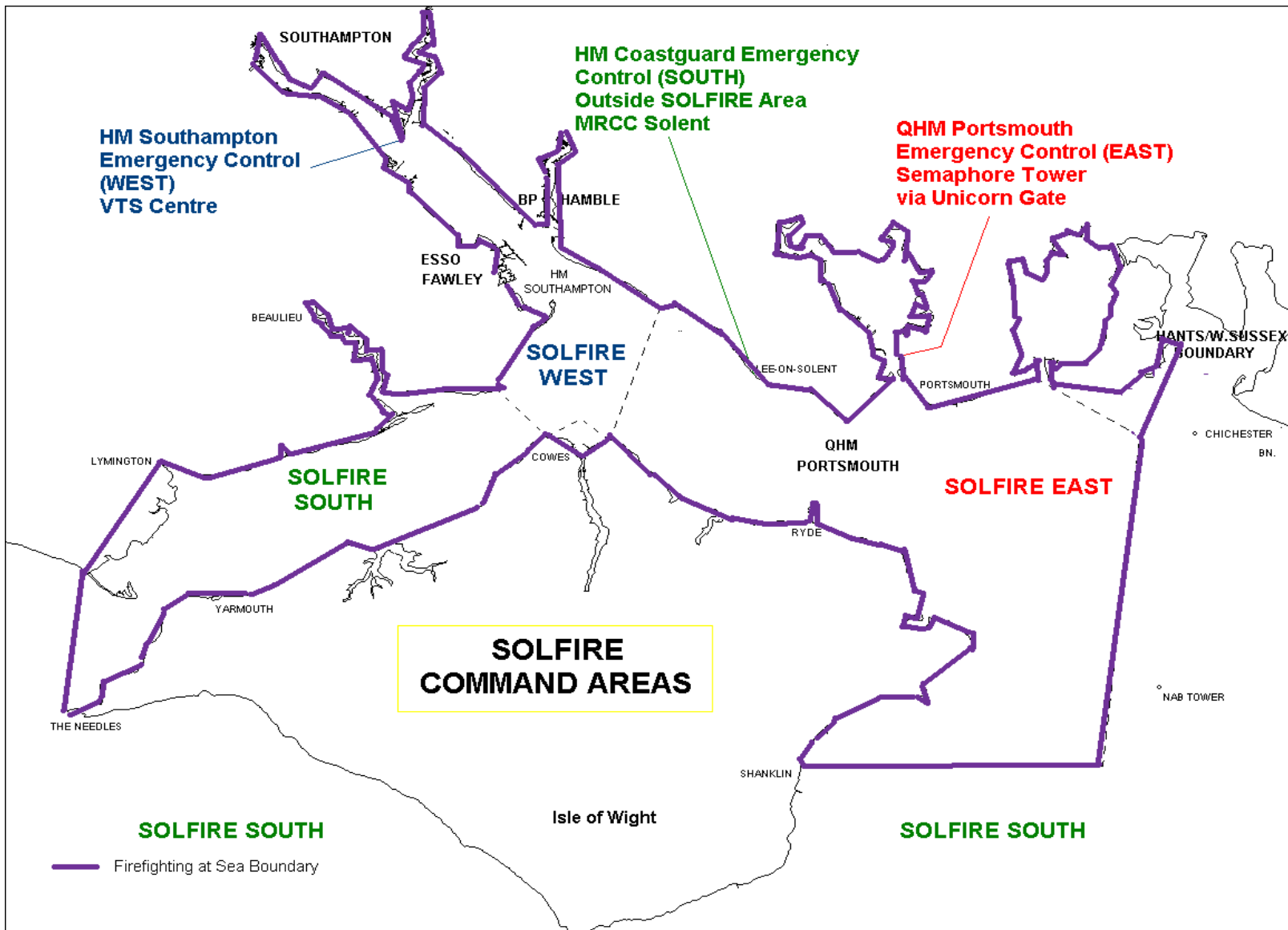
10 People Impact Assessment

- 10.1 No adverse effects have been identified from the recommendation in this report.
- 10.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation.

Appendix A

Costs associated for the offshore fire fighting team

Annual costs	£
<u>Internal training costs</u>	21,000
<u>External training costs</u>	
Sea Survival Refresher	12,500
Marine Fire Fighting Management	8,000
Helicopter refresher (1 day) - Salary	2,200
Helicopter hours / use	5,000
<u>Projected equipment costs</u>	
Maintenance / repair	5,000
Replacement	10,000
Total	£63,700



Proposed "Fire fighting at Sea" boundary