

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

19 September 2012

Item:

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has recently published the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012. This represents the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (FRA) and proposals for fire and rescue services (FRS) for the coming years.
- 1.2 The Framework sets out a number of high level requirements that local authorities must undertake in order to satisfy the Government's priorities on resilience and accountability. The Framework translates several key pieces of legislation, including the Localism Act and Open Public Services agenda into a fire and rescue context.
- 1.3 Whilst previous National Framework documents have been created with a three year life span, the 2012 framework remains open ended.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority considers the contents of the 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and notes the development of the HFRS Strategic Assessment.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 This paper builds upon the previous Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority report presented on 9 February 2012 titled 'Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Consultation.'
- 3.2 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare a National Framework for fire and rescue authorities, and it is the purpose of the Fire and Rescue National Framework to set out the Government's priorities and objectives as a series of high level expectations.
- 3.3 The previous National Framework was published in 2008 and contained as one of its main objectives the desire to balance the overall weight of expectation placed on the fire and rescue service in order to provide the capacity to deliver FireControl (the introduction of regional control centres). The three key priorities of the Framework were to:

- Deliver an enhanced resilience capability;
- For fire and rescue authorities to take ownership and successfully implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy; and
- That in a tighter fiscal climate, fire and rescue authorities were to meet public expectations of a modern, efficient, and effective public service.

4 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

4.1 The 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England identifies the following three priorities for fire and rescue authorities:

- Identify and assess the full range of fire and rescue related risk their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;
- Work in partnership with their communities and wider range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service; and
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

4.2 Unlike the 2008 Framework which had a publication date of 2008-11, the 2012 framework has no end date. It moves away from being prescriptive in design to an increase in localism and accountability, with a change of focus from the need for organisational change and issues of equality and diversity (which are now deemed to be covered in existing legislation) to directing fire and rescue authorities to:

- Be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions, and to provide the opportunity for communities to help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement;
- Have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard communities expect for an important public safety service; and
- Provide assurance to their communities and to Government on financial, governance and operational matters and on national resilience capability.

4.3 Chapter 1 – Safer Communities

4.3.1 This chapter deals with the production of the integrated risk management plan (IRMP) and the identification of risk.

4.3.2 The new framework widens the responsibility of the IRMP by requiring fire and rescue authorities to identify and assess all fire and rescue related risks that not only affect their community (as previously) but also those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature.

4.3.3 The framework notes that the IRMP must have regard not only to the Community Risk Register produced by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) but also to the National Risk Register, the National Risk Assessment and the National Resilience Planning assumptions.

4.3.4 Whilst the work of prevention and protection activity in reducing incidents of fire and associated deaths and injuries is recognised within the Framework, there is a recognition that fire and rescue authorities are ideally placed to undertake a wider

contribution in support of a safer society.

4.3.5 In support of this the IRMP must:

- demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities through authorities working either individually or collectively in a cost effective way
- set out its management strategy and risk based enforcement programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

4.3.6 Focusing upon response, the framework directs fire and rescue authorities to enter into reinforcement schemes with other FRA's so far as practicable, identify areas where collaboration could improve service delivery and have in place business continuity arrangements in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

4.3.7 The need for intraoperability is highlighted within the framework with fire authorities directed to collaborate with other FRA's, emergency services and Local Resilience Forums.

4.3.8 A sub heading within this section details the requirements for 'collective engagement'. This places an emphasis on the need for authorities to engage with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board (the Board) regarding capability and national resilience. The Board will determine whether any gaps identified will need to be met and if they do how this will be accomplished.

4.4 **Chapter 2 – Accountable to communities**

4.4.1 The second chapter outlines the theme of accountability and scrutiny, with emphasis on fire and rescue authorities being accountable to their communities for their actions and decision making surrounding the development of their IRMP.

4.4.2 The key measures set out within the framework ensure that the IRMP provides an effective vehicle for community engagement and involvement in decision-making, particularly through enhanced consultation, translating a number of themes included in the Localism Act into a fire and rescue context.

4.4.3 This chapter informs the fire and rescue authority that their IRMP must;

- be easily accessible and publicly available;
- reflect consultation at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies, and partners;
- cover at least a three year time span; and
- reflect up to date risk analysis and the evaluation of service delivery outcomes.

4.4.4 To secure accountability the Framework expects the Fire and Rescue Authority to:

- hold its Chief Officer to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service; and:
- have arrangements in place to ensure that their arrangements are open to scrutiny.

4.4.5 This chapter also sets out requirements around the provision of open and

transparent data to the public and partners. The requirements involve meeting current standards on data transparency, publishing pay policy statements, providing links to comparable data, acting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and publishing peer reviews, self assessments and other key documents.

4.5 Chapter 3 – Assurance

- 4.5.1 The third chapter on assurance sets out the requirement for local fire and rescue services to publish an annual statement of assurance that covers financial, governance and operational matters and demonstrates how they have delivered against the expectations set out in their IRMP.
- 4.5.2 It is noted within the framework that the Government will be providing ‘light touch guidance’ on the nature of the assurance statements.
- 4.5.3 This assurance statement will build on the HFRA’s Annual Governance Statement that is currently produced, with an increased emphasis on operational matters.
- 4.5.4 In addition to the local assurance statements, fire and rescue authorities must work collectively, including the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board, to provide governmental assurance that risks are assessed, plans are in place, and capability gaps have been identified relating to national resilience.

4.6 Chapter 4 – Context, timescale, scope

- 4.6.1 There are a number of expectations articulated within this section which are already prescribed in statute. This is particularly the case in relation to the Fire and Rescue Services Act and the role of the Local Resilience Forum under the Civil Contingencies Act.
- 4.6.2 It is clear that Government expects fire and rescue authorities, and their political and professional leadership, to have proactive processes in place that will support and lead improvement. Whilst the framework identifies that the Local Government Association (LGA) will work collaboratively to identify at an early stage where serious performance issues are developing, the Government, as a last resort, would use intervention powers in accordance with the intervention protocol as set out in section 23 of the FRS Act 2004.
- 4.6.3 In relation to timescales and scope, the national framework has an open ended duration and covers Fire and Rescue Service’s in England only.

5 HFRS alignment with the 2012 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

- 5.1 We are working to align our arrangements with the new National Framework. Many of the described requirements are already in place. A summary of the amended arrangements is described below:
- 5.2 The National Framework makes it clear that it is for fire and rescue authorities to identify all foreseeable risks in their areas and make provision to respond

appropriately. Accountable to their communities, they should work closely with local people to help develop the service through effective consultation, whilst taking into account national risks and identifying gaps in service.

- 5.3 The Service has assessed the foreseeable risks within its planning process for some time. Recently adaptations have been designed to ensure alignment with the expectations within the Framework Document. The newly developed Hampshire Fire and Rescue Strategic Assessment is a tool that analyses national risk profiles such as national threats, severe weather as well as the local perspective by undertaking geographic, demographic, and economic profiling, public health monitoring, and evaluating incident data.
- 5.4 Identifying strategic options, the Strategic Assessment will produce the issues for consultation with the local community, staff, and other identified partners. A draft of the Strategic Assessment was presented at the Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2012.
- 5.5 The resultant development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, and the processes used to inform its production will ensure that community needs and organisational gaps are identified and acted upon through prevention, protection, and response activity.
- 5.6 The Framework Document describes the requirement for an annual assurance statement. Amongst the elements that need to be contained within this statement is confirmation of our operational capability.
- 5.7 We will use our planned Operational Assessment and subsequent Peer Challenge to inform and evidence our assurance statement with regards to operational matters. This process will also offer opportunity for peers to identify any gaps in alignment with the Framework.
- 5.8 The National Framework also highlights the need to demonstrate accountability to the communities that HFRA serve.
- 5.9 Aspects of scrutiny, openness, and accountability will be the subject of a further report to the Standards and Governance Committee.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 Whilst none of the proposed changes to the National Framework represent a significant risk, the new requirements surrounding IRMP design, community engagement, transparency, assurance, and scrutiny will require careful consideration to ensure alignment.

7 People Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation.

8 Resource implications

8.1 There are no resource implications identified at this stage.

9 Consultation

9.1 Consultation was undertaken with the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority at the draft consultation stage of the national framework in February 2012.

10 Background papers

10.1 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:

10.2 2012. CLG. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/nationalframework>

10.3 HFRS National Framework consultation response

Appendix A – Copy of the letter from Chair of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority to DCLG dated 12 March 2012, headed ‘Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority’s response to the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England consultation – December 2011’.

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