

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item 7

16 April 2013

Operational Assessment of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to being the best fire and rescue service and part of that commitment involves seeking external scrutiny and assessment of our performance. The Local Government Association (LGA) administers the Operational Assessment and Peer Challenge process on behalf of fire and rescue services.
- 1.2 Our previous Operational Assessment was in 2009 and the completion of the resulting action and improvement plan was reported to this Committee in November 2010 and February 2012.
- 1.3 We have now informed the LGA that we are seeking a Peer Challenge, and dates have been arranged for a team to visit from 29 April to 2 May 2013.
- 1.4 In preparation we have completed a self-assessment process and developed five key areas that we would want the peer challenge team to consider.

2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Agree and endorse the service's self-assessment results.
- 2.2 Endorse the five priority areas for peer challenge.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The Service is committed to regular external scrutiny and assessment where it is considered that doing so will bring benefit and added value. Any external assessment should assist us with continuous improvement and our aim of being the best fire and rescue service.
- 3.2 The Operational Assessment process administered by the LGA is a well established scrutiny and challenge process which is improvement focussed. We were last assessed in 2009, and the resultant action plan has been completed. This was reported to this Committee in February 2012. Additionally, the toolkit and process have recently been refreshed and updated and so it is considered that this is a good time to go through the process again.

3.3 The first step in the process is a self-assessment and we have a small team of relevant personnel to gather evidence and make that self assessment.

For each of the Key Areas of Assessment we have evaluated ourselves as Developing, Established, or Advanced.

3.4 Our self assessment results are:

1. Community Risk Management – Advanced
2. Prevention – Established
3. Protection – Established
4. Response – Advanced
5. Health and Safety – Established
6. Training and Development – Established
7. Call Management and Incident Support – Established

3.5 This self-assessment rating has been considered and agreed by Heads of Service Team and Service Management Team. The next stage of the process is a Peer Challenge which will involve a visit from a team of specially trained peer assessors, who will give an opinion on our self-assessment as well as look into any specific areas we have identified.

3.6 From this self assessment and evidence gathering we have identified five priority areas which the Peer Challenge team will focus on during their visit.

These are:

Member governance

Scrutiny and Assurance. Looking to the future there is a clear recognition of the growing expectation on Fire Authority Members in terms of scrutiny and the need to be answerable to the wider community for decisions made in future Integrated Risk Management Plans etc. The Peer Challenge process provides an ideal opportunity to bring some external challenge to the existing arrangements and to consider if and where improvements can be achieved.

Community engagement

HFRS is developing and strengthening engagement outside of the organisation to assist in setting the direction of our organisation. The peer challenge can help us to get the most value from our engagement activity and ensure that we can see a 'golden thread' that staff and community engagement is helping to influence and shape our priorities and objectives.

Technology, innovation and service effectiveness

Technology and the use of information are increasingly important for almost every aspect of the service. Given the constant advances in communications, technology, and information services, there is considerable scope to improve services through investment and innovation. Is the service positioned to embrace this change and successfully secure the benefits?

Training and development

How do we ensure that the training delivery model remains fit for purpose and is flexible and adaptable enough to meet the needs of a rapidly changing environment and service delivery model? The Peer Challenge will help us to answer this question.

Community Safety – prevention

In recent years the service has made effective progress in its community safety activity giving an emphasis on delivery at a local level. We know that some aspects of our community safety activity are more effective than others and that this is also true of our partnerships. What can we do to ensure a coherent understanding about the role and purpose of the service and how can we support the wider community safety agenda?

- 3.7 We see elected Member involvement as important to the Peer Challenge process to enable us to achieve the best value from the process. We would therefore invite members of this Committee and other Fire Authority members to be involved.
- 3.8 Once the Peer Challenge team has visited and given us their final report we will develop the relevant actions required to improve our performance and will report on the action plan and progress against it to this Committee.

4 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 4.1 The proposals within this report support our aim of being the best fire and rescue service.

5 Risk analysis

- 5.1 Without external scrutiny and assessment we may miss opportunities for improvement.

6 People Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There is no people impact from the assessment and any actions arising afterwards will be subject to individual consideration.
- 6.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation.

7 Environmental and Sustainability impact assessment

- 7.1 There are no impacts from the assessment process and any actions arising will be separately assessed.

8 Resource implications

- 8.1 Human Resources:
There will be no human resource impacts of the process.
- 8.2 Physical Resources:
Self assessment and support to the Peer Challenge team will be accommodated within existing resources.

8.3 Information and communications technology resources

No implications.

8.4 **Financial Implications**

The LGA do not charge a fee for the Peer Challenge itself, although there will be a charge for the member of the team from the private sector.

9 Consultation

9.1 Consultation over the process has taken place with the Local Government Association.