

Operational Performance Assessment

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report presents a summary overview of the operational performance assessment process and the Government's requirement to provide assurance in respect of operational matters.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report's contents.

3 Background

Given the public safety functions provided by the nation's fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) and the nature of the risks, the Government has stated within the current Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 (DRAFT)¹ that robust mechanisms should be in place to provide independent assurance to communities and to the Government. The Framework details important measures that will ensure that FRAs provide local scrutiny arrangements and in particular states:

FRAs must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework. To provide assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance.

(Paragraph 3.2)

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/2039159.pdf>

The exact details regarding the expected nature, style and content of the annual statement of assurance are still awaited. The advocated approach to the assurance of operational matters is, however, set out in the recently published Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit (OpA).² It must be stressed that the OpA approach is advocated, not mandatory.

4 Overview of the OpA Process

The OpA process is designed to form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement within the nation's Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), and provide FRAs and Chief Fire Officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure it is efficient, effective and robust.

Self assessment against the OpA Toolkit is recommended at least every three years.

Prevention, protection and response are core statutory responsibilities of FRAs, underpinned by effective risk management. Health and safety, training and development and audit and review are by necessity interdependent.

The key assessment areas within the OpA Toolkit are:

1. **Community Risk Management**
How well is the FRA identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?
2. **Prevention**
How well is the FRA delivering its community safety strategy?
3. **Protection**
How well is the FRA delivering its regulatory fire safety strategy?
4. **Response**
How well is the FRA delivering its response activities?
5. **Health and Safety**
How well is the FRA ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?
6. **Training and Development**
How well is the FRA ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?
7. **Call Management and Incident Support**
How well is the FRA delivering its call management and incident support activities?

² http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=8ef22584-8a86-47c2-b67d-4bd999ae4801&groupId=10171

The Chief Fire Officers Association developed the concept of OpA in 2009, in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.

5 Approach to OpA

In partnership with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS), both Shropshire FRS and HWFRS have commenced preparations for a formal OpA peer review later this year, with the summary findings and subsequent action plan(s) to be reported to respective FRAs in December 2012.

Underpinning the approach is the independent assurance to local communities and to the Government, with service improvements secured through a shared SFRS / HWFRS action plan(s), where appropriate.

The LGA led OpA peer review team will visit SFRS for four days in late October. The team will include senior officers from other FRSS, together with an elected Member, West Mercia Police officer and a professional from the private sector. The team will review HWFRS in November.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory authority for the Fire Service National Framework and requires FRAs to have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

Members should have due regard to the new Framework and in particular paragraph 3.2 as discussed in section 3 above.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Human resources 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.