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Operational Assessment Peer Review

**Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue
Service
November 2010**

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Executive summary and key recommendations

Summary

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) produced a self assessment and invited a team of peers to undertake a peer review. This report details the findings of the peer team.

CFRS has made considerable strides in the last three years and this has been achieved by strong and clear leadership.

There is good engagement from Members and a simple, clear committee structure is in place. Members and officers at the CFRS treat each other with respect and professional consideration.

CFRS are seen as a key partner in both Peterborough and the wider Cambridgeshire area. They are well respected at both a corporate and a personal level.

There is an open and collaborative culture and the service has carefully aligned this with a desire to install more business and performance management systems.

This open and collaborative culture has been supported and developed by numerous positive examples of communications such as the staff magazine, Sharp End, and the Senior Management Team (SMT) visits.

CFRS have acted proactively in delivering savings and efficiencies over the last three years. With the impending savings required from the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) greater again, CFRS will need to be prepared to continue with their new phase of communications and engagement if they are to continue to bring staff with them. Increasing the timing and pace of their savings programme will also be key in relation to partnership working.

SMT visits form an important part of the communications strategy by providing staff with direct access to senior managers. The value of these visits and the information gleaned could be enhanced by providing more structure to the messages being delivered and feedback flowing back from these sessions.

The contribution and talents of Members could also be better utilised particularly in Scrutiny and Performance and a more structured approach to Member development would be valuable.

There are a number of points across the organisation where the discretion of local managers is constrained by the direction imposed by central support functions.

CFRS should continue to build on their positive approach to equality and diversity. Providing practical examples to both operational and support staff of how identifying and responding to diverse needs can drive quality of service and reduce risk would be helpful.

Key recommendations

The recommendations of the peer-review team are set out under the main themes of the operational assessment KLOEs and the cross cutting themes, as follows:

Cross cutting themes

- Consider the pace and timing of your savings programme and your strategy, communications and engagement
- Reintroduce the communications infrastructure to ensure consistent messages are delivered by SMT and feedback is understood and acted upon – Make it visible
- Better utilise the contribution and talents of Members particularly in Scrutiny and Performance and consider introducing a more structured approach to Member development
- Identify those points in the organisation where line managers are overly directed by support functions and empower them with discretion that aligns with your aspirations
- Continue to build on CFRS positive approach to equality and diversity

Community risk management

- Review the effectiveness, after an appropriate period of time, of CFRS's approach to risk analysis and community safety
- Introduce a policy or framework to show the wide range of risk intelligence and data sources available, to ensure all aspects of risk information are accessible to support planning and delivery at both local and strategic levels
- Further extend CFRS risk management capability through the provision of risk specific training to its community risk managers

Prevention

- Work to fully embed the approach to achieve 'central focus and local delivery' to ensure both parts of the service have confidence that the targets set are underpinned by a consistent interpretation of data
- When agreeing actions with partners, ensure that these are communicated in a timely fashion to those who are required to deliver
- Improve the understanding of CFRS' organisational structure to partners, especially in relation to where decision making responsibility lies between central teams and district staff
- Improve the effectiveness of the partnership evaluation toolkit by considering the work undertaken by other FRS's

Protection

- Improve the deficit in protection knowledge and experience, particularly amongst Retained Duty System (RDS), to help ensure they have the ability to be able to identify issues that should be referred for specialist examination
- Address the technical difficulties migrating data into the CFRMIS database

Response

- Clearly state planning assumptions for officer cover and link them to risk, local and regional where necessary, and appropriately resource them
- Consider an alternative approach to Incident Command resilience, beyond recall to duty
- Consider the opportunity to enter into discussions with neighbouring FRS regarding the sharing of Gold level incident commanders
- With the introduction of the Combined Aerial Rescue Appliances (CARA) the service should ensure that future resources continue to be matched to risk. For example, the future need of the Turntable Ladder (TL) appliances.
- Empower middle managers responsible for fire stations to manage their resources according to local risk

Health and safety

- Continue to manage the risk of overlap or duplication between Health and Safety Team and Operational Support Group (OSG) with an ongoing positive approach to openness and good communication
- Develop more proactive Health and Safety indicators to assist in improving risk management in the organisation

Training and development

- Make the Integrated Personal Development System2 (IPDS2) more effective and use it to record more operational activity
- Train operational staff in technical fire safety training to support the effectiveness of After Incident Response (AIR)
- Reduce the amount of time RDS managers spend on management activities on drill nights rather than training
- Consider making appraisals less complex and more relevant for firefighters

Call management and incident support

- Ensure adequate resources are in place to support data cleansing and transfer work for the Regional Control Centre (RCC) Project
- Improve the effectiveness of the Gartan Personnel Availability System through further integration with the current mobilising system
- Progress ideas for a 'Plan B' for call handling arrangements with regards to the current climate of uncertainty over the RCC project, and the ongoing risk that it may not deliver its full ambition or functionality

1. Background

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service requested an Operational Assessment Peer Review. This review is part of the developing sector led performance framework for FRS's. These arrangements have a strong focus on peer review and self assessment.

It was recommended by the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) and approved by Fire Services Management Committee of the Local Government Association that CFOA and Local Government Improvement and Development operate a partnership approach that included developing the already established local government peer review process to fully meet the fire and rescue sector requirements. The peer review process is designed to help a FRS assess its current achievements and its capacity to change. The peer review is not an inspection. Instead it offers a supportive approach, undertaken by friends – albeit 'critical friends'. It aims to help an FRS identify its current strengths, as much as what it needs to improve. The basis for this review is the toolkit for operational assessment developed by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA) and CFOA. The key lines of enquiry (KLOE) are:

- Community risk management
- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Health and safety
- Training and development
- Call management and incident support

The members of the peer review team were:

- John Bonney, Chief Officer Hampshire FRS, Lead Peer
- Lucy Phillips, DCFO Hereford and Worcester FRS
- James Mahoney, Head of Learning and Development, Wiltshire FRS
- Mike Howes, Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships London Borough of Harrow
- Councillor Marco Longhi, Walsall MBC
- Gary Hughes, Review Manager, Local Government Improvement and Development

The team was onsite from 08 November 2010. The programme for the onsite phase included activities designed to enable members of the team to meet and talk to a range of internal and external stakeholders. These activities included:

- Interviews and discussions with councillors, officers and partners
- Focus groups with partners, middle managers and frontline staff
- Visits to fire stations and Control
- Reading documents provided by the FRS, including a self-assessment of progress against the operational assessment KLOEs

Local Government Improvement and Development would like to extend its thanks to CFRS for making the peer review team so welcome and ensuring that the review ran smoothly. The team would like to thank Rick Hylton and Sandra Knight in particular for their assistance in organising the review.

Our feedback to CFRS on the last day of the review gave an overview of the key messages. This report builds on the initial findings and gives a detailed account of the review. The report is structured around the seven areas of the KLOEs listed above and the cross cutting themes identified.

2. Context

The population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is approximately 750,000 with Cambridgeshire being classed as a rural area. Several areas across Cambridgeshire are experiencing significant growth and increases in home building.

The demography of Cambridgeshire varies considerably with the cities of Cambridge and Peterborough having 10 per cent of the population from non white ethnic groups (census 2001). The diversity of the area would have increased considerably with the migration of citizens from the new EU countries into the county.

Across the county an average of 64 per cent are in employment, higher than the national average, and 68 per cent are home owners, consistent with the national average.

Fire appliance provision for CFRS has remained static since 1977 with the addition of specialist support vehicles.

CFRS have 28 fire stations - 4 wholtime stations, crewed 24/7, 1 day crewed station for 7 days per week, 2 day crewed stations for 5 days per week and 21 Retained stations. These are managed locally within the six districts. CFRS has 38 fire appliances and 10 specialist support vehicles.

CFRS has a clear vision for safe communities where there are no preventable deaths or injuries from fire or other emergencies and to achieve this has underpinning aims and objectives of achieving operational and community safety excellence in the most cost effective way.

3. Cross cutting themes

Strengths

- CFRS has improved significantly over the last three years, is performing well and is operationally effective
- Strong strategic leadership that is well regarded by staff and by Members
- There is a clear and simple committee structure with Members who are committed to the work of the service
- CFRS is recognised as a good partner
- A positive culture of openness and involvement throughout the service with staff bought into the service's new approach
- The introduction of a joined up, systematic and consistent business like approach is evident across the service and is delivering improvements
- Continues to build upon the positive examples of effective communication channels that are supporting change

The service has made considerable strides in the last 3 years through strong and clear leadership that has a genuine commitment to changing the culture of the organisation. Staff have responded positively to both the aspirations for change and the drive to install more business like processes. Members also demonstrate an enthusiasm and commitment to this organisational change within the service.

There is good engagement from Members and a simple, clear committee structure. CFRS have ensured Members contribute to the development of the service by involving them in working groups and projects. Whilst the structure is clear, the Scrutiny and Performance committee is yet to operate to its full potential. The committee's agenda is mainly confined to financial reporting and statutory audits. The opportunity for Members to provide a more active role in reviewing and evaluating the various projects and initiatives of the service would ensure more rigorous challenge and equip Members better for the difficult decisions they face in the future.

Members and officers at CFRS treat each other with respect and professional consideration. The review team did not find any evidence of political agendas interfering with strategic direction or service delivery. This professional approach is helping ensure good governance and effective service delivery.

Political and executive leadership is robust and there is strong mutual respect between the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer (CFO). The Fire Authority is seen by stakeholders as having changed significantly for the better in recent years and this is broadly acknowledged as resulting from a renewed leadership approach. Strong and effective leadership will support delivery, partnership working and deliver meaningful change.

CFRS are seen as a key partner in both Peterborough and the wider Cambridgeshire area. They are well respected at both a corporate and a personal level and it is clear that the focus on performance management and strategic clarity provided by service representatives is both welcome and necessary in a number of key partnerships.

To date the primary consideration of these partnerships has been about delivering more effective and integrated services. However in the future there will be a need to focus on the honing and targeting of these services as well as reducing overhead costs. CFRS is well placed to be an equal partner in those local discussions because of the respect it has earned and previous track record of involvement.

From a regional perspective CFRS is regarded as a willing and open partner in a region recognised as, at times, struggling with its collaborative work. CFRS, however, has a number of sound joint initiatives including an extensive software interface project - middleware. There are more opportunities here which are beginning to be explored and CFRS needs to capitalise on the perception of its neighbours that it is a partner of choice.

As referred to above, there is strong leadership of the service which has won the respect of Members, partners and most staff. Driven by a commitment to have a more open and collaborative culture, the service has carefully aligned this with a desire to install more business and performance management systems. Similarly the service has demanded of staff more managerial discipline to ensure that these systems work effectively. CFRS has made good strides with this and the move to a more mature, collaborative work environment. This extends well into the organisation although, inevitably, some teams are further advanced than others. There is no doubt that the leadership programme and the development of a leadership charter has played a major role in promoting and embedding this new approach.

The decision to continue this leadership programme is to be commended but the opportunity to procure this jointly with local partners should not be ignored.

There are many positive examples where this approach has led to improved productivity, reduced "silo working" and ensured better collaboration between functions. Given the size of the service this has prevented the need for more structural coordination mechanisms. However there is no doubt that the establishment of a programme/project capability has assisted in this progress.

The positive culture of openness and collaboration has been delivered through strong leadership and good communications. CFRS has numerous examples of effective communication channels and has developed positive working relationships with the local media, which has resulted in a positive external brand. Staff welcome the opportunity to contribute to 'bottom up' consultations and often cited the ability to challenge senior managers as the main driver to change. Overall CFRS should continue build on the communications in place to drive further change through the organisation.

Key Areas for Consideration

- Consider the pace and timing of the savings programme and the communications and engagement strategy
- Reintroduce the communications infrastructure to ensure consistent messages are delivered by SMT and feedback is understood and acted upon – Make it visible
- The contribution and talents of Members could be better utilised particularly in Scrutiny and Performance and a more structured approach to Member development would be valuable
- Identify those points in the organisation where line managers are overly directed by support functions and give them the discretion that aligns with your aspirations
- Continue to build on CFRS positive approach to equality and diversity

In terms of preparation for a much more difficult financial future, CFRS has invested heavily in ensuring staff are aware of the scale of the challenge. Moreover staff have a good understanding of the approach to spending cuts, which avoids holding off on decisions until the details of the grant settlement are known. There is also an appreciation of the rationale for halting the Improving Service Delivery (ISD) project in order to commence a specific piece of work around spending cuts. Staff are mindful of the need for saving but the magnitude or personal impact is much less well understood.

Additionally there is a widespread perception that for financial years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 sufficient savings have been identified to cover anticipated shortfalls. . The service will need to ensure that the inevitable acceleration in pursuing savings post December does not catch the organisation by surprise and cause the good communications undertaken so far to be undermined. The service has the opportunity if it acts quickly with their new phase of communications and engagement to ensure that staff feels engaged and informed about the process of change.

Timing and pace of their savings programme will also be key in relation to partnership working. A number of key partners, notably Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, are well advanced in terms of their financial planning and strategic intentions. CFRS have been presented with an opportunity because of the current imperative on these bodies to re-engineer their services. These are willing and trusted partners and the potential for sharing services and overhead costs should be explored sooner rather than later.

SMT visits form an important part of the communications strategy by providing staff with direct access to senior managers. The value of these visits and the information gleaned could be enhanced by providing more structure to the messages being delivered and feedback flowing back from these sessions. This would create not only an audit trail of the engagement but also an important and dynamic catalogue of issues and concerns emerging from staff groups.

The Fire Authority has a less structured approach to Member development and it is unclear if all Members have their training and development requirements understood and met. CFRS has an induction scheme for new Members but generally Members receive ad-hoc development/training from occasional seminars post FRA meetings; Members also receive support/training if specifically requested. A more

comprehensive and structured approach to training for Members may lead to more engaged members making more meaningful contributions.

The Authority has a Scrutiny and Performance sub-committee which meets quarterly. The peer review team has established that the committee could improve its effectiveness by:

- Broadening its remit beyond mostly financial and auditing matters
- Having a dedicated scrutiny support officer with appropriate delegations
- Undertaking project/overview work that can help inform policy decisions
- Meeting more frequently
- Assessing its own effectiveness at the end of each year

Whilst the drive for empowerment of staff has been extensive there is still more to do in this area. Indeed there are a number of points across the organisation where the discretion of local managers is constrained by the direction imposed by central support functions. Clearly this runs counter to the culture and creates frustration for managers and confusion for partners. Examples include local managers' authority over staffing levels at retained stations and the target setting for prevention activities at stations. In a similar vein, whilst the appraisal scheme is well received and comprehensively adopted, it could be simplified and redesigned to promote a richer dialogue between manager and staff member. We understand that work around this is soon to commence.

There is a good understanding in most areas of the service of the role that equality and diversity plays in improving service delivery. Although there is more work to do here and providing practical examples to both operational and support staff of how identifying and responding to diverse needs can drive quality of service and reduce risk would be helpful. A number of services have adopted the concept of "Operational Diversity" and their experience maybe beneficial for CFRS.

4. Community risk management

Strengths

- A clear commitment to understanding and reducing the risks faced by the diverse communities CFRS serves
- CFRS collects risk information from a wide range of sources including performance data, Mosaic, partner information and local intelligence
- Strengthened ownership of risk analysis and risk reduction at district and local levels
- Performance information is being used to identify areas of risk and effective action is being undertaken to address these
- Good evidence of risk information from Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) software being used to support the prioritising of Protection activities, and information from Mosaic being used to help target risks within the student population
- Accurate information and a quality assurance structure is now in place to ensure the highest standards of data quality are maintained with regards to the Incident Recording System
- CFRS extends its risk analysis capacity and capability through the use of an external company to good effect

CFRS demonstrates a clear commitment to understanding and reducing the risks faced by its diverse communities at all levels across the organisation. It has strengthened its ownership of risk analysis and risk reduction at district and local levels, through the introduction of district and station profiles, and closer involvement of stations in the understanding and targeting their local risks. The service's risk reduction team at corporate and district levels actively supports this commitment and work.

The FRS recognises the importance of effective risk intelligence and analysis in the planning and delivery of its service. It has extended its capacity and capability in this area of activity through the use of a company called ORH to progress particular pieces of work as required. This has included the development of its latest Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and further operational risk analyses to support its Improving Service Delivery and Improving Retained Service Delivery Projects.

CFRS collects risk information from a wide range of sources including performance data, Mosaic, partner information and local intelligence. It analyses the risks to its communities and uses this in the planning and delivery of its services. Evidence of performance information being used to identify areas of risk and effective action being undertaken to address these is particularly strong e.g. the development of an Memorandum of Understanding with prison service in response to significant numbers of prison-based fires, the sharing of information with the police in Peterborough and Cambridge leading to effective local risk reduction activities.

There is good evidence available of risk information from FSEC being used to support the prioritising of Protection activities, and information from Mosaic being used to help target risks within the student population to good effect.

CFRS recognise the importance of working with accurate information to support their risks analysis process. They have engaged an Incident Reporting System (IRS) Manager and established a quality assurance system to ensure the highest standards of data quality are maintained with regards to IRS information.

Areas for consideration

- The approach to risk analysis and community safety has been fully implemented recently and it may benefit from reviewing its effectiveness after an appropriate period of time
- The introduction of a policy/framework to show the wide range of risk intelligence and data sources available could benefit CFRS to ensure all aspects of risk information are accessible to support planning and delivery at both local and strategic levels
- CFRS risk management capability could be further extended through the provision of risk specific training to its community risk managers

CFRS's approach to risk analysis and community safety has been fully implemented only relatively recently; but it is well understood and engaged in by staff both centrally and locally. The service will benefit from reviewing its effectiveness after an appropriate period of time to ensure its new systems are fully effective.

The service could benefit from the introduction of a policy or framework to show the wide range of risk intelligence and data sources available to it, how they are owned and managed, and to ensure all aspects of risk information are accessible to support planning and delivery at both local and strategic levels. This will ensure that all information held across the organisation, for example the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) level risk information is fully incorporated into its analysis and planning processes.

CFRS's community risk team comprise both uniformed and non-uniformed staff who may not all have specific expertise in risk-related activities. Their capability could be further enhanced through the provision of some risk specific training to its risk managers.

5. Prevention

Strengths

- CFRS has developed a good understanding of its community through the use of Mosaic, customer insight and a perception survey
- The service has adopted an innovative solution centre approach to tackling risks which are proving intractable to the tried and tested methods
- Partnership working has been identified as a key strength where CFRS enjoys a 'can do' reputation, is highly valued and provides drive and leadership
- Monthly performance management meetings provide early reality checks and exception reports ensure no end of year surprises

Combining knowledge of the community and risk information makes targeting community safety activity more effective. This has developed with the greater use of local data and knowledge from Districts now to provide bespoke activities for station crews to minimise risk. Risk profiles have been revisited in the light of additional data and targeting has been refined to achieve a good return on the investment of staff time.

This approach, particularly when supported by and involving partners, facilitates the development of practical and innovative proposals, which would be unlikely to be identified through more traditional problem solving means. Examples have included partnership projects such as addressing teenage pregnancy in Peterborough as well as addressing the Unwanted Fire Signals issue, fire safety at Westgate House (the Co-op) in Peterborough and establishing a Fire Death and Injury Forum.

Evidence from Peterborough in particular has supported the view that the service adds value to partnerships, brings skills and leadership where they may have been lacking and demonstrates the service's capacity to contribute significantly beyond the areas that might be traditionally thought to be FRS concerns.

The service is actively and enthusiastically involved in the Homeshield scheme which enables a visit to a vulnerable resident by one agency to trigger the involvement of other relevant agencies where necessary which is evidence of effective partnership working on the ground.

The service gives a high priority to reducing traffic accidents. The 'For my Girlfriend' campaign, targeting young male drivers, and a programme for young female drivers are felt to be particularly useful.

Performance management capacity and discipline is reported to have improved significantly in recent years providing the organisation with reassurance that priorities are being addressed and targets are being pursued. Effort has been directed towards data quality in recent months to ensure that the VIEWS system provides accurate information for Practitioner Groups, Steering Groups and, on an exception basis, for SMT.

Areas for consideration

- The approach to achieve 'central focus and local delivery' is not fully embedded therefore both parts of the service lack complete confidence that the targets set are underpinned by a consistent interpretation of data
- When agreeing actions with Partners ensure that these are communicated in a timely fashion to those are required to deliver
- CFRS' organisational structure is not easily understood by Partners, especially in relation to where decision making responsibility lies between central teams and district staff
- Improve the effectiveness of the partnership evaluation toolkit by considering the work undertaken by other FRS

There is some confusion, both within the service and amongst partners, about the responsibility for determining targets and the degree of flexibility that can be built into local targets to account for local knowledge and experience. There was some concern that targets were set with too little local input which reduced the ownership of targets locally.

Partners have expressed confusion about where responsibility lies. While this is not a significant operational issue, it highlights a communication issue.

Communications, both internally and externally, have improved significantly over the last year or so but messages are not always landed with crews as well as the service might like. There are also options for developing joint communications capacity with partners that the service might want to explore. Peterborough, for example, have just engaged a new Communications Director who has a remit to seek a joined up capacity with the Police, CFRS and others.

Partners have reported that, on occasion, there are delays in transmitting agreements reached in partnership settings to the operational staff who will implement that agreement. While the service is highly regarded by partners, incidences of this sort reduce the service's reputation as an effective and engaged partner.

The current Evaluation Tool Kit looks more at the success of actions rather than Partnerships and will not be able to advise CFRS on the value of and to be derived from membership of new or existing partnerships. There are good examples of partnership evaluation toolkits from other FRS' and CFRS should consider these. An increasing number of FRSs use the Performance Improvement Network protocol which has some credibility and provides a pragmatic approach.

6. Protection

Strengths

- Considerable improvement in Protection outcomes
- Effective Risk Based Audit Programme in place and effectively performance managed
- Reducing the number and impact of unwanted fire calls releasing crews to undertake other activities such as premises visits to populate and update risk profiles
- Enforcement targets exceeded demonstrating good targeting of audit work
- Positive approach to staff recruitment and retention into Fire Safety
- Developing capacity and expertise in stakeholder engagement and consultation

Risk profiling has identified the areas and types of premises that represent high risk. Enforcement action results from a high percentage of risk audits and post incident publicity to similar and neighbouring premises identifying actions to minimise risk helps to reduce further incidents.

The Performance Management routines applied to maintaining and updating the Risk Based Audit Programme are robust both through the regular review of the premises lists that are within the scope of the Programme and the review of progress made in undertaking and completing audit visits.

The number of unwanted fire signals has been reduced by more than 1,000 through targeting the premises with the highest incidence of false alarms and working with alarm contractors and premises managers to confirm the validity of signals generated. The capacity unlocked through this work can be used to increase the number of audits undertaken and/or to extend the targeted prevention programme.

A target of 60 per cent of audits resulting in enforcement action has been set to validate the allocation of the relevant risk rating to the visited premises. The target has been exceeded with a current figure of 72 per cent, demonstrating the robustness of the risk rating.

Operational staff have been offered 'tours of duty' in Fire Protection to add to their career development with the option of moving into other areas later to generate better understanding of the function and add to its attractiveness within the service. There is also a more established career path within Fire Protection for staff opting for this aspect of service.

The service has developed good working relationships with the other public bodies concerned with enforcement activity such as Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Building Control. In addition, the engagement of premises managers, especially at Cambridge University, has been particularly beneficial in managing down unnecessary demands on the service. The service has also taken on good practice pioneered elsewhere regarding a Memorandum of Understanding with the prison service locally to reduce the incidence of fires within the three prisons in the County.

Areas for consideration

- There has been progress in popularising protection work within the service, but there remains a deficit in protection knowledge and experience, particularly amongst RDS, limiting their ability to be able to identify issues that should be referred for specialist examination
- There are some technical difficulties migrating data into the CFRMIS database

Some RDS retained crews feel remote from decision-making and disempowered through a lack of knowledge to contribute effectively to the more specialised elements of protection audits and there is a need to address the deficit in protection knowledge amongst these RDS crews.

There are issues with the migration of data to the CFRMIS database and although it is recognised that the CFRMIS database is complex, these issues should be addressed.

7. Response

Strengths

- A strong team ethic and community focus at every level is clearly evident
- Equipment is considered to be of a high standard by operational staff
- Effective cross-border working
- The introduction of Audit of Incident Monitoring (AIM) is proving effective in supporting operational excellence
- AIM ensures a joined up approach between protection and response and is well evidenced

The strong team ethic is apparent not only within teams, but across departments and functions. There is evidence of effective communication e.g. protection feeding information about emerging risks such as timber framed building construction into the Operational Support Group (OSG) for wider sharing. This ensures an open and inclusive culture which facilitates the flow of information across departments.

Operational personnel are very happy with their standard of equipment; Road Traffic Collision (RTC) extrication equipment was particularly noted, leading to an enhanced operational capability supported by effective training.

Cross border working is effective and the services exercise programme includes multi-agency events at shared risk sites e.g. Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) sites. This is supported by effective debriefing which ensures learning is captured and operational performance enhanced through changes to Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) and training delivery.

AIM is supported by the Quality Assurance (QA) officer role is ensuring that learning and improvement follow. This was seen in terms of both individual and organisational development leading to improvements in competence on the one hand and adjustments to policy and procedure on the other, ensuring a greater understanding of corporate and community risk.

The After Incident Response (AIR) links to Fire Protection and is embedding as an approach to risk management in non-domestic premises. This supports the management and mitigation of risk to the service, operational staff and the community.

Areas for consideration

- Planning assumptions for officer cover should be stated and clearly linked to risk, local and regional where necessary, and appropriately resourced
- An alternative approach to Incident Command resilience, beyond recall to duty, should be considered
- Consider the opportunity to enter into discussions with neighbouring FRS regarding the sharing of Gold level incident commanders
- With the introduction of the Combined Aerial Rescue Appliances (CARA) the service should consider the future need of the Turntable Ladder (TL) appliances, matched to risk
- Empower middle managers responsible for fire stations to manage their resources according to local risk

Planning assumptions for officer cover should be stated and clearly linked to risk, local and regional where necessary, and appropriately resourced. For example research by the service is suggesting that officer cover can be reduced from 8 to 7, however, further work is necessary to identify what level of operational activity could be supported with this complement locally and regionally. This is particularly relevant to shared risks and the level of resourcing required to meet the stated level of risk whilst taking account of wider developments in incident command, such as the need for decision logging.

Where operational activity is placing a high demand on the Flexi-duty Officer complement, recall to duty is relied upon. This lacks resilience and the service would benefit from considering alternative options to this approach in order to ensure the safety of crews and the community.

B and LFRS have expressed an interest regarding the sharing of Gold incident commanders. These discussions should be progressed in order to enhance the services ability to resource major incidents thereby developing resilience.

Where both the CARA and TL are stationed in close proximity, CFRS should consider the removal of one of the specialist capabilities based on risk. This would release capacity to be redeployed.

Middle managers are constrained by procedure e.g. decisions on the use of overtime at district and station level are tightly controlled by the centre. Similarly, targets for the management of risk at district level are not set by district managers. Empowering middle managers will allow more local flexibility to the management of risk.

8. Health and safety

Strengths

- Health and Safety is well resourced, clearly organised and providing specialist advice and support on a geographical basis
- Active monitoring of Health and Safety controls through a district linked structure.
- Pursuing BS18001 on behalf of the service and this provides clarity of focus and organisation of documentation
- Good evidence of incident ground performance being gathered, analysed and acted upon

The Health and Safety team is well resourced and clearly organised providing specialist advice and support on a geographical basis. The team is clear as to its role which has been to support and guide line managers rather than to shoulder their responsibilities

There is active monitoring of health and safety controls through a district based structure. Inspections of premises are now a formal and regular activity with line managers and safety representatives supported by district health and safety officers.

The health and safety function is pursuing British Standard 18001 on behalf of the service and this provides a clarity to the focus and organisation of H and S documentation. CFRS has sought out the experience of others notably the supermarket Sainsbury's to learn from their achievement of the British Standard.

There is good evidence of incident ground performance being gathered, analysed and this includes consideration of equipment, systems and competence and there is a participant feedback system as well as an onsite audit process conducted by an attending officer.

Similarly the operational debrief cycle demonstrates a coherent process of data gathering, analysis and action planning. The processes are well supported by staff and align with a culture of openness and willingness to improve.

OSG play a pivotal role in coordinating and progress managing actions flowing from this intelligence. There are good examples of changes and improvements being made such as the use of hand held radios.

Areas for consideration

- Continue to manage the risk of overlap or duplication between Health and Safety and Operational Support Group with an ongoing positive approach to openness and good communication
- The development of more proactive Health and Safety indicators to assist in improving risk management in the organisation

There could be a danger of overlap and duplication between H and S and OSG but this is currently managed by a culture of openness and good communications between the teams. There is a need, however, to ensure that this current practice does not decline when post holders change and that the positive approach to openness and good communication is supported with robust structures and processes.

Performance reporting to various levels in CFRS on injury and near misses is well established. Simple regular monthly reporting at district level and six monthly to SMT provides a regular update on progress although more proactive indicators are yet to be developed. The work of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) supports the development of proactive indicators and these should be investigated.

9. Training and development

Strengths

- All managers have had appraisal training and annual appraisals are delivered consistently
- Leadership development is very well received, with clear evidence of delivery outcomes and an improved culture
- The AIM is proving an effective learning tool with tangible results and improvements evident
- In preparation for the new Assessment and Development Centre (ADC) process, CFRS is rolling out preparatory workshops, having learnt from previous experience
- The assessor and verification network is established and is supported by external accreditation as a means of quality assurance
- Delivery of training by the Training Centre is of a high standard
- CFRS is developing learning and development for line managers based on risk
- The approach to Incident Command development is robust

Appraisal training has been delivered to all managers and subsequent appraisals have been conducted. There is strong evidence to show this process is understood and that there is a clear link between individual appraisals and the corporate vision. The service leadership development programme has been embraced by service managers and the fact that they were involved in the development of the leadership charter has ensured buy-in at all levels.

AIM has been effectively used to deliver real service improvements supporting operational excellence through improvements in the provision of Personal Protective Equipment, operational equipment and associated training.

In preparation for the roll out of a bespoke ADC process, CFRS is conducting a series of workshops to support potential candidates to give of their best. This follows previous experiences where personnel were not successful due more to a lack of understanding of the process rather than not having the potential. This supports the view of CFRS as a learning organisation.

Workplace assessment as a procedure is in place, with appropriate training delivered to all managers. Standardisation meetings form part of this process to ensure that quality assurance is an integral feature. Whilst there are internal verifiers in place to support this approach to quality assurance, the service has recognised the need for further development of this network and additional training is programmed. The external accreditation of the service systems (City and Guilds) and of some of their courses further supports the assurance of quality.

Service training instructors are appropriately trained; for example Breathing Apparatus Instructors (BAIs) are trained at the Fire Service College. They also have the necessary teaching qualifications (Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning

sector – PTTLLS). This ensures that training is delivered to the highest standard. The service also recognises the need for specialist instructors to undergo formal refresher training in order to maintain their own skills and this is currently being considered.

CFRS has identified that the role of line managers in maintaining the competence of their team members is critical, especially in relation to safety critical skills. To that end, the learning and development team have built training days into their programmes which address these concerns.

All managers required to respond to operational incidents receive appropriate development and are formally assessed before being allowed to do so. They are also required to maintain their levels of competence and undergo re-assessment. This approach is supported by the IPDS2 database, the AIM process and quality audit officers attending the incident ground to monitor and assess in the work place. This latter approach also allows for less experienced Incident Commanders (ICs) to be mentored and coached supporting their further development.

Areas for consideration

- The IPDS2 is perceived in some areas as a time consuming process and could be used for recording more operational activity
- The After Incident Response (AIR) is proving effective, however operational staff have not received technical fire safety training in support
- RDS training is limited to two hours per week with managers spending significant amounts of time on management activities on drill nights rather than training
- Whilst appraisals are well received, consider making them less complex and more relevant for Fire-fighters

The IPDS2 recording system is bespoke and hence dynamically adaptable based on end-user feedback, the robustness of workplace assessment and the quality of resultant records would however benefit from additional focus. Further support and guidance to line managers and a strengthening of the verification process would address this.

The AIR process is developing with several examples of good practice arising from operational incidents. Recognition of safety issues is reliant on the experience of individual Incident Commanders who may not have had any formal training in technical fire safety matters. The service would therefore benefit from the introduction of this training and having it linked to the IPDS2 recording system and development programmes detailed within it.

There is a focus on the maintenance of operational competence on RDS drill nights, but with the ever growing requirement to carry out managerial activities such as IPDS2 recording etc, less time is available to supervisory managers to actually participate in drills themselves or for their involvement in workplace assessment.

With increasing demands on time and the need to maintain underpinning knowledge, alternative training delivery methods should be considered. E-learning platforms are available which will enable a more flexible and blended approach which would also cater for differing duty systems.

The appraisal system, whilst understood, is considered bureaucratic especially at fire fighter level. Further guidance to support line managers would be useful to ensure maximum benefit is gained from this important element of the performance management system.

10. Call management and incident support

Strengths

- CFRS has effective call management arrangements
- Positive and systematic approach to quality assurance and performance management, with an open culture, is contributing to learning and improvement
- Effective and regularly tested fallback arrangements
- Good progress for the move of call handling to RCC with demonstrable leadership within the region in developing collaborative projects
- Gartan system has improved the ability to forecast resource availability and has enhanced predictive mobilising capability
- Changes in the Automatic Fire Alarms policy, including call challenge, has contributed to significant reductions in appliance mobilising

CFRS has effective call management arrangements in place. Their continued investment in the Remsdaq mobilising system upgrade and Control Room environment has ensured the resilience of their call handling function, contributed to the maintenance of staff morale and minimised their dependency on timely delivery of the Fire Control Project.

CFRS Control has a positive and systematic approach to quality assurance and performance management. Its open culture, including the consideration of monthly call handling monitoring information at individual operator level and the self-reporting of errors is impressive and supporting a positive approach to learning and improvement. Control performance is continuing to improve and is currently performing at a higher standard than ever before.

CFRS has effective fallback arrangements in place which are tested regularly. Their secondary control includes a discrete backup IT server, should CFRS experience a catastrophic IT server on its main site. The service have also recognised the vulnerability of both their main and secondary Controls running on the same telephone system and have put in place further alternative arrangements which have been tested.

The introduction of the Gartan system has improved CFRS's ability to forecast resource availability. Staff spoke positively about the improvements in effectiveness which this system has supported, particularly how the system has enhanced their predictive mobilising capability.

CFRS Fire Control staff have supported the implementation of changes in the service's Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) policy, extending their existing call challenging for malicious calls to incorporate call challenging for AFAs. Their work in this area has contributed to significant reductions in appliance mobilising. CFRS's proactive approach to the Regional Control Project has ensured it is making good progress in its preparations for the move of call handling to RCCs. It is showing positive leadership within the region in progressing collaborative Fire Control project activities. CFRS staff are encouraging colleagues to engage in progressing key, potentially challenging work packages for the Project including activity to develop common pre determined attendance (PDAs) and attribute mobilising

Areas for consideration

- Ensure adequate resources are in place to support data cleansing and transfer work for the RCC Project
- Improve the effectiveness of Gartan through further integration with the current mobilising system
- Progress ideas for a 'Plan B' for call handling arrangements with regards to the current climate of uncertainty over the project, and the ongoing risk that the RCC project may not deliver its full ambition or functionality

The extent of data preparation, cleansing and input required to prepare effectively for cutover to the RCC is very significant and this is recognised by the key CFRS staff involved in the Fire Control Project. Whilst the service has put additional capacity in place to support specific work packages such as National Land Property Gazetteer (NLPG) data matching, the volume of this activity continues to be challenging to resource.

The new Gartan system has delivered positive improvements with regards to understanding retained availability and predictive mobilising arrangements. However, its effectiveness could be improved through further integration with the current mobilizing system, as manual system updates and the maintenance of a parallel backup system prove time consuming.

The service may wish to progress some ideas for a 'plan B' for their call handling arrangements due to the current climate of uncertainty over the RCC project, and ongoing risks that it may not deliver its full ambition or functionality. Staff are aware of potential issues with the national project. They would welcome some further engagement in understanding the service's approach to the current uncertainty and any alternative options which may be available should the RCC project direction be subject to significant alteration or further delays.

In summary the peer challenge team congratulate CFRS and believe that by further harnessing the motivation, drive and determination that exists in the organisation it will continue to succeed.

CFRS Notable Practice

During the peer review the team identified several areas of practice which they considered to be worthy of note.

Fire Brigade Union Learning Fund Activity

The joint commitment of local FBU learning representative and CFRS in supporting the delivery of training across the Service in numeracy, literacy, and most recently leadership and management has been impressive. Staff have spoken positively of these courses and have welcomed the extension of the leadership/ management courses to Service family members as well as employees.

Solution Centres

Issues that arise within the service that either cannot be resolved locally or have a Brigade-wide implication are brought to the attention of Practitioner Forums for discussion. Where the issue is either only partially resolved or remains unresolved, it is directed to a Solutions Centre.

This is a formal process that provides space and time for a range of officers from different parts of the service to consider the problem and generate actions and approaches that have the potential to resolve the issue.

The approach has been adopted by Partner organisations including, in Peterborough, through the creation of a dedicated space for facilitated problem solving.

The approach of involving officers other than those directly concerned with problematic issues to think round and beyond the usual avenues for tackling issues, and particularly, the formalisation of the process, is regarded as notable practice delivering solutions drawn from wider and more varied experience than would normally be available.

The approach has been applied to partnership projects such as addressing teenage pregnancy in Peterborough as well as addressing the Unwanted Fire Signals issue, fire safety at Westgate House (the Co-op) in Peterborough and establishing a Fire Death and Injury Forum.

Risk Audits

Fire Fighters have been equipped and tasked with undertaking initial visits of the non domestic premises identified through risk profiling as being most vulnerable. This increases the capacity of CFRS to make initial contacts with premises concerned and increases the familiarity of the crews with premises that they may need to attend in emergency situations. This process also verifies the relative risk rating allocated by default to those premises, the former being a key component of the Risk Based Audit Programme for non domestic premises.

The initial audit identifies major hazards and allows for a more technical evaluation to be undertaken where it has been identified that this could be beneficial.

Leadership approach to Regional Control Centre project

CFRS's proactive approach to the Regional Control Centre Project has ensured it is making good progress in its preparations for the move of call handling to RCCs. It is

showing positive leadership within the region in progressing collaborative Fire Control project activities. CFRS staff are encouraging colleagues to engage in progressing key, potentially challenging work packages for the Project including activity to develop common Pre-Determined Attendances and attribute mobilising.

Audit Incident Monitoring / After incident Response Processes

The Incident Ground audit system is already proving its value in terms of service improvements. It is well accepted and understood by staff who are enthusiastic around the simplicity of the process and the tangible benefits it is already delivering.

The use of Operational Staff to undertake a simple post incident audit of non residential premises is not common practice across the sector but it is providing initial information to the protection function and elevating the appreciation of fire crews to the importance of passive and active fire protection measures in buildings.

Contact details

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