

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND CIVIL DEFENCE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21ST MARCH 2005

1. **INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) –
ACTION PLAN**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee note the proposed response to the consultation comments (set out in Appendix I) received during the IRMP Action Plan consultation period which ran from 10th November 2004 to 1st February 2005.
- 1.3 THAT the Committee approve the 2005/2006 final version of the IRMP Action Plan (see Appendix II) arising from the outcomes of the consultation process.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Committee of the consultation responses received in respect of the draft IRMP Action Plan for 2005/2006; to note the proposed responses to the issues raised by consultees and to approve the final version of the IRMP Action Plan for 2005/2006.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Fire Service Circular (FSC) 7/2003 set out the requirement for each Fire Authority to produce an IRMP. The circular provided guidance on what should be included within the IRMP and the proposed consultation arrangements that Fire Authorities were expected to undertake when developing and implementing an IRMP.

3.2 In December 2004, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published the Fire and Rescue National Framework for 2005/2006. One of the requirements placed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities is set out in paragraph 1.4 of the chapter on fire prevention and risk management. It states:-

“In summary, Fire and Rescue Authorities must each have in place and maintain an IRMP which reflects local need and which sets out plans to tackle effectively both existing and potential risks to communities. They should also:

- produce annual action plans on which they have fully consulted their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for the consultation;
- have regard to central government guidance in producing their plans;
- make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the action plan, including using more efficient working practices where appropriate”.

3.3 In 2004/2005 the Authority published its first full IRMP and, following a period of 12 weeks consultation, undertaken in line with FSC 7/2003 and Cabinet Office guidelines, the Executive Committee, at its meeting on 22nd March 2004, approved the 2004/2005 IRMP.

3.4 In the Action Plan on page 46 of the IRMP (previously published in 2004/5), the Authority set out twelve points to action, including:-

“We intend to operate effectively, efficiently and economically. We will evaluate the effect of the changes we make. If and when the evidence in practice confirms our planning assumptions, we will schedule vehicles and staffing levels according to demand at different times of the day. This will enable us to use our resources more effectively for prevention work”.

“No changes will take place to staffing levels at different times of day until the evidence is clear. We expect our evaluation and planning to take some months, so this will not take place before 1st January 2005”.

- 3.5 In respect of the IRMP Action Plan for 2005/2006, at a Policy Planning Forum held on 13th September 2004, Members received a full briefing, adopting a full IRM approach which included an option to have no pumping appliances available at certain stations during lower risk periods. Arising from that briefing, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority requested officers to take a phased approach to more closely match resources to risk, requesting that at the commencement of the consultation period on the Action Plan, stations should have at least one pumping appliance allocated to them at all times.

Therefore, the stations where it was proposed that the 15 fire engines would not be crewed between midnight and 0800 hours included the following two pump stations, namely:-

Bournbrook	Highgate
Brierley Hill	Ladywood
Central	Oldbury
Coventry	Smethwick
Dudley	Solihull
Erdington	West Bromwich
Foleshill	Wolverhampton
Handsworth	

- 3.6 At its meeting held on 25th October 2004, the Policy Planning Forum received a presentation on the proposed draft Action Plan for 2005/2006 and this was approved, for a twelve week period of consultation, at the Authority's Executive Committee held later the same day. The Committee also approved the nature of the consultation which was based on FSC 7/2003 and Cabinet Office guidelines.
- 3.7 Essentially the draft Action Plan contained a single initiative that built on the first year's IRMP and the use of a 'strategic reserve' of fire engines. In essence the draft Action Plan proposed:-

“Whilst we can use our ‘strategic reserve’ during the day and early evening, it is unrealistic for firefighters to carry out fire safety education and awareness with the public between the hours of midnight and 8am.

We have compared the fluctuation in emergency demand between different hours of the day and the hours our ‘strategic reserve’ can feasibly provide a service. As a result, we now propose to more closely match our fire engine availability to the demand from 999 calls. We therefore propose to reduce the availability of fire engines, during specific hours, at certain fire stations. **This means that between midnight and 8am we are proposing to reduce the number of fire engines available from 62 to 47, a reduction of 15.”**

- 3.8 Members received subsequent presentations on the proposals at the Policy Planning Fora held on 31st January 2005; and 28th February 2005, following the closure of the consultation period when the consultation outcomes and the proposed response to them were presented.
- 3.9 Attached as Appendix I to the report is a summary of the consultation issues and responses and attached as Appendix II is the proposed final version of the Action Plan for 2005/2006, amended in the light of consideration of the consultation responses.

4. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

Fire discriminates against those most at risk in the lower socio-economic groups. The 2005/2006 IRMP Action Plan would target resources to those most in need of the Authority’s prevention and protection strategies. The introduction of the IRMP means that the service provided by the West Midlands Fire Service would be fundamentally based on risk. The approach ensures that an effective service would be delivered appropriate to the needs of the community.

5. **CORPORATE AIMS SUPPORTED**

The principal corporate aims supported by the information in this report are as follows.

1. To meet the Fire Authority's statutory duties, standards and expectations
3. To reduce risk in the community
12. To improve channels of communication

6. **TRADE UNION CONSULTATION**

The trade unions were included in the list of consultees. Both the FBU and Unison responded and their comments have been considered in the consultation phase.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, as a result of the proposal to reduce the number of fire appliances by 13 between the hours of midnight and 0800hours, there would be a need to reduce the number of staff accordingly. This would require a new duty system and shift pattern being introduced for operational station based personnel.
- 8.2 Options are currently being considered for alternative duty systems which would meet the fluctuating demand throughout the day. This issue, including anticipated salary savings, will be the subject of a future committee report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire Service Circular No. 7/2003 – Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Planning.

Home Office – Risk Assessment Working Group – Report – Community Fire Risk Management.

West Midlands Fire Service – Report – A Case for the Introduction of Community Risk Management.

IRM Project Brief.

IRM Project Plan.

Executive Committee Report – 25th October 2004.

Minute No. 100/04 refers

Policy Planning Fora Presentations held on 13th September, 25th October 2004, 31st January and 28th February 2005.

Minute Nos. 20/04, 22/04 and 29/04 refer.

F. J. E. SHEEHAN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER