

CORPORATE RISK: AUDIT COMMITTEE BRIEFING

Report by Strategic Enabler for Protection

Corporate Risk 4

Delivery of Services – Protection 4.1

“The Fire Authority is unable to effectively discharge its duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and associated legislation, resulting in a decline in non-domestic fire safety standards; reduced confidence and credibility; and increased litigation and reputational damage”.

Context

Contained within the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services 2012, is the expectation that Fire Authorities (Section 1.10) will:

“Set out its management strategy and risk based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat”.

Within West Midlands Fire Service, we have internally developed and implemented a bespoke piece of software which serves the purpose of our risk based programme. The software is called the Intelligence Led Audit Programme (ILAP) and is designed to take a wide range of factors into account in order to determine relative risk thereby supporting decision making in terms of resource allocation; in essence highlighting premises that are suitable for an audit/inspection from a Fire Safety Officer.

The software was an evolution of a previous system and has been in the service for a number of years.

Concerns

As detailed above, the software is designed to utilise a wide range of data to determine a relative risk score and provide intelligence for Fire Safety Officers. However, it has been identified that there are significant gaps in the data that we hold which is required to enable the software to accurately assess risk and inform our Protection activities. In addition, evaluation has shown that certain data sets are weighted too heavily within the risk calculation, resulting in premises being identified that if visited would not represent the best use of resources and potentially cause unnecessary disruption to businesses.

The organisational awareness around the fact that ILAP is not accurately identifying the most suitable premises for Fire Safety Officers to visit, means that there is a corporate risk that we are not fully meeting the expectations prescribed within the National Framework.

Impact on Corporate Risk

There has been awareness of the deficiencies with the system within the organisation for a considerable period of time (18 months) with mitigating steps put in place to reduce the risk on a temporary basis. Although there is still confidence in the steps taken to respond to the prevailing risk, because of the protracted time period in addressing the risk in a permanent manner, it is now appropriate to raise the likelihood factor associated with Corporate Risk 4.1 from 2 to 3. This has the overall impact of increasing the risk score from 4 to 6 moving it from a low risk to a medium risk and ensuring a quarterly review takes place.

How we are responding to the Risk

- Utilising “Command Risk Profiles” that have been produced by the Integrated Risk Management Team to provide information and intelligence for Fire Safety Officers to identify risk within their command area.
- Collecting performance information to understand how effectively we are using the command risk profiles.
- Developing a revised ILAP system that will address the issues identified and enhance the current system.
- Working with data providers (e.g. Experian) to understand what data they can provide and how it can be kept current and updated.
- Revising the Fire Safety Strategy (yet to be approved at SET) which will determine a schedule of inspection over the next three years to increase our inspections over the next three years to compensate for these concerns.