

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**20 SEPTEMBER 2010**

1. **FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008/11**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority note the revisions to the expectations of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) from those which are currently detailed in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) National Framework 2008/11.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform Members of the revised expectations for FRAs arising from the FRS National Framework 2008/11.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The National Framework sets out the Government's expectations for the Service and what is required of FRAs to meet those expectations. The Government has a duty under the FRS Act 2004 to produce the Framework and keep it current. FRAs must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their duties.

3.2 The requirements placed upon FRAs by the National Framework have been revised. These revisions were announced by the Fire Minister on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at a Ministerial workshop to launch the Fire Futures review. The Chief Fire Officer attended this workshop. The key messages arising from the Minister's announcement are summarised in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.8 below. The detail regarding the revisions is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.3 The FRS National Framework for 2008/11 remains in force but the following aspects will no longer be enforced:

- Regional Management Boards
- Equality and Diversity
- Workforce Development

- Asset Management.
- 3.4 The continuation of Regional Management Boards will be entirely voluntary and will enable FRAs to work collaboratively in a way that works best locally. The membership of Boards will no longer be determined by regional boundaries.
- 3.5 Communities and Local Government (CLG) will no longer monitor performance against the FRS Equality and Diversity Strategy or enforce the recruitment, progression or retention targets. Whilst the Government are committed to the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into the work of the Service, they believe this will be best achieved without the need for a prescriptive framework and that FRAs should decide how to achieve improvements in this area.
- 3.6 In respect of Workforce Development, the Government recognise that FRAs are best placed to determine their individual and sector recruitment, training, development and progression processes and practices. The use of the Integrated Personal Development Systems (IPDS), National Firefighter Selection (NFS) tests and Assessment Development Centres (ADCs) will no longer be enforced. It is recognised that the approach to Workforce Development should be lead and driven by the sector. The Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) are co-ordinating a sector led approach to Workforce Development.
- 3.7 In terms of Asset Management it has been determined that FRAs are best placed to manage their estates in order to deliver effective services for their community.
- 3.8 The Minister confirmed that Intergrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) will continue to determine the need for and allocation of prevention, protection and response resources.
- 3.9 The Service is currently considering the implications of these revisions to the National Framework. Further reports will be submitted to the Authority as the Service determines its approach to addressing the revisions detailed within this report. Lead Members will be kept informed of and be involved in the development of proposals for change.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required. The matters contained within this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

This paper outlines revisions to the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising as result of this report. Future policy decisions about the matters referred to in the report may have financial implications which will be reported to the Authority in due course.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

CLG letter from Shona Dunn – 30th July 2010

VIJ RANDENIYA  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**APPENDIX 1**

**REVIEW OF FRS NATIONAL FRAMEWORK**  
**LETTER FROM SHONA DUNN, CLG DETAILING CHANGES TO THE**  
**FRAMEWORK ANNOUNCED BY THE FIRE MINISTER**

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30 July 2010

Dear CFO/Chair/Portfolio Holder

Thank you very much to all those who managed to attend yesterday's Ministerial workshop to kick-off the Fire Futures review. The Minister was very grateful that so many people were able to attend at such short notice. The engagement with the issues and the calibre of the ideas emerging was fantastic and it is clear that we have a real opportunity to work together to plan for the future of the Service. Colleagues will correspond with you separately on next steps.

I am writing now to provide you with further detail on the Fire Minister's announcement, made at yesterday's workshop, on aspects of the National Framework and on Cornwall Fire and Rescue Authority (news release attached).

**National Framework**

The 2008/11 National Framework remains in force but, without fettering his discretion the Minister will no longer expect to enforce the following aspects of it - Regional Management Boards, Equality and Diversity, Workforce Development and Asset management.

**In terms of Regional Management Boards** we will no longer require FRAs to work through Regional Management Boards on the various elements of RMB core business as currently set out in the National Framework. In effect, the continuation of RMBs, and participation in them, will be entirely voluntary.

It is, of course, right and proper that FRAs should be expected to work together collaboratively to seek a more effective provision of public services and to achieve efficiency savings. However, it is not necessarily right to expect them to do that on a regional basis.

The effect of this announcement is that FRAs will now be able to collaborate in ways and in forums which best suit their own and their neighbouring FRAs' local circumstances. I know from discussions yesterday that this move is a welcome one giving, as it does, the freedom to work more flexibly with a range of partners across the sector and beyond.

**In terms of Asset Management** we will no longer be telling FRAs how to manage their estates. FRAs are best placed to decide how to strategically manage their estates in order to deliver an effective service for their area.

Effective asset management can support FRS objectives to deliver cost savings, take forward IRMP implementation, improve facilities and meet carbon reduction targets.

It is recognised that asset management planning is good practice and the sector is already taking a lead in this area. For example, the Asset Management Network Group is communicating common issues between asset managers with a view to the establishment of an appropriate sector benchmarking capability for the FRS.

**In addition, the Minister made clear that the use of integrated risk management planning (IRMP) will continue** to determine the need for and allocation of local fire prevention, protection and response resources. The whole ethos of IRMP is that of local decisions made by local practitioners and locally elected members on the basis of locally assessed risks and circumstances – localism in action.

IRMP as an approach to identifying, assessing and mitigating risks has been in place for some seven years now. Ministers believe that it is sufficiently embedded within the Service for the sector itself, with its 'on the ground' experience, now to take a lead role in continuing to develop its understanding and implementation. We shall therefore be looking to the sector, initially through the IRMP Steering Group (in which CLG will continue to participate), to take responsibility for determining the future direction of IRMP.

### **Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service**

In recognition of Services' willingness to support each other, the Government will be ending its formal engagement with Cornwall Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officers Association and Local Government Association will help Cornwall FRA to continue to improve and carry forward the progress that has already been made.

### **Improvement and inspection**

In line with the Coalition Government's stated intention to step away from burdensome regulation and inspection of public services, and to encourage sector-led approaches to performance assessment, the Secretary of State announced last month that Comprehensive Area Assessments had been abolished. Greg Clark will be reviewing, with all Government Departments, what more can be done to reduce the burden of inspection in line with the Coalition Agreement.

In future central government will only intervene in extreme cases and will instead work with the sector to look at alternative ways to support fire and rescue authorities.

**Next Steps**

This letter has set out the immediate implications of the Minister's recent announcement. We will continue to work with you on the practical implications.

Yours sincerely

Shona Dunn  
Director  
Fire and Resilience Directorate