

National Framework Document

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report informs Members of the requirements placed on Fire Authorities, by Government, by the new Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2012 document. It also provides a position statement on how the Service currently performs in relation to those requirements.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the contents of this report.

3 Background

In July 2012 the Government, through the Department of Communities and Local Government, published the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework document, replacing the previous version which had covered 2008-11.

In the introduction to the new Framework Document, the Minister for the Fire and Rescue Service, Bob Neill MP, stated that:

“One of the key principles [of the document] is to acknowledge the proficiency and experience of fire and rescue authorities; and to allow them the freedom and flexibility to deliver the services for which they are respected and renowned without being hampered by Whitehall bureaucracy and red tape.”

He went on to say

“The National Framework will continue to provide an overall strategic direction to fire and rescue authorities, but will not seek to tell them how they should serve their communities. They are free to operate in a way that enables the most efficient delivery of their services. This may include working collaboratively with other fire and rescue authorities, or with other organisations, to improve public safety and cost effectiveness. Ultimately, it is to local communities, not Government, that fire and rescue authorities are accountable.”

Within the Framework Document itself, the Government summarises its priorities for Fire Authorities as follows:

1. Identify and assess the full range of fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
2. Work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service; and
3. Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

The Document then goes on to detail how fire authorities should go about achieving these priorities by specifying 18 ‘Must Do’ requirements. The appendix provides a detailed list of these ‘Must do’ requirements, as well as a brief comment, from the relevant officers, which highlights the extent to which they are currently being met and, where appropriate, a rough outline of the sort of work that needs to be undertaken to ensure compliance.

The following section provides Members with a summary position statement against each of the Government’s three stated high level priorities. These statements have been developed based upon the information contained in the appendix.

4 Measuring up to the Government’s stated priorities

- a) **Identify and assess the full range of fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately.**

Although the Fire Authority’s Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) process has ensured that the Service is currently well placed to deal with the foreseeable risks within the county as required by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Framework Document has broadened this responsibility to also include cross-border and national level risks. This will require a full gap analysis to be completed, which will be undertaken as part of the current 20:20 process. This will feed into the refresh of the Strategic IRMP.

b) Work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service.

The Service has an excellent record of working in partnership with the Local Authorities, Police and other agencies, in achieving its Strategic Objectives; particularly in relation to its Prevention activities, but also relating to its Response and Protection work.

However, a common theme running through the Framework Document is that of intra-operability, with other Fire and Rescue Services, and inter-operability with the other Category 1 and 2 Responders (eg. Police, Ambulance, Local Authorities, Utility Companies etc). The many years of work undertaken by all of the partners involved in the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) have certainly gone a long way to ensuring some form of inter-operability exists at a tactical level (particularly utilising radio communications). Further work is required to meet Government's broader definition of interoperability.

c) Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

The Framework Document requires Fire Authorities to publish an 'Annual Statement of Assurance'. There is still a lack of clarity over the contents and legal status of the new Assurance Statements. These issues cannot be clarified at the local level and therefore the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) are seeking further clarification from Government at the national level. The Service is therefore waiting for additional statutory guidance on this matter.

In the meantime, the Service is progressing work that will contribute towards this important area. One of the most significant elements of the Assurance Statement involves the provision of assurance regarding operational matters. This is currently being addressed via the Operational Performance Assessment process that the Service is undertaking in collaboration with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. Another significant element involves the work the Service is doing to further improve on how it makes information available to the public. This involves the adoption of the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

5 In summary

The effort and investment that the Fire Authority has put into delivering excellent Response, Prevention and Protection services to the communities of Shropshire has undoubtedly put the Service in a good position, when assessed against the requirements of the new Framework Document. However, as highlighted above, there is still a lot of work to be done and the key to progressing this, especially through these austere times, will be partnership working.

The Service continues to seek clarification on those requirements where it is needed. The Service is not, however, sitting back and waiting for the guidance to arrive. As the results of many audits have proven over the last few years, when faced with uncertainty the Service is more than able to take a proactive approach to these matters, thereby ensuring that we are able to continue to deliver the excellent service that the people of Shropshire can rightfully expect to get.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Government to develop and publish a National Framework Document for Fire and Rescue Services.

The Act requires that Fire and Rescue Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions.

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 Appendix

Position statements for each of the 'Must do' requirements

10 Background Papers

There is no background papers associated with this report.

Position statements for each of the 'Must do' requirements

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
1.3	Each fire and rescue authority <u>must</u> produce an integrated risk management plan that identifies and assesses all fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The Plan must have regard to the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate.	<p>The Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Process (IRMP) has undertaken this risk assessment work since the process was formalised in 2004. The Service therefore has a lot of experience in identifying the various types of incidents we may have to respond to on a day to day basis. This not only includes fires and road traffic collisions, incidents we have a statutory responsibility to respond to, but also other types of 'special services' relevant to our county; water incidents (e.g. water rescue and flooding) and incidents involving hazardous materials are particular examples.</p> <p>In addition to these more common incidents, the Service is required to meet its responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act. This involves planning for the less frequent, but potentially higher impact major incidents. We do this in conjunction with the Police, Ambulance and other partner agencies that sit on the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (WMLRF). The Government specifies, in a National Risk Register, the types of risks that need to be considered by LRFs. The results of this assessment are captured in the LRF's Community Risk Register and are used to inform the partnership's joint planning, training, exercising and response work. WMLRF is an excellent example of a very effective partnership, but, as highlighted in the next section, there is still much to be done to ensure that we are as effective as possible.</p> <p>The Fire Authority's Strategic IRMP, supported by the 2020 process, is currently going through a refresh. This process will include a full gap analysis, specifically exploring the public and Fire Authority's expectations and Service capabilities. This will ultimately need to ensure that we bring the two sides of that formula together, with changes, including resource implications, being taken forward as agreed by the Fire Authority.</p>

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
1.9	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> work with communities to identify and protect them from risk and to prevent incidents from occurring.	Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) engages with a wide variety of community groups and works with partner agencies to prevent and protect, for example neighbourhood groups in Brookside/Woodside, Cycle and foot patrols by Risk Reduction officers etc.
1.10	<p>Fire and rescue authorities' integrated risk management plan <u>must</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a cost effective way; and • set out their management strategy and risk based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the current Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators and Enforcement Concordat. 	<p>The Service makes sure that it has the fire engines and other vehicles, equipment, systems, procedures and trained staff required to deal with the incidents identified by its risk assessment process. The Fire Authority's Response Standards support our decision making about how we distribute our resources to deal with these incidents, as well as giving the public a method of assessing our performance.</p> <p>SFRS operates a risk based inspection programme managed through CFRMIS. We can demonstrate many examples of individual and collective working, particularly through our formalised partnership arrangements.</p> <p>The Service is looking to develop Prevention and Protection Standards that would support future decision making in times when budgets are being cut.</p>

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
1.11	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> make provision to respond to incidents such as fires, road traffic accidents and emergencies within their area and in other areas in line with their mutual aid agreements and reflect this in their integrated risk management plans.	<p>The Service makes sure that it has the fire engines and other vehicles, equipment, systems, procedures and trained staff required to deal with the incidents it may be called upon to attend. The Fire Authority's Response Standards support our decision making about how we distribute our resources to deal with these incidents, as well as giving the public a method of assessing our performance.</p> <p>We have agreements in place with all of our neighbouring Brigades, to ensure that the nearest fire engine, whether it be ours or a neighbouring Brigade's, responds to all 999 calls for assistance. These also ensure that we can get support from these other Brigades during exceptionally busy periods, whether it be due to having to respond to a large number of separate incidents (known as spate conditions), or to a single major incident (e.g. a large fire).</p>
1.14	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> have effective business continuity arrangements in place in accordance with their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and to meet the full range of service delivery risks.	Business continuity plans will need to be amended to take into consideration the reduction in personnel now and future proposals, when dealing with local and the new national resilience requirements contained within the framework.
1.15	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities to deliver intraoperability.	<p>Limited common control rooms and equipment but working with Hereford and Worcester (H&W) to improve this situation. Generally common operational procedures, guidance and terminology with other fire and rescue services (FRS).</p> <p>Despite Firelink being in place, limited national intraoperability policy and procedures in place. Further work required at local, cross-border and national levels to provide positive assurance of this.</p>

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
1.17	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> collaborate with other fire and rescue authorities, other emergency services, wider Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums to ensure interoperability.	<p>Despite Airwave being in place, limited national inter-operability policy and procedures in place. Further work required at local (LRF), cross-border and national levels to provide positive assurance.</p> <p>SFRS is championing interoperability through the LRF, looking at getting common understanding and agreement on scope of works to be undertaken.</p> <p>Interoperability was used on request of FRS at flooding/rescue incidents in Bridgnorth area on 28th June 2012</p>
1.26	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> engage with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board in order to support discussions and decision making in relation to national resilience.	The Strategic Governance arrangements will be monitored (as and when established) with appropriate recommendations brought before the Fire Authority for timely decision in relation to national resilience. Such recommendations will fall out of the gap analysis being undertaken to support the IRMP refresh.
1.29	Fire and rescue authorities' risk assessments <u>must</u> include an analysis of any gaps between their existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience (as defined in 1.19 Resilience, copied below).	The 2020 strategy and associated IRMP will identify any gaps between the Fire Authority's existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience. 'Gaps' will be reported to the Member led Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) Working Group, for onward assessment and decision making by the Fire Authority.

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
1.31	As part of their analysis, fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> highlight to the Department, or the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board, any capability gaps that they believe cannot be met even when taking into account mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action.	The 2020 strategy and associated IRMP will identify any gaps between the Fire Authority's existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience. 'Gaps' will be reported to the Member led STRaP Group, for onward assessment and decision making by the Fire Authority prior to notification to Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
1.33	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> work collectively, through the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board, to agree with the Department for Communities and Local Government whether and/or how to address any capability gap, identified through the gap analysis.	Capability gaps identified via the Strategic Governance arrangements will be monitored (as and when determined) with appropriate recommendations brought before the Fire Authority for timely decision in relation to national resilience.
1.38	In order to meet the requirements of this Framework, fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally.	The Fire Authority has a long tradition of working in partnership with the communities it serves. These partnerships cut across all aspects of our service – Response, Protection and Prevention.

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
2.3	<p>Fire and rescue authorities' integrated risk management plans <u>must</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be easily accessible and publicly available • reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies, and partners • cover at least a three-year timespan and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework; and • reflect up to date risk analyses and the evaluation of service delivery outcomes. 	<p>The Fire Authority is currently going through a refresh process for its Strategic IRMP. This involves the 18 month '2020' process, that is currently being undertaken with staff, but will then also go on to include consultation with the public and other stakeholders. This will be particularly important to the gap analysis process, which will aim to match public and stakeholder expectations for the Service, against the Service's current capabilities.</p> <p>With the benefit of then work undertaken from the 2020 process, the new IRMP will cover at least a three year period, possibly longer, with appropriate indicators for review contained detailed within the Strategy.</p>
2.4	<p>The fire and rescue authority <u>must</u> hold their Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for the delivery of the fire and rescue service.</p>	<p>Our public value measures have been consulted upon and agreed by our communities. We need to improve publication of the outcomes.</p> <p>Fire Authority has means to hold Chief Fire Officer (CFO) to account for Service performance (Audit and Performance Management and Strategy and Resources Committees and full Fire Authority)</p>

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
2.5	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> have arrangements in place to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.	The Authority does not operate executive arrangements and does not, therefore, have a cabinet or separate scrutiny function. Its committees, sub-committees and working groups have little or no delegated powers and virtually all decisions are, therefore, subject to scrutiny by the full Fire Authority. Working groups of the Fire Authority do, however, report to its various committees, which in effect, therefore, fulfil a scrutiny role. All meetings are open to the public and reports are fully published.
2.8	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> make their communities aware of how they can access data and information on their performance.	<p>We are committed to the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency. This recommends a 5 step approach of which we are on the first step (one star). Our key performance information is published on the website and appears in quarterly Public Value performance report papers to Audit and Performance Management Committee. This approach to data transparency has been audited by internal audit who agree that for an organisation of our size and capacity this is a pragmatic approach.</p> <p>Any other performance information outside of our key performance indicators can be accessed by the public through FOI requests.</p>
3.2	Fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> 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.	The Fire Authority will prepare and publish an Annual Statement of Assurance, adhering as far as reasonably practical to any issued guidance and in compliance with its statutory duties (FRS Act 2004, section 26 (a) & (b)). The Fire Authority cannot guarantee or qualify the level of assurance provided. The statutory duty (FRS Act 2004, section 21 (1) (a)) for providing assurance against the Framework resides with the Secretary of State (not the Fire Authority).

National Framework Paragraph number	Requirement	Leading Officers comments
3.4	<p>In addition to the assurance arrangements detailed above, fire and rescue authorities <u>must</u> work collectively, and with the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board to provide assurance to Government, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risks are assessed, plans are in place and any gaps between existing capability and that needed to ensure national resilience are identified • existing specialist national resilience capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient; and • any new capabilities that fire and rescue authorities are commissioned to deliver by government are procured, maintained and managed in the most cost-effective manner that delivers value for money whilst ensuring capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient. 	<p>The Fire Authority will prepare and publish reports adhering as far as reasonably practical to any issued guidance and in compliance with its statutory duties (FRS Act 2004, section 26 (a) & (b)). The Fire Authority cannot guarantee or qualify the level of assurance provided through these reports. The statutory duty (FRS Act 2004, section 21 (1) (a)) for providing assurance against the Framework resides with the Secretary of State (not the Fire Authority).</p>