

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee
3 December 2013

Report by the Assistant Chief
Fire Officer/Director of Safety

PEER CHALLENGE FINAL REPORT

REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The final version of the draft report brought before the Committee on 11 June 2013 is included at Appendix 1. There have been a number of changes to the report resulting from Officer comments upon the draft version. Those changes are detailed in Paragraph 6 of this paper.

Members will be aware that this report presents the key findings from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Peer Challenge at Humberside Fire and Rescue Service in March 2013.

The report highlights strengths and areas to explore in each key area of assessment.

Whilst the Peer Challenge Team were of the opinion that "Humberside Fire and Rescue Service provides a high quality service to local citizens and businesses" the Service is always keen to learn and improve and so all of the areas to explore are being considered with a view to improving the Service even further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee is asked to consider this report and make any recommendations it considers appropriate to the Fire Authority.

REPORT DETAIL

2. The Fire Peer Challenge took place from the 5-8 March 2013 and consisted of a range of on-site activities including interviews, focus groups and visits to four Fire stations. In total the team met and spoke to over 140 members of HFRS staff and partners.
3. The team also undertook background reading provided to them in advance, including Humberside's summary Operational Assurance (OpA) Self-Assessment and key supporting documentation. The purpose of the peer challenge was to complement that self-assessment by providing external challenge to help support improvement and to reflect how the Service is performing across the areas of focus.
4. Fire peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. Peers are at the heart of the peer challenge process. They help Services with their improvement and learning by providing a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.
5. The peer challenge team included:
 - Nigel Williams, Chief Fire Officer, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (lead peer);
 - Councillor Sian Timoney, Luton Borough Council;
 - Dean Stevens, Director of Prevent and Protect, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
 - Simon Allsop, Director of Finance and Treasurer, Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service;
 - Barbara Owen, Brigade Manager People and Development, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service;
 - Jonna Stevens, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association.
6. Officers commented upon the draft version of the report which was brought before this committee on 11th June 2013 and there have been a number of changes resulting from those comments. These are as follows:-
 - A small number of changes were made to reflect HFRS standards and local terminology;
 - Reference to widening the role of this Committee to include making formal recommendations to the Authority was removed as that role is already carried out by this Committee;
 - Reference to opportunities for elected Members to engage at CPU level was amended to acknowledge that some elected Members already attend quarterly CPU performance meetings;
 - Reference to CPUs not being able to access the Risk Register was corrected as the issue was around speed of access, rather than access itself. The report now acknowledges that the project to upgrade the Wide Area Network will overcome the problem. Progress against that strategic project is reported to this Committee in the Quarterly Performance Reports.
7. All of the 'areas to explore' which are highlighted are being considered by the relevant Boards and where appropriate managed through the Board's risk register.

Any strategic areas are being considered and managed by the Change Board which is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

8. Any significant improvements resulting from that work will be reported in the Annual Performance Report 2013/14.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

9. The report provides key information to assist in supporting delivery of the Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10. It is anticipated that any improvements resulting from consideration of the report will be met within existing budgets.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11. None arising

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

12. None arising.

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

13. None arising.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14. None arising.

COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ARISING

15. The Authority will be asked to consider the means by which the report is published.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

16. None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

17. Board Risk Registers and Action Plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS RESTATED

18. The Committee is asked to consider this report and make any recommendations it considers appropriate to the Fire Authority.

C BLACKSELL

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CB/KD
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