

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee
3 December 2013

Report by Deputy Chief Officer/
Director of Operations

DEVELOPING THE OPERATIONAL TRAINING INFRASTRUCTURE

REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over recent years the diversity of Humberside Fire and Rescue Service's (HFRS) operational response has expanded greatly. This diversity in areas such as water rescue, flood response, marine response and technical rescue now forms a critical aspect of a holistic approach to community protection in mitigating the impacts of large scale or complex emergencies.

Whilst this expansion of our operational response capability has been introduced through the provision of high quality operational equipment, personal protective equipment, procedures and training, the Service's ability to sustain this broader capability within a tightening financial climate will be challenging.

This paper focuses on proposals to improve the Service's in-house operational training infrastructure in relation to water response, rescue using ropes from height, marine response and incident command to ensure sustainability of our broader operational capability, which is cost effective through the reduction of high year on year revenue costs associated with current training provision through external providers and facilities.

Furthermore the development of the Service's training infrastructure in these areas may have benefits for HFR Solutions. As such this report has been developed in the context of the sustainability of HFRS's wide ranging response capability with a potential secondary benefit being HFR Solutions' commercial opportunities. Elsewhere on this meeting's agenda Members will note the draft Business plan for HFR Solutions which is supported in part by the proposals outlined here.

The proposals outlined represent a consolidation of plans first brought to Members attention via Member days and/or the HFR Solutions quarterly performance reports

The report proposes five areas of infrastructure development:

- Purpose built in-house flood rescue response facility our current favoured site being Peaks Lane Fire Station, Grimsby;
- Purpose built marine firefighting capability, current favoured sites at Immingham West Fire Station or Humberside International Airport;
- Purpose built height rescue facility at SHQ, including re-design of SHQ Stores area to provide an indoor training facility;
- Relocation of Incident Command School to a bespoke facility within SHQ Stores re-design to include training rooms and meeting facilities (including a new HFA meeting room);
- Develop enhanced welfare and teaching facilities at SHQ in order to maximise utilisation of proposed facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members consider the report and make any recommendations to the Fire Authority as necessary.

CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

Flood Rescue Response

2. Since 2008 the Service has significantly improved its water response capability with circa £300k invested in personal protective equipment and a further £200k invested in initial training for firefighters to work safely in water environments.
3. Water response maintenance training is currently provided at external venues at an annual revenue cost of circa £150k per year, which includes travel costs. As has been reported previously, nationally there are increasing concerns regarding the medium to long term viability of such training being continued with current providers due to growing instances of firefighter illnesses and subsequent insurance claims attributed to water borne bacteria present in the water of these training venues.
4. Furthermore, the sustainability of revenue budgets to ensure the necessary training coupled with a backdrop ensuring HFRS must remain proactive in its employee duty of care in safeguarding employees from foreseeable illnesses attributed to this aspect of training has led to the Service exploring improved options for the future delivery of water response training. To put this in perspective we are currently training 816 firefighters over 72 courses utilising 102 training days per annum to achieve this.

Marine Response

5. Following the removal of national funding to support firefighting at sea, a review of the Service's capability to deal with emergencies off-shore within our geographical boundaries and shipping incidents in port alongside was undertaken during 2012. The outcomes of this review identified significant shortfalls in the Service's capability to tackle shipping incidents alongside and no internal funding streams to maintain an off-shore response. A decision was made by the Corporate Management Team to implement improvements to our alongside marine response and also maintain our cadre of firefighters to deal with incidents off-shore to ensure marine risks identified within the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan could be effectively dealt with.
6. The specialist nature of such incidents requires realistic training scenarios, which cannot be currently provided in-house. The annual revenue costs of external training to maintain the Service's marine response capability is circa £55k.

Height Rescue facility

7. A key aspect of the Service's technical rescue response capability is rescue from height using ropes. The highly specialist nature of this work requires bespoke training facilities to enable a wide range of scenarios to be practiced using external and internal rescue scenarios. Limited north bank facilities offer basic working at height scenarios, but restrict full deployment of this highly skilled resource. All operational personnel are required to undertake a three year revalidations on their working at height skills with these skills practiced at a minimum frequency of quarterly for firefighters and weekly for the specialist rope teams.

Incident Command Training

8. Managers at all levels are required to undertake revalidation of their command skills every three years. The current facilities are situated at Clough Road Fire Station; budget provisions have been made within the new fire station development for a bespoke command facility on this site.

Welfare and teaching provision at SHQ

9. The current provision for welfare of students attending courses at SHQ has not had significant investment for a number of years and is currently not fit for purpose. The two appliance rooms, previously designated for Driver Training appliances are utilised as storage and ad hoc classroom spaces for operational courses that use the SHQ drill yard. Operational equipment is presently stored externally.

HFR SOLUTIONS

10. These proposals, whilst primarily aimed at improving HFRS's training infrastructure, may have a secondary beneficial effect for the Authorities trading company HFR Solutions. Almost all of the proposed improvements could be charged out to Solutions in order that they can utilise the facilities when not in use by HFRS staff for commercial gain, thus diversifying their customer portfolio in line with the business plan covered elsewhere on this meeting's agenda.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS

Flood Rescue Response

11. Subject to the outcomes of the Service Operational Efficiency Programme (January 2014) the redevelopment of the Peaks Lane Fire Station site could provide the opportunity to create a unique purpose built Flood Rescue Response Training Facility. The proposal involves the creation of a self-contained structure utilising the footprint of the current football pitch. The facility will operate on a water recirculation principle with water stored in culverts beneath the facility when not in use.
12. Key features of the facility include water treatment to ensure clean water suitable for immersion and the ability to turn off the water flow in an emergency. The facility will be bespoke to water response training with flexibility to vary depth, flow rate, flow direction and water conditions. A range of training scenarios could be replicated, including the placing of a vehicle in the water channel and a building facade to simulate rescues from a flooded streetscape. There will also be the ability to utilise powerboats in the main channel.
13. Supporting infrastructure including car parking will come from the conversion and upgrade of the South Bank Workshops into classroom, changing and welfare facilities. These workshops will become available as part of the combined workshops relocation to Melton.
14. Capital costs to provide this type of in-house facility are circa £1.2m. Current revenue spends to provide external training and maintain competence in our water response arrangements is circa £150k per annum.

Marine response

15. The proposal involves the provision of a container based ship simulator and suitable sites on the South Bank are currently under consideration. The simulator will consist of three deck levels with nine compartments and lobbies as well as sloping and vertical ladders. The unit will benefit from six independent fires strategically positioned throughout the unit to maximise the variety of scenarios available

including a burst fuel line or bilge sump fire in the engine room, a fat fryer in the galley, or an electrical fire in the machinery control room.

16. LPG will be used to simulate fires providing an environmentally acceptable solution as well as the necessary controllability of heat and flame without the generation of vast quantities of smoke. Individual cosmetic smoke generators will also be utilised to compliment the LPG flame effect. Fires, smoke, lighting and exhaust fans are all controlled by a remote pendant managed by the instructor ensuring a safe yet versatile training scenario.
17. External LPG prop fires will also be included, running off the same system. These can be used to simulate many of the risks on the local petrochemical sites and are controlled by a remote pendant providing a safe and effective facility.
18. Capital costs to provide this type of facility are circa £200k along with an additional £50k for the external props. Current revenue spends to provide training and maintain competence in our marine response capability is circa £55k per annum.

Height Rescue Facility

19. Work is currently underway to develop a Height Rescue Facility on the SHQ site. The existing aerial mast, which has now been decommissioned as part of the Control refurbishment works, will form the focal point of the facility providing a 40m climb – this will be the highest training facility of its kind in the UK. Additional structures will be built to provide further platforms and also simulate risks such as a tower crane, electricity pylon and wind turbine transfer at sea.
20. In order to meet market needs it is necessary to also provide an indoor height facility for use in inclement weather; this area could also be used for practical indoor training for a whole range of operational training. There could also be provision for the commercial home of HFR Solutions, currently at Beverley, this could all be achieved by utilising space through the re-design of the current Stores area.

Incident Command Facility

21. A multi-use facility; this area would give the ability for incident, sector and specialist commanders to manage specific elements of incidents remote from each other in syndicate room or 'command pods' and utilise the same technology soon to be available to them on the incident ground as part of our wider Incident Command project which is a priority of the Operations Directorate.
22. The lower area would provide flexible use, forming both a large conference space providing a fit for purpose facility for the HFA which could also be divided to form four syndicate rooms. A mezzanine structure above will house offices that can be utilised by instructors and a viewing area for training that is taking place in the internal training area.

Welfare and teaching provision at SHQ

23. The current Breathing Apparatus School welfare and classroom facilities would be totally refurbished moving all operational 'dirty' classroom facilities into a refurbished space currently used as an appliance room bay. Operational equipment storage for water and rope rescue kit would be improved as the second appliance room bay and current instructor offices would form tailored storage areas including a drying room.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

29. The proposals outlined in this report comply with the Service Strategic Plan 2011 – 14 particularly strategic objectives:

- Reducing risk in our communities
- Making the best use of the resources we have
- Continuing to develop a committed, skilled and safe workforce
- Efficiency through Financial Management

FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

30. The financial implications of the proposals contained within this report are set out below:

Facility	Capital Cost (£)	Funding (£)
Water Response	1.2m	HFR Solutions Earmarked Reserve
Working at Heights – External	75k	HFR Solutions Earmarked Reserve agreed September 2013 Fire Authority
Working at Height – Internal	Budget envelope of 550k of which 250k relates to Marine Response	300k from the Clough Road Scheme which was originally earmarked for Incident Command Facilities, 125k for SHQ included in the 2014/15 Capital Programme report and 125k of unused allocation to be released from the CFBTU scheme at Immingham West.
Incident Command School		
Welfare & Teaching provision in HQ		
Marine Response		

31. The total surplus earmarked from HFR Solutions is estimated to be circa £1.1m by 31/3/14 based on its activities in 2012/13 and 2013/14. Further contribution to the surplus should occur during 2014/15 as part of the CIC's activities, in readiness for the delivery of the Water Response Scheme in late 2014/15.
32. Undertaking Water Response and Marine Response training internally will generate efficiencies of circa £205k a year in training costs. It is anticipated that this funding will be used to meet the running costs of the training facilities that are created, e.g. utilities, servicing, repair, replacement and upgrade. It is unlikely that all of this saving will be taken up on the running costs of the new facilities and there should therefore be a net revenue saving to the Authority post completion.
33. The recommendations within this report seek to address the medium to long term sustainability of the Service's capabilities specifically regarding water response, marine response, height rescue and command training. In particular the infrastructure developments provide a much more cost effective approach to training provision resulting in reduced annual revenue costs, whilst also allowing surplus capacity to be charged out to HFR Solutions with broader opportunities for income generation.
34. The recommendations also fully align with the Findings of the Review into Efficiency and Operations of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England outlined in Sir Ken Knights 'Facing the Future' Report, in which a key finding was for Authorities to invest in service transformation projects.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

35. HFRS owes a duty of care to its employees to provide sufficient, relevant and realistic training.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

36. There are no direct equality and fairness implication arising from this report although the development of the infrastructure to support new training facilities would improve the provision of changing and welfare arrangements to meet H&S Workplace standards along with fairness and dignity needs.

CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

37. Utilising external facilities remote from the Service area is very costly in terms of venue hire, overtime and travel costs. This approach is unlikely to be sustainable long term when considered against the financial outlook for the coming years.
38. This is particularly relevant in relation to water response and marine response training where HFRS have historically utilised external training providers.
39. A growing number of litigation cases are now being received by the Service's from personnel allegedly suffering sickness after attending water response courses.
40. The sustainability of HFRS to maintain effective water rescue/flood response capability features on the Operations Board Risk Register.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

41. Recent Health and Safety guidance stresses the need to provide realistic training environments appropriate to the risks faced by the Service.
42. The Service owes a duty of care to its employees to ensure that training facilities are suitable, safe and meet the identified training needs.
43. The Service has received a number of compensation claims relating to sickness, allegedly brought on by contact with contaminated river water during training at an external training venue.

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIONS ARISING

44. Details of the proposals will be communicated internally should the HFA approve them. It is envisaged there will be significant media interest in some of the proposed facilities on their completion, the water rescue facility, for example, would be a national first.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

45. This paper has been produced in consultation with the Head of Operations and HFR Solutions managers.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

46. Flood Rescue facility feasibility report;
Marine Training facility feasibility report;
Rope Rescue facility feasibility report.
Facing the Future Report – Sir Ken Knight 2013

RECOMMENDATIONS RESTATED

47. That Members consider the report and make any recommendations to the Fire Authority as necessary.

Officer Contact: GM Dan Meeke ☎ 01482 567488
Operational Training Manager

Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
Summergroves Way
Kingston upon Hull

DM/HFA/12/13
14 November 2013

