

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING	FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
MEETING DATE	27 JULY 2009
REPORT OF	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT SPONSOR(S)	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES
SUBJECT	WATER RESCUE RESPONSE STRATEGY 2009 to 2012 – PHASE 4

SUMMARY

At the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting of 22 December 2008, members approved the progression of phases 1, 2 and 3 of the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) Water Rescue Response Strategy. The strategy provides opportunities to further improve the operational response capabilities within South Yorkshire for water rescue situations that may occur during flooding situations and/or “normal” weather conditions. The strategy was in response to recommendations from national, regional and local reports that resulted from the South Yorkshire and UK floods of 2007.

Following the successful introduction of the Water Rescue Storage Box system at Edlington Fire Station (phase 1) and subsequent practical evaluation of the concept, design and protocols, a further four storage boxes have been procured (phase 2). These will be based at Adwick, Royston, Rivelin and Lowedges Fire Stations and placed upon appliances upon actuation of Trigger Level 2 of the SYFR Major Flooding Contingency Plan. Phase 3 of the project, the acquisition of specialist water rescue clothing and equipment, is nearing completion.

Members are requested to consider the proposal with a view to approving progression of phase 4 of the strategy. Phase 4, the expansion of the top box facility to an Aston Park appliance and the subsequent review of the requirements for the Incident Support Unit, will provide an opportunity to standardise water rescue response attributes throughout SYFR whilst also providing potential efficiency savings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:-

- a) Note the contents of the Water Rescue Response Strategy 2009 to 2012 (previously circulated on 22 December, 2008).
- b) Approve phase 4 of the strategy.
- c) Finance the proposed changes from financial efficiencies generated from this phase.

CONTENTS

Main Report

BACKGROUND

1. Following the local and national floods of 2007 a number of reports were written which provided a range of recommendations for Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) and other agencies to consider and, where appropriate, implement. These reports included:
 - The Pitt Review which supports the need for Category 1 responders including FRSs to “*assess the effectiveness of their emergency response facilities*”.
 - ‘Facing the Challenge’ by Sir Ken Knight, the Government’s Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA), which states that “*where FRAs provide a response to flooding they must ensure that personnel are appropriately equipped and trained*”.
 - The South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) review of the floods.
 - An SYFR internal report on the floods and our response.
 - Meteorological office reports that indicate higher national rainfall during winter periods, leading to increased potential for water rescue situations.
2. Members were previously advised that each element of the strategy provides an opportunity to improve the overall water rescue capability within South Yorkshire. The strategy also provides opportunities to standardise water rescue response attributes through the Service whilst also offering some efficiencies. Progress on phases 1, 2 and 3 have previously been reported to members at the Fire Authority meeting held on 29 June, 2009.
3. Following the successful introduction of the water rescue storage box system on the rescue pump based at Edlington Fire Station it is proposed that the storage box concept is now introduced at Aston Park Fire Station (phase 4). In line with the changes made at Edlington, this will result in the removal of the 13.5 metre ladder from the Aston Park rescue pump, and allow a review of the requirement for the Incident Support Unit (ISU) based at Aston Park .
4. Completion of phase 4 would maintain the provision of three water rescue response capabilities that are available 24/7 (Aston Park, Edlington and TRU) and four additional sets of water rescue response resources that are initiated upon actuation of Trigger level 2 of the SYFR Flood Contingency Plan.

CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PLAN COMMITMENTS

5. This proposal contributes to the following commitments and objectives;
 - Risk Management - *We are committed to reducing deaths and injuries and safeguarding property.*

Objectives:

 - To identify existing and potential risks to the community.

- To regularly re-evaluate the effectiveness of preventative and response arrangements.
 - To identify opportunities for improvement and determine policies and standards for prevention and intervention.
 - To ensure resource requirements meet the community's changing needs.
 - To provide effective risk-based resilience plans.
- *Emergency Response - We are committed to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies and other requests for assistance.*

Objectives:

- To maximise use of new technology and forecasting.
 - To deploy our resources to best meet the needs of the communities we serve.
- *Service Standards - We are committed to providing a professional fire and rescue service to the highest standard.*

Objectives:

- To ensure equipment and other resources are appropriate to the needs of the job.
- To ensure plans, policies and procedures are effectively communicated and adhered to.
- To comply with regulatory and statutory standards.

CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT

6. The provision of a water rescue response capability has been formally integrated into the emergency response within SYFR since the late 1990's. A progressive increase in the provision of equipment, training and procedures has been undertaken since that time. However, this area of emergency response is a high risk area which, if appropriate levels of training, equipment and support are not provided, would lead to the Authority being vulnerable on a number of fronts. The increased threat from flooding and resulting increased demands placed on the Service has necessitated this review to be undertaken. The ability to provide response capabilities that meet with the public's expectations will also reduce the potential for bad publicity in the event of our not providing an appropriate response.
7. The continued provision of appropriate water rescue response resources and appropriate training will minimise the risk to the Authority whilst also ensuring that it more effectively meets the needs of the community. Prior to the introduction of phase 4 the mobilising criteria will be reviewed to ensure appropriate staffing resources are deployed to maintain effective and safe systems of work.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS

8. Initial discussions regarding improvements to our response capabilities have taken place with accredited representatives. Due to the review of the use of the ISU and

the potential impact this may have on staff dispositions further discussions will take place to ensure the appropriate personnel management protocols are followed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. Members have previously approved the finances associated with phases 1-3 of the Water Rescue Strategy and £158,000 was included within the capital programme for this purpose. The additional top box for the Aston appliance will cost £15,000. This funding can be found within existing revenue resources and will be used to support the capital spending.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10. The addition of water rescue as a statutory function of FRSs is yet to be confirmed. However, within the target duties envisaged under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, section 11 clearly states in generic terms that a fire and rescue authority may take any action it considers appropriate in response to an event or situation of a kind that causes, or is likely to cause, one or more individuals to die, be injured, become ill or cause harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals). That power includes power to secure the provision of equipment and permits that the “action” exercised by an authority may be outside as well as within the authority's area.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11. The report identifies the possibility of further procurement. It is important that full consideration is given to the procurement options to ensure value for money, the requirements of contract standing orders and the procurement objectives. The project lead will therefore liaise with the Procurement Manager and Legal Services from an early stage in the project.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COLLABORATION

12. Collaboration work within the Yorkshire and Humber region and mutual aid response/support arrangements on a national basis have significantly developed since 2007 and various reviews within Chief Fire Officers Association working groups and by the CFRA continue to be undertaken. National guidance regarding response arrangements, training and related Health and Safety issues have provided clear guidelines for FRSs to work towards. Recommendations within this paper integrate and complement developments on a regional and national basis.

IMPLICATIONS

13. Industrial Relations, Financial, Legal, Asset Management, Environmental and Sustainability, Diversity, and Local Area Agreement implications have been considered in compiling this report. Unless these are specifically mentioned above, none have been identified.

List of background documents
Are available at CHQ within Technical Services Section.

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