



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD held on Tuesday, 14 March 2023 at Fire Conference Room, Clemonds Hey, Winsford at 10.00 am

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Stef Nelson
Councillor Stuart Parker

Auditor:

Anne-Marie Harrop, Mersey Internal Audit Agency

Officers:

Alex Waller (Chair), Chief Fire Officer
Paul Vaughan, Treasurer
Tony O'Dwyer, Head of Operational Policy and Assurance
Louise Willis, Planning, Performance and Risk Manager
Chris Astall, Planning, Performance and Risk Officer
Emilie Salkeld, Governance Officer

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Andrew Leadbetter, Director of Governance

2 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes from the previous meeting on Tuesday 25th October 2022 were presented to the Risk Management Board and the following comments and actions were noted: The Chair requested an update from the Assistant Chief Fire Officer in relation to the action on a peer review benchmarking process for heritage buildings.

3 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Planning, Performance and Risk team introduced the risk register and provided an update for each risk. The following observations were made: -

720 – Industrial Action – Loss of Operational staff failure to fulfil Statutory duties

Further details relating to the risk were discussed during Item 6 on the agenda.

806 – ESMCP

It was agreed the risk would be removed from the risk register until further progress was made with the national project.

376 – Fire in Iconic Heritage Building

The Heritage Officer role was approved as a permanent role by the Fire Authority in February 2023. The team were awaiting confirmation from the Head of Prevention and Protection about whether to implement a peer review benchmarking approach.

2016 – Funding Uncertainty

The team advised that the Government had published their 2023-24 Settlement in December 2022 and the four unitary authorities had provided their business rates data at the end of January 2023. This information had provided further clarity on the 2023-24 funding position. However, funding beyond 2023-24 was still uncertain due to the volatility of business rates which made forecasting challenging.

995 – Fire Pensions – Increase in employers' contributions to firefighter pensions and 1008 – McCloud/ Sergeant Judgement – Pension Case

It was agreed that risks 995 and 1008 be closed and a new overarching departmental risk encompassing pensions be opened to reflect the current situation.

2035 – Blue Light Collaboration

The Chair advised that the End State agreements had not been signed as the Blue Light Collaboration benefits reviews were ongoing. The Blue Light Executive meetings which had oversight of the collaboration had resumed.

A member asked about the potential cost of moving departments back to the Sadler Road site. The Chair explained that departments already confirmed to be moving could be accommodated on the site. If further departments were confirmed to be moving, a facilities review would be undertaken. Whilst there is an overhead element included in the charge to Fire for shared services, there would be additional costs involve in moving departments off the Clemonds Hey site.

The Internal Auditor advised the risk should be revised to reflect the risks identified by the Chair and also the potential loss of skills if services were no longer delivered to Fire through the Blue Light Collaboration. The Chair agreed, and further advised that the risks were reviewed regularly through the Blue Light Executive Board by both parties, with consideration of control and mitigation.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Review of Strategic Risk Register be noted.

4 OPERATIONAL AND CORPORATE SERVICES RISK MAP

Further discussion on the Operational and Corporate Services Risk Map was held during Item 5 on the agenda.

5 RISKS BELOW THE THRESHOLD REPORT

851 – On Call Availability

The Chair advised that proposals to improve availability would be included in the Community Risk Management Plan for 2024-28. A Member requested that during discussions with Members on fire appliance availability across Cheshire a map of Cheshire be displayed to assist visualisation.

2052 – Driver Training

It was reported that a report making recommendations on the driver training function had recently been approved by the Service Leadership Team. The Head of Operational Policy and Assurance was responsible for implementing the recommendations.

2065 – Increase in other absences with Service Delivery

It was reported that there were higher levels of absence within Service Delivery than anticipated following the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chair advised that in addition to work undertaken at the Absence Management Board, a report would be submitted to the Service Leadership Team every quarter to consider the position on absences.

2066 – Reduction in EFAD skill

The Chair advised that this risk linked to risk 2052 as there is a lack of capacity for EFAD courses. The recommendations from the report to the Service Leadership Team mentioned in relation to risk 2052 covered this risk as well.

Other matters

The Internal Auditor raised concerns about the lack of risks relating to the Corporate Communications and Engagement and People and Organisational Development departments. The Planning, Performance and Risk team advised that the risks relating to the moves of these departments were closed and there were no further risks identified within the Corporate Communications and Engagement department. A meeting with the Head of People and Organisational Development was scheduled to identify any emerging risks. The Chair requested that a risk relating to culture should be included on the departmental risk register

ACTION: That

- [1] a risk relating to culture be included on the departmental risk register for the People and Organisational Development department.**

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Operational and Corporate Services Risk Map and Risks below the Threshold Report be noted.

6 RISK REGISTER DEEP DIVE: INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Head of Operational Policy and Assurance provided an update on the position of risk 720 'Industrial Action – Loss of Operational staff failure to fulfil Statutory duties'.

He advised that national employers offered a two year pay award which was accepted by membership on 6th March 2023. North West Fire Control staff had also accepted a similar offer. Negotiations for a pay award to green book staff for the next financial year had already begun.

The Service was reviewing industrial action plans and considering lessons learnt. Those who signed resilience contracts were available to assist during other spate conditions to enhance business continuity arrangements. It was expected that His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services would be reviewing industrial action business continuity plans as part of their next round of inspections.

The Service was also considering the impact of the Government's proposals to implement a degradation plan for the fire and rescue sector.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Risk Register Deep Dive: Industrial Action be noted.

7 ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2022-23

The Planning, Performance and Risk team introduced the report which demonstrated the responsibilities and activities of the Risk Management Board throughout 2022-23. The report contained information on the Risk Management Process, Deep Dive reporting and Risk Management training. The Board were advised that the report would in future years be submitted to the Audit Committee rather than the Performance and Overview Committee.

The Internal Auditor queried the arrangements for risk management following the decision to no longer deliver the service through the Blue Light Collaboration. The Chair explained the Service was finalising the team structure but that staff with experience of working with the Service would be part of the new directly managed team. The current risk reporting system would remain and policies relating to risk management were due to be reviewed in May.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Risk Management Report 2022-23 be noted.

8 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Head of Operational Policy and Assurance provided an update on the review of the Crisis Management Plan. He advised that the plan includes the strategic framework and the facilitation for the recovery of business functions in the event of an emerging crisis or event that disrupts business activities.

The plan had not been tested formally in recent year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there had been informal tests and the next formal test would be held on 30th October 2023 against a national power outage.

The Board queried how departments returning to direct management would impact the plan. The Head of Operational Policy and Assurance explained that the plan would be revised to reflect such changes. Training would also be available to staff in the new directly managed departments.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Review of Crisis Management Plan be noted.

9 FUTURE RISK MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Treasurer provided an update to the Board on the future of risk management arrangements. He advised that at the last Audit Committee meeting, a discussion was held to help to determine the responsibilities of the Audit Committee, informed by guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. This would include consideration of strategic risk. It was proposed that a meeting for officers only to discuss risk be established, to meet prior to the submission of reports on risk to the Audit Committee. Therefore, this meeting was likely to be the last meeting of the Risk Management Board.