Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service

Best Value Action Plan

2012 - 2013

Helping make the Highlands and Islands a safer and better place to live, work and visit
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1 Introduction

Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. Together they ensure that the Scottish Government and public sector bodies in Scotland are held to account for the proper, efficient and effective use of public funds.

Local authorities in Scotland, including fire and rescue services, have a statutory duty to deliver best value. We require to establish management arrangements, aimed at securing continuous improvements in our performance while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost.

Following a formal consultation with stakeholders in late 2010, the Accounts Commission decided that the audit of Best Value should be extended to fire and rescue services and authorities. With the Scottish Government signalling a potential restructuring of the Services, however, it was recognised that the audit needed to be proportionate, seeking to identify the key strengths which should be retained in a future structure and any significant weaknesses which needed to be resolved. The Scottish Government has subsequently announced its commitment to deliver a single fire and rescue service for Scotland, with details on the Police and Fire Reform Bill (Scotland) 2012 published in 2012.

During 2011, audits were carried out at each of the eight Scottish fire and rescue services and authorities. These are seeking to focus on core issues, such as strategic planning, the role of members, financial management, and service performance and costs. These local reports, which will support improvement and local accountability, will be followed by the publication of a national overview report in 2012.

Audit Scotland carried out the Best Value audit of Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service (HIFRS) during September 2011.

This action plan which has been developed by the Service and approved by Highland & Islands Fire Board will address the Accounts Commission findings and the Audit of Best Value Improvement Agenda for HIFRS and Highland and Islands Fire Board.

The strategic leadership team of HIFRS is being ably supported and guided by the Peer Support Team (PST) which comprises D Dalziel (CFO Grampian FRS), A Hay (CFO Tayside FRS) and D Millar (Director of Corporate Services). The vital supporting role of the PST has been approved by Highland and Islands Fire Board to enhance leadership and give strategic direction. The Board has also approved the secondment of a Brigade Manager to manage the ‘Safer Firefighter Programme’ and lead the Service Delivery function of the Service.
2 Convener’s Remarks

Highland and Islands Fire Board met on 25th June 2012 to discuss the Audit of Best Value Report.

The Board fully support this action plan and look forward to regular update reports and ultimately its successful implementation.

Andrew Drever
Convener
Highland and Islands Fire Board

3 Situational Context - Audit of Best Value Report

Highlands and Islands includes the local authority areas of the Highlands, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. It covers the largest land area of the eight Scottish fire and rescue services at 31,187 km². The area is predominantly rural with many islands, rugged coastlines, hilly and mountainous terrain. This presents many challenges for delivery of a fire and rescue service.

The population of Highlands and Islands is a little over 290,300. The population density is low, with an average of 9.3 people per km² but with a significant proportion of people living in towns, the population density is much lower in a large proportion of the area. The main population settlement is Inverness (56,660), with a number of other towns of between five and ten thousand including, Fort William, Nairn, Thurso, Wick, Kirkwall, Lerwick, Stornoway, and Alness.

The population is projected to increase slightly but also to increase in the proportion that are aged over 65 at a slightly higher rate than the Scottish average. Older people are a higher risk group and particularly with the predominantly rural nature of the area and high levels of inaccessibility this also presents further potential risk issues for service demand and capacity for delivery.

HIFRS is governed by a Joint Board that comprises 24 councillors. Sixteen of the members are Highland Council members, four from the Western Isles, two Orkney and two Shetland Councils. The Joint Board meets four times per year, and is supported by a number of sub-committees including a Best Value and Audit Working group. The Joint Board was established in June 2007 and will be renewed in June 2012.

HIFRS delivers its services from one whole-time station in Inverness, 95 retained stations and 13 Community Response Units. The Service spent £21.6 million in 2010/11 on its running costs. It employs around 1,400 staff. Of these, around 82 per cent are retained firefighters notably higher than the Scottish average of 34 per cent. It has a fleet of 142 emergency response vehicles, ranging from community response vehicles, standard water tenders with ladders, tenders with additional road traffic collision equipment, through to an aerial ladder platform and a control unit.

Since 2005/06 the Joint Board and Service have been upgrading the stations, to provide suitable equipment, vehicles and premises. In order to help achieve this, the Scottish Government has provided enhanced levels of capital funding. Thirty new stations have been put in place to date but there is a substantial way to go with this programme. Following the decision to move to the current model, in 2006/07 the Service began a phased review of all of the stations.
3 Situational Context - Audit of Best Value Report

During 2011 there has been a management restructure and a restructure of the Service Delivery districts from 11 to 4.

In November 2011, to help address the significant challenges identified, the Joint Board agreed to external support from a Peer Support Team and approved the secondment of a Brigade Manager from Tayside Fire and Rescue to lead the Service Delivery function and the Safer Firefighter Programme.

A further, necessitated, enhanced management/leadership structure was approved by the Board in 2012. The current strategic management has also engaged in discussions with SFRAU on progress with improvement priorities, a sustainable service delivery and internal capacity.

4 Mission Statement

Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service is committed to “Helping make the Highlands and Islands a safer and better place to live, work and visit”

We will deliver our mission and the necessary improvements to Community and Firefighter safety through our key strategic aims.

5 Our Aims

Our key strategic aims are:

Aim 1 - Prevention

Engaging with our communities to inform and educate people on how to reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies.

Aim 2 – People

Providing the support for a well equipped, skilled, and motivated workforce whose composition and purpose reflects the risks and diversity of the communities we serve.

Aim 3 - Response

Planning and preparing for emergencies that may happen, and making a high quality, effective and resilient response when emergencies arise.

Aim 4 - Resource

Managing our resources efficiently and effectively, ensuring value for money, demonstrating public accountability, and championing environmental responsibility.
6 Our Values

Our values are:

Commitment to the Community: The Fire and Rescue Service is primarily staffed by members of the communities we serve. Our commitment to keep our communities safe should inform our actions every day.

Commitment to Excellence: To endeavour to excel in all aspects of the role and the Service.

Integrity: Our staff conduct themselves in an honourable and honest manner.

Respect: Of others and procedures.

Responsibility: To support appropriate accountability throughout the Service.

7 Audit Scotland Improvement Agenda

As a result of the audit of Best Value, Audit Scotland has included an improvement agenda within the final report. The list is found below:

Leadership and Strategic Direction

1. Members need to take a much stronger leadership role in setting the strategic priorities, driving best value and providing robust challenge to the Service.

2. Both the Service and Board should engage with the peer support team and utilise this external capacity to assist in focusing and progressing the improvement agenda.

3. Review with the peer support team and national stakeholders the proposed fire cover model and how best this can be taken forward in the context of a national service commencing in 2013.

4. Review the appropriateness of new capital projects in the context of decisions in relation to the fire cover model and the national service commencing in 2013.

Workforce Management

5. Seek assistance in ensuring command competence and firefighter skills competence and other required training is brought up to the required coverage at an urgent pace.

Service Delivery

6. Progress work to ensure there are consistent and robust standard policies and procedures deployed across all of the area.

7. Ensure consistent and coordinated risk-based approaches are progressed in relation to operational assurance, tactical information property inspections, fire safety legislative inspection work, and community safety work.

Performance Management

8. Progress work with performance information systems to better support management.
8 Improvement Plan

This section details the action points which will be taken by Highland and Islands Fire Board and Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service to address the Audit Scotland’s findings during 2012/13. Due to the consultation period, a significant number of the actions detailed in this Action Plan have been completed, and progress is noted against each action point.

Key:  
- Green: Completed  
- Orange: In Progress  
- Grey: Not Yet Started  
- Red: Not Completed

1: Leadership and Strategic Direction

Objective 1.1
Members of Highland and Islands Fire Board to take a much stronger leadership role in setting the strategic priorities, driving best value and providing robust challenge to the Service.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Point</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP1</td>
<td>Implement a framework for member induction and training.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP2</td>
<td>Develop suitable arrangements for information dissemination and consultation with Fire Board Members.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP3</td>
<td>Convener and Vice Convener of the Fire Board to liaise with Principal Officers and members of the Peer Support Team.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective 1.2
Both the Service and Board to engage with the Peer Support Team (PST) and utilise this external capacity to assist in focusing and progressing the improvement agenda.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Point</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP4</td>
<td>Implement a formal programme of meetings with terms of reference for PST liaison.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP5</td>
<td>Introduce a process for information sharing and consultation with the PST outwith the formal meeting programme.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
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### Objective 1.3

Fire Board to approve criteria to determine the sustainability of all stations. Deputy Chief Fire Officers to make recommendations for a sustainable model against the approved criteria.

**Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP6: Determine criteria for station sustainability in terms of risk, personnel, training and cost in conjunction with the Fire Board and other stakeholders.</td>
<td>Deputy Chief Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP7: Communicate the agreed criteria for station sustainability to all key stakeholders.</td>
<td>Deputy Chief Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP8: Examine the existing location of our appliances and assets against local and national risk profiles to ensure an effective emergency response.</td>
<td>Deputy Chief Officers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Objective 1.4

Implement a sustainable model with the Peer Support Team and national stakeholders and determine how best this can be taken forward in the context of a national fire and rescue service commencing in 2013.

**Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP9: Work closely with the Scottish Fire &amp; Rescue Reform groups to ensure the sustainable model reflects the requirements of a single Fire &amp; Rescue Service.</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP10: Ensure strategic decision making reflects consideration of a single Fire &amp; Rescue Service.</td>
<td>Strategic Leadership Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP11: Actively seek opportunities for shared initiatives and co-operation with other Fire &amp; Rescue Services.</td>
<td>Heads of Departments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Improvement Plan

Objective 1.5
Review the appropriateness of new capital projects in the context of decisions in relation to the sustainable model and the national fire and rescue service commencing in 2013.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Points</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP12</td>
<td>Principal Officers</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP13</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Services</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2: Workforce Management

Objective 2.1
Seek assistance in ensuring command competence, firefighter skills competence and other required training is brought up to the required national standard at an urgent pace.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Points</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP14</td>
<td>Head of Operations</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP15</td>
<td>Head of Operations</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP16</td>
<td>Strategic Leadership Team</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP17</td>
<td>Head of Operations</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Improvement Plan

Objective 2.2
Improve the days lost due to sickness absence.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Point</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP18: Introduction of a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in relation to absence.</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Services</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP19: Review current policies and procedures relating to absence management whilst considering the requirements of a single Fire &amp; Rescue Service.</td>
<td>Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Foundation Services)</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3: Service Delivery

Objective 3.1
Progress work to ensure there are consistent and robust standard policies and procedures deployed across all of the area.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Point</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP20: Examine all our procedures for the delivery of operational performance to ensure they are in accordance with nationally accepted good practice.</td>
<td>Head of Operations</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP21: Implement a single storage point for key documents with a single managed system of document control.</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Services</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP22: Support the Information Management Project stream within the Scottish Fire Reform Programme.</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Services</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 3.2

Ensure consistent and co-ordinated risk-based approaches are progressed in relation to operational assurance, tactical information property inspections, fire safety legislative audit work, and community safety work.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

- **AP23**: Review current programme and methodology for the delivery of legislative and community safety activity.
  - Responsibility: Head of Community Risk Management
  - Progress: 

- **AP24**: Introduce a revised model for legislative fire safety audits, targeting high risk premises in partnership with other Scottish Fire & Rescue Services.
  - Responsibility: Head of Community Risk Management
  - Progress: 

4: Performance Management

Objective 4.1

Progress work with performance information systems to better support management.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

- **AP25**: Review and revise suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure performance information is accurate and accessible.
  - Responsibility: Head of Corporate Services
  - Progress: 

- **AP26**: Review suitability of current IT infrastructure to support performance management systems.
  - Responsibility: Head of Corporate Services
  - Progress: 

Objective 4.2

Ensure the Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is upgraded to support both Service Delivery and Service Support functions.

Action points for achieving this objective in 2012-13

- **AP27**: Complete final phase roll-out of upgraded ICT equipment to all stations.
  - Responsibility: Head of Corporate Services
  - Progress: 

- **AP28**: Ensure appropriate ICT support is in place to facilitate provision of risk critical information via Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs).
  - Responsibility: Head of Corporate Services
  - Progress: 
Alcohol fuel for fire

The majority of fire deaths in the Highlands and Islands involve alcohol - don't be next

DON'T GIVE FIRE A HOME

If you've been drinking...

...leave the cooker off!

Nearly two-thirds of domestic fires are the result of cooking. The risk increases dramatically if you've been drinking.

...make sure your cigarette is out!

It's all too easy to fall asleep or not notice a cigarette is still burning.

For more information on Fire Safety contact Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service on 01463 227000 or visit www.hifrs.org

Supported by Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service and the Drug & Alcohol Action Teams in Highland, Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney.