



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW INTO FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES BY SIR KEN KNIGHT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda No:

Date: 02 August 2013

Purpose of Report:

To propose a submission from the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority in response to the review into efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England by Sir Ken Knight.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

**Media Enquiries
Contact :** (0115) 967 0880

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Late in 2012 Sir Ken Knight, the outgoing Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser to the Government, was commissioned by Brandon Lewis MP, the Fire Minister, to undertake a review into efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England. The intention of the review was to look at ways fire and rescue authorities could deliver further efficiencies in operational arrangements without reducing the quality of front line services to the public.
- 1.2 The review took place primarily during late 2012 and the early part of 2013 and the final report was published in May 2013. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) did volunteer to participate in the review, but on 20 December 2012 Sir Ken declined this invitation due to timeframes and capacity. However, a submission highlighting much of the work recently undertaken in NFRS was made to highlight the savings and efficiencies already accomplished.
- 1.3 On 28 June 2013 the Fire Authority considered the outcomes of this review as part of a report from the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) on it, and its implications for NFRS. As part of the recommendations the CFO was tasked with drafting a formal response on behalf of the Fire Authority to be agreed for submission by Policy and Strategy Committee at its next meeting. The draft submission is attached to this report at Appendix A.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Sir Ken Knight's review was published in May 2013 as an independent review of the fire and rescue service in England. As the outgoing Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken had been invited by the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis, to undertake the review. The report is therefore in response to the Minister's request, but equally Sir Ken's comments "there is much here that is for fire and rescue authorities to consider and pursue themselves".
- 2.2 As an outcome of the review the CFO produced a report for the Fire Authority for its meeting on 28 June 2013 highlighting the headline elements from the document, along with cross-referencing much of what NFRS and the Fire Authority had already progressed. Equally it was important for the Fire Authority to recognise that although much had changed in the Service, more would have to be done against a back-drop of reducing budgets.
- 2.3 Whilst that report highlighted the specifics detailed in Sir Ken's review, it did not set out any challenge in respect of its findings nor seek to put forward difficulties faced by authorities such as NFRS, who had already made significant reductions and efficiencies in a lot of areas. By inviting response to the report the Fire Minister had left that opportunity open and it is through this submission that NFRS should challenge where it feels appropriate.

- 2.4 The response appended to this report is meant to be both challenging and in some aspects parochial. Sir Ken often reflects on inequalities within the report with regard to where different fire and rescue authorities are, and yet overall the report seems to question everyone. With tightening budgets it is essential that the Fire Authority makes its case for the position being experienced presently. Additionally, whilst some fire and rescue authorities may have avoided difficult decisions, Nottinghamshire has not, and it is important for this response to reflect that aspect.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES & LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

There are no specific human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to respond to the review could leave government of the opinion that the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority is content with its findings in totality. A formal response allows the Authority to express its views.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Policy and Strategy Committee consider the draft submission to Sir Ken Knight's review and subject to any amendments, task the Chief Fire Officer with submitting it on their behalf.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Response to Sir Ken Knight's 2013 Efficiency and Effectiveness Review

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority (NFRA) welcome the opportunity to engage in any debate regarding how the fire and rescue service is currently run. We welcome the opportunity to engage in influencing the future of the fire and rescue service, and we are pleased to see that by commissioning the review, government recognises the importance of the fire and rescue service to its communities.
- 1.2 There is no doubt that the fire and rescue service is something dear to the local community and we challenge Sir Ken Knight's comment regarding "the public's seemingly unconditional attachment to the fire and rescue service" acting as a constraint to efficiency and being outdated. Our experience has been more positive where the fire and rescue service has been able to use that attachment to access some of the most hard to reach, through initiatives such as the Prince's Trust, working with those on the edge of mainstream society. This is something we shall explore more in our response.
- 1.3 NFRA is pleased to see that there is a reference to the size and scale of funding and would welcome the opportunity to look at this and the transparency in which grant is distributed. In one financial year, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) went from being a net contributor to supporting authorities at the floor, to being a net receiver, having fallen below the floor. Given that fluctuations in population and risk varies little in 12 months, this challenges even the most adept of geographers and economists.
- 1.4 The recognition of the impact of the importance of prevention and protection is also welcome and we agree that staff engaged in such work should, and are, recognised as front line. Equally, we challenge the view that this can replace existing operational staff, who in the main are responsible for the bulk of delivery of such work. If we had to utilise retained crews for this purpose it would increase their costs, and the re-negotiation of non-uniformed contracts to undertake weekend and evening working would also inflate salaries. This should have been reflected in the findings.

- 1.5 Our response will show that we have been innovative, progressive, and have not shirked difficult decisions around shifts, redundancies and appliance decommissioning. Conditions of service have not been seen as an obstacle and we have been able to agree new arrangements with all staff. It is for this reason we will challenge the generalist approach that great savings can be made. NFRS is well on the way to having reduced its front line appliances by one sixth at the time of this submission. On the advice of our Chief Fire Officer, when we reach this point it has the potential to undermine our ability to assure the Minister as he would like.
- 1.6 In summary we would like this report to trigger action where those who have been more progressive in their approach be recognised and the obvious inefficiencies across the country be addressed.

2. EFFICIENCIES

2.1 Like Sir Ken, we acknowledge that risks within our county have changed over time. Pro-active fire safety work by our staff has led to reduction in mobilisations akin to those quoted within the report.

2.2 For example, over the last five years our figures show the following:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Incidents	15665	15198	13135	13111	10320
Mobilisations	22328	22391	19919	19391	15464

2.3 However, we believe that it is floored to base any assessment of operational resources without further looking at what lies under these overall figures. In fact the actual reality of accidental dwelling fires and non-fatal casualties in such incidents is far more static:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Accidental Dwelling Fires	645	654	680	695	634
Non-Fatal Casualties in ADF	175	168	136	123	150

2.4 NFRS is mature enough to recognise that a reduction in operational resources is both achievable and in the best interests of the public finance. However, the reality is these will need to continue to provide a service to those who are most at risk and those to which the Service needs to respond to most effectively. A general assumption that efficiencies equal to those reductions in mobilisations can be achieved is floored and will leave those most vulnerable at greater risk.

- 2.5 Equally, much of the work and capacity which exists within the Service is from within the operational workforce. Retained officers are employed on an as needed basis in Nottinghamshire. If we were to utilise this process for the delivery of early intervention then it would become a more costly model. Therefore simply changing the crewing system in this way, based solely on response statistics, will mask a negative impact in respect of early intervention capacity.
- 2.6 Sir Ken challenges the relationship between a number of factors relating to spend, deprivation, demographic profiling and obvious variations in such. NFRA covers one of the most deprived communities in the UK, where the average income is well below the national average. At approximately £40 per head we consider the service we deliver to be very good value for money, given the profile we face. It is very easy to say that some spend more than others without looking underneath at the challenges we all face. Perhaps Sir Ken's report should have focused less on headline figures and more on the relationship between the demands on Services, rather than coming to the conclusion that it is "fragile and inconclusive".

3. DEPLOYING RESOURCES

- 3.1 The deployment and arrangement of operational resources are a matter for individual fire and rescue authorities. The IRMP process was designed and implemented for that very purpose and the matter quite rightly is a local one with advice from the respective CFOs.
- 3.2 IRMP is the very process by which individual fire authorities match the needs of risk and demand.
- 3.3 Having already affected compulsory redundancies in uniform, non-uniform and control staff, as well as implementing a corresponding reduction in front line appliance provision, this Authority takes issue with the comments made regarding avoiding such matters. NFRS found it disrespectful that comments such as "self-censorship" and "avoidance" are used.
- 3.4 The threat of legal challenge amongst many decisions means that a methodical and well-structured approach to any changes to operational resources has to be taken. The National Framework itself refers to public consultation on a number of occasions and therefore the implied criticism that fire authorities avoid taking decisions because of redundancy and reduction strategies is flawed.
- 3.5 In 2006 NFRS introduced its first non-grey book shift pattern, which was updated in 2009 to implement the principles of self-rostering. Officers rotas have operated outside of grey book since 2005 and locally agreed practices are well established. The grey book is not a barrier, either cultural or perceived, where the organisation and the Fire Authority are at one with the need to change.
- 3.6 Our question in response to Sir Ken's report would be "when a FRS has implemented all of these aspects, where do the further efficiencies arise?" Protecting the front line is all very well, but when you have pared down all the

innovative models available, there is only the front line left. This is the position NFRS finds itself in as it looks to meet the further expectations in respect of budget costs.

- 3.7 The example of the success of the home fire risk grant is an interesting one that we as an organisation are already preparing for. As Sir Ken rightly points out the mass installation of smoke detectors was paid for by government; an amount which totalled £25 million over four years. He notes that the 10 year life of these items is now approaching the end of the life span. Faced with a number of follow-up enquiries, NFRA would like to know where the money will come from to replace them or do we simply direct the individual to the local hardware store? If the latter is the case, then if this does not occur due to an expectation that we provided the initial installation, who will deal with any impact?
- 3.8 Perhaps the suggestion might be that we find this by replacing wholetime employees with on-call staff. However, those individuals do not provide a permanent and continuous availability and any additional work would have to be costed. It also ignores the real problem of recruiting and retaining enough staff given the demographics of obtaining individuals in communities where the population migrates away during the day, has little employment locally and there are high levels of turn-over due to the lack of operational calls.
- 3.9 Innovative and creative staffing is clearly the way forward and NFRS will continue to develop its options in this way, so it is sad to see that progress has not been adequately reflected and that the solution appears to be an equally "traditional" option.

4. COLLABORATION

- 4.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service fought a battle all the way to the High Court twice to implement a joint co-responding scheme with East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) in 2006. To criticise the Service for "patchy" implementation of such schemes is a difficult pill for this Authority to take.
- 4.2 Not once during this process did CFRA or DCLG voice their opinion.
- 4.3 In 2004, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire FRS stopped a joint control centre business model on the basis of a promised regional control centre by 2006. Almost 10 years later, having waited for that project to complete and having watched the government waste half a billion pounds, the Services, along with Leicestershire, are now delivering a project.
- 4.4 As this submission response is drafted, EMAS are moving into FRS premises in Nottinghamshire as part of a co-location initiative. The savings for EMAS might be considerable, but the income for NFRS will be less than a 1% increase on Council Tax per annum! To imply that such initiatives will provide efficiencies enough to impact on the current budget reductions is financially floored.
- 4.5 NFRS buys its CFB Training from Lincolnshire, with obvious efficiencies, and shared a finance system with Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Payroll and

pensions provision, and fleet maintenance are all outsourced. These are not arrangements which have been driven by a reduction in grant, but provisions that are long standing and periodically tested for cost effectiveness.

- 4.6 This Authority does collaborate, has tried to collaborate more, but is often stifled by legal complexities. Any “duplication of effort” on our part is not through the want of trying and to infer in the report that there is a “lack of political appetite” to collaboration and mergers is floored.
- 4.7 The report is also conspicuous in its lack of reporting around positive collaboration that has had a significant benefit to the community.
- 4.8 Engaging to young people, not only through fire safety legislation, but also through work with charities such as the Prince’s Trust and Duke of Edinburgh, deliver positive outcomes for young people.
- 4.9 Working with Age Concern and Dementia UK is having an impact on protecting an ageing population. The added value of this work to the UK tax payer must be worth millions in terms of crime or health statistics, yet there is no attempt in the report to even acknowledge this.
- 4.10 If this was a review of FRS efficiency, then it should have looked at all aspects including the wider benefits.

5. DRIVING EFFICIENCY

- 5.1 NFRA is disappointed that the report identifies that the major driver for change has been the reduction in central government funding. If Sir Ken’s review had been more in-depth rather than a superficial overview it would have discovered vast attempts by fire authorities to innovate and improve services whilst becoming more efficient.
- 5.2 NFRS has a good track record of projects that are based upon invest to save principles (green technology), has a well-established trading company, despite continuous challenges from the wider fire industry, and has demonstrated clear leadership in its achievements since the revised Act and Framework came into being back in 2004.
- 5.3 We would not want to repeat the achievements already stated in this submission, but believe we can demonstrate clear evidence of driving efficiency through our approach to service delivery.

6. THE FUTURE

- 6.1 The final aspect of Sir Ken’s report lays the question of what is the future for the Fire and Rescue Service. Put simply, this Authority sees the key challenge of maintaining the highly respected service with a significantly diminishing budget.
- 6.2 We agree that the savings identified will probably be unlikely to be sufficient to maintain the current Service and have already started the work on our IRMP to change the public’s expectations of us.

- 6.3 Greater collaboration, co-working, co-location of ambulances, all form part of our approach, along with changing the public's expectation that a fire appliance will respond immediately to every eventuality. The latter aspect we believe is a sad reflection of how government sees the work we do, but unfortunately is a reality.
- 6.4 This Authority will not shirk its responsibility as it has never done, and will not veer from its innovative approach. Our detailed analysis shows us that areas of risk from fire are still areas of risk, and we will concentrate our efforts on the most vulnerable in our society.

7. SUMMARY

- 7.1 NFRA reserves the right to defend that this submission is parochial in its content. This is because we believe the generalist view taken by Sir Ken Knight in his review has failed to reflect the efforts made to develop and evolve this Service.
- 7.2 The media sound-bite approach of the final publication is a simple screen to hide the massive impact that the budget reductions will have on the Service, both locally and nationally. We hope government does not live to regret their actions.

Councillor Darrell Pulk
Chair of the Fire Authority
on behalf of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

02 August 2013