

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	30TH SEPTEMBER 2010
REPORT NO.	CFO/160/10
REPORTING OFFICER:	ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE & TREASURER
CONTACT OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	
SUBJECT:	AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT ON BUSINESS CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

**APPENDIX A TITLE BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT:
ATTACHED –HARD COPY THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Purpose of Report

1. An Audit Commission report has concluded that communities in Merseyside can expect “business as usual” in the event of a business interruption. This report introduces the findings of the Audit Commission’s report “Business Continuity Management: The Fire and Rescue Service” published on 15th September (attached as Appendix A).

Recommendation

2. That Members: note the findings of the report

Executive Summary

Communities on Merseyside can be confident that normal services will be delivered during any business disruption because Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has good business continuity arrangements in place, as detailed in the Audit Commission’s recent report.

Introduction & Background

3. On 15th September the Audit Commission published a report of their findings following an assessment of the business continuity arrangements in place in all 46 Fire and Rescue Services in England. The assessment was based on the responses to a self assessment questionnaire and was originally requested by CLG to form part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment 2010. With the abolition of CAA in May the report has been published separately. CLG requested the work to assess whether, in the absence of a national business continuity resource, all fire and rescue services could continue to deliver their services in the event of a major business disruption.
4. The report gives examples of the types of disruptions it considered and these include:
 - Extreme weather preventing staff getting to work
 - Industrial Action
 - High levels of staff absence – e.g. a pandemic
 - Other reasons such as power cuts, ICT failure and fire
5. The report includes nine case studies of Services that are demonstrating good practice in business continuity management and Merseyside Fire and Rescue is one of those included (page 9). The case study states that “Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has good business continuity plans in place that are well tested”. It goes on to describe the “business as usual” approach that was successful during the last period of strike action. MFRS is also mentioned in the case study about the Cumbria FRS approach to dealing with flooding, which demonstrates the way that MFRS works with others to offer resilience on a regional and national level (page 20). The overall summary of the assessment of MFRS’ arrangements is included on page 37.
6. Overall, the report concludes that most FRS have satisfactory arrangement in place but that there are areas for improvement that the FRS nationally should consider and MFRS will take account of these when developing its own business continuity plans. Those areas are detailed below:

“Fire and rescue services should:

- Involve local people more in deciding what an appropriate level of service means for them;
- Be clear about how plans for emergency cover meet those requirements;
- Carry out further testing and exercising of plans to assure services that they have enough capacity and skills to provide enough cover;
- Collaborate further with partners and other fire and rescue services to build capacity and maximise resilience in a way that shows the best value for money for local people;

- Develop tools and self-help guidance within the fire and rescue service to help services be even better prepared; and
- Look outside the Service at the plans of others, particularly in the NHS and other emergency services, to see if more can be learned.”

Equality & Diversity Implications

7. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

8. There are no financial implications arising from this report. It is suggested that the Service’s self sufficient arrangements in providing services with existing resources during a business disruption is an example of good value for money.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

9. There are no environmental implications arising from this report. All the business continuity arrangements put in place by the Authority are subject to the Service’s rigorous risk assessment processes.

Contribution to Achieving Our Purpose:

“To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community”

10. The ability to provide a self sufficient service to our communities during periods of business disruption is an integral part of the overall delivery of our purpose.

***Glossary of Terms**

CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessments
CLG	Communities and Local Government