



<b>Title</b>	<b>Chief Fire Officer Report – Adult and Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Chief Fire Officer Suite of Services	Trading Standards, Civil Protection and Coroners Services
Date	07.03.2023
Purpose of Report	To provide a strategic update on issues and key areas of service provision, opportunities and challenges

## Trading Standards

### Response to matters arising

#### Sheep in the Forest of Dean

1. Further to concerns raised by Cllr Hale, I can confirm that Trading Standards are working with partner agencies to address issues concerning sheep roaming outside the permitted areas in the Forest of Dean.
2. Where sheep are causing a nuisance in settlements for example, Bream or Parkend, this is not the responsibility of Trading Standards as these sheep are within the boundaries of the statutory grazing area and TS have no powers in relation to nuisance.
3. Trading Standards can only take action where there is clear evidence of breaches of legislation within their remit; this maybe missing ear tags, signs of illness or disease or any other circumstances which may cause distress to the animals.
4. The service does not have a full -time presence in the Forest of Dean and as such must prioritise response to reports of concerns, especially when the information is hours or days old.
5. In order to assist we ask that anyone witnessing an animal they believe to be in distress to call 01452 887666 immediately with as much information as possible around the circumstances and location.

#### Scams

6. Following the report by Cllr Cody of an online scam perpetrated against an Afghan refugee, Trading Standards have made contact with GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) via the Fire and

Rescue Service, we have been able to provide scam awareness material translated into relevant languages including Arabic and discussed how these and the Friends against Scams (<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/> ) program can be used to promote awareness though different communities. There is an open offer for GARAS to feed back on the material and on how Trading Standards can generally be more accessible.

### **Operational overview**

7. Year to date the service has received 6900 complaints and enquiries, as with the August report this is lower than the same period in 21/22, the different reflects the increased demand on the service during the pandemic period.
8. Comparison with 2019/20 shows a difference of only 21 complaints and enquiries suggesting demand is consistent with pre-Covid levels.
9. Officers have carried out 969 inspections of premises (including re-visits) compared to 858 over the corresponding period in 21/22.
10. The increased number of inspections reflects greater focus on market surveillance and intelligence led project work,
  - Cost of living related work re safety of second-hand items, especially electrical goods
  - Cost of living/protection work to individuals who have been scammed including public engagement sessions at banks and post offices. Including the ongoing return of approximate £7,500 given out to scammers but recovered before it reached them.
  - Sampling of takeaway curries to check they were not being sold with peanuts in them when the business was informed that the buyer had an allergy. All samples have returned with a satisfactory result.
  - Test purchase activities for the availability of age-related disposable e cigarettes to people under the age of 18.

### **Finance and performance**

11. The service budget remains on target.
12. Remaining inspections and project work are on course for completion by year end and KPIs are on target.

### **Risk**

13. Further to previous reports that the 2022/23 establishment of qualified food officers competent to deliver official food controls is insufficient, we are pleased to report that an MTFs bid for one additional member of staff was successful, recruitment is underway. This does not totally ameliorate the risk and further

MTFS bids will be considered to provide additional enforcement resource and general resilience.

14. Concerns remain around succession planning and the aging profile of the Service. The recruitment currently underway is the first step in addressing this concern.

## Civil Protection Team

### Operational Response

15. Incidents supported Jan - Feb 2023 (*CPT Duty Officer on call 24/7*)
  - Sewerage Issue – Cirencester
  - 4x4 support to resident – Tewkesbury
  - Burst Water Main – Gloucester
  - Domestic Fire – Structural Engineer support required
  - Water Supply Incident - Burst main that feeds Donnington Reservoir, Moreton in the Marsh

**Response Plans** - The following response plans have been / are being updated

16. **Highways Emergency Welfare Plan** (*Complete*) - This document provides a guide for Gloucestershire LRF to manage the provision of emergency welfare where the highway cannot be cleared expeditiously and the resulting congestion poses a threat to life or unacceptable discomfort.
17. **Cheltenham Racecourse - Local Authority Off-Site Emergency Plan** (*Complete*) - This plan provides an overview of the local authority's emergency response arrangements to any incidents occurring at Cheltenham Racecourse that require local authority involvement in an offsite response.
18. **GCC Critical Incident Plan** (*draft being updated following Exercise Aurum held in November 2022*) - This plan will provide guidance to GCC Gold group (Strategic leads in incident response) on coordinating the County Councils response to an incident that affects service delivery (ie: loss of building, power outage, cyber-attack etc). This plan incorporates a list of critical services (collated from the submitted business impact analysis), order of priority, timeframe and requirements to re-instate.
19. **Management of the Deceased Plan** - (inc: Emergency Mortuary, Excess Deaths, Mass Fatalities – Full revision underway) - This suite of plans provides guidance on the multi-agency management of an incident that results in mass fatalities / excess deaths (ie: Pandemic, large scale accident, malicious event etc...). Working with colleagues from Coroners, Glos Police and District councils.

**Training & Exercise** – The following exercises have been delivered

**20. GCC Silver response exercise** (Delivered February 2023)

Testing GCC ‘Silver’ groups coordination of the tactical response to an incident affecting / requiring support from GCC.

**Business Continuity Management (BCM)**

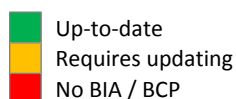
21. As previously reported, the programme of business continuity management (BCM) work approved by CLT in Q2 2020-21, which was extended through to December 2022, has completed its project phase. However, as part of business-as-usual (BAU), oversight and monitoring of compliance with business continuity policy will be continued.

22. Moving forward there will also be a focus on exercising business continuity plans and ensuring that business continuity remains a regular BAU activity for plan owners across the council.

23. Overall position for GCC (incl. GFRS) (data correct as at 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023):-



(Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding)



- **+6%** increase in business impact analyses (BIAs) up-to-date since the last report (January 2023: 65%)
- **-2%** fall in business continuity plans (BCPs) up-to-date since the last report (January 2023: 52%)

24. Although most teams across the council have now engaged with the BCM process, albeit with some business impact analyses (BIAs) and business continuity plans (BCPs) still awaited, a key concern is that a significant proportion of plan owners who have previously completed BIAs and BCPs are not complying with policy and are not keeping their BCPs – in particular – up-to-date.

25. Following a strategic level response exercise in November 2022 for members of CLT, at which the status of BCPs was discussed, further information on non-

compliance with business continuity policy was shared with the Deputy Chief Executive so that conversations could be held with the relevant Directors and Executive Directors to help ensure that attention is given to business continuity management.

26. It is intended that an updated BCM paper will be presented to CLT shortly, with a key question to be raised being whether CLT is happy to accept the current risk position around preparedness for disruption or whether it will wish further action to be taken to improve levels of compliance with BCM policy.

## **Finance**

27. The 2022/23 budget for the Civil Protection Team is set at £314k (£218k base plus £96k income from SLA's. x4 staff members funded from base budget & x2 staff members funded via SLA income. (Note: Following the pay award the base budget has increased by £13k for the remainder of 22/23)

## **Risk**

28. Despite three recruitment campaigns the team are struggling to recruit to vacant positions, this has resulted in not being able to fulfill the requirements of two service level agreements with district councils to provide emergency management support.
29. With the current resource challenges a full review of the team's structure, service level agreement commitments is due to be undertaken. A paper outlining options will be taken to the Corporate Leadership Team for further discussion.

## **Coroners Team**

### **Operational overview**

30. The winter months are traditionally the busiest time for the coroner service and this year has been no different with January and February continuing the high number of referrals seen throughout December and over the festive period. Coroner Officers are working hard to process this work and keep families updated on progress.
31. All partners involved in the death management system experience body storage capacity issues during the winter months. The coroner service proactively procured 32 additional storage bays which helped capacity and resilience and were present throughout December and January. 12 of these bays remain housed within the body store at the Coroner Court and will remain in the body store until the end of 2023.

32. The service is currently experiencing a backlog in deceased persons requiring a post mortem examination. During December and January this was the longest the service has ever had since the service moved to Barnwood in 2012. These numbers have eased somewhat through February but the service remains very busy and the mortuary team continue to utilise every opportunity to undertake examinations with duty pathologists to keep this list manageable.

#### Financial

33. As predicted at the start of the year, the service is overspent by £47k. This additional expense relates to additional fees payable to pathologists which was introduced in September. This is a continuous cost and will total c.75k over an entire financial year.
34. The service is pursuing an MTFs bid to ease this pressure and add additional funding to the baseline budget to cover these costs. This bid has been successful in the MTFs process so far.

#### Risk

35. Lack of duty pathologists available to undertake coronial work remains the largest risk to the service. This is a national problem and the Chief Coroner for England & Wales is actively looking into it. The Senior APT continues to work with duty pathologists to ensure her team are flexible to the needs and availability of pathologists. Saturday sessions were in use during December and January but have since dropped off as numbers have stabilised.
36. As part of the MTFs process the department has submitted a bid to increase the level of coroner cover and resilience in the county due to this increased risk. Subject to final Cabinet approval it is the intention to add an Area Coroner's position within the structure.
37. The Coroner's Court Centre Manager left the service to take up another post at the end of January. At this moment in time, this position has not yet been filled.