



Title	Chief Fire Officer Report to Adult and Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Chief Fire Officer Suite of Services	Trading Standards, Civil Protection and Coroners Services
Date	16 May 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

1. The committee will be aware of ongoing issues with sheep in the Forest of Dean; as previously explained, where reports are made in a timely manner and evidence can be gathered, this service is able to respond to matters within its remit.

I can report that 75 sheep persistently straying onto the A48 near Blakeney, outside the statutory boundaries of the historic forest were taken into possession over 4 occasions between March 20 and April 12, a Court Order has been obtained to sell the sheep (any monies remaining after deduction of expenses will be returned to the owner). This was achieved with the co-operation of Gloucestershire Police and veterinary surgeons from the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

This action was possible under the Animal Welfare Act as the presence of the sheep on a fast-moving road, was considered to present an unacceptable risk that the animals were likely to suffer if their circumstances did not change. Animals had previously been injured or killed following impact with vehicles and there was a high likelihood this would happen again.

Operational overview

2. In 22/23 the Service received a total of 7585 complaints and enquiries, compared to 9086 in 21/22, the decrease reflects the return to 'normal' increased demand on the service during the pandemic period. A better comparison is with 2019/20 which was when demand was 7631.

3. Officers have carried out 1088 inspections of premises (including re-visits) compared to 977 over the corresponding period in 21/22. As previously advised this increased number of inspections reflects greater focus on market surveillance and intelligence led project work.
4. The MTFS bid for an additional member of staff was successful, recruitment is currently underway for a trainee officer, once in post, this service will have 4 members of staff undergoing professional training, developing a combination of new and existing staff. Further recruitment will be necessary for effective succession planning.
5. On March 31, 2023, the Food Standards Agency confirmed that the formal Covid Recovery Plan had been brought to an end and that it is their expectation in 23/24 that delivery of official food control returns to normal as prescribed in the Food Law Code of Practice. As identified at point 10 below this service does not have sufficient qualified and competent resource to deliver the level of interventions required by the Food Standards Agency; steps are in place to mitigate that risk until such time as newly recruited officers achieve competency. It is expected that the Food Standards Agency will continue to monitor the performance of this service, any feedback or concerns from that process will be reported back to this committee.

Significant results

Illegal tobacco

6. Following an investigation into the retail sale of illegal tobacco, Officers seized 1551 packs of cigarettes and 186 pouches of hand rolling tobacco as non-compliant with plain packaging and health warning requirements from 2 shops on Barton Street, Gloucester.

The cigarettes and tobacco had been stored in vehicles parked close to the shops; this is one of many sophisticated concealments our Officers come across in attempts to avoid detection. Two vehicles were seized as they had been used in commission of a crime.

The work of the Service tackling the sale of illegal tobacco informed a multi-agency raid timed to take place 5 days later. This service seized a further 1525 packs of cigarettes and 194 pouches of hand rolling tobacco, partner agencies uncovered immigration issues and seized Class A and Class B drugs.

The cigarettes and tobacco seized by Trading Standards Officers over the two days had a 'street value' of £29,910 and represented £30,877 evaded duty lost to HMRC.

Under age sales of vapes

7. Following an increased number of reports that children are purchasing disposable e-cigarettes (vapes), an age-related product due to the presence of nicotine. Trading Standards carried out two test purchase operations, in August and December 22/January 2023.

The first operation had a failure rate of 20%, 6 shops of 29 tested sold vapes to young people. Officers worked with those businesses, providing access to materials which support them operate a challenge 25 policy.

The repeat exercise had a failure rate of 15%, 2 shops out of 13 tested sold vapes to young people. One of the shops was provided with access to materials which supported them operate a challenge 25 policy as it was the first time they had failed. One shop repeatedly sold vapes to the underage volunteer, an investigation is ongoing.

Finance and performance

8. The service came in on budget for 2022/2023
9. KPIs were met, surveys and projects were completed on time. A full break down will be annexed to the next report.

Risks

10. Further to previous reports that the 2022/23 establishment of qualified food officers competent to deliver official food controls in insufficient, we are pleased to report that an MTFS bid for one additional member of staff was successful, recruitment is underway. A short-term lack of capacity exists while new staff work towards their food qualification (qualification is a statutory requirement for any authorised food officer), a contractor has been engaged to fill this gap in 2023/24. The situation will be reviewed for 24/25.
11. General concerns remain around succession planning and the aging profile of the Service. The recruitment currently underway is the first step in addressing this concern.
12. This service relies on business-critical software which currently only operates properly on the citrix (blue) layer. Given the GCC ICT ambition to migrate all software to a cloud-based solution there is a risk that business delivery will be compromised if this software is not upgraded and migrated. An MTFS bid will be submitted in 2023/24.

Civil Protection Team

13. **Operational Response (24/7 Duty Officer)**
The following incidents were supported by CPT during March/April 2023

- Landslip blocking the road & access to properties @ The Wharf. Coombe Hill, Tewkesbury
- Domestic House Fire, Cotswold – Structural engineer
- Vehicle collision with domestic property, Gloucester – Structural engineer

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

14. **Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) Operations Order** *(Being drafted)* –
 - a. The Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) is held annually in July at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire and this year will take place from the 14th – 16th July.
 - b. RIAT is the biggest military air show in the world, with the event consisting of hundreds of aircraft from numerous nations and 2 miles of static displays, ground exhibits and activities. It is the largest event for Gloucestershire with over 144,000 visitors expected to attend.
 - c. As with any major event, it is necessary to plan for responding to an emergency potentially occurring at RIAT. The aim of this Operation Order is to detail the Local Authority and Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service emergency response arrangements for the period during which RIAT is operational.

15. **GCC Critical Incident Plan** *(draft complete to be circulated for comment)* - 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.

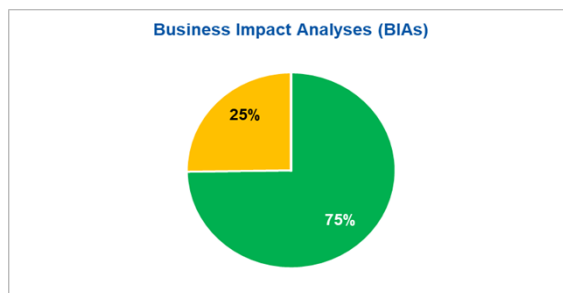
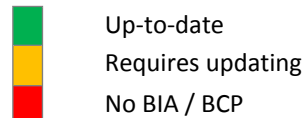
16. **Management of the Deceased Plan** - *(inc: Emergency Mortuary, Excess Deaths, Mass Fatalities – Draft complete to be circulated for comment)* - This suite of plans provides guidance on the multi-agency management of an incident that results in mass fatalities / excess deaths (ie: Pandemic, large scale accident, malicious event etc...). Working with colleagues from Coroners, Glos Police and District councils.

Business Continuity Management (BCM)

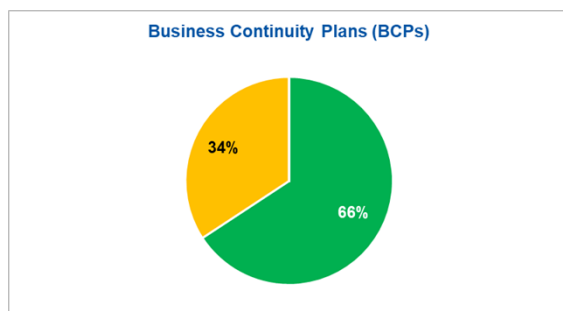
17. The programme of business continuity management (BCM) work approved by CLT in Q2 2020-21, which was extended through to December 2022, has completed its project phase. Oversight and monitoring of compliance with business continuity policy is continuing as part of business-as-usual (BAU) risk management. In addition to reporting on business impact analyses (BIAs) and business continuity plans (BCPs), moving forward there will also be a focus on

exercising business continuity plans, with compliance information on testing and exercising to be included as part of this report in due course.

Overall BIA and BCP position for GCC (incl. GFRS) (*data correct as at 17th April 2023*):-



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



- **+4%** increase in business impact analyses (BIAs) up-to-date since the last report (February 2023: 71%)
- **+16%** increase in business continuity plans (BCPs) up-to-date since the last report (February 2023: 50%)

18. Although the overall compliance position continues to improve, albeit slowly, a key concern is that this position has not been reached without substantial prompting.

19. 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, meaning that business continuity is still not an embedded process for many managers and Heads of Service.

20. This was discussed at the April 2023 meeting of the corporate BCM Assurance Board and will be reflected in a forthcoming CLT paper within

which recommendations will be made for Directors and Executive Directors to ensure “top-down” management action is taken to encourage plan owners to pay regular attention to business continuity management activities.

21. In consultation with the Chief Fire Officer and owner of Strategic Risk SR10.4 Business Continuity, as part of work to formally determine a target risk score for SR10.4 it has been agreed that target levels of 85% for BIA and BCP compliance will be adopted (also ratified at the above-mentioned BCM Assurance Board meeting).

Debriefs

22. The County Council experienced a P1 outlook incident in March 2023. In line with good practice, Digital Information & Communications Technology (DICT) review P1 incidents as a matter of course so as to capture learnings and improvements.

**Priority (P1) – an unplanned critical event, any faults that prevent the effective use of any major ICT Services or prevents absolutely necessary business transactions for example: Total loss of email, Internet etc...*

23. Given the extent and perceived impact of this incident, it was agreed that a debrief involving a wider group of stakeholders should also be undertaken so as to capture good practice, and any wider lessons learnt, to help inform future response.
24. CPT facilitated a structured debrief session in April, the findings are being compiled and the draft report will be forwarded to DICT to agree recommendations and actions.

Exercises

25. On the 28, 29 and 30 of March, Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum (GLRF) along with 33 other LRFs was involved with the National Tier 1 Exercise Mighty Oak in support and development of the response and recovery arrangements to a National Power Outage (NPO).
26. Mighty Oak was delivered by the Emergency Planning College (EPC) on behalf of the government focussing on testing the governments notification process via the Resilient Satellite network (RSN), activation, business continuity, welfare and public communications arrangements both at a national and local level.
27. The reality of an NPO is that it would greatly limit how we can respond as a county council to its impacts. Without means of communication, information gathering will be restricted, communication routes would be limited, staffing levels would be reduced. All this will hinder how we respond and assist our communities and those who are vulnerable.

28. As a key partner of the LRF, the County Council participated in the exercise over the 3 days with many officers from across the council attending and contributing to the discussions. The exercise injects tested and challenged our current level of preparedness both as a county council as well as in the multi-agency arena.
29. In order to capture attendees reflections a debrief question set has been circulated to all the county council officers who attended. Feedback will be collated and a report will be written to capture learning and actions for improvement.

Looking forward

30. The Civil Protection Team has faced challenges over the last few years in terms of resources and workload from external commitments. This has resulted in the team not having sufficient capacity to be able to support the county council as much as we would like in terms of emergency preparedness and resilience.
31. In addition retention of staff has been difficult, coupled with the difficulties faced in recruiting to vacancies this has put pressure on the existing team members.
32. This has been recognised and an improvement plan is being scoped to be presented to CLT for agreement. As part of this journey the Civil Protection Team has moved from the Community Safety Directorate into the Corporate Resources Directorate.

Coroners Team

Operational overview

33. The winter months are traditionally the busiest time for the coroner service and this year has been no different with March and April continuing the high number of referrals. Coroner Officers are continuing to work hard to process this work alongside the new installation of Civica Cloud. The increase in the national death rate has and continues to put all staff under pressure physically and mentally.
34. 12 extra bays remain housed within the body store at the Coroner Court and will remain in the body store until the end of 2023
35. 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

36. Funding has been secured for an Area Coroner to support the Senior Coroner, currently being advertised, as is a Coroners Operational Officer in the absence of the previous manager's 18-month secondment period.
37. Funding was not secured in the last budget for an additional Coroner's Officer and an apprentice Anatomical Pathology Technician. The service will pursue an MTFS bid to ease this pressure and add additional funding to the baseline budget to cover these costs.

Risk

38. 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.
39. Pressure on current staff across the Coroner's service with the increase in reportable deaths and post mortem examinations. Risk due to injury, stress and general wellbeing.