

## **LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

Meeting to be held on 24 April 2017

### **UK INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM (UK ISAR)**

Contact for further information: Assistant Chief Fire Officer David Russel

Telephone: 01772 866801

#### **Executive Summary**

To inform Members on existing commitments to the UK International Search and Rescue Team (UK ISAR) and additional responsibilities following the introduction of a new logistics role supporting the UK Emergency Medical Team.

#### **Recommendation**

The CFA approve the continued involvement and commitment to UK ISAR and support the wider functions as identified within the briefing paper.

#### **Background**

The international framework for search and rescue activities, including policies and operational guidelines, is organised through the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which is a global network of more than 80 countries including the UK. As a strong humanitarian actor, the UK sponsors a high value search and rescue capability by supplying a rapidly deployable world class search and rescue team, which aligns to international standards endorsed by the UN General Assembly Resolution (GAR 57/150) "Strengthening the effectiveness and coordination of international urban search and rescue assistance" in 2002.

Requests for the provision and use of fire and rescue sector assets to respond to humanitarian disasters and emergencies overseas will be considered and ultimately commissioned for deployment by the Department for International Development (DFID) as the Lead Government Department for UK ISAR.

UK ISAR is a co-operative of fifteen Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), formed in 1993 (following the issuing of DCOL 9/92 item 13 (United Kingdom Fire Service Search and Rescue Team). Each Service contributes competent personnel and equipment plus arrangements to provide these resources when requested. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) acts as the Lead Authority for the UK ISAR Team, on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council which will replace the Chief Fire Officers' Association involvement with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has been a member of UK ISAR since 1993 and can be requested to mobilise to sudden on-set disasters (mainly earthquakes), participate in training/exercising and undertake international capacity building programmes in disaster prone countries. Lancashire has over the years deployed to Macedonia, Turkey, Mozambique, India, Algeria, Kashmir, Haiti and Japan.

The deployment of the UK ISAR team enables survivors to be located and rescued in situations where local teams may not have the technical capacity to, and/or may not be able to prioritise over multiple other critical demands in other affected areas where there may be a higher chance of a successful rescue in the timeframe.

UK ISAR deploys on average every 2.8 years to disaster missions all over the world; the most recent being Indonesia, Haiti, Japan, New Zealand, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Nepal. The team operates on a 4 month on/off rota system that includes search dogs, medics, engineers and veterinary personnel.

The team mainly deploys under the auspices of the United Nations but it also supports the UK's commitment to the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and offers Heavy (70 persons) and Medium (48 persons) modules. It is one of 47 UN classified Search & Rescue teams from across the world.

Lancashire FRS currently commits 13 personnel to the overall team strength of 246.

### **Capacity Building**

Global disaster statistics show that the vast majority of high impact earthquakes occur in less developed countries, where local response structures are usually primitive and lacking funding training and equipment.

UK ISAR undertakes capacity building programmes in many countries including India, Pakistan, Lebanon and Tajikistan in order to train local first responders and ultimately improve survivability. UK ISAR personnel also undertake training and mentoring of other international search and rescue teams, and carry out peer assessments as part of an INSARAG classification system.

### **Emergency Medical Logistics team**

In February 2016, DFID requested UK ISAR to provide the logistics support for a new UK Emergency Medical Team (EMT).

The UKEMT is a rapidly deployable Governmental field hospital that is sent following sudden onset disasters anywhere in the world aiming to be fully operational within 72 hours. It is a multi-stakeholder team with 4 main partners. UKMed facilitate the release of the field hospital's clinical staff from the NHS and provide them with relevant training; Handicap International as a partner of UKMed and provide rehabilitation expertise; UK ISAR provide the logistics and site operations specialism for the field hospital platform; and DFID via CHASE OT deliver the infrastructure and overarching management.

All EMTs must by definition adhere to World Health Organisation (WHO) minimum standards. The UKEMT completed a verification programme in December 2016 and are officially recognised as one of 6 accredited global EMTs.

The EMT has the ability to remain in country for up to three months however; FRS staff will be rotated on a 3 weekly basis (maximum).

The team is in a developmental phase and is under considerable pressure to declare an operational capability.

Lancashire FRS has committed 5 personnel to support the EMT with personnel to develop equipment and training modules. This is expected to take 4 months commencing January 2017. Personnel will also be required to undertake a series of training modules, which will also be delivered over a 4-month period. The time requirement for the delivery of the training is still to be defined.





### **Staff Implications**

Each team normally deploys with up to 5 personnel for search and rescue deployments, and are generally engaged in operations for between 7 to 10 days.

For the EMT UK ISAR will send an initial team of up to 25 staff to build the hospital infrastructure and repatriate up to 50% of the team after 7 days or when the hospital is fully functional. It is envisaged that each service will provide up to a maximum of 3 staff, however this will depend upon whether the team deploys in a search and rescue and EMT logistics role at the same time.

Membership of the ISAR team is voluntary for all team members and as such, individuals are expected to commit a considerable amount of personal time to maintain competence and attend events.

### **Legal Implications**

Fire and Rescue Services in the UK have a statutory responsibility to deal with fires and road traffic collisions pursuant to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Each Fire Authority has the power to use the resources primarily provided for firefighting to deal with non-fire incidents. These may include maritime, aeronautical and land based search and rescue operations. It is for each Fire Authority to set its own policy with regard to ISAR operations and these will vary around the UK.

## **Financial Implications and Value For Money**

DFID and UK ISAR have agreed a 4-year programme of financial support to the ISAR and EMLT roles. The Emergency Deployment Teams (EDT) Programme (Project Number: 202878) commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 and will run until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The DFID budget covers the cost of maintaining equipment, training levels and commitments to INSARAG activities. It does not cover salary and related costs for team personnel; these are met by individual services.

Personnel and travel costs associated to operational deployments are reimbursed by DFID and based upon agreed backfill rates. Costs associated to capacity building and INSARAG support inclusive of travel, food and accommodation are reimbursed from central funding, however Services are requested to support extraction costs.

Set against a backdrop of financial uncertainty and continued FRS budget reductions, LFRS have been able to operate one of the leading heavy USAR teams in the world. The budget contribution provided by DFID allows UK ISAR to maintain and develop its competence and capability.

## **Risk Management, Health & Safety and Environmental Implications**

Security, political and humanitarian impact assessments are carried out prior to any deployments. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is always consulted prior to a decision being made to send staff abroad.

All UK ISAR training and operations are fully risk assessed and carried out under supervision by appropriately trained and competent managers. Team personnel have the following insurance provisions in place: Employer Liability, Public Liability, Business Travel, Personal Effects, and Medical Repatriation. UK ISAR team management ensures that insurances are valid before deploying individuals overseas.

In recognising its duties under statutes, regulations and codes of practice, the UK ISAR team conducts operations effectively and efficiently whilst ensuring stringent standards of health, safety, security and welfare compliance. The team provides a dedicated Safety and Security Officer to ensure effective implementation in the field by ensuring that high standards are embedded as part of its daily service delivery and function.

Individual risk assessments are maintained for all of the equipment associated with the SAR and EMT elements. A full medical screening takes place before, during and on return from any international mobilisation. This includes critical incident debriefing/diffusion.

## **Contribution to Our Purpose: Making Lancashire Safer**

Search and rescue deployments promote good inter-departmental relations and co-operation between DFID, FCO, Home Office and the Cabinet Office, all of which are involved in the UK ISAR deployments.

There is anecdotal evidence that the high profile rescues of individuals and associated personal interest stories also help generate significant public support, and high levels interest from many areas, including the Royal Family, Government, regional and national media. This in turn provides a high degree of pride for local communities, the Fire Authority and wider work force.

Search and rescue deployments generate high profile positive publicity, being highly visible and often dramatic. Teams wear the ISAR logo on corporate wear and PPE and often give press interviews which generate high levels of positive media exposure, promoting the professionalism of individual teams and the wider Fire and Rescue Service. Benefits include having the knowledge that we, as an organisation, have contributed to support disaster affected communities, which often resonates with our ethnic groups, and may help promote recruitment from underrepresented groups.

Team members are often highly motivated and promote a high level of team ethos within the organisation. These attitudes in turn help to improve wider personal motivation within the organisation. Skills and experience gained by our team members in some of the world's worst disasters are directly transferrable and lead to enhanced levels of operational capability, and increased service delivery.

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### **Environmental Impact**

None.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None.

## Human Resource Implications

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## Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact David Russel Tel. 01772 866801
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		