

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

REVIEW OF THE REPORT INTO THE CATHEDRAL YARD, EXETER FIRE OF 28TH OCTOBER 2016

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

On 28th October 2016, DSFRS responded to and undertook a complex firefighting operation at Cathedral Yard in Exeter.

This was one of the largest fires in recent years for DSFRS and resulted in the loss of a historic building. The operation prevented the fire from spreading to cause significant damage to numerous other buildings.

Thankfully there was no loss of life or serious injury during this operation.

There is nothing to suggest that any individual staff member from DSFRS displayed anything other than extreme professionalism during this incident. However, media outlets have alleged that there is evidence to suggest that during the operation there were command decisions that impacted upon the effectiveness of the firefighting and that these decisions have not been acknowledged in the official report released by DSFRS.

AIM OF THE REVIEW

The aim of the review is to consider the official report issued by DSFRS and report on:

- The process of compiling the report
- The range of evidence gathered to substantiate the report
- Whether any evidence corroborates the allegations that the Command decisions ignored information that may have affected firefighting operations

STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW

The review will be carried out by a peer Fire & Rescue Service through the NFCC to ensure an unbiased but sector knowledge approach is effected.

The review will consider the official report released by DSFRS and all evidence held by DSFRS in relation to the compilation of the report including statements, incident logs, photographs, video imagery and notes made by the report authors. In addition, the review will consider the organisational learning gleaned from this incident and how that learning has been shared both internally and externally by DSFRS.

The review will aim to report initial findings to the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRS) on the 23rd January 2018.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

This review will seek to answer the following issues:

Was the process used in compiling the official report issued by DSFRS thorough, transparent and wide ranging enough to provide a comprehensive outcome?

Was the evidence gathered to compile the report relevant and of sufficient breadth to provide solid basis for the report?

Has any relevant evidence gathered been omitted, either accidentally or deliberately, from the report?

Is there any evidence that corroborates the media allegations that command decisions taken during the incident ignored information that may have had an effect on firefighting operations?

IN SCOPE

Foreseeable risk (i.e. what did D&SFRS know about the site prior to the Incident)

- Previous interactions between site and DSFRS (Prevention, Protection and Response)
- Recording Systems
- Data held on property by DSFRS
- What SSRI Records existed at the time of incident and was this used
- Heritage plan for these types of sites and how this is factored into IRMP (Pre-Incident)
- Any 'missed opportunities' prior to incident that may have improved the outcome of this incident in terms of damage.

Policy

- What Policies existed at the time which were used to deal with this incident.
- What Policies, if any, have been introduced since

Dynamic Risk Assessment at the Incident

- Actions, Decisions and Rationale of key people in the Command Structure
- DRA of Incident Commander (Hazards, Intel Sources etc)
- Risk Assessment of Sector Commanders (Hazard identification etc)
- Key Decision Log

Tactics Deployed at the Incident

- Plan
- Strategic Plan
- Tactical Plan

- Operational Plan (Confine timeline to the point in which the building was lost)
- Comparison to NOG

Resourcing

- Resource Plan of Incident Commanders (Confine timeline to the point in which the building was lost)
- Type of Resources and Make Ups (Speed and Weight of Attack)

Fire Investigation

- Review of Fire Investigation reports and arrangements for FI at this incident

Case Study Comparison

Have there been any other significant fires in DSFRS of the same type and if so what was different about this incident to the case study.

OUT OF SCOPE

- Any form of investigation into either the conduct or allegations made around this incident by employees or ex-employees of D&S FRS to external agencies or organisations (to BBC etc).
- Recommendations around any potential actions against individuals within DSFRS
- Determination of the cause of the fire.