



Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Pirehill
Please ask for Kay Johnson
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SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Wednesday 19 April 2017
2.15 pm
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Pirehill

A Chair and Vice-Chair's Preview (for Mrs K M Banks and Mr R J Clarke) has been arranged
for 1.45 pm

Howard Norris
Secretary to the Authority
6 April 2017

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017**
4. **Retained Availability**
Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response
5. **Response Standards**
Verbal report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

6. **Fire Control Update**

Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

7. **Slitting Mill Fire Update**

Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

8. **Items for Future Meetings**

To be reviewed by Members

11 July 2017	Performance Report
	Succession Planning to April 2021
	Working with HM Prison Service – Update
	Effective Scrutiny
Future Items date not yet specified	Previous Working Group updates
	Outcomes of the EXIT Programme
	Fire Cadets Overview and Update
	Impact of Safe and Well Visits (early 2018)

9. **Date of Next Meeting** – The next meeting of this Committee will be held on Tuesday 11 July 2017 at 2.15 pm

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE
HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2017**

Present: Banks, Mrs K M (in the Chair)

Clarke, R J
Day, W D
Irving, R A

Winnington, M J.
Wood, Miss C B

Apologies:- Chapman, F A and Davies, M W

Also in Attendance: Mr T Hyde, Director of Response, Mrs K Bourne, Corporate Manager, Business Intelligence Team, Mr S Ruckledge, Fire Engineer, Mrs D Singleton, Prevent Coordinator and Mr M White, Technical Fire Safety Lead.

PART ONE

Documents referred to in these minutes as schedules are not appended but will be attached to the signed copy of the minutes. Copies, or specific information in them, may be available on request.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2016

40. **RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee held on 7 December 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Performance Report
(Schedule 1)

41. Ms Bourne presented the Performance report to the Committee. With regard to “All Attended Incidents” the most common incident type in the year to date was False Alarm Good Intent, followed by Small Fires. In the third quarter the most common incident was False Alarm Good Intent, followed by Primary Fires. The drop in incidents in December was predominantly due to a decrease in False Alarm Good Intent followed by Small Fires.

Accidental Dwelling Fires overall were on a downward trend for the year to date. The rise in incidents during November and December has low and high severity fires occurring in the same proportion to October (40% high and 60% low). The most common cause was Cooking for both overall and low severity fires and Fault in Equipment for high severity fires. Mr Hyde advised that of a housing stock of approximately 250,000 there were approximately 50 incidents per month. Out of these 50 fires the Service rarely had to use a hose reel. He advised that the weakness of the statistics was that they did not show the impact of each fire eg cost and the impact of these fires seemed to be far less. He advised that historically there seemed to be an increase in fires when the weather became cooler eg chimney fires.

In the year to date Careless Handling had been the most common cause of Accidental Dwelling Fire Deaths and Injuries, being responsible for three of the four deaths and three of the injuries despite being cited as a causal factor in only 8% of Accidental Dwelling Fires overall. Human factors of falling asleep or having a medical condition were the two most

often cited factors which contributed to casualties caused by Careless Handling incidents (appearing in 5 of the 6 cases this year to date).

All fires caused by Careless Handling had a high proportion of additional contributory human factors involved, 25% of incidents involved a person with a disability or health issues, 10% cite falling asleep and 10% distraction as contributory factors to the fire. Cooking similarly had a high rate of contributory human factors involved in the cause of the fire, 35% of fires this year cited distraction, 15% a person with a health issue and 10% falling asleep. The Service still experienced a number calls to fires between the hours of midnight and 2 am relating to cooking fires.

Since the beginning of 2014 there had been an upward trend in Accidental Dwelling Fires where medical condition/illness was cited as a contributory behavioural factor.

Families with Needs made up the Mosaic type with the most Accidental Dwelling Fire incidents in the year to date. For low severity fires Families with Needs followed by Low Income Workers had the most incidents whereas for high severity fires Make Do and Move On followed by Renting a Room had the most incidents. These Mosaic types shared a number of key characteristics: Rented Housing, Low Income, Low Educational Standard, Poor Health and Smoking. Fatal Fire Conferences would feed in the Mosaic information. It was known that if a person was elderly, drank and smoked then they had an elevated risk of fire. Of the recent fatal fires none had working smoke alarms.

Members were advised of the fire death which happened on Boxing Day. The Coroner was still to establish the cause of death.

In response to a question Mr Hyde explained how the Coroner could determine the cause of death by examination of the nasal passages which would indicate whether or not they had died before or after the fire.

Accidental Dwelling Fires in rented properties for the Staffordshire Local Authority area this year were 49% of all incidents which was slightly higher than the rented housing stock for the area (47%). For Stoke on Trent the rate of fires in rented properties was 58% which was much higher than the rented housing stock for the area (45%).

Members discussed whether there was a trend for candle fires and were advised that there had been relatively few. Mr Hyde advised that many candles self-extinguished.

Members discussed the number of fires in rented properties which seemed higher than in owner occupied and were advised that this may be linked to the behaviours of occupiers. There was no evidence to show that there were fewer smoke alarms in rented properties compared to owner occupied.

Members held a discussion on the responsibility of landlords to fit smoke alarms. In response to a question Mr White advised that, under the new legislation it was the responsibility of landlords to have working smoke alarms in premises at the start of a tenure, after that it was the tenant's responsibility. Mr Hyde advised that people sometimes removed the batteries from the smoke detectors.

Members discussed the Slitting Mill Fire which was categorised as a "small fire". This fire had been a concern to Members. Mr Hyde advised that this was not classed as a "major incident" for the Service but it was for the District and County Council. Mr White advised that the Service was undertaking a piece of work with a Strategic Group including the

Environment Agency, City, District and County Council whose aim was to prioritise these sites in order to mitigate the risks and to make sure that all agencies were better prepared. They were also undertaking some work with the Civil Contingencies Unit. In response to a question Mr White advised that it was not always necessary for the Fire Service to get access to a "site" as this could be done through the Environment Agency.

Safe and Well visits showed performance operating close to expected performance and was more in control following the establishment of the CAT team (Community Advice Team). The number of Safe and Well Visits had reduced in December across all sections of the community as the new process became established. Safe and Well visits took longer to complete and this was expected to result in a reduction of the numbers of visits completed going forward. System issues may also have caused a backlog with paperwork during the December period.

There was a downward trend for Business Fires in the year to date. There had been a noticeable reduction in the number of business fire incidents in December across a range of business types. The most common business types to experience fires were Manufacturing Factories during 2016/17, all of which were accidental. In the year to date 57% of incidents were low severity and 47% required no firefighting action on arrival.

For Prison Fires performance was trending downward in the year to date and was static during quarter three. Prisons with the highest number of incidents for 2016/17 were HMP Oakwood and Werrington, both with 22 incidents. In the year to date 49% of incidents were low severity and 80% required no firefighting action on arrival. An on-going programme was underway to work with the Prison Service on prevention issues. The Service now had a legislative role in ensuring prison fire safety and would work in partnership with HMP Service to this end.

The trend for Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) attended was static overall for the year to date. However the trend for attending these RTCs had gone up during quarter 3 and December's performance was close to the Upper Control Limit. High severity RTCs (involving extrication) were down and low severity RTCs were trending up. Of those RTCs which were low severity, 59% involved a victim. In response to a question Mr Hyde advised that although high severity RTCs had gone down the Fire Service were increasingly being called and were in attendance before the ambulance service which may be due to fewer ambulances being available. The Fire Service's attendance at the scene earlier would count as having attended the incident on behalf of the Ambulance Service. Mr Hyde was in favour of the Service attending as he would rather that the Fire Service be in attendance and give the casualty attention than having to wait. He advised that the information relating to Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) was out of date but they were unable to get any more up to date figures as all the information had to be verified.

Members discussed the relationship with the Ambulance Service. Mr Hyde advised that "on the ground" the relationship with the ambulance service was fantastic but strategically the Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service was averse to co-responding. Mr Hyde advised that the Rebecca Bryant and four other Chief Fire Officers had arranged to meet with Anthony Marsh, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Ambulance Service to discuss this but the meeting had been cancelled. Members discussed the targets being met by the West Midlands Ambulance Service, who had introduced extended turn out times.

Members expressed concern that there seemed to be reluctance, by the Ambulance Service, to collaborate. There also seemed to be reluctance, by the Police and Crime Commissioner, to be involved in working with the Ambulance Service.

Members asked that a letter be sent to the Chief Fire Officer about their concerns. Mr Hyde undertook to write to Ms Bryant requesting that she produce information to a future Fire Authority meeting with regard to the progress on "blue light" collaboration.

All False Alarms were on an upward trend for 2016/17. Attended False Alarms were trending upwards for the year to date and also for Domestic, Commercial and Other Exempt properties. The downward trend emerging during quarter 3 was largely due to reduced attendances at Domestic and Policy Exempt properties. The downward trend since October followed enhancements to Call Challenge procedures used by Control to ensure appropriate mobilisation.

There had been one report of verbal abuse from prison inmates while attending a fire-call in the Northern Service Delivery Group (NSDG) during quarter 2, and during quarter 1 one report of verbal abuse to an Officer in Charge, and missiles thrown at a vehicle causing minor damage on the way to an incident

Three operational injuries had been reported under RIDDOR. These were a lower back injury from stepping back onto a hose ramp, a shoulder injury from using inflatable platforms to obtain access to a cow in a slurry pit and a lower leg injury when returning to the appliance to respond to a fire call.

Overall absence levels were similar to those during the same period last year, although the figures showed a slight increase for this year. There had been an increase in absence of Uniformed (Management) and Support staff and a corresponding decrease for uniformed (Firefighter to Watch Manager). There was a spike in the absence figure in November which was indicative of a number of winter viruses and reflected in the short term totals. Mental ill health conditions were the main cause of lost shifts for the first quarter but more days had been lost through surgical procedures/recovery in the latter part of this period.

Response standards had been met on 88.46% of the time for this quarter compared to 88.99% in 2015/16. It had been recognised that the main cause of the reduction in achievement of attendance times was due to traffic volume. This was a national issue. This was of concern to Members. In response to a question Mr Hyde advised that the Service was notified of most road works and for the majority of road works fire appliances were able to get access through these. There was to the odd exception ie water main works where the Service were not able to get through these.

Members discussed retained availability including:- the low availability at some stations; the retention of retained staff; the possible extension of response times in some rural areas to allow time for retained staff to respond; the issue in relation to part time contracts, the possibility of ensuring higher availability during harvest time to allow firefighters to stay on site, whether another type of system would be appropriate for retained staff to just contract staff for a set number of hours etc, and the concern at sending wholetime appliances from other areas, that may be delayed due to travelling through the town centre.

Mr Hyde advised that extending response times in some rural areas ie Gnosall would mean that this would then encroach into the retained availability in the Eccleshall area. There had been periods where neither Gnosall or Eccleshall had been on the run due to low availability, but between the two stations there could be an appliance on the run with a dynamically run system, but the software system was not available to do this currently. If they were going to extend the call out times then it would be quicker to send a whole time appliance from Stafford. He advised that Longnor had successfully been an 8 minute response for some time due to the location of the station. With regard to increasing availability during harvest time, the Service could not afford to do this but did ensure that it covered all risks in the Service area.

Mr Hyde explained that in the report 11P1 referred to the Leek appliance which was manned 50% of the time by wholetime staff during the day. 11P2 referred to the appliance at Leek that was manned by retained staff. For Leek four retained staff were required during the day and eight were required at night. In response to a question Mr Hyde advised that the Response Directorate kept retained availability under review.

Members discussed the requirements of the retained response arrangements, whether retained availability was necessary 100% of the time. Members requested a report on retained availability to the next meeting.

42. **RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be noted.

(b) That a report on Retained Availability be put to the next meeting.

(c) That a letter be sent to the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive by Mr Hyde on behalf of the Committee requesting her to provide information to Members at a future Fire Authority meeting with regard to the progress on “blue light” collaboration.

Automatic Fire Alarm Policy (Schedule 2)

43. Mr White, Technical Fire Safety Lead, gave a presentation to the Committee which outlined the progress of the Service’s Automatic Fire Alarm Policy (previously known as the Unwanted Fire Signals Policy). Historically a response was made to all fire alarm activation prior to June 2015, although call challenging was in place where appropriate. From June 2015 a response to commercial premises was not made during the day time unless there was a confirmed fire. The Service still responded at night.

With effect from 3 August 2015 the revised policy was introduced. From then the Service did not respond to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) from a commercial premises, unless there was a call to that there was a confirmed fire, or they could smell smoke etc. The Service was still responding to domestic premises, sheltered housing, residential care and hospitals as these were exempt from non attendance policy. No response was made to calls received from ARCs (Alarm Receiving Centres) unless Domestic, Residential care, Sheltered housing or Hospitals. Attendance may still be made if the responsible person was unable to investigate the reason for alarms activating ie if they were alone on site.

The presentation outlined the unwanted fire signals attended since 2012. A breakdown between attended UWFS in dwellings and commercial properties was given. This showed the reduced number of attendances at commercial properties since the changes to the policy had been implemented. There was a steady turn out to residential premises.

In response to a question Mr White advised that Business Support offered “after the fire” advice to businesses to assist them in getting back up and running. For premises that had repeated issues then the Service’s Fire Safety Officers would advise them of measures that they needed to take.

Mr White advised that there had been a conscious decision to move away from the term “Unwanted Fire Signals Policy” to Automatic Fire Alarms Policy. He advised that for recording purposes there was a fine line between a call for small cooking fire and a false alarm good intent. He advised that some alarms may be triggered by dust in the alarm system.

The plan going forward was for delivery groups to investigate the UWFS’s attended in commercial premises locally. The vast majority of UWFS’s were at domestic premises (71.5% since January 2014). They would further investigate trends (generally cooking) and drive these down through specific campaigns and targeting through Safe and Well visits. A list of highly attended premises was being produced to allow for a targeted approach to reducing incidents at those addresses. UWFS’s at private dwellings did provide a means of accessing potentially vulnerable persons, therefore minimising the chance of incidents escalating at that address in the future.

Members thanked Mr White for his presentation.

44. **RESOLVED** – That the presentation on the Automatic Fire Alarm Policy be noted.

Fire Detection and Suppression (Schedule 3)

45. Mrs Singleton, Prevent Coordinator, gave Members an overview of the work being undertaken in relation to fire detection. Her role under Work-stream 4 was to look at Best Practice, Current Issues (faulty equipment), Training and Fitment, Risk Intelligence and Testing (eg did the equipment do what it was designed to do)

Review– The Service had reviewed its organisational risk and procedures/guidance, reviewed what it provided against legislation, new landlords regulations, CFOA heat detection guidance etc. The Service had used historical data in its review. They had also ensured person centered bespoke Safe and Well visits, looking at the person and property. The Service supported other services by responding to referrals. It was estimated that for every £1 that the Fire and Rescue Services spent on preventative work saved £7 for the health service in the long-term.

With regard to alarm technology the Service was working with companies to develop systems. The Service was also selective in who they targeted for the detection equipment. In Scotland they predict that they can reduce incidents by 2/3 through the installation of heat detectors. These were now being supplied and fitted by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service through the Safe and Well visits. These detectors provided earlier warning and detection of fires, allowing people to evacuate earlier.

The Service was working with National Grid who provide CO (Carbon Monoxide) detectors free of charge to the Service. These are used to target those who are more at risk such as 65-79 year olds and 80+ year olds, who live alone.

Instead of the “universal offer” the Service was targeting vulnerable households.

The Service had held events for landlords to come in a collect Smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarms and for the Service to advise Landlords of their responsibilities under the legislation introduced in October 2015

Developing Technology – Best practice – The Service had been trialing new products, working with manufacturers to shape the design of products, the ST622 smoke alarm had now improved to ST750 as a result. This had a new type battery which would reduce the number of false alarm activations or faults.

Smart Technology – She advised on the interlink alarm system which meant that when one smoke alarm went off in the house then they all did. Interlink heat detectors were also available which link into the smoke alarm system. The Service offers interlinked alarms to people who are at specific risk, using data such as; age, size and layout of property, occupancy and instances of previous fires.

The Service was also looking at assistive technology and the “canary system”. Also there was technology whereby residents could see remotely on their phone when an alarm was activated. The Service was trialling as much as possible to see what was most appropriate. The Service was looking at a variety of self-monitoring and notification capability technology including “Apps”, texts, recording testing and activations.

Training – Workshops had been held with manufacturers and prevent teams sharing information and allowing feedback and problem solving. Safe and Well guidance had been issued to crews and technicians detailing the position of the different systems.

Mr Ruckledge, the Service’s Fire Engineer and Fire Suppression lead officer, gave an overview covering the following in relation to fire suppression:-

Local Economy – The Service promoted suppression systems in relation to business resilience, supported local businesses and the economy which in turn reduced the loss of income from business rates.

Domestic Systems – The Service was targeting domestic and residential properties. For houses they could supply a small “wardrobe style” unit which would be of use for a resident that was confined to one room and may be bedridden. These systems were installed based upon risk. The Service had five of these systems being refurbished and one currently in use.

Community Sprinkler Project – In relation to firefighter safety the Service area had 41 residential buildings over 5 floors, housing 2700 people, 630 of which were in Bronze Silver and Gold categories. The Service was conscious of incidents in Shirley Towers where two firefighters died and Blacknall House where 20 members of the public were injured. 10 residential properties were already in the process of being reviewed, joint funding and technical support was being provided.

Social Housing Sprinkler Conference – Mr Ruckledge advised that a sprinkler conference was held in the week prior to the meeting. This served as an Education forum for 15 social housing providers in Staffordshire. There were demonstrations and stands from suppliers/installers dispelling myths and explaining compensatory features. Attendees at the conference included planners and architects.

Sprinkler Saves – The Service was collating Staffordshire incidents and would be publishing these nationally through the National Fire Sprinkler Network (NFSN). Distributing this information raised awareness with staff and the incidents were used as case studies for Incident Command development.

Mr Ruckledge advised that Staffordshire had experience the first “Sprinkler Save” of 2017 which had occurred at Bostick in Stafford. He also referred to the recent fire at the Amazon Distribution Centre. Sprinklers had been fitted which contained the fire and enabled the firefighters to put it out without extensive damage to the building. The escalation was a matter of hours and enabled the business to continue its operating function within 24 hours.

Schools – He advised on the re-drafting of the BB100 regulations. The draft removed the requirement for sprinklers in schools generally and it was suggested that these would now just be fitted into high risk schools. Letters had been sent by the Department for Education, NUT BAFSA CFOA and the Service objecting to this amendment and the document was due a redraft early this year.

The good news was that two new schools in Staffordshire, in Rocester and in Burton both had sprinklers fitted. He advised that the Service had good relationship with Entrust and they now had sprinklers on their horizon.

New Technologies – The Service continued to horizon scan, prepare, advice communities and local business accurately, give Continuing Professional Development (CPD) presentations and carry out testing.

Mr Ruckledge advised that the Service was looking at new products ie a system that reduces oxygen below 16% to extinguish a fire. In response to a question Members were advised that a level of 13% oxygen was survivable to people. The system worked by sucking the air out of the room. The Service would ensure that housing providers were aware of these new technologies. He advised that on average a sprinkler system cost in the region of £3500 and this new technology “box” would cost in the region of £10,000.

Culture – By using media the Service were nationally and local providing education and awareness of suppression systems. The Community Sprinkler Project was a legacy that would never end. The Service had British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association (BAFSA) support and would use the Lifeskills Centre to further spread the awareness of suppression systems.

Training – Mr Ruckledge would be working with Learning and Development to put together some training packages on fire suppression.

Mrs Banks commented that she had previously been the Authority’s sprinkler champion prior to that role being removed by the Authority. She indicated that Members would be very useful to the Service in spreading the sprinkler message and indicated that she continued to do this. She was disappointed that there was no Members presence at the Sprinkler Conference. Members could be used to lobby and influence. She advised that Stoke-on-Trent City Council had undertaken to have sprinklers in all new build schools. She commented that all large buildings should contain sprinklers. Members discussed the importance of building up relationships with academies and sponsors as all planning applications were individually dealt with by the academies rather than via local authorities.

Members thanked Mrs Singleton and Mr Ruckledge for their presentation.

46. **RESOLVED** – That the presentation on Fire Detection and Suppression be noted.

Report on the Adrian Thomas Review
(Schedule 4)

47. The report summarised the recommendations resulting from the Thomas Review and presented information relating to the action plan that had been developed by the Service in order to address these recommendations.

This report had also been considered by the Human Resources and Ethics Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2017. No issues had been raised at that meeting with regard to the report or the action plan.

The review was commissioned in 2014 and designed to review the conditions of service of Chief Fire Officers and Firefighters and the process by which they are determined to consider whether they present barriers to the reform, improvement and efficiency of Fire and Rescue Services.

The Thomas Review, which had previously been forwarded to Members, contained a total of 45 recommendations that impacted on:-

- The working environment
- Documented conditions of service
- Industrial relations
- Duty systems
- Management of the Fire and Rescue Service

A number of the recommendations made were directed at individual Fire and Rescue Services and a number that were beyond the scope of the Service to implement as they related directly to nationally agreed terms and conditions under the auspices of the National Joint Council as well as some recommendations that were directed at Government to review and implement. There had not been a response by Government to the Thomas Review.

Appendix 1 to the report presented the Service's analysis of the recommendations and illustrated the action plan recommended for implementation in relation to those which were applicable to the Service.

Members commented that the action plan was positive.

Mr Hyde advised that a report on the Thomas Review would be put to the full Authority in due course and Members would have an opportunity to discuss it further then.

48. **RESOLVED** – (a) That the contents and findings of the Thomas Review be noted.

(b) That the action plan, which had been drawn up by the Service to address a number of the recommendations made by the Thomas Review, be noted.

Items for Future meetings

49. Members held a discussion on possible future items for scrutiny.

Members discussed the update on Working with the Prison Service. Mr Hyde advised that Paul Shaw from the Fire Service was now liaising with a new officer from the Prison Service, who would be invited to come along to the next meeting. The performance with regard to prison fires over the last quarter had been less volatile. A Member commented that the work undertaken by the Service with the Prison Service was to try and assist them in whatever way they could.

Mr White explained that the Service now had a legislative role in ensuring prison safety and was working with the Prison Service to this end. He advised that although the Service had been given this role they had devolved responsibility back to Crown Prosecution Inspection Group (CPIG), who were the equivalent to the Service's Fire Safety enforcement.

Following discussions Members concurred that the following items be brought to future meetings of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee.

19 April 2017	Slitting Mill Fire, Rugeley - firm outcomes following the incident
	Working with H M Prison Service Update
	Fire Control Update
	Retained Availability
On-going over the Next 12 Months	Response Standards – following the impact of the Adrian Thomas Review
Future Items date not yet specified	Previous Working Group updates
	Outcomes of the EXIT Programme
	Fire Cadets Overview and Update
	Impact of the Safe and Well Visits (early 2018)

Date of next Meeting

50. Members were advised that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 19 April 2017 at 2.15 pm.

Exclusion of the Public

Upon the motion of the Chairman it was:

51. **RESOLVED** - "That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below".

PART TWO

Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2016 (exemption paragraph 3)

52. Members commented upon the positive work that had been undertaken by the Service in relation to Community Cohesion in the Northern Service Delivery Group, as outlined within the Exempt Minutes.

53. **RESOLVED** - That the Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Scrutiny and Performance Committee

19 April 2017

Retained Availability

Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

SUMMARY

Members will have noted from successive performance reports that retained appliance availability is variable across the Service. The efficiency gains that come with a crewing model that has a limited establishment on each station with each firefighter post being asked to deliver 84 hours (average) per week on call comes with a risk that the result of a very small change in one person's availability can mean that the appliance is unavailable. Each appliance needs an EFAD (Emergency Fire Appliance Driver) qualified driver, a qualified officer in charge and at least two qualified breathing apparatus wearers to be available for all call types. Station establishments were reduced as part of the service budgetary reviews and as a result of the negotiations that led to the introduction of the retained payment scheme from 1 January 2017 the crewing of each RDS (Retained Duty System) pump is now twelve; one Watch manager, two Crew managers and nine Firefighters.

Appliance unavailability can result from crewing being below four and also from a deficiency in one or more of the skills noted above. Efforts to mitigate these effects include attempts to ensure that each person based at the station receive as much training as possible so that they can fulfil a number of tasks. For example, a firefighter may be fully trained as a Breathing Apparatus (BA) wearer and a driver and they may also be assessed to attain a "ticket to ride" which is a qualification that allows them to ride as the Officer In Charge (OIC) of the appliance in exceptional circumstances, if the appliance would otherwise be unavailable for the lack of an OIC. Of course, other skills such as BA or driving are absolute; the person is either qualified or they are not so the loss of a driver giving day cover might mean that the appliance will be unavailable for 60 or more hours per week until another driver can be trained which can take 6-8 months.

Officers and retained support officers work within each delivery group to recruit and retain retained firefighters continually. The current RDS establishment is 384. The actual number of FTE's (full time equivalents, giving 84 hours per week on call) is 308. Over the last three years the Service has recruited and trained 110 RDS firefighters but during that time 185 RDS staff have left. Reasons given for leaving include a lack of [response] activity, changes in primary employment status or location, lack of flexibility (staff have to remain within five minutes of the station when on call) and a desire to establish a better work life balance. The establishment of a more generous reward package from 1 January 2017 may have a limited beneficial effect in terms of retention but evidence of this will not be available for some time. A former reason to join the retained service; as a possible route to gaining a wholetime job, has been absent for a number of years but the wholetime recruitment campaigns planned for the next four years should restore this as an attraction tool for our recruitment teams.

The availability of our retained staff across the service is variable with some appliances achieving near 100% availability and others seeing short term dips in availability to around 30%. As each station area is different, some being in larger towns such as Cannock, Hanley and Burton and some in small villages such as Brewood, Longnor and Abbots Bromley. In order to recruit new staff from sparsely populated areas extensions to the time given to firefighters to respond to station have had to be made. Longnor, for example, has an eight minute turn in time simply because there are insufficient people living within five minutes to crew the appliance. Reviews of turn in times are a tool that station managers are aware of and will be used if necessary.

Staffordshire has for a number of years aligned the initial training of RDS staff with that of its wholetime staff. This includes the application of the national firefighter selection tests. A review of this has taken place recently and the number of potential trainees lost before the commencement of training is of concern. We do not want to lose the proportion of the very limited potential recruitment pool from station areas in future that we have done in recent years. By ensuring that more applicants enter training and tailoring the person's development to meet those needs we should be able to translate more of those who express an interest into firefighters in development than we have been doing recently. Assurance has been given to representative bodies that the assessments that trainees undergo will not be compromised so this new approach will result in more applicants receiving training but no reduction in the competency of those who reach stations.

The Service often has adjacent appliances unavailable for the lack of one skill therefore reviews are taking place that will seek to identify appliances which, if combined with an adjacent crew, would become available. For example, Gnosall could have a crew of two BA wearers but no driver or OIC and Eccleshall could have a crew of a driver and OIC but no BA wearers. Currently these four people across two stations would not be considered by Fire Control for mobilisation. Officers are seeking to identify a robust means of identifying such opportunities and a means of allowing Control to mobilise the staff on one appliance as a blended crew.

Members will be aware that the Service has used Targeted Response Vehicles for a number of years. These have been used to respond to secondary incidents such as small outdoor fires and car fires. If an RDS appliance has a crew of three it will not be counted as being "available" because an assurance was given to Representative Bodies some time ago that unless an appliance was available for all calls, with a crew of at least four, it would be deemed to be unavailable for reporting purposes. If an appliance has a crew of three with at least two BA wearers Fire Control still have the provision to mobilise that pump for "persons reported" incidents but in this event Control will always mobilise at least two further fully crewed appliances as back up. The premise used is that mobilising a crew of three gives the nearest crew the opportunity to conduct a rescue if the crews assessment of risk on arrival indicates that lives are saveable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Committee are asked to note the report and ask questions regarding the content.

Financial Implications

The retained duty system is a more cost effective means of providing response arrangements at a fire station. Approximate salary costs for a retained appliance are £220k pa and for a wholetime appliance £900k pa. The trade offs are that a retained appliance almost always has greater periods of unavailability and there is a delay in response times of up to an additional five minutes. Additional costs for the RDS include those associated with a greater turnover of staff. Whereas the Service will expect to train one firefighter per wholetime post around every thirty years experience in recent years has shown that the average service of an RDS firefighter is less than five years. This means that an RDS post costs around six times a wholetime post in terms of initial training over a 30 year period. This turnover of staff has an inevitable effect on retained appliance availability.

Legal Implications

The Fire and Rescue Authority is required by The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Part 2 section 6, to make provisions to conduct work to prevent fires and other emergencies and sections 7-12 for the response to fires and other emergencies.

Equality and Diversity

Whilst the contents of this paper do not specifically impact on any of the protected characteristics listed in the Equalities Act 2010 Members are asked to note that the recruitment of RDS staff from within a specific response area around each station does tend to lead to the make up of RDS station staff being more representative of the local community than may be the case at other stations. Of particular note, though, is the lack of female firefighters which is not representative of the local community and efforts are being made through positive action to address this situation.

Risk Implications

All Fire and Rescue Services have been challenged by the former and current Home Secretaries to make more use of RDS staff. The number of leavers/ recruits within Staffordshire mirrors the national picture, with one significant exception (see below). The risk for Services such as Staffordshire is that demographic changes; ageing populations, more mobile workforces and a reduction in younger people in rural communities, lead to an ever reducing pool of people from which to recruit and an unwillingness to commit to the amount of cover required for the rewards available.

The exception to this situation is being experienced in those services which have established co responding arrangements with their local Ambulance services. This leads to a large rise in demand for response from RDS crews and a greater reward for those additional responses. Members will be aware that considerable efforts are being made to secure such agreements locally.

Consultation and Engagement undertaken

RDS staff and representative body officers engage regularly with delivery group officers and retained support officers.

Protective Security

The contents of this paper will be kept in line with Service Protective Security policies.

Social Value and Procurement

Not applicable to this paper.

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Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Scrutiny and Performance Committee

19 April 2017

Fire Control Update

Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

SUMMARY

This report is to update Members on the progress of Fire Control which the Service is collaborating on with the West Midlands Fire Service.

Since the previous report in December 2016 a number of areas of work have been delivered through the continued work of officers and staff in both Staffordshire and the West Midlands. The ongoing relationship between the two organisations is strengthening and the function is being jointly scrutinised through the work of the Governance Board.

There has been a full review of the staffing arrangements within Fire Control and as a result of this review the crewing numbers on each watch have been reduced. This means that there are now two less personnel on each watch which has the result of reducing the pay budget by £412k per annum. In addition to the reductions a self rostering model has been introduced which provides flexibility for both staff and the organisations.

In August 2016 the Joint Fire Control Vision was launched by CFO Phil Loach and CFO/CE Becci Bryant this was received positively by all staff and was followed up through further sessions delivered by Simon Barry and Tim Hyde. These meetings have been very positive and have resulted in a draft suite of measures (See **Appendix 1**) being developed and trialed, with the aim being to establish ownership of the measures, culture and outcomes with the watch based staff who will then, in turn, be supported by the Control officers. This has allowed Control staff to work for a day with risk reduction officers in West Midlands. This will be expanded shortly to allow Control staff to work with Staffordshire Community Safety Officers (CSO's) and watches.

In addition to the work related to the vision and culture within control work has progressed regarding a broadening of the focus of Control staff to establish the contribution that they can make to Prevention. The first phase of this work has been to raise awareness of Prevention and Community needs by using some of the flexibility afforded by the new rostering model.

The work related to aligning as many of the business processes as possible is continuing and the understanding of both organisations requirements is developing daily as working relationships develop. In response to a request from Control staff all watches in Staffordshire, wholtime and retained, and all officers have been asked to take time to visit the Control room and get to know their Control colleagues. Many visits have taken place and the feedback has been positive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee Members are requested to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Make comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications

As identified above, changes in staffing have resulted in a reduction in staff costs of c £412K pa. The current funding model apportions costs on a 70:30 basis so Staffordshire will benefit from this reduction by around £124K pa. Around £20k of this has been reinvested in a secondment to further build systems and relationships. Early indications are that this investment has been of real benefit.

Legal Implications

Part 2, Section 7 (2) (c) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a legal requirement on Fire Authorities to provide a means for dealing with emergency calls and providing a response to those calls.

Equality and Diversity

The contents of this paper do not have any impact on any of the protected characteristics contained within the Equality Act 2010.

A positive benefit in terms of knowledge of our communities is expected as an outcome of the work being done by Control staff with Community Safety Teams and the focus on Prevention as part of the Vision launch.

Risk Implications

The dialogue between HS2 and Fire Control are ongoing. The move of the secondary Control to Smethwick was completed and following testing this went live on 10 March 2017. The move of the main Control room to the HQ building is still being worked on and a move is anticipated by April 2018.

Protective Security Implications

There are no known protective security implications linked to this report.

Procurement and Social Value Impact

There are no known procurement and social value issues linked to this report.

Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Fire Control staff, including Middle managers and Day team.
Simon Barry, Officer responsible for Fire Control on behalf of WMFS
The Fire Brigades Union.
Fire Control Governance Board.
Watch based staff within Staffordshire.

Background

Around two years since go live the shared fire control has developed into a high performing, efficient model of how two fire and rescue services can combine functions well. The synergies in terms of a focus on outcomes and putting Prevention first gave the two Chief Officers the opportunity to introduce a shared Vision that was taken forward by the staff within Control. Flexible working and efficient crewing models coupled with a desire to deliver excellent outcomes has meant that the service delivered to both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Services goes from strength to strength. Attention to the feedback from watches in both services led to a secondee being identified and he has delivered the ability to attend to issues as they have arisen. In addition to the processes being refined a considerable effort has been made to develop relationships and a joint understanding of the differences across the two areas. Every opportunity to reduce variance and align procedures has been taken.

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Appendix One:

Not performance measures but required for context setting:

Number of emergency calls answered
Number of admin calls answered
Number of mobilisations
No of times emergency fall-back arrangements used

Attendance

Average days sickness by FTE (Full Time Equivalent) & breakdown of how many people at various stages of attendance management policy
Number of times OCL (Optimum Crewing Levels) achieved
Number of shifts covered with overtime
TOIL (Time Off in Lieu) accrued in last quarter
Bank shifts balance

Call handling & mobilising

% of calls answered within 10 seconds
% of incidents mobilised in 90 seconds (90% is the target)
Call duration (Answered to Assigned) for category 1&2 calls
Call duration (Answered to Assigned) for category 3-6 calls
No of Incidents where a Brigade Response Vehicle (BRV) should have been mobilised (within 20 minutes) but a PRL (Pump Rescue Ladder) attended instead.

Over border

Number of Over the Border Mobilisations

- SFRS into WMFS
- WMFS into SFRS

Dynamic mobilising

Number of incidents where dynamic mobilisation has occurred

- Number of incidents where the attendance has been increased
- Number of incidents where the attendance has been decreased

Contact Centre

Number of outgoing calls made
Number of incoming calls
Number of appointments booked
Number of outstanding appointments

System performance

A comprehensive verbal update on any system performance issues over the previous quarter.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Scrutiny and Performance Committee

19 April 2017

Slitting Mill Fire update

Report of Tim Hyde, Director of Response

SUMMARY

At around 1740 on 5 September 2016 Fire Control received 999 calls from members of the public reporting that a large stack of waste was alight at Oak Tree Farm, Slitting Mill Road, Slitting Mill, Rugeley. Fire crews from Rugeley and Cannock along with a Station Manager attended and it quickly became apparent that due to the size of the waste stack [several thousand tonnes], the presence of a drinking water aquifer beneath [reported to crews by the EA] and multiple seats of fire that extinguishment of the fire by applying foam or large quantities of water would not be possible.

Efforts were made following the decision to allow the stack to burn to apply some soil as a smothering blanket using an on site excavator owned by the site operator but this was unsuccessful due to the poor condition of the machine used. On identification of the state of repair of this vehicle it was made clear that we would not use it again due to the risk of the Service being liable for any breakdowns allegedly due to it being used for our purposes.

The site operator and the owner were well known to the local community and enforcement officers of both Cannock Chase District Council and The Environment Agency and fines had been levied against Mr Ward in court after he was found to be accepting waste on site illegally. Unfortunately the fine did not appear to have been a significant deterrent.

From 12 September efforts were made to accelerate the rate of burning of the waste, predominantly wood and sawdust, using the Service telehandler to turn over and aerate the fuel. The Service was approached by a manufacturer of a water softening agent during this week and a trial application of 4000lts of softened water was undertaken. Unfortunately due to the small particle size of the waste on the stack and the highly absorbent nature of the shredded waste this trial was unsuccessful as the water would not penetrate the stack to extinguish the fire. By 16 September the local community were becoming increasingly concerned about the smoke emanating from the stack and on 19 September a public meeting was called at Rugeley Fire Station.

The event was very well attended and the local community made very clear their dissatisfaction that the owner had been allowed to accumulate such a large volume of waste. They did, however, understand that of the options available to the Service, allowing it to burn quickly presented the best of a host of limited options. However they also voiced their concerns regarding the amount of smoke in the locality and their concerns about what was in the smoke.

On the morning of 20 September shredded asbestos sheeting was found within the waste stack by SFRS staff turning over the waste. This development meant that continuing the efforts to agitate the stack in order to accelerate the burn could not be justified due to the risk to the health, safety, and welfare of the firefighters working in close proximity to the stack. After feedback from the local community about the amount of smoke issuing from the stack an options appraisal was repeated with the help of Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mark Andrews of East Sussex F&RS, national CFOA lead for waste fires, and multi agency support was received to proceed with applying a soil cap to the stack using hired in excavators and using soil from on site. The aim was to create a large “charcoal oven” by capping the whole stack with a thick layer of soil so that combustion would continue with very much reduced levels of smoke. The down side of this approach is the reduced rate of degradation of the waste. The incident would now take many months rather than weeks to resolve.

In the months following the fire enforcement action was taken against the owner and operator of the illegal waste site at Oak Tree Farm and a High Court Injunction was issued preventing further dumping of waste and the burning of any material on site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report.
- Make comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications

To date the Service has spent around £30k in additional staff wages and £40k in hire costs with the Service being solely liable for these costs. Final clean up costs for the site, which do not fall on the Service, have been estimated to be in excess of £1M.

Legal Implications

In addition to the Services duty to respond to fires under section 2 of The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 the Service has worked with the Environment Agency to mitigate any impacts on the drinking water aquifer which lies immediately beneath Oak Tree Farm.

Since the incident a Group has been called together from all Local Resilience Forum members to develop a guide for all agencies. This guide will seek to outline who is responsible for action at each stage of a waste event, from the initial tipping of the waste, to the ignition and clean up of the site. It will also outline legislation that each agency can use to discharge its duties and make Staffordshire a “no go area” for those who would engage in this type of criminal activity.

Equality and Diversity

None of the protected characteristics listed under the Equalities Act 2010 are affected by the contents of this paper.

Risk Implications

The Service, partner organisations and our communities are significantly affected by the widespread illegal accumulation of waste. The most common resolution of such an accumulation is the illegal application of a naked flame and a large fire. Upon ignition until the fire is resolved all costs fall solely to the Service.

Consultation and Engagement undertaken

Local Resilience Forum (LRF) members
James Bywater, Head of Central Prevention and Protection
Fire Brigades Union

Protective Security

This paper and all documentation related to the incident and subsequent actions are kept in line with Service Protective Security policies.

Social Value and Procurement

Officers have ensured that any plant hired at the expense of SFRS has been sourced from within Staffordshire and as efficiently as possible.

1. Background

1.1 The site operator and owner are both well known to enforcement agencies and local communities and the illegal accumulation of waste had been ongoing for some time. The site was known to fire crews and risk inspections had been conducted over a number of years.

1.2 Early on the afternoon of 5 September the site owner had contacted fire control to inform them of their intention to burn off some waste from their pig farming operation on site. Fire Control were unaware of an injunction preventing the owners from burning off waste on site. Members are asked to note that a process has now been put in place to ensure that injunctions gained by a non F&RS body will be notified to SFRS and then to Fire Control.

1.3 Due to the cost of disposal of the waste off site being in excess of £1m and far in excess of what the owner had received for the illegal dumping of it initially the only way that the owner of the land was going to remove the waste from site was for it to burn. The cause of the fire on 5 September is "deliberate ignition by persons unknown".

1.4 Following the application of the soil cap the combustion continues and regular site inspections are conducted by local crews using thermal imaging cameras. Temperatures recorded recently are in excess of 400 Celsius which indicates that combustion is continuing as planned. As the fuel degrades it collapses from beneath the cap causing fissures to open from which smoke issues again. In this case SFRS and hired excavators have to return to site to rebuild the cap. This process is likely to need to be repeated into 2018 unless the site is cleared.

1.5 Photographs of the site are shown below for Members information.



1.6 Following this incident a multi agency Recovery Group has been led by Service officers and a further 54 sites have been identified across Staffordshire. Each site has been assessed and those of high risk have been assessed by multi agency teams and appropriate plans put in place to deal with any future accumulations of waste or fires. A good example of this work reaping significant benefits was the fire at Hanbury Plastics in Milton which was dealt with inside two weeks though, again, at considerable cost to the Service.

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