

Status of Report:

Public

Agenda Item:

11

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 7th February 2018

Subject: Operational Update

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For: Information

1. Purpose

This report provides Combined Fire Authority (CFA) members with an update on key operational matters since the last CFA meeting.

2. Recommendations

The CFA is requested to note the contents of this report.

3. Executive Summary

The subject matter areas that are covered in this report include:

1. New item - On Call Futures Review
2. New item - Primary Crewing of the Aerial Ladder Platform
3. Update – Delivery of Corporate and IRMP Objectives
4. Update – Response to Grenfell Tower Block Tragedy
5. Update – Wholtime Firefighter Recruitment
6. Update – Firefighter Pay Negotiations 2017
7. Update – Operational Activity Levels

4. Report Detail

4.1 New item - On Call Futures Review

It is recognised nationally that the current model for paying and contracting On Call (or retained) firefighters is no longer appropriate. Attraction and retention on call firefighters is increasingly difficult and this has a severe impact on the availability of the appliances.

A concerted effort during 2017 resulted in a first On Call course with over ten trainees for many years. We acknowledge however that significant changes

need to be made to how we employ On Call firefighters. Work is underway in Leicestershire to explore and experiment with new models for pay and contracts. A report by the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) sheds light on the main issues that put people off joining or cause them to leave the service. A meeting took place with the Chief Executive of the RFU to consider the report in greater detail and to share some of our initial thoughts around areas for change.

Our intended outcome is an increased uptake in people joining the service and better retention rates. CFA members will regularly be kept abreast of progress.

4.2 New item - Primary Crewing of the Aerial Ladder Platform

Members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have expressed concern about the crewing arrangements for our Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) at Birstall and Central. We previously changed this model to reduce costs, resulting in the ALPs no longer being crewed by a dedicated pair of firefighters. Instead two firefighters drop off the pumping appliance when the ALP is needed. This is known as switch crewing and is used regularly in many services.

An experiment is underway to address these concerns and maintain primary crewing of one ALP more often. When we have more crew across the service than the necessary minimum, we redeploy two firefighters to Birstall so their ALP can be primary crewed. It is anticipated this will result in it being crewed approximately 75% of the time without increasing staffing costs or the operational establishment. We will monitor this approach to determine its effectiveness.

4.3 Update – Delivery of Corporate and IRMP Objectives

Further progress has been achieved in delivering the key corporate and IRMP service improvement objectives that the CFA have previously agreed. By way of a summary, set out below are the main aspects that have been; or are about to be delivered/implemented:

- Building work has started at Wigston fire and rescue station to create the accommodation needed for the Day Crewing Plus model. As previously reported, the crew are currently in temporary accommodation while the work is carried out.
- All five Tactical Response Vehicles have been allocated to stations. Four are fully operational at Loughborough, Lutterworth, Market Harborough and Oakham. Crews at Coalville are undergoing final driver familiarisation training. All five will be fully operational by mid-February.
- We are experimenting by placing a TRV at Lutterworth instead of Melton for a period of time, contrary to the original plan. Crewing difficulties at Lutterworth mean the appliance is often unavailable because fewer than four personnel are available. When this happens cover appliances are sent from other stations, causing disruption and reducing cover across the rest of the service. Melton can usually maintain four so can keep a standard appliance available, reducing the benefit of a TRV at that station. Since the experiment started there has been a 95% reduction in cover moves to Lutterworth. We will monitor performance levels to determine if this is a

preferred option until such time that On Call availability difficulties can be addressed. CFA members will be kept abreast of progress.

- The Braunstone Blues multi-agency partnership was due to finish at the end of March 2018. Fire, Police and EMAS have all agreed to resource the team for a further six months and the PCC has allowed an £18k project underspend to be carried forward for the same period. A detailed review into the project is underway to identify successes and learning points. The review findings will be added to those from other integrated prevention initiatives. This will allow a range of evidence based options to be presented to the Strategic Partnership Board to consider future integrated delivery models.

4.4 Update – Response to Grenfell Tower Block Tragedy

The tragic fire at Grenfell Tower resulted in significant workloads across our service delivery function, particularly affecting the fire protection team. In June 2017 we suspended our Risk Based Inspection Programme to focus nearly all our effort on determining the safety of high and medium rise buildings. We have now completed inspections in all medium and high rise buildings across LLR.

We previously reported our three priorities, to address concerns in:

Priority 1: buildings of 8 or more floors.

Priority 2: buildings of 6 or 7 floors.

Priority 3: buildings of up to 5 floors.

Priorities 1 and 2 are complete with 171 specific inspections undertaken. Priority 3 is an ongoing programme of work within our normal workloads.

The Risk Based Inspection Programme has resumed, boosted by the return from a Home Office secondment of two Watch Managers. The expertise they have gained inspecting Crown Premises is proving of benefit to the rest of the team.

Home Office issued a survey to determine the impact of Grenfell Towers on the workloads of each fire and rescue service. Our response made clear that while we had incurred only small financial costs, the impact to our normal workloads was huge. Had we funded the response with additional resource, rather than redirecting existing, it would have cost in excess of £115k.

4.5 Update – Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment

All 25 trainee firefighters have been posted to stations. Some are already spending time in Operational Planning Department teams to learn how operational crews are supported. A number of trainees have attended significant incidents, including the tragic fire death on London Road, Leicester and the gas explosion in Birstall, both in December.

We anticipate a further recruitment drive in Winter 2017/18. Our current staffing is 361 against an establishment of 348. The retirement profile of staff suggests we will need to begin a further recruitment drive in Winter 2018/19.

4.6 Update – Firefighter Pay Negotiations 2017

Pay negotiations remain ongoing and a settlement is not yet in place. Work is underway nationally to determine how the role of the firefighter might be broadened and this is linked to pay negotiations. Five areas are being explored:

1. Emergency medical response
2. Multi-agency response
3. Health and Community
4. Inspection and Enforcement
5. Environmental Challenges

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service are more advanced in their discussion and it appears to be emerging that a 15% pay rise is being sought. If this level of increase is agreed there may be similar expectation of representative bodies in England, this level of increase is not affordable in our current budget planning.

4.7 Update – Operational Activity Levels

Performance against nearly all operational targets remains in line with expectation for the period 2017/18. All but one target indicator shows 'Green', demonstrating we have attended fewer of each type of incident or are within acceptable tolerance levels. The only indicator showing 'Red' is that for fire deaths, set against a target of zero. We have unfortunately suffered two recent fire deaths one in December and January. Following both of these incidents, we have carried out extensive work in the local area to educate people about the dangers of fire to avoid further incidents. This work is carried out by fire crews and our Community Safety Educators.

Incidents of note since the last CFA meeting include:

On 11th December at 7.30am a gas explosion destroyed one house, partially destroyed a second and caused widespread damage across a housing estate in Birstall. Fire crews made an immediate response and quickly got to work in the rubble to rescue three people. Tragically an older woman from the house that was partially destroyed later died in hospital despite the efforts of fire and ambulance crews. Two men who were rescued both survived. Fire and rescue crews were heavily praised for their efforts.

On 9th December at 11:20 pm we were called to a property fire on London Road in Leicester. The fire was in a large house that was in a dilapidated state. It was caused by a paraffin heater. Unfortunately the owner, an 88 year old man, died in the fire.

Nationally the multi-story car park fire in Liverpool in December in which 1400 cars were destroyed. Rapid fire spread in these car parks - due to the proximity of the vehicles to each other and heavy fire loading - is a known phenomenon. The findings from the investigation into this fire may result in changes to the fire precautions required in car parks and would impact our workloads.

5. Report Implications/Impact

5.1 Legal (including crime and disorder)

None identified.

5.2 **Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)**

There are no direct financial implications from this report.

5.3 **Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)**

None arising from this report.

5.4 **Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)**

None arising from this report.

5.5 **Environmental**

None identified

5.6 ***Impact upon Our Plan Objectives***

The matters set out in this report inform the progress that has been achieved in delivering the key corporate and IRMP service improvement objectives that the CFA have previously agreed.

6. **Background Papers**

None.

7. **Appendices**

None.