

**Status of Report:**                      **Public**

**Meeting:**        **Combined Fire Authority**

**Date:**            **12 December 2018**

**Subject:**        **On-Call Review Project**

**Report by:**     **Rick Taylor (Chief Fire and Rescue Officer)**

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**For:**             Information

## **1. Purpose**

This paper explains the challenges we face in maintaining on-call appliance availability and our short, medium and long term plans to address them.

## **2. Recommendations**

CFA is asked to note the content of the paper.

## **3. Executive Summary**

- 3.1 On-call appliance availability is low and the long term trend is a decline. This is due to challenges in the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters
- 3.2 Improvements are being made to on-call availability however more radical changes are needed to further improve and sustain it.
- 3.3 A project has been established to address the issue of low availability and other associated issues.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 On-call appliance availability, one of our Key Performance Indicators, is low. It averages approximately 50% across the on-call stations. This is largely because our establishment of on-call firefighters is approximately 20% below target, equating to roughly fifty firefighters. Also, the hours of availability of on-call firefighters is not evenly distributed across the day and night. This means fewer appliances are available and attendance times increase, particularly in the smaller towns and villages where on-call crews are based. There has been a recent improvement from 49% to 54% in average appliance availability, however it is at odds with a long term decline. The problem is not evenly distributed across our area; some on-call stations achieve between 90% and 100% appliance availability while others only between 20% and 30%.
- 4.2 There are many reasons for the decline in availability and on-call firefighter numbers, including:

- Current expectations for on-call firefighters are contrary to changing lifestyles, the five-minute attendance time limiting their freedom of movement.
- Primary employment has moved out of the small towns and villages, so people need to travel out of their local area.
- The success in reducing the number of calls means that on-call firefighters earn less and have less opportunity to put their skills into practice. This has been impacted upon by the introduction of Day Crewing at three of our stations, reducing the use of on-call firefighters during the day.

4.3 Recent improvements have been achieved through a focus on recruitment. The effect has been subdued because it takes time for new firefighters to be qualified as 'safe to ride'. We expect availability to increase as more become qualified.

4.4 Medium term availability improvements will be made by introducing two more Tactical Response Vehicles, predictions showing increases from 30% to as high as 70% are potentially achievable. Tactical Response Vehicles can be crewed by two people as opposed to the four needed for a traditional fire engine. These will be placed at stations where the greatest improvements to availability and public safety will be made.

4.5 CFA members have previously been advised of a number of planned initiatives designed to sustain availability. These initiatives are being combined in a single project, led by a Group Manager with a team assigned. This will include a review into the pay, contracts and expectations of on-call staff. A Project Initiation Document will be presented to the Senior Management Team for approval.

4.6 CFA members will be advised when the project commences. They will also be advised on developments through the updates provided at CFA and CGC meetings.

## **5 Report Implications/Impact**

### **5.1 Legal (including crime and disorder)**

The Combined Fire Authority has a statutory duty to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan that includes the provision of response service to fires and other emergencies. Use of the on-call duty system plays an important part in exercising this duty, so maximising availability improves our ability to deliver the plan.

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

The project is likely to propose changes to how on-call staff are paid. Any changes will impact the on-call pay budget.

Improving the retention of on-call firefighters will reduce futures costs for recruitment, training, equipment and reduce the administrative burden.

### **5.3 Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on**

the continuity of service delivery)

We are less likely to meet our response standard if we don't improve on-call availability.

Increasing on-call availability will improve our business continuity arrangements, maximising the resource available.

Representative Bodies may oppose changes that lie outside the NJC Grey Book Terms of Conditions.

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

On-call staff may be asked to consider new terms and conditions that sit outside the NJC Grey Books Terms and Conditions.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out into the implications of any change if necessary.

On-call staff will be involved in the project and will be kept abreast of developments.

5.5 Environmental

We will reach incidents more quickly by maximising availability and reducing response times. This is likely to reduce the environmental impact incidents.

If on-call resources are available it will reduce the travel distances when responding to incidents.

5.6 Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

Delivery of the project impacts 'Our Purpose' and our Response Strategy.

Our Purpose, 'Safer People, Safer Places', states we will 'respond in the right way at the right time when we're needed'.

Our Response strategy includes the objectives:

- Manage calls to fires and other emergency incidents
- provide a 24/7 response to local, regional, national and international incidents
- supply the appropriate resources and attend incidents to meet the needs of our communities
- manage our operational equipment to ensure its readiness for use
- meet our community's expectations in resolving emergencies

**6. Background Papers**

None.

**7. Appendices**

None.

**8. Officers to contact**

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