

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
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REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

CO-RESPONDER UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress relating to the implementation of a pilot Co-Responder Scheme in Retford.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The concept of Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service engaging in a co-responding scheme with the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) was first presented in the Authority's inaugural Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The key driver for this had been the high mortality rates within the East Midlands area, as well as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) publications "Our Fire & Rescue Service" and the Fire & Rescue Services National Framework, which encouraged Fire & Rescue Services to engage in co-responding schemes.

2.2 The Fire & Rescue Authority adopted its first IRMP and with it a proposal of a co-responding scheme, at its meeting on 26 March 2004. As a consequence of this endorsement, a Memorandum of Understanding for a pilot scheme was developed in conjunction with EMAS and Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service and Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service. This was presented to the Fire & Rescue Authority on 22 October 2004 and endorsed for implementation.

3. REPORT

3.1 Following the Fire & Rescue Authority endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding, a comprehensive programme of action was developed to support the implementation of a pilot scheme.

This included :

- Training requirements ;
- Procurement of equipment ;
- Health and safety issues ;
- Appliance stowage ;
- Mobilising and control procedures ;
- PPE issues ;
- Station and watch briefings ;
- Risk assessment ;
- Communications requirements ;
- Memorandum of Understanding updates.

- 3.2 Following a comprehensive action plan against the items listed in 3.1 the scheme was implemented for a trial period of eight months on Tuesday 6 September 2005.
- 3.3 Since the co-responding scheme has been operating calls have been passed to Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service by EMAS. In each case an ambulance has arrived to support the Fire Service crew within the time frame of twenty minutes agreed with EMAS. The longest time currently experienced has been twelve minutes.
- 3.4 The scheme has been well publicised by the media and has been received positively by the communities around Retford.
- 3.5 The first review of the scheme is due after three months, where any issues that have arisen will be discussed both locally with the responding crews, and externally with EMAS. In the interim period each call is being followed up by Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service staff to ensure that responding personnel receive the necessary levels of support required.
- 3.6 If the pilot scheme is successful then the proposal is to extend the co-responding initiative to other areas of the Service where EMAS have identified that assistance would be valuable.
- 3.7 As a consequence of the implementation of the scheme, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) balloted its members within Nottinghamshire over proposals for industrial action. This is as a consequence of a National FBU mandate which does not recognise co-responding as a duty of a firefighter.
- 3.8 On 26 September 2005 the results of the FBU ballot was received. Of an eligible 767 members, 447 cast their votes. This was 58% of the available membership. Of these votes cast, (447), 362 voted in favour of industrial action and 85 voted against, a ratio of 80:20. In real terms, therefore, only 47% of FBU members have voted against co-responding.
- 3.9 A number of wholtime employees at Retford have informed the Service in writing that their compliance with the scheme was being done reluctantly and under duress.
- 3.10 As a consequence of the ballot, the Clerk to the Authority received notification of a period of "continuous industrial action involving all members of the union employed by the Authority commencing 3 October 2005".
- 3.11 The industrial action has been detailed as follows :
- A refusal to attend briefings or undertake training as part of a co-responder scheme or carry out any duties connected with such briefings or training ;
 - A refusal to handle equipment specifically intended for use as part of a co-responder scheme ;
 - A refusal to attend calls as a co-responder or provide any assistance connected to co-responding.
- 3.12 As a consequence of this action Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has written to all employees that these actions constitute a reduction in their contracted duties and as a consequence Section 14(5) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 will be implemented. This provides for deductions to be made from an employee's salary where industrial action has been undertaken. This will result in salary reductions for those employees who refuse to carry out the duties. Predominantly this will affect the thirty-four FBU members based at Retford Station and others who may be

detached into the station to supplement crewing shortfalls. An assessment of the co-responding duty in relation to operations and training requirements has resulted in a proposal of a 10% reduction in salary.

- 3.13 EMAS have been informed of the current position regarding the scheme and are in contact with Senior Managers at Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Services. As EMAS still mobilise resources in any community/co-responder scheme the legal duty to attend still rests with them.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The financial implications associated with the scheme at present have been associated with the training of staff and procurement of equipment. These have been contained within the existing budgets and have presented no significant burdens.
- 4.2 Should the scheme be extended to retained areas then additional costs may be incurred. These were identified and budgeted for as part of the 2005/2006 budget proposals.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Occupational Health support both from Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service and EMAS has been made available should any personnel feel that it may be beneficial.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial impact assessment has revealed that there are no direct equality issues arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire & Rescue Services National Framework 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 advised Fire & Rescue Services to consider the implementation of co-responding schemes. Failure to do this would be a failure to comply with statutory guidance.
- 7.2 The implementation of a co-responding scheme formed part of the Fire & Rescue Authority's inaugural IRMP which was endorsed by both the ODPM and the Authority themselves. The implementation of the scheme ensures that Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service meets its obligations under these proposals.
- 7.3 Statistically the survival rates of persons is greatly increased by the early intervention of defibrillators. Failure to employ this scheme increases the risk to the community.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Members note the contents of this report and further endorse the implementation of the co-responding scheme within Nottinghamshire.
- 8.2 That the Fire & Rescue Authority endorse partial performance reduction to the level of 10% of employees' salary for refusal to deliver co-responding to the community, during this episode of industrial action.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

- The Bain Report ;
- ODPM White Paper "Our Fire & Rescue Service" ;
- Fire & Rescue Services National Framework 2004/2005 ;
- Fire & Rescue Services National Framework 2005/2006 ;
- Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority IRMP 2004/2005 ;
- Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority IRMP 2005/2006 ;
- Fire Authority Report, Agenda Item 10, 22 October 2004.

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