



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Community Safety Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 13 October 2023 from 10.01 am - 11.12 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan (minutes 12-15 inclusive)
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

9 Apologies for Absence

None.

10 Declarations of Interests

None.

11 Apologies for Absence

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

12 Service Delivery Performance

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the comprehensive report which provides the committee with an update on the performance of the Service between 1 April and 30 September 2023.

Some highlighted points included the following, along with responses to members' questions:

- a) 5,430 incidents were attended by the Service during this reporting period, which, compared to the same period last year, is a decrease of 16.4%, but this can be attributed to last year's extreme summer weather conditions;
- b) The report provides a breakdown of the type of calls received, the volume of calls, comparative figures for previous years, month by month activity, priority, and activity levels by district;
- c) Whilst the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) target is to respond to all incidents within 8 minutes from the first appliance mobilisation, the average time achieved during this performance period was 8 minutes and 14 seconds. The slightly longer than previous response time can mainly be attributed to the introduction of the new appliance Mobile Data Terminals, which took place in June. This is being further investigated and will be monitored;
- d) On-call station availability is set out in the report, with Hucknall, Newark, Stapleford and Warsop achieving in excess of 95% availability, whilst Harworth and Southwell stations failed to meet the 70% minimum standard set by the Service. It is anticipated that the recent recruitment of 34 new on-call firefighters will help to address this issue;
- e) The year-to-date statistics for Ashfield DSC are set out in the report, and it is noted that the station will return to 24-hour crewing from 29 November 2023, in line with the resourcing to risk work stream;
- f) The year-to-date statistics for Retford DSC are set out in the report, and whilst there have been reductions in availability, there are no proposals to amend the current crewing arrangements;
- g) Performance data for 999 calls answered within 7 seconds, call handling times for priority one and two incidents, and mobilisation system availability, are all set out in the report with priority call handling performance improving;
- h) During six months of activity, the Service has completed more than half of the 14,000 proposed 'safe and well' visits, and so is expected to exceed this year's target;
- i) Safety initiatives, including water rescue, road safety, general fire safety, and fire safety for older citizens, were among the initiatives undertaken during the reporting period;
- j) People-focused events are being held three times a year, including at Warsop College, with the aim to reach approximately 3,000 pupils in total;
- k) Referrals for the 'Fire Setter' courses can come from the Police or Youth Offending Teams, with the aim to deter and address such behaviour;
- l) A comparison of fire safety audits completed month by month for the past 3 years is set out in the report and clearly shows that performance in the latest reporting period has exceeded that of previous years;

- m) However, with a target of 1000 business safety checks during the performance year, the Service is behind on target with only 386 completed. This is mainly due to several supervisory managers who are yet to complete the required qualification, but a training programme begins in November for 30 officers;
- n) A range of protection activities have been undertaken the reporting year-to-date, including statutory building regulation consultations, licensing consultations, post-fire inspections, follow-ups to complaints, enforcement and prohibition notices;
- o) The Service responded to 2,133 false alarms in this reporting period which is an increase of 16% from last year, against a target to reduce Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) by 3%. A breakdown of the four alarm classifications, including malicious, good intent, and apparatus, are set out in the report, with 383 attendances to non-residential premises, 234 of these being at hospitals, 1207 being residential, 400 of which were single occupancy houses or bungalows with telecare systems installed;
- p) The Building Safety Act was implemented on 1 October 2023, and requires dedicated multidisciplinary teams to support the work, which will include the Fire Service. The operating model is very similar to that already established by the Service with regard to the Fire Safety England Regulation 2022, and the statutory duties on responsible persons, particularly in buildings over 18 metres in height;
- q) Business safety checks are undertaken on smaller businesses, with a focus on seasonal themes and activities.

Members of the committee welcomed the ongoing good work of the Service and the recruitment of further on-call firefighters, specifically as it will help address the on-going availability concerns at Southwell Fire Station.

Resolved to note the report.

13 Approach to Reducing Unwanted Fire Signals - Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the update report on the Service's approach to reducing the number of unwanted Fire signals (UwFS).

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) When an automatic fire alarm activates for a reason other than fire, this is regarded as an unwanted fire signal (UwFS);
- b) The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) has a target to reduce UwFS year-on-year, but nationally, they have risen by 8%. For this Service the rise has been 16%;
- c) Previously there was a proposal not to attend automated alarm signals at hospitals between the hours of 7am and 7pm, following concerns raised by members the proposals was further explored and is now reported;
 - i. Consultation was undertaken of representative bodies including the respective NHS Trusts and Private hospitals providers, with an 86% response rate;

- ii. A further data review on attendance was undertaken and it found that the vast majority of UwFS were from the City and Queens Medical Centre Hospitals;
 - iii. Whilst the Fire Protection Team (FPT) has a good working relationship with these providers and continues to work with them to reduce the number of UwFS, the review highlighted that a more specific risk-based approach would be the preferred option against non-attendance, with both sites committing resources to help tackle the problem;
- d) The Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group (SDEAG) continues to monitor overall UwFS trends and recorded an increase at hospitals, and most concerning, a 50% increase in the number of signals from domestic dwellings, particularly sheltered housing and premises with independent living alarm systems;
 - e) As a result, further work will be undertaken with hospitals and with regard to minimising the false activation of telecare call systems, which are usually fitted at premises occupied by the most vulnerable citizens in society who are often at very high risk;
 - f) Investigation of the potential for chargeable calls as a mechanism to reduce repeat UwFS, continues and will be reported to members at a future meeting;
 - g) Currently there are no easy solutions identified regarding unwanted telecare signals, but there is potential that as domestic communication technology moves away from analogue, there may be the ability to differentiate between the type of alert issued through the telecare type systems. As the population is living longer and remaining within their own homes is the preferred option, the increased use of alert systems needs to be taken into account and planned for, not only by the Service but by health and social care partners;
 - h) A chargeable UwFS scheme is already in place, but any further expansion would require the approval of this committee.

The committee welcomed the new approach as an alternative to a blanket non-attendance policy for hospitals, noting that staffing is a nationwide issue for hospitals, but there needs to be more responsibility placed with sheltered housing alert systems.

This resolved to:

- 1) **note the update relating to the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in reducing UwFS;**
- 2) **support the continued work and focus to reduce the number of UwFS attended in line with the Service's CRMP.**

14 Safeguarding, Disclosure and Barring Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides a summary update, including implications to the Service, on the changes to the Rehabilitation of

Offenders Act (Exceptions), alongside an overview of current safeguarding practices in the Service.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) New legislation requires increased vetting of all personnel, whereas previously, a basic check was undertaken for those coming into contact with vulnerable citizens;
- b) A higher-level check is now required for officers coming into contact with vulnerable citizens, which takes into consideration spent and unspent convictions, and is repeated on a recurring basis. Following consideration of risk, all other staff are to undergo only the basic check;
- c) There haven't been any dismissals from the Service due to the emergence of any previous convictions or crimes, and where convictions do emerge, they are considered on a case-by-case basis dependant on the nature of the offence;
- d) The National Fire Chiefs Council has issued guidance which explicitly sets out the safeguarding expectations for the Sector;
- e) A further update will be provided to the committee in 12 month's time, which will provide information on the outcome of the vetting which occurred;
- a) The Service sets out clear behavioural expectations for all staff, and has confidential reporting mechanisms in place that have been checked for effectiveness, and which can be used by all members of the workforce if inappropriate behaviours and/or cultures emerge. The Leadership Team are confident that if any issues arose, they would be appropriately and promptly addressed, and reported to the Human Resources Committee as part of its monitoring and scrutiny role;
- b) More broader checking/enhanced DBS checks of all staff could be further considered within the internal governance review;
- c) Safeguarding communities is a statutory requirement under the Care Act 2014, so the Service requires staff to undertake safeguarding training. To date more than 700 employees have completed the basic online e-learning package, whilst an additional 134 have completed the advanced training;
- d) In the year from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023, the Service identified and referred 27 people to multi-agency safeguarding hubs, 8 of whom were children;
- e) The safeguarding culture encourages staff to have professional curiosity and report instances and circumstances which don't feel are quite right, prompting further investigation;
- f) The Service is working with partners to support the 'Safer Streets' initiative and is promoting city fire stations as a place of safety for women and girls in fear of violence or intimidation. There is scope for all fire stations to be more broadly promoted as safe spaces, and there has been a report of a victim of modern slavery approaching the crew of a station, which then engaged the Safer Streets protocol along with partner organisations.

Members commented;

- l) Enhanced DBS checks for all staff would be welcomed, but the balance between risk and financial impact is acknowledged, along with the need for a standardised approach across all Services;
- m) There are of course, no guarantees that crimes may have been committed, but that there is no criminal record;
- n) The importance of ensuring that the cultures across all areas of the Service are aligned, is important. It is understood that no existing employees have declared themselves as members of the LGBT+ community, which raises concerns as to whether the Services' culture is perceived as being accepting of such declarations;
- o) Further information on the whistleblowing policy and enforcing a positive behavioural culture would be welcomed in future reports.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the contents of this report and the updated changes to legislation;**
- 2) endorse the approach of the Chief Fire Officer, as outlined in the report;**
- 3) agree to receive a further update in 12 months' time once the new approach to checks has been embedded.**

15 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Areas For Improvement

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the committee on progress in addressing the Areas For Improvement (AFI) allocated to the Community Safety Committee for monitoring and scrutiny, as identified in the 2021 inspection.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) AFI 2 stated that 'the Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk';
 - i. The Service already applies its own Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to ensure that fire protection activities are targeted at the highest risk premises;
 - ii. the Service will be working with Nottingham Trent University to evaluate the RBIP and ensure it is functioning as intended;
 - iii. the Service is undertaking its own internal gap analysis, and evaluation of its RBIP, using the risk related guidance recently issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council;

- iv. It is anticipated that this AFI will be ready for closure in Spring of 2024;
- b) AFI 4 advised that 'the Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) are reliable to allow staff to access risk information';
- i. This AFI theme was initially identified in the 2019 inspection, and closed in 2022 following significant progress. However, this AFI seeks to continue progress and advancement in the reliability and access by crews of relevant risk information;
 - ii. New MDTs have been rolled out across all appliances across the Tri-Service collaboration, but some improvement are still required and work continues to improve reliability and accessibility;
 - iii. The new MDT system is due to be operational by October 2025, but information around risk will continue to be scrutinised and a secondary backup device provided to all responding crews, with the closure of this AFI predicted in early 2024;
- c) It is noted that Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Mick Sharman, works collaboratively across both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services to progress the appropriate joint commissioning of the new Replacement Mobilising System.

Resolved to note the progress with addressing the areas for improvement are assigned to the Community Safety Committee.