



**Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority**

**Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority -
Community Safety**

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Joint Fire and Rescue Service/
Police Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 15
March 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.35 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Bryn Coleman	- Area Manager for Prevention and Protection
Andy Macey	- Area Manager for Response
Damien West	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

21 Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, Councillor Nick Raine took the Chair for the meeting.

22 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – other County Council business.

23 Declarations of Interests

None.

24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

25 On-Call Duty System Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report updating the Committee on the achievements of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's On-Call Sections in 2023/24 and the measures being taken to support their success in the future, highlighting that:

- (a) 16 out of the Service's 24 fire stations host an On-Call crew, and most of Nottinghamshire's 30 fire appliances are crewed by On-Call firefighters (16 during the day, and 17 at night).
- (b) On-Call firefighters are those who live or work within a short distance of their fire station and usually have alternative employment away from Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) (although some also have another role with the Service on a dual-employment basis). They carry an 'alerter' which activates when they are required to respond to an emergency incident and provide up to 120 hours of availability each week. In addition, they maintain their operational competence by attending weekly training sessions and completing learning events.
- (c) Nationally, fire and rescue services (FRSs), are struggling to recruit and retain On-Call firefighters. Changes in society, such as people travelling further to work, house prices, general cost of living and busy lifestyles have all impacted On-Call firefighter recruitment and retention figures.

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- (d) The key metric by which NFRS measures the success of its On-Call is appliance availability. The Service targets On-Call availability to be above 85%, with each individual section being available no less than 70% of the time. As of 17 February 2024, NFRS On-Call appliances have collectively been available 86.2% of the time during 2023/24. This places the Service in fourth place nationally when it comes to On-Call availability. Only Southwell fire station, at 69.8%, has fallen below the individual 70% minimum target.
- (e) Attending operational incidents is a key motivator for On-Call firefighters. Maintaining appliance availability therefore plays a significant role in their retention.
- (f) An innovative approach to maintaining appliance availability has been the introduction of the Service's On-Call Support Team (OCST). The team's primary function is to mobilise members to crew On-Call appliances where they would otherwise be unavailable. When fully established, the team consists of five whole time employees, all of whom have appropriate incident command and driving qualifications to enable them to fulfil any role on a deficient On-Call crew. During 2023/24 this team has contributed 1,452 hours to On-Call crewing.
- (g) Another innovation to maintain On-Call appliance availability in Nottinghamshire has been the introduction of alternative crewing over several years. This relates

to the crewing of standard fire appliances with three On- Call firefighters at times when the section is unable to maintain the traditional minimum crewing level of four. This has enabled On-Call appliances to remain available to attend operational incidents as an additional resource at the most serious, or as part of a pre-determined attendance at those that are less significant. The ability to alternatively crew appliances has contributed over 6.5% to On-Call appliance availability in 2023/24.

- (h) Some of the Service's On-Call firefighters also have another role within the Service on a 'dual employed' basis. There are currently 69 whole time firefighters who also perform an On-Call role. Not only does dual employment support the availability of On-Call appliances, but it also has many other benefits, including the sharing of knowledge and experience, and the breaking down of cultural barriers which had once existed between the On-Call and whole time staff.
- (i) Whilst the OCST, alternative crewing and dual employment have increased On-Call appliance availability, the sections that have the highest establishment numbers always perform better in this area. Targeted recruitment remains a real focus for On-Call sections and the OCST. In 2023/24, the delivery of local recruitment campaigns, 'have-a-go-days' and primary employer liaison have resulted in 24 new On-Call trainees beginning a career with NFRS. The ability for new trainees to now undertake modular ('safe-to-ride') initial training that has removed the potential barrier of a 13-week initial course, which has been cited by many as a key enabler to On-Call recruitment.
- (j) The success of On-Call recruitment in 2023/24 has meant that NFRS will end the year with up to 14 more On-Call firefighters than it had at the end of 2022/23, which bucks the national trend of reducing On-Call establishment numbers.
- (k) Whilst On-Call recruitment is crucial, the Service also recognises the importance of similar efforts being placed on the retention of existing On-Call firefighters. Currently, 85 of the Service's On-Call firefighters have between 10 and 40 years' experience in the role. This commitment and dedication to serving their local community cannot be understated, especially when considering that many of these On-Call staff provide over 120 hours of availability each week for those years.
- (l) Attending operational incidents is a key motivator for On-Call firefighters, however, nationally the number of operational incidents attended by FRSs is reducing. It has therefore been important to enhance the role of the On-Call firefighter with additional opportunities to attend operational incidents. One way this has been achieved is to have special appliances such as the welfare unit, water and foam bowser and high-volume pump crewed by On-Call sections and special attributes such as marauding terrorist attack capability provided by them.
- (m) Another way of increasing opportunities for the On-Call to attend operational incidents, has been the introduction of 'short-crewing'. This enables an On-Call firefighter to volunteer to undertake shifts on a whole time watch when there are

shortfalls in the whole time ridership, and when it does not affect the availability of their On-Call appliance. The concept of short-crewing was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, but has been retained as it has proved to be very popular and provides flexibility and resilience for the Service.

- (n) Retention has also been enhanced by providing On-Call firefighters with the opportunity to undertake the full firefighter role. Whereas other FRSs may not enable On-Call firefighters to undertake prevention and protection activities, this is encouraged in NFRS wherever an On-Call firefighter has the capacity to do so, and the benefit for communities can be evidenced.
- (o) For some, the potential for progression within the On-Call is a key factor in their decision to remain in role. Whilst dual employment has been beneficial in terms of enhanced appliance availability, an unintended consequence has been the proportion of dual employees who have successfully achieved On-Call supervisory manager roles. To counter this, every section is permitted to recruit to an additional temporary crew manager role for the development of their firefighters who are solely On-Call employees.
- (p) National research has shown that alongside attendance at operational incidents, another crucial factor in an On-Call firefighter's decision to leave their role, is the feeling of being under-valued. In 2023/24, NFRS has taken several steps to address this. At Christmas, the OCST facilitated arrangements for each On-Call section to have a 12-hour period free from providing availability so that they could celebrate with family and friends. Social media promotion of the achievements of On-Call sections has increased, and a letter of appreciation will be sent to On-Call firefighters from the Chief Fire Officer at the end of 2023/24.
- (q) Removing complexity from the On-Call role is also important. The introduction of Fire Service Rota for the start of 2023/24 has improved an On-Call firefighter's ability to access real-time insights into the availability of their section, and to arrange their periods of unavailability at any time that suits them. It is now far easier for On-Call firefighters to be on call when needed, but also free when possible.
- (r) To ensure appropriate support can be provided, during 2023/24, District Manager responsibilities have been reviewed and realigned to provide them with more capacity to be available to support and attend the On-Call sections for which they are responsible.
- (s) In 2024/25, NFRS will continue to focus on the On-Call. Initial training courses are planned for August and September so targeted recruitment campaigns have begun. To support the OCST's decisions regarding the mobilisation of team members to improve On-Call appliance availability, the upcoming Fire Cover Review will consider the impact on attendance times when each On-Call fire appliance is unavailable. Opportunities to attend operational incidents will be further enhanced by the introduction of three rural firefighting vehicles which will each be crewed by On-Call sections. More opportunities to undertake prevention and protection activities will also be provided with the increase of achievement targets for both safety and welfare visits and business safety

checks, and the community befriending scheme will be rolled out to On-Call sections too. In addition to this local work, throughout 2024/25, NFRS will remain committed to supporting national On-Call working groups at both practitioner and strategic levels.

Members commended the Service for its achievements and the good work taking place.

Resolved to note the report.

26 Review of Fatal Fires 2023

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating the Committee on the fatal fire incidents that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service attended between 1 January and 31 December 2023, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Within the 2023 calendar year, there has been a decrease in fire fatalities from the preceding five years with four incidents resulting in four fatalities within 2023. The annual figures are:

Calendar Year	Number of Fire Fatalities	Number of Incidents
2023	4	4
2022	7	4
2021	7	7
2020	4*	3
2019	6	7
2018	10	7

**an incident in 2019 resulted in a death in 2020, due to the length of time spent in hospital receiving treatment.*

- (b) Whilst every loss of life is a tragedy, it is also an opportunity for NFRS to learn lessons and, where necessary, adapt its approach to prevention and response activities, and engagement with partner organisations.
- (c) One fatal fire incident occurred in January 2023, two fatal incidents in June 2023 and one in December 2023. Of the four fatal incidents, three of these incidents took place in a domestic premises whilst one took place in a vehicle.
- (d) Of the four fatal incidents, two incidents took place in the Mansfield District, one took place in Nottingham City, and one took place in the Bassetlaw District. The four fatalities were adults over the age of 45. The youngest fatality was 47 years old and the oldest 61 years old.
- (e) Two of the four incidents were determined as accidental causation, with one being deliberate ignition and one where the cause remains as undetermined and under Police investigation.
- (f) NFRS's fatal fire (CHARLIE) profile was examined against the four incidents:
- two of the four fatalities lived alone;

- all had underlying medical conditions, mobility impairments or mental health issues;
 - three of the fatalities were known smokers;
 - two had care and support packages in place from local health providers;
 - all four incidents had working smoke alarms, three of which were monitored systems.
- (g) Of the four fatal incidents, one address was previously known to NFRS regarding previous interaction. Work continues to raise awareness with partner agencies to ensure that referrals are made to NFRS for all vulnerable people, and especially those who are subject to in-home care provisions.
- (h) NFRS commissions a Serious Event Review Group (SERG) following any incident resulting in death or serious injury from fire. The group is convened as soon as is reasonably practicable after a fatal fire or serious event has occurred to manage the Service's response. The group's responsibilities include reviewing the Service's response to the incident, planning for immediate prevention activities to take place, deciding on appropriate messages that the Service will put out to the media, interrogating systems to ascertain what knowledge was held on the person(s) involved and what information had been shared with partners, and ensuring that the welfare needs of attending crews have been met.
- (i) Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) activities take place as soon as possible following a fatal fire to offer engagement at a time of heightened awareness of the local communities. This involves a high-visibility presence of response and prevention personnel in an affected area to carry out door-to-door visits.
- (j) Of the fatal incidents which took place in domestic premises in 2023, each area received a CRaE. This resulted in a total of 620 properties being given safety advice. Of these properties, 165 safe and well visits were conducted, with 39 smoke alarms fitted.
- (k) Where a serious but non-fatal incident takes place, CRaE activity will still be considered to reassure communities. NFRS also work with the 'Safer Houses' scheme to ensure that living standards and home fire safety within the private rental sector is supported.
- (l) The Service continues to fund a seconded Occupational Therapist from the public health sector. This role continues to work closely with prevention and fire investigation teams to identify trends and areas for collaborative working between NFRS and the NHS. This work aims to prevent future fires, injuries and ultimately fatal incidents, as well as improving a person's standard of living where required and reducing duplication and inefficiencies between partner agencies.
- (m) The CHARLIE fatal fire profile is continually reviewed to ensure this still reflects the demographic of fatal fire or serious fire injury incidents that NFRS attend. The CHARLIE profile questionnaire, used by NFRS staff and partners, is also analysed to ensure standardisation of the approach and identification of risks.

- (n) The Service is undertaking a review of the CHARLIE profile in 2024 to ensure that the Service's identification of, and targeting of, those most at risk from fire continues to be accurate. Efforts will continue to educate partner organisations of the CHARLIE profile and when appropriate referrals should be made to the Service. Support from Members to continue promoting the CHARLIE profile and referrals from partner organisations is also seen as key.
- (o) Prevention staff will continue to focus on safety messages and proactive engagement with communities, linked to the outcomes from fire investigations, where criminal and Coronal limitations allow.
- (p) The Prevention Team has embedded links with Nottinghamshire County, and Nottingham City, Trading Standards teams. The work focuses on electrical appliances which may cause fires and highlighting trends which are fed back to manufacturers to allow for recall notices to be issued.

Members commented that these fatalities had been tragic losses and that their thoughts were with the families of the victims.

During the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- (q) There is an increasing number of lithium ion battery fires, which are used in vapes, eScooters, etc, as those not made to European standards can cause a risk if they are not charged and stored correctly. Reputable products that aren't tampered with and are charged correctly are safe.
- (r) There will be a renewed campaign on lithium ion batteries focussing on the risks of inappropriate charging, the disposal of damaged batteries, and the importance of charging and storage not taking place in areas that are used as a means of escape.
- (s) Lithium ion battery fires can not be put out as they create their own heat source, so they have to burn themselves out, for example, if an electric car catches fire, it has to be submerged in water for a number of days to stop the fire spreading until it is burnt out.
- (t) Technology grows quicker than regulations and fire fighting techniques, and more needs to be done to ensure that regulations can keep up with the speed of development in technology to keep everyone safe.

Resolved to note the report.