



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Joint
Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 7 October 2022 from
10.01 am - 11.26 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)

Councillor Nicola Heaton

Councillor Nick Raine

Councillor Dave Trimble

Councillor Roger Upton

Councillor Mike Quigley MBE (Substitute for Councillor Robert Corden)

Absent

Councillor Robert Corden

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Bryn Coleman - Area Manager for Prevention

Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response

Guninder Nagi - Community Engagement Manger

Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager

Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

5 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Robert Corden (Councillor Mike Quigley MBE substitute)

Cllr Nick Raine for lateness.

6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

7 Declarations of Interests

None.

8 Service Delivery Performance Report

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, and Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report which informs members of the performance of the Service between 1 April 2022 and 31 August 2022.

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, highlighted the following points and answers to members' questions:

- a) a total of 5,561 incidents were attended during the period, which is a 27% increase in the same period last year, but this is mainly due to lockdown restrictions in April and May 2021, and extreme hot and dry weather experienced in July and August 2022, during which there was an increase by 52% of fire attendances compared to the same period last year;
- b) tables within the report provide a rich visual representation of the numbers and types of incidents attended during the past 12 months, for which is noted that outdoor, refuse and grassland fires had significantly increased by 236%, 93% and 327% respectively;
- c) the number of unwanted fire signals (UwFS) received had reduced during lockdown restrictions in the same period of last year as many business premises were unoccupied and less likely to accidentally trigger alarms;
- d) there had been a significant increase in the number of Priority 3 fires since March 2022. The additional demand is reflected within the average response times, which rose to 8 minutes 36 seconds, exceeding the average target of attending within eight minutes. Some delays were due to the remoteness of grass fires, gaining access and an unclear location report. The Service continues to promote the use of the 'what three words' location app;
- e) the On-Call availability has a target of 85% which was exceeded at 85.97%. Hucknall station achieved 100% availability, Warsop 99%, Misterton 96%, and Newark 95%. One quarter of all stations fell below the 85% targets, and ongoing recruitment issues at Southwell resulted in the station achieving less than the 70% minimum standard of availability;
- f) the report provides further detailed breakdown of availability at the Day Shift Crewing (DSC) fire stations of Ashfield and Retford, compared to previous years;
- g) three key performance measures are monitored regarding activity of Joint Control:
 - i. 96% of 999 calls answered within seven seconds. During the height of the summer activity, this dropped to 94%, purely due increased demand;
 - ii. the call handling time aims for completion within 89 seconds, and although significant improvement has been achieved, the target was not met;
 - iii. mobilisation system availability has a target of 99%, and although improvement was clear against the same period last year, the target was missed by a small margin;

- h) it has not yet been possible to compare the Services activity against that of other similar authorities for the July August period, but this information can be provided to a future meeting. However, it should be noted that other services have a different ways of measuring activity so will not provide a fully compatible comparison.

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, highlighted the following points and provided responses to members' questions

- i) a total of 4,829 Safe and Well Visits (SWVs) were completed in the period between 1 April 2022 and 31 August 2022, against an annual target of 13,000. This equates to 37.15% completion;
- j) prevention work is currently targeting the over 65-year-olds and disabled citizens as these groups have been statistically (data led intelligence) identified as the most vulnerable;
- k) two safety zone events were held, one at Ranby Preparatory School, and another at Ashfield Fire Station, to which schools from the North of the county were invited. Further events are planned in the south of the county during September;
- l) work to address hoax calls and promote fire prevention was undertaken with secondary schools. The Service's intervention package has now been adopted by the National Fire Chiefs Council as part of the stay-wise education initiative;
- m) the Service also contributed to multiagency, holistic road safety interventions, including 'Biker Down' with further multiagency engagement planned with schools and colleges across the county on 'Operation Highway' events, which previously have been well received;
- n) 463 Fire Safety Audits (FSAs) were completed and as a result, 98 premises required informal action, whilst a further 14 were issued formal notices. The Service doesn't hesitate to issue action and enforcement to ensure the safety of citizens;
- o) the number of audits is increasing compared to the same period in the last three years, as is illustrated in figure 12 within the report;
- p) 156 of the 500 Business Safety Checks (BSCs) of lower level risk businesses such as shops and smaller businesses have been completed, mainly by operational crew and watch managers who undergo supervised checks before being allowed to work unsupervised;
- q) Fire Safety Audits and Business Safety Checks are prioritised through the risk-based inspection programme (determined by an algorithm) which includes consideration of building height, locality, what the businesses may store, and sleep risk. The top 10% of premises (4,500) are then targeted for examination every three years. The remaining 90% of business are subject to business safety checks by operational crews. Premises such as nursing homes are considered high-risk, but if graded as good by the Care Quality Commission, then they drop down the priority list as they have a proven good management programme in place;
- r) takeaway food businesses aren't specifically considered high risk but do form the majority of safety prosecutions and are where incidents do occur, the premises are

subject to a safety inspection visit. These premises should not have living accommodation above, but often do;

- s) citizens should not doubt that the Service does prosecute where necessary if the advice and support of the Service are not heeded;
- t) figure 13 of the report provides a chart of the protection activities over the past 3 years, of which Building Regulation Consultations provide the majority of work and will continue to increase;
- u) whilst the CRMP aims for a 3% annual reduction of UwFS, overall, there has been an increase but work continues to address this with the initial advice, but following a sixth occurrence at the premises, a full audit from a Fire Safety Inspector is undertaken;
- v) the work of the JAIT (Joint Audit Inspection Team) continues with 25 buildings of over 18 m in height and 339 buildings under 18 metres in height still requiring inspection;
- w) regarding training, recruitment and retention of Fire Safety Inspectors, since last reported, none have left. There is now a career development pathway to enable existing Fire Service staff progress to the role. External recruitment has been useful, but there is still a capacity issue and currently whilst the 11 inspectors are each aiming to undertake 100 inspections per year, this has not been possible and is a huge challenge;
- x) there are increasing numbers of new student accommodation schemes within the city and it has been challenging with regard to capacity to ensure that all are compliant with building safety regulations. There have been prosecutions and prohibitions whereby buildings cannot be occupied until the required safety work has been completed. There will be further information on this at the next meeting;
- y) of the 81 lift incidents, the majority will be late night occurrences in student accommodation or hotels where more people enter the lift than the capacity, often having been drinking. The Service is looking at repeat offenders and urging appropriate building management. The Service only attends if there are people in distress or there is a medical emergency, but people do panic so the Service does often attend. There may be a possibility for the Service to charge to attend non-emergency lift related incidents, but this is yet to be determined;
- z) for those uninspected businesses and high buildings, the Service has targeted those considered at most risk, but all need inspecting. If a complaint is made, then inspectors will attend but otherwise it's prioritised by a desk top risk evaluation and capacity has to be directed to the most appropriate areas. There is potential for the Service to be challenged if an incident occurs at a property which was not considered high priority and therefore wasn't inspected;
- aa) of the 1,117 false alarms approximately 500 are attributed to the larger hospitals across the county, with the majority of the rest relating to local authority housing – so basically only a few organisations provide the greatest number of incidents. Members should be assured that although there are several stages whereby the Service writes to the repeat offenders, there is regular contact with hospitals and Local Authority Housing to address these unwanted alarms. It's not possible to legally charge for responding to false alarms;

- bb) deregulated building control is a huge issue for the Service and very complex. There is an overlap of duty with building control and members concerns that the Service undertaking building control work without charge is noted. Further to Councillor Upton's query, he would be welcome to spend time with the Building Safety Inspection Team to see first-hand what these issues are, and possibly report back to a future meeting.
- cc) Members of the Committee expressed concern and frustration that when fire regulations change, there isn't a formal process in place to ensure that all relevant parties are informed. It is sometimes not until premises are inspected by the Service that the responsible persons are aware of changes but would have been willing to comply earlier if the information was known. It would be helpful if there could be a process whereby when fire regulations change, the information is widely promoted, including to Local Authorities.

Resolved to note the report.

9 On-Call Recruitment

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report which informs the Committee of the challenges and recent efforts to increase On-Call firefighter recruitment.

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to members' questions:

- a) there are 16 On-Call sections, 12 of which are stand-alone and 4 of which share a station with whole-time crews. On-Call firefighters are trained to and provide the same level of service as full time firefighters;
- b) the On-Call Support Team (OCST) consist of 6 staff to help promote recruitment and maintain crewing for On-Call stations;
- c) recruitment of On-Call firefighters has been a national challenge as applicants must live and/or work within five minutes travelling time of a fire station. This is particularly an issue in rural areas with ageing populations and where the majority of residents don't work within their community and commute elsewhere;
- d) another challenge is that more primary employers are reluctant to enable staff to be available to attend incidents;
- e) being an On-Call firefighter requires a high level of commitment which can be a barrier along with the perception that pay is low and that there may be difficulty maintaining a work/life balance, and particularly achieving the required level of flexibility from their primary employer;
- f) for the period between April 2021 and July 2022, 178 applications were received at all On-Call stations but only 34 applicants succeeded in completing the recruitment process which consists of staged tests, including for where the applicants live/work, the amount of time they can commit, written, memory and comprehension tests, job related fitness tests, an interview, medical, DBS checks and a reference check. The report provides the percentage of applicants which failed at each stage;

- g) to help increase successful applications, new initiatives such as 'try it' are being trialled to help potential applicants gain a better understanding of the role and requirements of recruitment process, including the level of fitness, for which support can be provided;
- h) physical tests are very much job related, such as rolling out fire hoses and carrying weight, but also include manual dexterity and overall fitness against the bleep test. The more support the Service can provide applicants with understanding the level of fitness required and sporting them to achieve it, the greater the success level;
- i) if all initially successful applicants were to receive a medical examination at an early stage of the recruitment process, this would require a significant amount of time from the Service Doctor, so the medical is scheduled for later in the process once the majority of other requirements have been met and the numbers progressing are much reduced;
- j) On-Call firefighters are encouraged to promote their role to potential recruits, including at jobs fairs, coffee mornings and being visible within their community. This approach has successfully attracted 23 applications in the Hucknall, Ashfield and Stapleford areas, from which 14 were successful;
- k) the Service's upgraded website is much improved, providing potential candidates an opportunity to register an interest which is then passed to the local station to make contact;
- l) the OCST establish and maintain contact with primary employers to emphasise the importance of releasing On-Call firefighters to allow them time to attend incidents, but also to promote the benefits in terms of personal development that working for the Service can provide to their staff and therefore their business;
- m) the traditional training programme is 13 weeks long but a new alternative policy initiative of 'Safe To Ride' has been introduced whereby trainees have the option to complete a modular programme over a 12 month period, which it is hoped to prove more attractive than the 13 week course which can obviously provide an income barrier and is a significant impact on primary employers. 50% of new trainees have chosen the 'Safe to Ride' option;
- n) the standard On-Call commitment time required by the Service of 84 hours per week is a big demand to be physically On-Call; no drinking and remaining within 5 minutes travelling time of the station, so, to enable greater flexibility a trial was operated offering a lower level of commitment, the results of which will closely examined;
- o) details of gender, age and ethnicity of applicants and successful recruits is tracked and can be brought to next meeting;

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- q) Mansfield District Council used to have a good arrangement and allowed their staff to respond as On-Call firefighters during working hours as the station was close to the offices. Maybe Local Authority promotion of this arrangement could be encouraged elsewhere;

- r) the Service's engagement with members of the Pythian Youth Group has been successful, so widening that type of offer to other youth groups may be beneficial;
- s) other Fire Service models of operation across Europe have been examined. Whilst the German model relies largely on On-Call and volunteering staff, firefighters are not trained to the same high level and rely on power in numbers. There may be potential for a similar model, but it would be difficult to train all such firefighters to an acceptable standard of skill and ability for every eventuality;
- t) interesting lessons can be learned from Dutch Fire Service colleagues who maintain a good level of recruitment and retention. The Dutch service allows On-Call officers to undertake primary employment tasks from the On-Call station. For example, an office-based job can be done from the Fire Station. In addition, where necessary, when pagers go off, alerts are automatically sent to call a nursery worker to fire station to provide childcare;
- u) the vast majority of British citizens would want fully trained firefighters;
- v) the community value of On-Call firefighters should be promoted, both within the public and private sector;
- w) consideration should be given to some sort of commendation for business who engage On-Call firefighters, which would highlight individual business commitment and investment in their communities by providing necessary flexibility for On-Call firefighters. It is reasonable that businesses which is happy to support the safety of the community with a commercial sacrifice should be publicly acknowledged;
- x) the trial of the 'Safe To Ride' twelve-month module is welcomed, it being acknowledged that very few citizens could afford, or would be able to undertake a three-month training course away from their primary employment;
- y) the potential for childcare provision during a callout would be an economic and logistic necessity for some parents;
- z) some sort of commendation for businesses who engage On-Call firefighters could be investigated as they are supporting their community and their contribution should be promoted.

Resolved to note the report.

10 Community Engagement - Working with Ethnic Minority Communities Update

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, was in attendance with Guninder Nagi, Community Engagement Manger, who provided an overview of the community engagement work over the last 14 months which has focused on Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and highlighted the following points:

- a) the Community Engagement Plan approved in 2021, has three main work streams of:
 - i. understanding our community;

- ii. inclusive services and communications;
 - iii. inclusive workforce;
- b) initially ethnicity is gauged via the census information and then the approaches applied tailored appropriately;
 - c) a pilot scheme has been run in Berridge, which is a very diverse community, as a gap in take-up of safe and well visits had been identified within the BAME community. The pilot was run over eight days, aimed to establish a baseline and identify the specific community needs;
 - d) cultural changes have meant that more elderly Asian people are now living alone and not with extended families, and so may be more at risk from fire and incidents;
 - e) it is acknowledged that among many BAME communities there is a mistrust of uniformed services, so work is focused on engaging and interacting to raise confidence and trust;
 - f) Shisha is a growing trend among young people and presents new safety and prevention challenges;
 - g) prevention and protection messages were promoted through Radio initiatives which have been positively received by listeners. Anything said in English by representatives of the Service were directly translated and/or shows were broadcast directly in Punjabi/Urdu/ Mirpuri to reach the wider South Asian community, including the business sector. As a result, business targeted translated workshops will be considered;
 - h) expanding the Service's chaplaincy to become multi-faith will help the Service broaden its inclusiveness;
 - i) women's groups have been approached within the community with the idea of promoting community volunteer role to engage with the community and promote the Service's messages as Service Champions and highlight the opportunities available within the workforce;
 - j) engagement with youth groups is key and has proved successful, including a six-week pilot with the Pythian Club, following which a young Romanian man was keen to become a community champion for the Service within his community;
 - k) there is now potential to work with the Nottingham Girl's Academy. Sowing the seed of interest and trust at an early age is vital for the Service's successful engagement and potential recruitment;
 - l) previously, some of the areas within the City had been mainly been home to one or two cultures, but diversity has much expanded, particularly with regard to new emerging communities including refugees who arrive through settlement programmes from Syria, Afghanistan and the Ukraine. Some sections of these communities often fear uniformed services so initially engagement is soft to help build relationships. Sometimes contact is most successful through the voluntary sector which appears to be the main support route for such communities and can provide valuable communication and introduction pathways;

- m) the latest census results are likely to provide an interesting view of how diversity expanding. As a result, the Service will need to respond with applying differing languages and BSL to engage citizens and promote prevention and safety messages, but also promote employment opportunities;
- n) the County population is still less diverse than that of the City, but this is changing and there are pockets of diverse communities establishing in some areas of the county;
- o) for some people being self-employed and/or a small business owner can be seen as a barrier for becoming an On-Call firefighter and many do not even consider the Fire Service as career. It is a very alien concept in some communities, so the Service needs to continue to engage, promote and show that there people like them employed in the Service and that the opportunity is there for them too.

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- p) much community support during Covid emerged from the BAME communities which illustrated a cultural approach to public service, helping people and the hospitality culture. The connection with the community care role of the Fire Service needs to be emphasised. The third sector plays an important role with contacting, and encouragement for communities to engage with the Service;
- q) the Service does need to reflect the communities it serves;
- r) there is still much to be done but the progress to date is very much welcomed.

Resolved to note the report.

11 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved to note the future meeting dates of Friday 6 January 2023 at 10am, and Friday 24 March 2023 at 10am.