



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on Friday
8 October 2021 from 10:01am to 11:21am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Toby Neal (items 10-14)

Absent

Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Nick Raine

Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
(Substitute for Councillor Nick Raine)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Adrian Mann - Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Mick Sharman - Area Manager for Response

7 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Nick Raine

8 Declarations of Interests

None.

9 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

10 Service Delivery Performance Update

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the performance of the Service Delivery Directorate between 1 April 2021 and 31 August 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) there have been no significant changes to the incident profile in the period, and the incidents in each category are of a similar level to the previous year. There has been an increase in fires attended, which has largely been due to fires being set deliberately in the open ground around the Oak Tree Estate in Mansfield. A multi-agency approach to education and enforcement is underway, to address this issue. There are a number of construction sites close to the affect area, so the Service will engage with the site developers on security considerations, where appropriate. There have been 11 serious incidents requiring multi-appliance attendance, with a number taking place within the city in high-rise residences. The tri-service response with Leicestershire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services continues to be effective in managing larger incidents;
- (b) response times remain below the Service attendance standard of 8 minutes, and are likely to decrease during the winter. The Service continues to meet the attendance standards set by the Authority in a consistent way. Ongoing monitoring and assurance is in place for the Functional Collaboration Agreement between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services, including for the Joint Control Room, for which three key performance measures have been agreed. The Control Room performance was close to target, with the slight shortfall in meeting the mobilising system availability standards due primarily to a prolonged technical fault during June. The fault has now been corrected and work is underway with the supplier to improve the stability of the system;
- (c) on-call availability remains a continual challenge, with a current average availability of 85.24%, which just meets the service target of 85%. However, of the 16 on-call sections, 10 are performing above target. Day shift crewing availability is now reported separately. Of the two day shift crewing stations, the position is improving at Retford, but still remains challenging at Ashfield. There is a very strong commitment the on-call sections and everything possible is being done to support on-call provision, including the introduction of a new 3-year training planner. In order to mitigate unavailability in some sections such as Ashfield, cover is provided by appliances from other areas, so no availability is left empty at any of the major stations;
- (d) on-call availability is a national issue and presents a constant challenge in recruitment and retention. A dedicated team has been established to support the sustainability of the current on-call structure and the on-call firefighters. Currently, this team has been able to increase on-call availability by just over 10%. The available resources are being aligned to areas on the basis of risk, and the team is working proactively to increase availability, which is good in the national context;
- (e) however, there is a lack of supervisory managers and incident commanders, so it is important to carry out training to build confidence amongst on-call staff to carry out these roles. The training programme has been changed significantly in 2021, and has been very successful. It is important that on-call staff are able to work as flexibly as possible, so the Service is investing in a new, easily accessible rostering system that will facilitate this. As much work as possible is required on engaging with the large communities around the on-call stations to increase numbers, with a particular focus on the day shift crewing stations. The 2020/21 recruitment campaigns generated 166 applicants, which are being supported by

the dedicated team, but a large number of applicants for on-call roles often drop out of the process;

- (f) the national conditions for on-call firefighters require a high level of time commitment, so a local contract is being trialled with more flexible terms, to make the role more accessible. The contracts will be reviewed and evaluated towards the middle of 2022, and the conclusions will be reported to the Authority. The Service recognises the challenges of increasing diversity as part of the recruitment process, so work is underway to take positive action and broaden the appeal and inclusivity of a role as a firefighter. Positive action has been most successful in increasing diversity amongst whole-time firefighters, but is proving more difficult for on-call roles;
- (g) engagement is being carried out with schools to widen awareness and outreach is carried out with a wide range of communities. There is also support available to help break down barriers to making an application for a role in the Service, including in developing the required level of fitness. There is a clear focus and challenge in place to ensure that all recruitment requirements are reasonable and necessary, and consideration is given to who might be discouraged from applying due to certain requirements. All support from members of the Authority in reaching communities is very welcome, and the details of the upcoming recruitment campaign starting on 18 October will be forwarded to members;
- (h) the Service is now returning to a 'business as usual position' following the Coronavirus lockdown, but is still providing support to the East Midlands Ambulance Service and to food banks. Emergency planning procedures are in place and the Service will provide support as needed in the event of a new emergency as part of the Local Resilience Forum. Fire prevention work continues, including the carrying out of a large number of 'safe and well' visits following lockdown, which are on track to achieve the target number of visits, which is higher than the national average;
- (i) the Committee requested that the details relating to where and when safe and well visits are being carried out, the priority areas for them and their resource allocations are circulated to members, for their information.

The Committee noted the report.

11 Response Times and Call Handling Performance

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the Service's response times and call handling performance. The following points were discussed:

- (a) in January 2021, the Home Office published the national response times to attending incidents, which showed the Service as having a higher than average response time. However, the Home Office figures identify Nottinghamshire as a predominantly urban area, though its context is relatively different to that of the other metropolitan regions against which it is compared in the data. A tri-service review has been carried out with Leicestershire and Derbyshire, which are much more similar in context to Nottinghamshire – and the response times for the three Services are relatively similar;

- (b) the Service's response time reflects the time taken to answer a call, mobilise assets and then travel to an incident. The Service has two key performance indicators relating to answering a call and then mobilising assets. However, there is disparity across the country as to at what point response time starts to be recorded, depending upon the system that each individual service uses. As such, it is most helpful to compare the Service against others that use the same recording system;
- (c) ultimately, there are no national targets for response times, and the Service's response times do meet the targets set by the Authority, and they are decreasing. Means of reducing call handling times are under review, but a main priority of the Service is to ensure that mobilisation is properly informed by clear information, so that the right assets are sent to attend the incident. As such, the longer lead-in time recorded as part of the call handling time leads to a much more informed and effective response to the incident.

The Committee noted the report.

12 Fatal Fires Review 2020

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the fatal fire incidents attended in 2020 and the Services' response. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the number of fire-related fatalities are relatively low, with 5 in 2020. Of there, two were adult women and three were adult men, and four were over the age of 65. Three lived alone, and 4 had mental health needs. Profiling vulnerable people is carried out as part of the Service's fire prevention activity, and a visit had been carried out at the address of one of the fatalities. Vital work is done with partners to provide education and to identify and seek to mitigate the risks to vulnerable people as much as possible. An Occupational Therapist is now in place to work with the Service and partners in engaging with vulnerable people with particularly complex needs;
- (b) reviews are carried out into the circumstances surrounding all fatal fires, and they look at previous responses, whether the victim was known to the Service, and whether the victim had been identified as being at risk. In many cases, a fire is caused as a result of a person's actions, so the main focus of risk mitigation is on addressing individual behaviour. However, the risk to an individual can be exacerbated by the nature of the building in which they live. Reassurance and engagement activities take place immediately following a serious or fatal fire to support the local community and increase awareness of fire safety.

The Committee noted the report.

13 'Areas for Improvement' from the HMICFRS Inspection 2019 Update

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Service's response to its 2019 inspection report. The following points were discussed:

- (a) Area for Improvement (AFI) 9 ('to ensure that mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information') is the final AFI from the last HMICFRS Inspection to be completed. Whilst significant progress has been made and a focused programme of work is underway, there are still some actions to be undertaken to mitigate problems relating to the reliability of the risk information uploaded onto the appliance data terminals. Currently, manual interventions are taking place to ensure that crews have access to the most up to date risk data;
- (b) an extension of the completion date to 31 March 2022 is required to conclude this AFI, to allow for the completion of the action plan. The additional time will allow for the implementation and testing of a planned upgrade to the data terminals. In the longer term, a process will take place to recommission the mobilising system for the Service.

Resolved to agree the extension of the completion date for Area for Improvement 9 to 31 March 2022, and to receive update reports on the progress against this outstanding Area for Improvement.

14 Fire Protection Update

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the developments within Fire Protection. The following points were discussed:

- (a) fire protection is an important national focus and the National Fire Chief's Council has published a framework to support the changes to fire safety arising from the Grenfell Inquiry. In response, the Service has implemented a new and more detailed fire safety audit process for high-rise residential buildings;
- (b) a set of training standards has been introduced to embed the framework into ongoing practice, and new investment has been made in further specialist training on fire safety and education, to professionalise the approach to fire protection. An accreditation scheme is in place for the Service's Fire Safety Inspectors, and two members of staff are taking a Fire Engineer course. The Service is making a strong investment to establish in-house fire protection roles, and staff are being brought in at the introductory level, for development;
- (c) a full building risk review is being carried out, and partnership working is being done with a focus on high-rise premises. Unfortunately, of the buildings inspected, there has been a very low level of fire safety compliance. As such, a great deal of work is being carried out with building owners to ensure that the structures are compliant. However, there is still a substantial amount of work to be done, so the right investment must be in place to ensure good recruitment to and resourcing of fire protection roles, to fulfil the requirements of the safety standards and legislation.

The Committee noted the report.