



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 1 April 2022 from 10.06am - 11.15am

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Nick Raine (minutes 23-25 inclusive)

Absent

Councillor Nicola Heaton,
Councillor Toby Neal

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin – Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Bryn Coleman - Area Manager- Head of Prevention and Protection
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

20 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Toby Neal - other City Council business
Councillor Nicola Heaton (Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora substituting)

21 Declarations of Interest

None.

22 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2021 were confirmed as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

23 Service Delivery Performance Report

Prior to consideration of the item, representatives of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) were invited to present the following questions:

- 1) The availability figures for appliances such as Hucknall and Eastwood to name a few may appear to be high according to this report. However, on an ever-

increasing frequency, these appliances are being used to provide standby cover at Ashfield fire station leaving Hucknall and Eastwood along with other areas without any fire cover. If an incident occurs in their own station area, then the public will have a delayed response to any incident, putting lives at risk. Are the Fire Authority prepared to continue taking this risk to support a failing Day Shift crewing model at Ashfield?

To which the Chair responded:

Operational response for the city and county is balanced across and provided by all stations and further supported through cross border mutual assistance and is therefore not reliant upon the closest station in isolation. The Service is well practiced in routinely deploying its resources flexibly to ensure that appropriate cover is maintained. This may be to deal with the unavailability of Whole-time as well as On-Call appliances, or indeed large and protracted incidents. Management continues to work with the workforce and representative bodies to ensure that all response appliances, including the 18 On-Call, are as available as is practicable, but recognises the national as well as local challenge for the On-Call system.

- 2) When Day Shift Crewing (DSC) was implemented by this authority, the residents in the affected areas were told that this would not result in a reduction in fire cover.

The figures published by the service show that where there used to be a whole-time appliance at Ashfield & Retford, which provided almost unbroken 24hour cover, 365days of the year. This has now been replaced by an on-call appliance, providing an inferior level of fire cover.

In simple terms, both of Ashfields appliances are unavailable between the hours of 18:00-08:00 for an accumulative total of over 562 hours or 40, 14 hour shifts over the course of a year.

Both of Retford's appliances are unavailable between the same times for a total of over 970 hours or 69, 14-hour shifts.

Given the recent Fire deaths in Ashfield, the statistics provided by the service, and the recent recommendations set out in the fire cover review, specifically in relation to DSC stations. Will this authority commit to reversing the changes at the affected DSC stations, fulfilling its commitment to the public as agreed by consultation to maintain and not reduce the level of fire cover at DSC stations?

To which the Chair responded:

The introduction of day shift crewing was implemented in response to continued reductions in the Services budget and followed a public consultation exercise. Those financial pressures continue for Nottinghamshire as it implements the 2022-2025 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The On-Call system covers the majority of the United Kingdom land mass and is underpinned by the great dedication of all those who work for Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. The majority of response cover in Nottinghamshire is provided by the On-Call model, which is recognised as challenging, but not considered as inferior.

It must also be recognised that the recent tragic incidents in the area were responded to within the standards set by the Authority, and once again underpins the strong need to focus upon prevention activities to drive down risk.

Operational Response, through the Strategic Assessment of Risk, is just one element of the services delivered to communities, alongside Prevention and Protection aimed at keeping them safe from fire.

Any future changes to the delivery model will need to balance all those community services and be delivered within the financial resources available to the Authority. Given the global economic climate, this will no doubt be a challenge, and the Authority will continue to work with the workforce and communities to drive down risk and makes communities safer.

In a personal capacity, as a resident and elected representative for Ashfield, the Chair reminded the committee that in 2018 he had voted against the On-Call crewing of Ashfield Fire Station, and his opinion has not changed. The area experiences bespoke challenges and it is his belief that Ashfield and the wider service is best served by whole-time crew. However, the pressure on budgets is recognised. During the summer he is due to meet again with the Chair of the Authority, Chief Fire Officer, Ashfield Station firefighters and representatives of the FBU to discuss the outcome of a review of the Response capability of the Service, including Ashfield, a report on which will be submitted to the Fire Authority meeting in the Autumn.

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Bryn Coleman, Area Manager- Head of Prevention and Protection, presented the report which provides an overview of performance for the year to date from 28 February 2021.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) performance and activity are within expected parameters;
- b) there has been reduction in unwanted fire signals (UwFS), but incidents are still too frequent so there is a challenging target to reduce numbers by 33%;
- c) the Service is performing well with an average attendance time of 7:49 minutes;
- d) On-Call availability averaged 81.6%, which is below the Service's target of 85%. Recruitment issues remain at Southwell Fire Station, which achieved 67% availability, whilst firefighters at Bingham and Eastwood Fire Stations left the service so recruitment in these areas is underway. Warsop, Stapleford and Hucknall Fire Stations achieved an impressive 97% availability;
- e) paragraph 2.7 of the report provides a summary of performance for 999 calls answered within seven seconds, and shows a drop in performance, but all of the highest priority calls were responded to within the target;
- f) a hardware restructure of the mobilising system is predicted to improve mobilising system availability;
- g) in excess of 13,000 Safe and Well visits have been completed as of yesterday and the fixed term contracts of five additional safe and well operatives have now finished;

- h) the offer of Safe and Well visits has will be expanded beyond vulnerable person for persons to include every person in a property;
- i) 82% of all properties visited did have a smoke/ fire alarm;
- j) prevention approaches are tailored to respond to the community needs with individual Community Safety Area Prevention Plans;
- k) safety education packages are available for presentation within mainstream schools, and work is underway to identify 'risky schools' which will be directly targeted with intervention activity during 2022/23;
- l) for the period 1 April 2021 to 28 February 2022, the protection department undertook the following activities:
 - i. 509 pre-planned inspections of non-domestic premises with 106 follow up inspections;
 - ii. 105 Business Safety Checks (Short Audits);
 - iii. 223 Specifics;
 - iv. 196 post fire inspections;
 - v. 210 Complaints against buildings;
 - vi. 11 Enforcement Notices served;
 - vii. 7 Prohibition Notices served;
 - viii. 715 Building regulation consultations with local authority building control or approved inspectors;
 - ix. 309 Licencing consultation;
 - x. 94 other consultations with agencies including Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.
- m) where unwanted fire signals (UwFS) happen, the Service writes to the establishment and will visit in person after 4 instances and a require a full audit of the premises after 6 incidents. There was a significant drop in UwFS during COVID lockdown, but incidents have now returned to their pre-covid levels;
- n) hospitals are the worst offenders for UwFS but are also the biggest risk, so Fire Protection Officers work closely with hospitals to reduce occurrences;
- o) this Service was highlighted as an example of best practice for its collaborative work with Nottingham City Council with the Joint Audit and Inspection Team (JAIT) which currently examines high rise buildings for safety issues, and is aiming to include medium rise (11-18 meter) properties;
- p) it is anticipated that realistically, at current capacity, it will take several years of work to safety audit all current medium and high-rise residential properties within the city and county;
- q) Nationally, building safety issues are a legacy which will take time to resolve;
- r) as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire, the Building Safety Act is anticipated to come into force in mid-to-late 2023 and will place further burdens of fire safety and prevention responsibility on the Fire Service;

- s) there needs to be a holistic approach across all partners to fire safety and prevention.

Committee members' questions were responded to as follows:

- t) the number deliberate fires peaked during an especially warm period just as COVID restrictions were lifted. This included secondary fires of grassland, particularly on Oaktree Lane Estate in Mansfield. Any extreme weather increases Fire Service activity but the Service will also be promoting the 'Fire Stoppers' confidential reporting lines if people are aware of those who are purposely setting fires;
- u) COVID appeared to have a positive impact on availability, which may have been reflection of society's changes in priorities and the need to be flexible;
- v) there are challenges for daytime On-Call cover during normal working hours so the Service needs to be more flexible. This is an issue nationally for which solutions are being sought. Historically on-call staff need to be within five minutes travelling time of the station, but with current pressures, consideration is being given to expand this timescale. The Fire Cover Review may offer solutions to this issue;
- w) with long-term On-Call recruitment issues for the Bingham and Stapleford Fire Stations, an employment terms trial is taking place with the support of staff and the FBU. The trial offers reduced contracted hours from 84 to 62 or 48 within these areas to hopefully make the role more appealing and attractive to eligible residents. Once evaluated in the Autumn, if successful, then this offer may be rolled out;
- x) it is a real concern that current construction legislation has systematic fire safety failings, the results of which will become very apparent within the next 20 years. The construction industry needs to deal with existing safety issues and take the risk to life seriously;
- y) the Fire Service is a statutory consultant for proposed developments of 18m and above but not below this height;
- z) JAIT Inspections of 120 existing inspection eligible buildings has found that only 2 required no further work. Identified issues included compartmentation, glazing issues and missing fire shafts;
- aa) 23 high-rise buildings were identified as being of concern within Nottingham and some still have flammable cladding, which is yet to be removed. The Service is working with management companies and partners, but progress can be slow and Fire Service powers can be limited;
- bb) with regard to fire safety there needs to be a cultural change in Central Government and within the building sector as some developers do building the to 17.99m to achieve as much capacity as possible, but without the need to comply to high rise (18m) residential building requirements. However, buildings need to be safe and compliant and not just compliant. These issues have been highlighted by the National Fire Chief's Council to the LGA and other bodies;
- cc) the National Fire Chief's Council has a dedicated 'Protection Policy Reform Unit' which is working closely with Government and the LGA to get the Fire and Rescue view of

best practice on safety on what building safety requirements should be. Systemic failings need to be designed out;

- dd) the city has a significant number of dwellings which provide broader risks, but the Service is working with partners to prevent further incidents in the future. Given some of the issues identified during audits, it should not be presumed that another incident like Grenfell Tower won't happen again;
- ee) the refurbishment and re-purposing of buildings regularly provides additional fire safety complications, often due to hidden compartments and unknown materials;
- ff) with regard to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), local authorities rely on Environmental Health to enforce safe living conditions, but with different inspections taking place, better coordination and a holistic approach from all partners continues to be required;
- gg) regeneration and business is important, so the Service needs to work closely with contractors to identify and address issues and look closely at the standards;
- hh) with the additional pressures of the additional work attached to the new legislation, more fire safety inspectors are required to accelerate current and future inspections, but this will be a challenge with reduced funding. Nationally it has not been possible to recruit the number of qualified inspectors and so the Service recruits unqualified people to train in the required competencies;
- ii) changes in legislation are ongoing and whilst significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done.

Members of the committee commented;

- o following Covid many people are re-evaluating the lives so the opportunities available within the Fire Service, particularly On-Call fire fighter, needs to be communicated and promoted more broadly with in our communities, including by elected members;
- o it needs to be highlighted to planning authorities across the city and county that the new legislation of the Building Safety Act will require further governance but NFRS is here and is supportive;
- o HMOs are getting bigger, more prevalent and includes new build properties so with increasing density of population and the repurposing of buildings, standards of construction need to be controlled.

Resolved to note the report.

24 2021 Fatal Fires Review

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager and Head of Prevention and Protection, presented the report which provided an update to the committee on fatal fire incidents attended by the Service between 1 January and 31st of December in 2021.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) not all incidents referred to in the report have been subject to a coroners review yet so there are further details to be provided;
- b) there's been an increase in fatalities from 3 in 2020 to 7 in 2021, with 7 as the average;
- c) the report provides general information on where the fatal incidents took place, the dates, and the gender and age range of the fatalities. It is noted that all 7 fatalities lived alone, the youngest was 53 years of age but only one met the 'CHARLIE P' profile;
- d) three of the seven addresses were known to the Fire Service, and one had declined a Safe and Well visit and one was engaged 12 times and additional alarms fitted;
- e) the Serious Event Review Group of relevant internal partners including the incident commander, fire control and colleagues in Prevention, examines what had happened and what level of Service or partner intervention there had been (if any) and what could have been done to help prevent the incidents. This approach improves learning for the Service and supports preventative work;
- f) where fatalities occur, the Service undertakes Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) to highlight the necessity to take home fire safety seriously, including having working fire alarms and to be able to exit the property in an emergency. In total, 788 properties were visited and advice provided;
- g) an Occupational Therapist was seconded to the service in 2020 and works 50/50 with the NHS and is proving a vital asset, working closely with the prevention and fire investigation officers to identify trends and areas for collaborative working between the Service and the NHS, with a view to preventing further incidents;
- h) prevention activity planned for 2022 is outlined within the report and includes re-educating partners, particularly with regard to the 'CHARLIE P' profile of those most vulnerable to fatal fires, further promoting the fire safety message and continuing the work of the Arson Reduction Investigation Team, which works in partnership's with Trading Standards to identify trends in fires caused by electrical goods to enable manufacturers to recall consistently faulty products;
- i) it's easier to identify individuals at higher risk of an incident who are known to partner agencies, but the real concern is those who are completely unknown, often quite reclusive and often choosing to live in austere conditions. These people often don't want to be known to the wider establishment.

Committee members welcomed the engagement of an Occupational Therapist and noted that further engagement with Adult Social Care will be valuable.

Resolved to note the report.

25 An update on the Areas For Improvement from the 2019 HMICFRS Inspection

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an update on the Service's response to the outcomes regarding the 2019 inspection of the Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to members questions;

- a) the report seeks closure of 'Area For Improvement' 9, which was 'to ensure that mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information' as this work has now been completed;
- b) this is the last AFI to be completed from the 12 areas relevant to community safety;
- c) there are longer term objectives to further improve access to information for fire crews.

Resolved to agree the closure Area For Improvement 9.