



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 9 June 2023 from 10.07 am - 11.17 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Nick Raine (Chair for the meeting)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Bryn Coleman - Area Manager for Prevention and Protection
Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

1 Appointment of Chair for the Meeting

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

2 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jason Zadrozny, on County Council business.

3 Declarations of Interests

None.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair presiding at the meeting.

5 Service Delivery Performance Report

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report which provides an overview of Service performance for the financial year 2022/23.

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, provided the following update on Response and answers to member's questions:

- a) It's worth noting that statistics are compared against previous years' activity, which includes periods of time significantly impacted by the Covid pandemic, and so overall to an overall increase in activity;
- b) Activity is summarised as follows:
 - i. 11,343 incidents were attended, which represents increase of 12.4%;
 - ii. Unwanted Fire Signals increased by 12.1%;
 - iii. fires increased by 18.7% due to the extreme summer weather conditions;
 - iv. special service activity reduced by 4.4%;
- c) The report provides a visual representation of the types of activity month by month during the year, and also the number of callouts per district, for which Nottingham City had by far the greatest at 3,246;
- d) Also, included in report is a breakdown of the three priority types of incidents attended per month, which are summarised as:
 - o priority 1, severe risk to life;
 - o priority 2, serious hazard and high-risk threat;
 - o priority 3, confirmed low risk to human life.
- e) Whilst the Service aims for an attendance time of eight minutes or less, due to the number incidents during last year's hot summer, many of which were difficult to get to and/or the precise location unclear, attendance time averaged 8.15 minutes, whilst attendance time for the current year, to date, is averaging 7.55 minutes;
- f) On-call availability achieved 87.1% against target of 85%, placing it within the top 3 UK Fire and Rescue Services;
- g) Hucknall Fire Station achieved 100% on-call availability, closely followed by Worsop;
- h) Long-term On-call availability issues continue at Southwell Station, but following focused recruitment, there are now 26 on-call new starters;
- i) As previously requested, a detailed breakdown of performance at both Ashfield and Retford Fire Stations is included in the report and shows a marked improvement at Ashfield, but a reduced performance at Retford, mainly due to vacancies as 3 firefighters have left the Service;
- j) With a target of 98% availability, Wholetime Duty System (WDS) availability performed well overall, with the exception of the second appliance at Stockhill Lane, with an availability of 97.1%;

- k) The seven second 999 call response time target of 96% was only marginally missed by the Joint Fire Control, at 95.6%. However, this can be attributed to the large number of summer incidents, and the added complications of identifying the exact of location of and access to incidents in very rural areas;
- l) Mobilising performance dropped due to ongoing issues with the mobilising system which is due to be replaced in 2024.

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

- m) The target of 13,000 Safe and Well Visits was exceeded by 7%, totalling 13,914;
- n) 86.9% of Safe and Well Visits (SWV) were delivered to citizens over 65 years of age and/or disabled citizens, which is in line with the CHARLIE profile of those most at risk of fires in the home;
- o) Fire safety, road safety, and water safety awareness activities were undertaken;
- p) The Safer Schools programme is being rolled out to schools based in areas where there is a higher occurrence of fires, whilst the Fire Setters Scheme received referrals of 128 individuals;
- q) Due to vacancies within the Fire Safety Inspectors Team, it had not been possible to meet the target of 1,200 Fire Safety audits, however 1,024 were successfully completed, with 531 Business Safety Checks (BSC) undertaken by operational crews and 123 shadowed by inspectors;
- r) Total number of BSC by operational crew exceeded the target of 500 by 6.2%;
- s) The following prevention activities were undertaken in 2022/23:
 - i. 216 post fire inspections;
 - ii. 241 follow-ups to complaints;
 - iii. 30 issuing of Enforcement Notices;
 - iv. 8 Prohibition Notices;
 - v. 766 building regulation consultations;
 - vi. 320 licencing consultations;
 - vii. 96 other consultations with agencies.
- t) The number of unwanted fire signals (UwFS) increased by 9.1%, against a target reduction of 3%. This figure is higher than the national average and provided an increase of 7.6%. Once attended, the Service do follow up to determine the cause of the UwFS, and to try to prevent further unnecessary attendances. The main culprits were residential premises, then non-residential premises, including hospitals, followed by hotels and care homes;
- u) Lift rescues reduced by 7% to total of 177;

- v) The Joint Audits and Inspection Team (JAIT) has inspected 188 buildings (21,747 flats) and is yet to inspect 21 buildings in excess of 18 m in height, and 273 buildings below 18 m;
- w) The Health and Safety Executive is to oversee establishment of regional multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) of professionals from building control, fire safety and the housing sector to support their regulatory responsibilities. As Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire have the highest number of high-rise buildings, these two Services will collaboratively lead on the regional MDTs, with funding available to support the additional resourcing of new regulatory legislation;
- x) Following the extreme weather of last summer and the substantial rise in fires, some of which will have been natural combustion, prevention activities continue and the Service is ensuring that response capacity is available at the height of the summer, when demand is at its greatest. In addition, consideration is being given to specific requirements of rural fire fighting and the potential investment in a rural fire fighting vehicle for 2025;
- y) The availability of On-Call firefighters at Southwell Fire Station is an ongoing challenge, but staffing has been increased this year, including dual contract firefighters (working as Wholetime, and On-Call) but this will not resolve all issues. The Service is investigating revision of the On-Call contract to make it more accessible and attractive to potential On-Call recruits, whilst also ensuring that the adequate resources are available;
- z) The Fire Safety Inspection Team was not able to meet its targets due to staffing issues, including retirements and the two years required to train and qualify for unsupervised inspection. In addition, the metric does not take into account the entire workload of ongoing inspections where concerns are raised, and further visits required. Further to that, 50% of checks undertaken by operational crews require a further visit from an inspector, which again, is not recognised within the metric;
- aa) A proportion of UwFS can be attributed to the increase of care in the community and the knock-on effects of other services', not necessarily emergency services, inability to attend vulnerable people in need. Attending crews never presume that there is a false alarm and always respond. There are potential measures which could be put in place in vulnerable people's homes, including a smoke and/or heat detection unit, which alerts a named individual when triggered. If that individual does not respond, the system then summons the emergency services;
- bb) With regard to the tall building inspections, the establishment of the Multi-Discipline Teams (MDTs) will relieve some of that work pressure, but at the same time, some members of the Fire Safety Inspection Team will be transferred to staff the MDT, from which they may be transferred out of county to assist in work in the highest need areas. Current fire safety advisers can go for promotion which enables 12 month training, for which there is grant funding available, instead of two years of training. However, this still limits projected staff planning to 12 months;
- cc) Mobile data terminals (on board appliances) are often slow to update, but when attending an incident, the premises should maintain a fire resistant box on site providing relevant structural and safety information. Following changes in

legislation, maintaining this information and ensuring it is up-to-date is now the responsibility of a named responsible person.

Resolved to note the report.

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

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the Committee on the Service's progress against two of the four Areas For Improvement (AFI) identified by his Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue (HMICFR) in 2021, for which this committee has been delegated the monitoring and scrutiny role.

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

- a) The two AFIs are as follows:
 - i. AFI 2 – the Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk;
 - ii. AFI 4 – the Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals (MDTs) are reliable to allow staff to access risk information;
- b) with regard to AFI 2, as previously reported to the Committee, the Service is collaborating with a Nottingham Trent University PhD student who has undertaken an in-depth evaluation of the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), to ensure that it is fit for purpose and operating effectively. The full report is scheduled to be presented to the Committee at its October meeting;
- c) AFI 4 was confirmed as completed in June 2022 following a successful trial and then roll out in this financial year across the tri-service collaboration appliances of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue, Derbyshire Fire Rescue and Nottinghamshire Fire Rescue of new MDTs, including additional hardware.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the progress with addressing the AFI assigned to the Community Safety Committee;**
- 2) agree to receive future updates on progress.**

7 Grenfell Tower Inquiry and Tall Building Response

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an update on the actions taken in response to the Grenfell Tower Action Plan, to enable effective firefighting and rescue responses to fires in tall buildings.

Following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) Following the tragic deaths of 72 people in fire at Grenfell Tower, six years ago, a public inquiry was established to examine the circumstances and present recommendations to help prevent future incidents by addressing building safety regulations and how emergency services respond;
- b) Since 2020, the Service has formulated an action plan to address the inquiry recommendations and has inspected 23 tall, high risk buildings (18 m and above), which present a range of challenges including firefighter access and/or the potential for fire to spread easily within premises. This information is collated with fire protection partner agencies, the responsible person for the building, and operational crews to ensure that of the best possible plans of action are in place for the premises. This work is ongoing, being regularly monitored and recorded;
- c) Joint Fire Control have also been undertaking tall building exercises, from which learning continues with regard to disability evacuation, residents with foreign languages, and potentially those with disabilities;
- d) 50 table top exercises have been undertaken with all stations, alongside no-notice physical exercises to ensure familiarity with response plans;
- e) Funding has been received from Central Government, some of which has been spent on specialist equipment, such as smoke hoods to aid evacuation, along with additional firefighting equipment, examples of which are available for members to view following the meeting;
- f) High-rise response procedures continue to be tested and feedback provided at a local and national level to support a fully holistic learning environment to ensure that best practice is embedded across the sector;
- g) With regard to fire protection, a lot of new legislation has been introduced or scheduled, which presents further challenges with regard to additional learning and enforcement knowledge for firefighters;
- h) Paragraph 2.13 of the report lists the requirements of the named responsible person, as is mandatory for each tall building where people reside above 11 metres;
- i) Building Safety Inspectors are highly qualified and in great demand, both in the public and private sector, and so current vacancies place another pressure on the Service;
- j) To give assurance and ensure that residents of high-rise buildings know what is expected of them in a fire, the Service holds targeted community events to engage and educate higher risk communities to ensure there is a wholly joined up understanding and response. In addition, the Service has a dedicated website page providing advice for residents of tall buildings;
- k) After the Grenfell Tower tragedy, there was a lot of immediate national and local activity focusing on the removal of ACM cladding, which was responsible for the

rapid spread of fire on the tower. This continued to be closely scrutinised with the Fire Service taking an ongoing lead;

- l) Ongoing building safety inspections continue to find problems with buildings, particularly where there has been a change of purpose, such as offices converted to student accommodation, where compartmentalisation has been compromised and fire can spread easily or even unnoticed between units;
- m) The new building requirements do assist with reducing fire risk for newly renovated properties. Service officers are confident the Service has robust processes in place identify and highlight issues, and to work with building owners and partners, including with enforcement where necessary, to protect the safety of citizens;
- n) The Service hasn't identified buildings or businesses that are purposely non-compliant, but there is a challenge with regard to timescales due to resourcing issues within the sector around the limited number of contractors qualified to remove ACM cladding, which is far exceeded by the number of buildings acquiring cladding removal, and so the Service works with the buildings' responsible person, providing safety advice and guidance in the meantime. This can sometimes result in the provision of a waking watch during nights until proper systems put in place;
- o) Nottingham City has the most high-rise properties within the county. Where a high risk building is identified, the Service works closely with the responsible person to address the issues, but issues are also highlighted to operational crews to ensure they are aware and able to respond effectively. Partner agencies are also informed, and the Service undertakes resident/community engagement, to ensure that residents have an understanding of what to do if an incident does occur. Where issues are identified, the Service undertakes and records regular monitoring and where progress is not made enforcement action can be taken;
- p) There are 23 high-risk high-rise buildings outstanding full compliance, from approximately 300-400 high-rise buildings Nottingham. If the level of safety presented an immediate risk to residents in any of these buildings, the Service would issue prohibition notices to prevent the occupation. Some of these buildings need elements of improvement. The majority of these premises are student accommodation with a yearly turnover of residents, meaning a repeat of the safety advice is required annually, but the responsible persons and building owners are more often taking responsibility for this element;
- q) Every frontline appliance now carries smoke hoods which are used regularly, including at domestic property fires to evacuate occupants.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the contents of the report;**
- 2) endorse the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure an effective response to fires in tall buildings.**

8 British Sign Language Charter Progress Report

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the Committee on progress against the five pledges of the British Sign Language (BSL) Charter.

Following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The five pledges are as follows:
 - o Pledge One: consult formally and informally with the local deaf community on a regular basis;
 - o Pledge Two: ensure access for deaf people to information and services;
 - o Pledge Three: support deaf children and families;
 - o Pledge Four: ensure staff working with deaf people can communicate effectively using British Sign Language;
 - o Pledge Five: promote learning and high-quality teaching of British Sign Language;
- b) This commitment is just one element of the Service's drive to ensure that it can engage across all communities and provide an excellent Service to all citizens, including ensuring that the citizens can communicate with the Service, and that the Service can communicate to them;
 - i. Specialist prevention teams are learning British Sign Language to help better engage with the deaf community;
 - ii. Specialist heat and smoke alarms which incorporate flashing lights and vibration pads in the event of a trigger, have been made available to members of the deaf community for installation in their homes;
 - iii. There has been increased engagement with the BSL community, including through social media, on the Service's website and with the 999 BSL service specifically for deaf citizens to contact in the event emergency;
 - iv. Specific engagement has been undertaken with the deaf community with regard to the community risk management plan;
- c) the BSL charter will further be reviewed through the inclusion performance group and strategic inclusion board;
- d) further technology will be investigated with regard to interpretation technology and apps to assist crews and community engagement, including support staff;
- e) The Service also proposes to visit deaf schools and the deaf community as a whole to increase fire safety awareness;

- f) Consultation is ongoing to ensure the needs of the community are met by the Service without any access discrimination.

Members welcome the work and progress to date.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the content of the report;**
- 2) support the Service's commitment to continue to improve its services for the deaf community.**