



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

EVALUATION OF CHANGES TO ASHFIELD FIRE STATION CREWING

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 11 October 2024

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an update on the impact of re-instating a 24-hour Wholetime provision at Ashfield fire station.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Support the reporting of 12-month evaluation of changes to Full Authority and close the evaluation process.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2021, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) commissioned an independent review of fire cover which highlighted that the reinstatement of a 24-hour Wholetime crewing provision at Ashfield fire station would decrease attendance times in the area and support the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) commitment to attend all incidents within an average of eight minutes.
- 1.2 At the Fire Authority meeting in February 2023, Members voted to *"task the Chief Fire Officer to swiftly work up and implement proposals at Ashfield fire station to address the identified gap in resourcing to risk faced by the community."*
- 1.3 In July 2023, Members supported and endorsed the Chief Fire Officer's proposal to amend ridership levels at other stations to enable 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station within the existing establishment of 356 posts.
- 1.4 At 07:00hrs on 29 November 2023, Ashfield fire station returned to 24-hour Wholetime crewing.
- 1.5 In December 2023, Members agreed that performance metrics relating to the changes should be monitored and an update report be presented to Community Safety Committee during 2024/25.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 To understand the impact of re-instating 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station, data contained within this section compares performance in the nine months post-implementation (01 December 2023 to 31 August 2024) with the same time period prior to the change taking place (01 December 2022 to 31 August 2023).
- 2.2 It is worth noting that the re-instatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station required 30 moves across the Wholetime establishment. Proactive engagement with staff, representative bodies, and internal and external stakeholders enabled these changes to be implemented with minimal disruption. The fact that not a single grievance or complaint was raised relating to the process is testament to the managers, teams and personnel involved.
- 2.3 During the reporting period post-implementation, 469 incidents occurred within the Ashfield district. For comparison, during the reporting period pre-implementation, 433 incidents were attended.
- 2.4 A key consideration in the decision to re-instate 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station was the predicted impact it would have on attendance times in the area. During the post implementation reporting period,

attendance times in the Ashfield district (from time of mobilisation to the first appliance being in attendance) averaged 7 minutes and 24 seconds. This is well below the CRMP commitment of 8 minutes.

- 2.5 For the pre-implementation reporting period, attendance times in Ashfield district averaged 8 minutes and 36 seconds. The impact of re-instating 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has therefore contributed to an improvement to the average attendance time of 1 minute and 12 seconds over the reporting periods. This exceeds the expectations of the modelling conducted as part of the 2021 Fire Cover Review which predicted a 48 second improvement.
- 2.6 In addition, the improvement in attendance time within Ashfield district has not had any detrimental impact on attendance times elsewhere. County-wide attendance times during the post implementation reporting period have been 8 minutes and 1 second. This represents a four second improvement on the pre-implementation reporting period.
- 2.7 Facilitating the re-instatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has meant a reduction in establishment numbers at other stations. However, this has not resulted in a reduction in Wholetime appliance availability. During the post implementation reporting period, Wholetime appliances have been available 99.2% of the time. During the pre-implementation period availability was slightly less at 99.1%.
- 2.8 The re-instatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has also had a positive impact on the number of times an appliance from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service has been called to cross the border into Ashfield district. During the reporting period post-implementation this has occurred on 30 occasions, a significant reduction on the 68 occasions during the pre-implementation reporting period.
- 2.9 The creation of an additional two Wholetime watches at Ashfield fire station has greatly increased productivity of deliverable services within Ashfield district. Safe and well visit completion has increased 93% between the post and pre-implementation reporting periods (from 381 to 736), and business safety check completion has increased by over 250% (from 21 to 75).
- 2.10 A further benefit has been an increase in the number of groups that are included within Ashfield district under the Community Befriending Scheme. Selston Youth Initiative, Models For Heros, Teversal Ladies Football Club, Ashfield LGBT+ Drop-in, and Academy Transformation Trust Education College are all being supported this year. Before the return of 24-hour Wholetime crewing, there was only capacity to engage with two such groups.
- 2.11 A consequence of reinstating 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has been a reduction in the number of incidents bring attended by the On-Call section based there. Post implementation, during the reporting period, the On-Call crew was mobilised to 107 incidents compared to 245 times during the same period pre-implementation. This represents a 56% decrease in mobilisations.

- 2.12 Being mobilised to incidents is a key retention factor cited by On-Call employees. Since the re-instatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing, Ashfield fire station has lost two On-Call firefighters. However, during exit interviews it was confirmed that the reason for this was not due to reduced mobilisations but other factors (moving house and the change to primary employment).
- 2.13 Alongside a positive impact on retention, the 'promise' of being mobilised to incidents can also have a positive impact on recruitment. Pleasingly, the reduction in On-Call mobilisations since the reinstatement of 24-hour Wholetime cover does not appear to have had a detrimental impact on attracting new On-Call firefighters to the Ashfield section. One new trainee who will be based at Ashfield is currently undertaking an initial On-Call course, with a further one due to begin in January 2025.
- 2.14 Any dissatisfaction with the reduction in mobilisations for the On-Call section would likely also manifest itself in reduced availability. However, during the reporting period post implementation, the availability of the On-Call section at Ashfield fire station has been 92.39%. This is worthy of note and exceeds the NFRS target of 85% and betters the 90.1% average availability that was achieved in the same reporting period pre-implementation. (This is despite having two less firefighters to call upon).
- 2.15 The reduction in On-Call mobilisations in and around Ashfield district as a result of reinstating 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has contributed to cost saving for NFRS. Alongside the impact for Ashfield On-Call section described in 2.11, Hucknall On-Call section has also experienced an 18% reduction in mobilisations over the reporting periods. 'Attendance fees,' 'disturbance allowances,' and 'turnout payments' for Ashfield and Hucknall On-Call sections have reduced by approximately £46k when comparing the two reporting periods and when pension and national insurance oncosts are included. These savings have contributed to a net £65k underspend currently forecasted for the On-Call pay and will assist in alleviating the cost pressures arising from the re-banding on On-Call pay in the 2025/26 budget.
- 2.16 It is reassuring that despite the significant change that has been made at Ashfield fire station, responses from those employees who are based there to the recent staff satisfaction survey show some marked improvements to responses given in 2022. For example, those who intend to stay with NFRS for at least the next 12-months has increased by 8.8 percentage points to 82%; those who would recommend NFRS as a great place to work has increased by 15.2 percentage points to 67%; and those who enjoy their job has increased by 11.6% to 83%.

- 2.17 The Service continues to monitor the impacts of the changes, as well as the impacts on the wider ridership. This performance is measured and monitored internally through the Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group.
- 2.18 A further report of performance, including the wider changes from the resourcing to risk project will be provided after a 12-month period of evaluation. It is proposed that this is reported to full Fire Authority and therefore, formally close the evaluation process.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The information in this report aligns with the Core Code of Ethics and in particular the principles of putting communities first, and treating people with dignity and respect.
- 5.2 An equality impact assessment was undertaken for the project and was central to ensuring effective engagement with personnel.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on NFRS in respect of the delivery of its services to communities.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service's corporate risk register highlights risks which are associated with the contents of this report:

Risk	Implications
Employee Engagement	The report section explains how the reinstatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has not had a negative impact on employee engagement and the latest staff survey shows continued, and improved, employee satisfaction.
Preventable Deaths	Section 2 of the report highlights how the reinstatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has increased capacity for preventative work to be delivered and has significantly improved response times in Ashfield district.
Availability of Resources	The report shows that over the reporting period, the availability of resources has improved since the reinstatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

Section 2 of the report details how the reinstatement of 24-hour Wholetime crewing at Ashfield fire station has enhanced collaborative arrangements with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service by reducing the number of occasions appliances from Derbyshire are called in to Ashfield district to more acceptable levels.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the contents of this report.
- 10.2 Support the reporting of 12-month evaluation of changes to Full Authority and close the evaluation process.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER