

To: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

From: Area Commander, Head of Operations and Fire Protection - Stuart Smith

Presenting officer(s): Chief Fire Officer - Chris Strickland  
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## Service Operational Improvement Opportunity

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of plans to explore the opportunity to redistribute operational resources from lower risk areas of the county to higher risk areas where guaranteed appliance availability is required at weekends. The report also outlines how the Service will provide Members with suitable assurance that appropriate change protocols have been employed in reaching any final decision(s).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to;
- 2.1.1 note and endorse the contents of this report;
- 2.1.2 note that a further report, based on findings from the review, will be presented to the Authority as and when available.

### 3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Political** – unless the Service uses its operational resources efficiently and effectively, there is a high likelihood of a failure to meet the response standards set within our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This will lead to negative scrutiny from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Home Office (HO) and local politicians.

Re-distribution of resources will require engagement with local Councillors and Members of Parliament. There is a risk that any operational change may be challenged by representative bodies and local communities. The Service must engage with all stakeholders to ensure the risks and benefits of any proposed course of action are understood.

- 3.2 **Economic** – population growth within Cambridgeshire continues and to mitigate the risks associated with such growth, having the right resources in the right location at the right time is vital. Recruitment and retention in the On-Call workforce is recognised as a national concern; it continues to challenge this Service. There are currently no surplus funds to support an increase in workforce, finances will need to be sourced within current budgets. If our operational availability maintains or worsens, the Service may not be able to meet its CRMP objectives.
- 3.3 **Social** – changes to crewing arrangements and re-distribution of resources will impact our people and may create additional concern and tension within the operational workforce. There may be a perception within communities that removing services from an area will lead to an increased localised risk. The Service currently experiences low levels of guaranteed appliance availability at weekends. With the population growth in county there will be an increased need to target those most vulnerable in society. Ensuring we have the right resources for prevention, protection and response activities will help facilitate these activities.
- 3.4 **Legal** – any proposals for change will need to be consulted on with affected colleagues to ensure the Service follows employment law correctly. The Service must ensure it is using its resources to provide the best operational response under its statutory duties within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and meet its CRMP objectives.
- 3.5 **Equality Impact Assessment** – to be completed as this process moves forward to understand the impact on all those involved in the change.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 For several years, the Service has strived to recruit and retain operational On-Call firefighters who provide cover in most rural areas of the county. Whilst the Service has good availability in the evenings, availability during the daytime is extremely challenging.
- 4.2 Data from the pandemic confirmed that most of our rural community commute away from home to work and are therefore not available during daytime hours to provide the much-needed fire cover. Naturally people want a work life balance so after a week at work the likelihood of individuals providing additional cover at weekends is limited. Weekend availability is lower during the daytime hours where our countywide cover can be poor against the demand from operational incidents.
- 4.3 In 2018 the Service introduced two roaming appliances to help deal with increased risk and demand. Officers believe there is a need to further enhance and adapt the Service's operational resources to meet the continued growth across the county.

- 4.4 The Service has 10 wholtime appliances available (eight across wholtime and day crewed stations plus two roaming appliances) between 0800 and 1800 hours, Monday to Friday. At weekends this drops to eight whole time appliances owing to Ely and St Neots appliances becoming On-Call crewed.
- 4.5 The Service's operational planning assumptions require a minimum of 14 appliances being available to support a large incident (12 appliances with two for resilience) or multiple incident occurrence (two x six appliances with two for resilience). Our planning assumptions for periods of business continuity is to maintain a minimum of 10 appliances available.
- 4.6 As stated above, there has been significant population growth within Cambridgeshire over the last 10 years. This has seen the number of incidents the Service is attending increase (as well as an increase in static risk in domestic and non-domestic properties); this is likely to continue.

## **5. Plan**

- 5.1 The Service has identified a potential opportunity to re-distribute operational resources to guarantee the minimum resource requirement at times of higher risk and demand. Initial analysis identifies the re-distribution could improve operational services in higher risk areas of the county and enable enhancements to be made to prevention and protection activities.
- 5.2 To support this, the Service is considering the potential impacts of re-distributing operational resources from the three lowest risk areas identified as Sutton, Manea and Kimbolton to the higher risk areas of St Neots and Ely, by increasing the number of wholtime firefighters to provide guaranteed fire cover during the daytime, seven days a week (St Neots and Ely are currently day-crewed Monday to Friday only).
- 5.3 It is envisaged that the additional guaranteed daytime operational resources would be able to operate flexibly across the county, in a similar way to existing roaming appliances, to provide better strategic fire cover and enable wider opportunities for proactive prevention and protection work in hard-to-reach rural and vulnerable communities, especially in the northeast and southwest of our operational area. This would be significantly more positive for those areas, where we currently struggle to provide support as effectively as we would like.
- 5.4 The plan (as it develops) for this proposal will be subject to formal consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, including colleagues who work at the named stations. Public engagement will also take place as part of this process.
- 5.5 This initiative is one part of ongoing work within the CRMP to help the Service mitigate the risk of continued growth across the county and ensure resources match this demand across all prevention, protection and response activities.

- 5.6 Once plans have been further explored and fully developed a report will be brought to Members detailing how the Service has discharged their responsibility to meet the requirements under the CRMP and properly consulted and engaged with all relevant stakeholders.

## Source Document

Modelling 2022 On-Call Station Weekday vs Weekend Availability 2022 Operational Planning Assumptions

## Location

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