

To: Policy and Resources Committee  
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## Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS) Strategy

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy and Resources Committee on the strategy to reduce the burden of unwanted fire signals (UFS) and our reporting of automatic fire alarms (AFA's) to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- 1.2 This relates directly to a HMICFRS report informing the Service that it needed to do more to reduce the burden of UFS within Cambridgeshire.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to;
  - 2.1.1 note the content of this report and in particular the risk assessment,
  - 2.1.2 endorse the policy change detailed at Paragraph 8.

### 3. Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed.

### 4. Risk Assessment

- 4.1 **Political** - members of the public expect a level of service from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS). To ensure this is the best possible we need to manage our resources effectively and use them in the most efficient manner. By not attending AFA's to certain premises we will ensure best use of resources and mitigate the risk of not having resources available when one of our most serious incidents occur. Obviously this then poses a risk that any premises having an AFA that we do not

attend could actually have a fire and there will be a delay in our mobilisation until a call confirming a fire situation is received.

- 4.2 **Economic** - there will be a non-cashable saving from wholetime appliances not attending AFA's and cashable savings from On-Call appliances not attending AFA's. Substantial value for money will be seen from this change by focusing resources on operational risk work, growing our awareness of static risk and improving our response to the public during our most serious incidents.
- 4.3 **Social** - an equality impact assessment has been completed. Therefore the risks from a social perspective relating to individuals who usually resided or are found in premises we will not now respond to under the new policy guidelines are captured.
- 4.4 **Legislative** - Article 18 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the premises responsible person to '*appoint one or more competent persons to assist in undertaking the preventive and protective measures.*' Where the protective measures include a fire alarm and fire detection system, a proper service and maintenance programme is essential to ensure the fire alarm and detection system works when it is needed most. British Standards recommend that the number of service visits per annum should be a minimum of twice a year (with the actual number dictated by a suitable and sufficient risk assessment).
- 4.5 **Environmental** - there will be a reduction in vehicle movements to emergency incidents through this non-attendance so CFRS will save on fuel and vehicle maintenance. This change will create capacity in working time meaning some vehicle movements may be required at normal road speed to undertake other tasks.

## 5. Definition of an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA)

- 5.1 National and local statistics show that the majority of all AFAs are unwanted fire signals (UFS). An unwanted fire signal is defined as "*a fire signal resulting from a cause other than fire.*" AFA's fall into two categories; faulty equipment alarms and non-fire condition alarms from areas such as cooking or dust from works.

## 6. Background

- 6.1 CFRS already has a policy where we do not attend AFA's during the period of 0900 and 1700 hours, Monday to Friday, for some non-domestic premises (namely shops and offices). This change was made historically based on data and to improve our efficiency and effectiveness when delivering services to the public.
- 6.2 Its introduction saw a dramatic decline in the number of calls attended by CFRS and a slight reduction in calls to our Combined Fire Control (CFC). There was minimal impact on our operational response in the event of a fire as these (non-domestic) premises are 'staffed' during this timeframe and therefore individuals were making a call to CFC for help triggering our mobilisation to the incident.
- 6.3 We have reduced our AFA data to HMICFRS in the last year by correcting a reporting issue but this still does not lessen the burden of AFA's on the organisation (primarily operational crews and CFC). Appendix 1 refers.

- 6.4 As part of the Operational Response Review Project we have interrogated and reviewed all our response data and information to allow us to make informed operational decisions about how to best use our resources. This data has led us to continue to evolve our initial decision around non-attendance to AFA's at certain premises, whilst continuing to deliver the best service possible to our communities.

## 7. Data Analysis

- 7.1 Looking at data spanning 10 years (Appendix 2 refers), there is a correlation between AFA's that occur in residential properties and care homes/sheltered accommodation and our 'killed or seriously injured in fires' in these premises. In line with our current policy, we only mobilise to 39.4% or 28071 of AFA's that our CFC receives calls for. Of these, only 1.9% or 523 AFA's were closed as a fire (which can include for example, light fittings smoking and overheating plugs) and 360 of these calls were between 0900 and 1700 hours; only 25 of these incidents required action to rescue an individual from a property.
- 7.2 Under the new policy we would still attend all 25 of the incidents that required lifesaving action as they all occurred following AFA's in care homes/sheltered accommodation or private residential properties.
- 7.3 As part of the Operational Response Review Project, data has been reviewed to understand what capacity this policy change will create (by our non-attendance to AFA's). By looking at time currently spent at AFA's and then what that time will look like with the new policy in place, we can free up capacity for our operational crews to do more productive work. We will re-establish our operational risk exercises (at local risk sites on station grounds) to ensure crews continue to train and familiarise themselves with our most significant risks across the county. As Members are aware, operational incidents make up a small percentage of wholetime crews' work and there is other vital work that needs completing alongside providing an operational response. This work will continue within the project to ensure our wholetime crews are being as productive as possible with the capacity they have available to them.

## 8. Policy Change

- 8.1 It is intended to introduce the new policy on 1 May 2023. Its introduction will see CFRS **stop attending** AFA's to the following premises between 0900 and 1700 hours, Monday to Friday, unless called for a reported fire or a manual call point is activated:
- hospitals and hospices,
  - houses of multiple occupancy,
  - prisons and secure accommodation,
  - hostels,
  - high-rise buildings.
- 8.2 We will **continue to attend** AFA's to the below premises between these times based on the data analysis;

- care homes/sheltered accommodation,
  - private residential properties.
- 8.3 This change in response to AFA's will provide capacity for crews to continue with training and targeted work during the day with less likelihood of being disturbed due to AFA's, whilst still providing an attendance at care homes/sheltered accommodation and residential properties.
9. Consultation
- 9.1 The people responsible for the premises affected by this change have been actively engaged with and consultation has been ongoing with representative bodies for over a month. This change will not only reduce the burden of false alarms on our crews but should reduce the impact of calls to our CFC. We will monitor this impact and if we see that calls are still being made to CFC further education with alarm receiving centres will take place to try to reduce this burden further. A robust communication strategy has been devised in preparation for any negative responses or concerns.

## Source Documents

Policy and Resources Committee Reports and Minutes – various

Fire Authority Reports and Minutes – various

HMICFRS Inspection Reporting - various

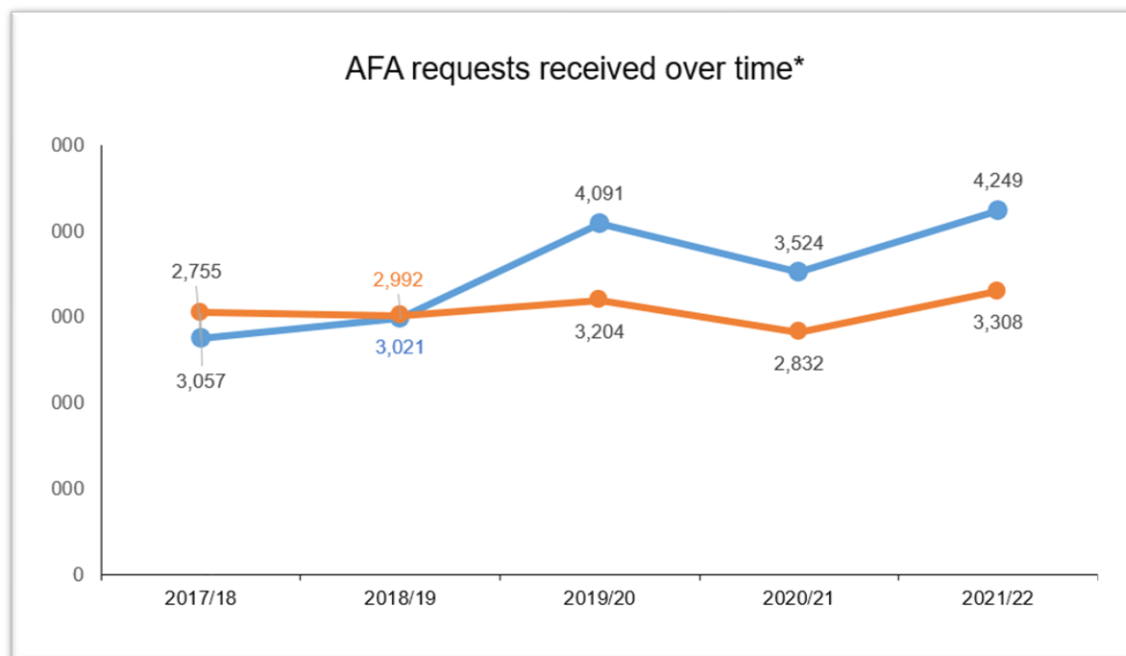
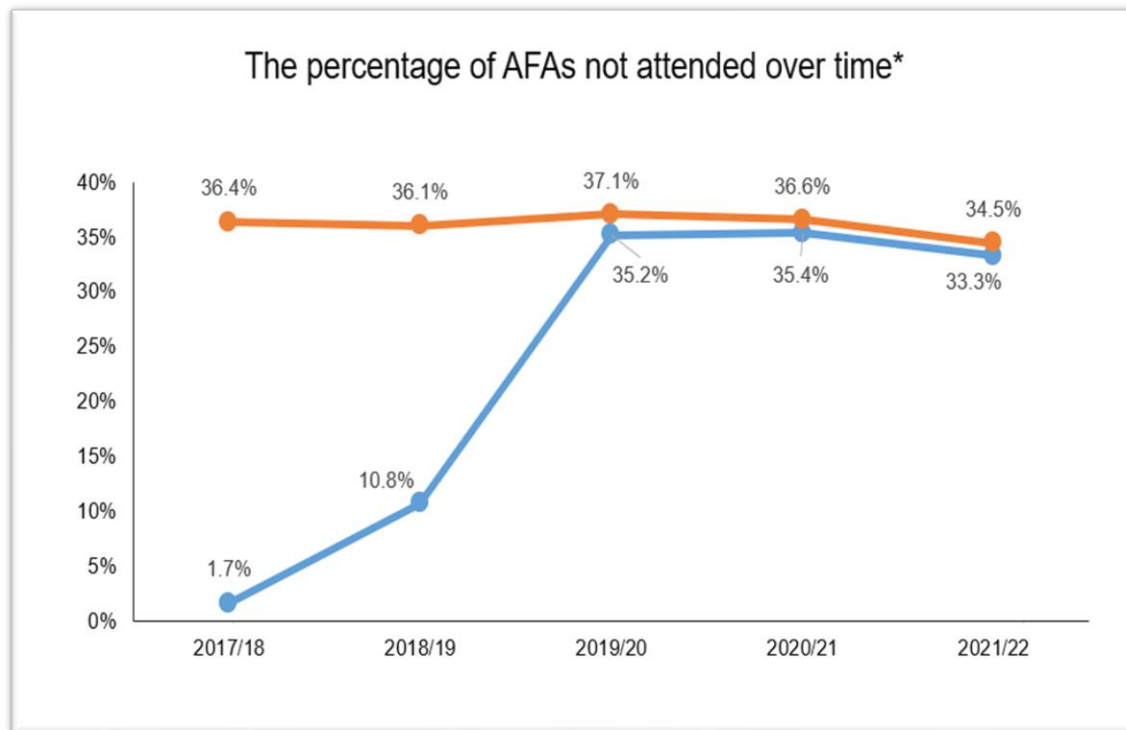
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## Appendix 1



Blue lines are HMICFRS reported figures, orange lines are adjusted figures.

## Appendix 2

**10-Year analysis (April 2011 to March 2021)**

Measure	Trend	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Grand Total	% of Total
Total Incidents attended over 10 years		8338	6913	6533	6292	6746	7200	7182	7511	7228	6489	70432	
Of which were Mobilised to : Alarms - AFA		3405	3248	2697	2643	2788	2807	2698	2671	2751	2363	28071	39.4%
Of which were closed as a Fire		67	60	50	50	59	43	61	41	45	47	523	1.9%

[illegible]