

TO: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

FROM: Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Jon Anderson

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ON-CALL CREWING UPDATE

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Fire Authority on recent progress made to improve the On-Call service and the next steps the Service intends to take to continue the momentum.

2. Recommendation

- 2.2 The Authority is asked to note the progress made and the associated next steps.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Economic** – this work is to support On-Call to become a sustainable service for the future. Any cost savings which may or may not materialise are incidental.
- 3.2 **Political** – the Service has done much to improve the On-Call service within Cambridgeshire. Challenges remain however in terms of the sustainability of the current On-Call service.
- 3.3 **Social** – society has changed dramatically during the past 15 years. Fewer people work in their home town or village and employers are less prepared to release their staff to attend incidents. People value their leisure time more than ever before.
- 3.4 **Legislative** – the Service is required to keep abreast of legislative changes in the Working Time Directive (WTD) Regulations. It has the potential to reduce even further the ability to provide an On-Call service.
- 3.5 **Technical** – technology advances all the time for example, lighter battery operated rescue equipment for road traffic collision work. These systems may reduce the number of personnel required to commence operations, without compromising safety.
- 3.6 **Environmental** – smaller appliances may be more environmentally friendly.

4. Background

- 4.1 The On-Call service has been experiencing fundamental issues regarding recruitment and retention of staff which impacts on the availability of appliances to attend incidents and ultimately, the general sustainability of the service in its current guise. This is a national problem and not specific to Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS). In February 2005, the Government recognised these issues in a report 'The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System'.
- 4.2 CFRS has worked extremely hard to maintain an effective On-Call service and continues to offer value for money as well as providing a good level of fire cover to the communities we serve. However we frequently have numerous fire appliances unavailable because there are insufficient firefighters to crew them locally. This means we have to utilise neighbouring fire appliances to provide that cover. Due to the way we manage our On-Call stations, this is done efficiently with little detriment to our communities.

5. Recent Progress

- 5.1 CFRS has carried out extensive analysis to determine how best to utilise the On-Call resources available. This has led to the identification of our nine strategic On-Call stations - these are the stations that contribute the most to our response model and if kept available will ensure we are able to meet our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) targets. The stations identified as strategic are kept under review and at present are;
- Sawston
 - March
 - Chatteris
 - Cottenham
 - Papworth
 - Whittlesey
 - Ramsey
 - Soham
 - Yaxley.
- 5.2 CFRS has prioritised maintaining the availability of these stations using recent developments such as roaming appliances and On-Call strategic reserve duties. Whilst continuing to recruit at all stations, recruitment activities at these strategic stations have been prioritised.

6. Next steps

- 6.1 Having focused mainly on the strategic stations we are now looking at what we can do to improve the service offered by the other non-strategic On-Call stations. There are a number of options that we are currently considering and have started work on for example, phased response, alternative appliances and crewing models, as well as the possible removal of 13.5 metre ladders.

- 6.2 **Phased response** – this would allow firefighters at non-strategic stations to provide availability outside of the current five minute response requirement. If they can be available within an hour we would use them when required to respond to spate conditions, provide relief crews or make themselves available due to the Service having a number of appliances committed at a large incident. The Service will be carrying out a trial of phased response in the summer to determine if it does provide the anticipated benefits.
- 6.3 **Alternative appliances and crewing models** – CFRS has recently purchased three appliances that are smaller than the appliances we traditionally use and that have equipment on them that would be suitable for use by a crew of less than four. These appliances have been trialled as the second appliances at our busier On-Call and day-crewed stations. These trials have concluded that they are fit for purpose and they are currently being moved to stations with low call rates, in low risk areas, that also struggle with providing a crew of four. The next phase of this project will be to engage with staff and their representatives to explore alternative crewing models for non-strategic stations. Following consultation we will conduct a trial of the proposed solution and the outcomes of this will be considered for inclusion in our next IRMP.
- 6.4 **Removal of 13.5 metre ladders** – we are considering the benefits of removing the 13.5 metre ladders from some or all of our On-Call stations. Evidence suggests that these ladders are rarely used operationally by On-Call stations yet they spend a lot of valuable training time on them. The Service will continue to analyse data and engage with On-Call firefighters to determine if removal of the ladders at some or all On-Call stations would enhance the effective use of valuable training time without exposing the local community to increased risk.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System	CLG Document	NA
ORH Report	Headquarters Hinchbrook Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	ACFO J Anderson jon.anderson@cambsfire.gov.uk 07711 444201