

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 14 February 2024

Subject: Service Delivery Update

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For: Information

Purpose

1. The purpose of the report is to update the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) on key Service Delivery performance for the first three quarters of 2023/24, April to December 2023 inclusive.

Recommendation

2. The CFA is requested to note the contents of this report.

Executive Summary

3. This report sets out the progress, or otherwise, that has been achieved in relation to Service Delivery and provides an overview of the performance and activities within the first three quarters of 2023/24. The subject matter areas that are covered in this report include:
 - Prevention.
 - Protection.
 - Response.
 - Performance.

Background

Prevention

4. Prevention refers to a proactive approach the Service takes, aimed at minimising the risk of fires and other emergencies before they occur. Fire prevention involves a range of activities and initiatives designed to educate the public and communities about fire safety and to implement measures that reduce the likelihood of fires through a Home Safety Check.
5. The Service utilises a risk matrix to identify those who are at a greater risk of fire as well as working with partner agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community are prioritised, and prevention activities are targeted accordingly.
6. The intent of the Home Safety Check (HSC) is to identify potential hazards, educate homeowners or occupants about fire safety measures, and provide recommendations to minimise the risk of fires and enhance overall fire safety.

7. Between April and December 2023, a total of 11,245 successful home safety checks were completed, an increase of 1,543 compared to the same reporting period the previous year. Among these successful home safety checks, 2,739 were referrals from partner agencies.
8. During the reporting period, the Service also installed 4,051 alarms, comprising of 3,739 standard smoke alarms, 152 Carbon Monoxide alarms and 160 smoke alarms for those individuals with hearing impairments.

Protection

9. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
10. The order applies to all non-domestic premises, including common areas of residential buildings and aims to simplify and consolidate fire safety regulations into a single piece of legislation. It places the responsibility for fire safety on the "responsible person", who is typically the employer, owner, or occupier of the premises. This person is required to carry out a fire risk assessment, implement appropriate fire safety measures, and maintain them.
11. In order to fulfil its duty to manage risk within the communities it serves, Fire Protection Team staff will carry out fire safety audits on premises that the legislation applies to as part of a risk-based inspection programme (RBIP).
12. Fire Safety Inspectors have completed 1,107 Fire Safety Audits (FSAs), of which 782 were within the risk-based inspection programme for 2023/24. This is compared to 1,078 the previous year.
13. Following the 1,107 Fire Safety Audits, the Service has issued 48 fire safety enforcement notices and 109 action plans. This represents a 67% rise compared to the three-year benchmark. It also underscores the effectiveness of the risk-based inspection programme in focusing on the appropriate premises as part of the Service's commitment to achieving Safer People, Safer Places.
14. Partnership and Collaboration: Fire safety teams continue collaboration with businesses, industry associations, and trade organisations in promoting fire safety. They have engaged in joint initiatives, such as Better Business for All, as well as providing engagement events to support businesses in working together to address fire safety challenges specific to certain industries or sectors.

Response

15. The Service attended 7,026 incidents between 1 April and 31 December 2023, of which 2,782 (39%) were non-fire incidents, 2,570 (37%) were fire false alarms and 1,674 (24%) were fire incidents. This is an increase of 492 more incidents than the 3-yearly average of 6,534.
16. The surge in incidents can be further explained by an 84% rise in the number of occurrences that the Service responds to, specifically related to gaining entry to

premises since 2020. This rise underscores the evolving landscape of challenges and demands faced by the Service.

17. Regrettably, during the reporting period, the Service has attended 70 fatalities at a variety of incidents, including:
 - a) 4 x Fire related.
 - b) 15 x Road Traffic Collisions.
 - c) 51 x Special Services (*assisting partner agencies/gaining entry/suicide*).

Performance

18. On-Call availability for April - December 2023 has seen a slight increase from 63.5% to 64.2% compared to the previous year. However, On Call availability remains an issue, and one that is being experienced nationally, and can be attributed to several factors:
 - a. **Changing Demographics:** The demographics of the population have changed over time, with more people working non-traditional hours or having commitments that make it challenging for them to be On-Call firefighters. This shift in demographics has resulted in a smaller pool of potential applicants.
 - b. **Increased Employment Commitments:** Many individuals have taken on full-time employment or multiple jobs, making it difficult for them to commit to On-Call availability. The demands of their primary occupations may not allow them to be readily available for emergency response.
 - c. **Lifestyle Changes:** Modern lifestyles have become increasingly busy and demanding, leaving less time for individuals to commit to On-Call availability. People often have multiple personal and family responsibilities, limiting their ability to respond to emergencies at a moment's notice.
 - d. **Training and Commitment:** The training and commitment required to become an On-Call firefighter can be extensive, requiring individuals to balance their regular occupations, personal lives, and the demands of the fire service. This can discourage some potential recruits from pursuing this role.
19. The Service has recognised these issues and is developing several strategies to address these challenges and maintain an effective level of On-Call availability including:
 - Flexible contracts
 - Revised initial basic training
 - Employer recognition events
 - Introduction of Variable Response Vehicles.
20. As previously communicated to the CFA, the Service has implemented two Variable Response Vehicles (VRVs), with the first one introduced in November at Market Bosworth station. This initiative has promptly resulted in increased availability, rising from 65% between April and October to 90% in November and December.

21. Whole-time availability has seen a decrease on the previous year from 98.30% to 97.91% for the reporting period.
22. The response time to life-critical incidents slightly exceeded the 10-minute target, standing at 11 minutes and 33 seconds. A closer examination reveals that road traffic collisions (RTC's) significantly contribute to the delay in meeting the 10-minute response time, primarily due to the rural nature and extended travel distances in these areas.
23. Removing RTC's from the data reveals that attendance at life risk residential dwelling fires reduces the attendance time to an average of 8 minutes 22 seconds.

Report Implications/Impact

24. Legal (including crime and disorder)
None identified at this time.
25. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)
There are no direct financial implications from this report.
26. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of Service delivery)
None arising from this report.
27. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)
None identified at this time.
28. Environmental
None identified at this time.
29. Impact upon "Our Plan" Objectives
This report sets out relevant developments and performance achieved by the Service Delivery Directorate in pursuance of the objectives set out in Our Plan.

Officers to Contact

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