

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 6 February 2019

Subject: Review of Provided Cars

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: Mick Grewcock, Area Manager Service Assurance

For: Decision

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with details of the outcome of the review of 'provided cars' for officers, as was requested by the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018, and to seek approval for the purchase of 'provided cars' for officers during 2019/20.

Recommendation

2. The CFA is recommended to:
 - a) Acknowledge the outcome of the review of 'provided cars' for officers, and the vehicle scheme options presented within this report;
 - b) Agree that the 'Provided Vehicle' method is the preferred vehicle scheme to support operational response and business transportation needs;
 - c) Approve that the Capital Budget, as set out in Appendix A, is used to buy outright replacement vehicles during 2019-20, allowing the current vehicles that are subject to lease arrangements to be returned avoiding financial penalties;
 - d) Agree that the Ford Kuga is selected as the preferred replacement vehicle for the Flexi Duty System (FDS) officers.

Executive Summary

3. The report provides details of the outcome of the review of 'provided cars' for officers, as was requested by the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018. It also provides information on various vehicle schemes, their advantages, disadvantages and forecasted costs.
4. The outcome of the review concluded that purchasing 'provided cars' for officers is the preferred option for meeting operational response and business transportation needs, and this report seeks approval to do so.

5. The report explains the role that the FDS officer has in relation to attending emergency incidents and the equipment they must carry in the car to enable them to command and control incidents, and what they use the vehicle for when they are not attending incidents. It also details the roles of other members of staff who are provided with vehicles.
5. The report outlines the number and types of provided vehicles used by the Service and those used by other fire and rescue services where known.
6. The process used to identify suitable replacement vehicles against extant policy is included within the report.

Background

7. A report was presented to the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018, relating to the progress made following the Review of Fleet Arrangements 2016. The CFA requested further information and resolved that:
 - a) subject to any action which is urgent, no action be taken on this report until a further report is presented to the CFA on the outcome of the review of 'provided cars' for officers, such report to include details of the number and model of vehicles recommended to be provided, the costs thereof and of practice elsewhere.
 - b) the Treasurer be consulted in respect of the information provided in paragraphs 8-11 of the report on financial considerations, further information on the comparative costs of and savings from 'provided cars' to be reported to the CFA.
 - c) in the event of a requirement for urgent action prior to the next CFA meeting, delegated authority be given to the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer in consultation with the Treasurer as the representative of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
8. The Treasurer has been consulted in respect of the detail in paragraph 7 b) above, and on the financial details contained within this report.

The Role of the FDS Officer

9. FDS officers are required to respond to emergencies when they are on call and dependant on their shift, can be for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When they are on duty they must have with them at all times their fire fighting personal protective clothing and various items of specialist equipment. This enables them to fulfil their role effectively.
10. When on duty the FDS officer must also attend various managerial meetings and events, whether locally, regionally or nationally. They need to have their equipment and a response vehicle with them at all times so that when an incident occurs that needs a FDS officer to attend, one with the most

appropriate skill set who can get there in the shortest time is sent.

11. FDS officers can be “recalled to duty” on a voluntary basis when they are not at work. This is to support managerial arrangements at large or complex incidents, provide specific skills or respond during things like flooding where resources are stretched due to the high volume of incidents. Recalling them to duty allows them to respond or be instantly available to respond to incidents as needed. They can only do this if they have access to a response vehicle and their personal equipment.
12. The FDS officers are rostered to be on duty and only take leave when there is sufficient number with the right skills still available. Arrangements are in place that allow FDS officers to mutually agree to cover for each other in the event that taking leave is not possible. Covers performed by off duty FDS officers can be planned ahead, however there are times when they are arranged at very short notice, often to support the FDS officer to deal with domestic matters where it would be unsuitable for them to remain on the rota. This is only achievable if off duty FDS officers have access to a response vehicle and their personal equipment.
13. There are 30 FDS officers as shown below:

Station Managers (20)
Area Managers (2)

Group Managers (5)
Brigade Managers (3)

Other Members of Staff

14. There are currently ten members of staff that are provided with vehicles so that they can do their job effectively. The cars they use are not due for replacement and consist of nine Vauxhall Corsa models and one Hyundai Ioniq (all electric) model, which is being used to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative fuel technologies. The Vauxhall Corsa models are subject to lease arrangements until 2020, totalling £54,000 over five years. The Hyundai Ioniq was purchased outright in 2017-18, costing £16,905. Details of the roles undertaken by the members of staff provided with vehicles is shown below:
 - a) Fire Protection Officers (FPO) give advice to people who are responsible for premises in relation to compliance with fire safety legislation. They visit sites and inspect buildings as part of their role, and if needed due to failings within the property, they can issue prohibition notices. They are available 24/7 and required to have their personal protective equipment and other resources in their car at all times, enabling them to attend sites and carry out inspections. The provision of vehicles allows them to be home based and reduces mileage costs and lost time associated with travelling between sites.
 - b) The Tri Service Fire Control Manager has a provided vehicle to support travel requirements between Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire Control rooms. All aspects of this post holders costs are shared between the three fire and rescue services.

Vehicle Schemes

15. There are various vehicle schemes used by fire and rescue services, with many using a blended approach to meet the diverse range of transportation needs. This section looks at the three methods available and concentrates on the operational needs of the FDS officers as they are the highest number of users of 'provided cars'.

a) Provided Vehicles

Each of the 30 FDS officers is allocated a vehicle equipped for emergency response that also meets business transportation needs. To conform to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Transport Group recommendation of having a 10% reserve response capacity, three reserve vehicles are maintained, totalling 33.

Many fire and rescue services use this method, either purchasing vehicles outright using various funding methods, or leasing them and having to return vehicles once the agreement ends.

Advantages

- It ensures fit for purpose vehicles are used for emergency response
- It allows robust risk management (fleet monitoring/camera systems)
- It provides high levels of resilience when vehicles breakdown due to the number of remaining vehicles available
- It supports the highest levels of operational preparedness as all on duty FDS officers are able to respond
- It supports resilience arrangements including 'recall to duty' due to immediate readiness to respond
- It supports the operational availability and managerial flexibility of the FDS officers
- Provided cars can be recalled from users if they are needed for any purpose
- It maintains parity as all vehicles provided are similar

Disadvantages

- There is a perception that the number and specifications of the vehicles supplied to meet the operational response needs are excessive, especially as they are able to be used for private purposes by the officer
- Changes to personal taxation regulations can financially disadvantage employees who use the cars for private use

b) Pool Cars

A pool of operational response vehicles suitable for FDS officer business use.

There is no known fire and rescues service using this method for FDS officers, however most have pool cars of some description as part of their overall fleet arrangements.

Advantages

- It ensures fit for purpose vehicles are used for emergency response
- It allows robust risk management (fleet monitoring/camera systems)
- It provides high levels of resilience when vehicles breakdown due to the number of remaining vehicles available
- It supports the highest levels of operational preparedness as all on duty FDS officers are able to respond

Disadvantages

- It reduces managerial and operational flexibility of FDS officers
- It will increase the time it takes FDS officers to get to incidents as travel distances are likely to be longer (the nearest available FDS officer to the incident may not have a suitable vehicle to respond in)
- It weakens resilience arrangements as FDS officers are unable to respond immediately when recalled to duty if a response vehicle and their equipment is not available to them
- Managers are likely to be less flexible as transport issues will affect attendance at meetings and other events
- Costs associated with overtime will increase
- The logistics associated with vehicle changeover is time consuming, costly, reduces productivity and restricts management availability
- If pool cars are not available the FDS officers may not be able to do any meaningful work until such time there is one
- It needs changes to employment contracts and will need to be negotiated possibly having financial implications
- Employee relations are likely to be strained

c) Essential Car Scheme

FDS officers supply and use their own vehicles for emergency response and managerial business use, claiming agreed allowances and mileage expenses.

Advantages

- No cars are needed for emergency response or managerial transportation needs, placing the responsibility on the employee to supply them

Disadvantages

- It reduces the control over the type, make, model and age of vehicles used
- There is no authority to install communication, fleet monitoring or camera systems
- There is no guarantee that the vehicle will be available for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service use including for recall to duty purposes (breakdown and use by other family member)
- It needs changes to employment contracts and will need to be negotiated
- Additional costs, responsibility and liability of any adverse financial impact to the value of the employee's vehicle as a result of fitting and removing blue lights and sirens
- It is not a cost effective option
- Employees are likely to seek financial assistance in supplying vehicles

Scheme Costs

17. The forecasted costs to operate each vehicle scheme over five years is summarised below:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| ○ Provided Vehicle | £ 900,987 |
| ○ Pool Cars | £ 879,557 |
| ○ Essential User | £ 1,111,687 |

18. The cheapest way of providing operational response and business transportation needs for FDS officers is not best value. The Provided Vehicle method is the preferred option as it offers greater operational and managerial flexibility, control and resilience. These benefits outweigh the additional costs of the pool car scheme and provides value for money. Detail of this calculation is shown in Appendix A.

Replacement Flexi Duty Response Fleet

19. It is recommended that the CFA approve vehicles are purchased outright for use by FDS officers from the 2019-20 capital budget, replacing the current ones that are subject to lease arrangements. Orders for the new vehicles will need to be placed in February 2019 to allow sufficient time for them to be sourced and fitted with blue lights, sirens, fleet monitoring and camera systems, ready for use in August 2019. This will allow the redundant leased vehicles to be decommissioned and repaired where necessary, prior to them being returned to the lease company on time, avoiding penalties.

20. It is recommended that the CFA approve that the Ford Kuga is selected as the preferred replacement make and model as it meets the specifications listed in the Provided Vehicle Policy. Details of vehicles evaluated and how they meet the specifications is shown in Appendix B.

Practice Elsewhere

21. The review considered how our neighbouring fire and rescue services manage transportation needs and further to the request from the CFA at their meeting in December 2018, a wider range of fire and rescue services were canvassed through the NFCC Transport Group. Details of this is shown in Appendix C.
22. The majority of fire and rescues services who replied stated they use a provided vehicle scheme. Others were actively looking or moving towards a provided vehicle scheme once existing lease arrangements end.
23. The need for FDS officers to carry firefighting personal protective and specialist equipment securely in their vehicles, leads to vehicle models being selected that have sufficient boot space. This is typical across many fire and rescue services.

Report Implications/Impact

24. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The FDS officer contracts state within them that they will be provided with a vehicle, which they have the option to use for private purposes. This is subject to agreed private mileage costs and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rules. Only the Provided Vehicle scheme facilitates this, the Pool Car scheme does not allow for private use of the vehicles.

25. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

- a) Accurately calculating the costs associated with the different ways of meeting operational response and business transportation needs is complex as there are many variables, including; vehicle depreciation; fuel efficiency and mileages travelled.
- b) The financial costs associated with the scheme alone should not be the only factor in determining value for money. The Provided Vehicle method offers the best value as it allows for the highest levels of operational and managerial flexibility, maximises the capacity of the FDS officers and reduces claims for overtime or mileage expenses that will be necessary if any other scheme is adopted.

27. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

- a) The lease arrangements for the current vehicles concludes at the end of September 2019. The conditions of the lease require them to be returned on time and undamaged. There is a risk that if there is no alternative scheme or replacement cars in use by August 2019, there will not be sufficient time to decommission the old vehicles by their expected return date, resulting in financial penalties being applied.

- b) Using the Ford Kuga type of four wheel drive vehicle increases the ability of FDS officers attending emergency incidents regardless of the weather, whereas other vehicles may struggle to cope with ice, snow and flooding. The Ford Kuga is being used by Leicestershire Police for this reason. The elevated driving position improves the view available to the driver, and the size of the car improves the visibility of it by other road users, particularly useful at junctions and when traffic is congested.
- c) The four wheel drive capability provided by these vehicles enhances the Services' operational capability. The disposal of inefficient four wheel drive Ford Rangers as part of the Fleet Replacement Project 2017-18 was achieved on the basis that the Service maintained a four wheel drive provision through the Flexi Duty Officer Fleet.

28. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

- a) Personal taxation associated with the private use of emergency service vehicles is in a transitional phase, with HMRC expected to bring in changes to the way tax is calculated in April 2020 detrimentally affecting many users. These transitional arrangements allow officers to determine if they wish to use the vehicle privately, potentially reducing any claims against the CFA of supporting additional costs associated with the tax changes.
- b) A consultation on provided vehicles and the Ford Kuga was carried out in December 2018 with FDS officers. The general feedback was that they felt the model was suitable for operational response and business transportation needs.

29. Environmental

Fuel economy and emission data forms part of the analysis and evaluation methodology when selecting new vehicles. The use of alternative and greener fuel options has been considered however the technologies available either do not support, or they are too expensive, in providing an effective and resilient operational response capability.

30. Impact upon Our Plan Objectives

Providing the right amount of fit for purpose vehicles maximises the effectiveness and efficiency of the fleet. They provide a safe system of work ensuring that the right people are in the right place at the right time to command and control emergency incidents.

Background Papers

Report to CFA 12 December 2018 - Review of Fleet arrangements 2016 Progress Update

<http://www.leicestershire-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/cfa-review-of-fleet-arrangements-2016-progress-update-final.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix A – Vehicle Scheme Cost Comparison.

Appendix B – Provided Vehicle Evaluation Matrix

Appendix C – Practices in Other Fire and Rescue Services

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