

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 20 June 2018

Subject: Operational Update

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For: Information

1. Purpose

This report updates the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) members on key operational matters since the last CFA meeting.

2. Recommendations

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

3. Executive Summary

The areas covered in this report include:

1. New item – Procurement of further Tactical Response Vehicles
2. New item – Visit from Home Office re: Resilience for Strike Action
3. Update – Delivery of Corporate and IRMP Objectives
4. Update – Response to Grenfell Tower Block Tragedy
5. Update – Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment
6. Update – Firefighter Pay Negotiations 2017
7. Update – Operational Activity Levels
8. Incidents of note since the last CFA meeting

4. Report Detail

4.1 Procurement of further Tactical Response Vehicles

The Capital bid programme submitted last year included the purchase of four further fire engines at a cost of approximately £1m. This plan has been amended to purchase three further fire engines and two additional Tactical Response Vehicles (TRV). This enables improved availability at the On Call stations that present the greatest challenge in maintaining the availability of four crew to staff the engines. The TRV can be crewed by a minimum of two people rather than the traditional four, so staff availability can be secured for more of the time.

4.2 Visit from Home Office re: Resilience for Strike Action

Last Autumn, the Home Office requested information from all fire and rescue services about the levels of response that could be maintained in the event of strike action by firefighters. Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) responded that six fire engines could be maintained but a guarantee could not be given that National Resilience assets - Detection, Identification, Monitoring (DIM) capability; Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) - would be available.

The Home Office subsequently visited eight services to collect further information, including LFRS. During the visit, they were provided with further assurance about the six fire engines and it was agreed that LFRS would undertake further work to provide regional crewing arrangements for the DIM capability.

LFRS explained that it would be more difficult to maintain the USAR capability due to the level of initial and continuity training necessary. Home Office officials provided examples of arrangements elsewhere that might enhance the likelihood of securing USAR availability; these included 'resilience' payments to firefighters who agree to not take strike action, using third part providers and providing condensed training to officers. These ideas will be explored further with an update to a future CFA meeting.

4.3 Update – Delivery of Corporate and Integrated Risk Management Plan Objectives

Further progress has been achieved in delivering the key corporate and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) service improvement objectives that the CFA have previously agreed. By way of a summary, set out below are the main aspects that have been; or are about to be delivered/implemented:

- Building work is nearing completion at Wigston fire and rescue station to create accommodation for the Day Crewing Plus model. The crew remain in temporary accommodation while the work is carried out.
- Building work started at Lutterworth fire and rescue station on 4 June 2018. This will improve the facilities available for the wholetime crew. It also provides additional accommodation to enable future collaboration with partners.
- Work has started to construct a training rig at Southern fire and rescue station for use by the Technical Rescue crews. This reduces the need for them to travel to external training sites. The build will incorporate the now redundant training tower that was previously used at Wigston.
- The Coalville fire and rescue station development has been completed. The police moved into the building on 8 January 2018 with a lease in place. Lease arrangements are still being finalised with East Midlands Ambulance

Service (EMAS) who will move into the building when they are signed, creating the first shared emergency services 'hub' for LFRS.

- All five Tactical Response Vehicles have been allocated to stations and are fully operational. They are based at Loughborough, Lutterworth, Market Harborough, Oakham and Coalville.
- CFA members were advised at the last meeting of a trial to place a Tactical Response Vehicle at Lutterworth. This was to improve On Call availability by providing a vehicle that could be crewed by a minimum of two people as opposed to four. Availability has increased from 62% to 85% and this will continue to be monitored as the trial proceeds.
- The last update detailed an experiment to improve crewing on the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) at Birstall by redeploying additional staff when they are available. Between January and March this enabled primary crewing of the ALP for 80% of the time. This fell to 30% during April and May when more people took annual leave. It is likely to fall to 0% during the summer months before increasing again in Autumn and Winter. Senior Managers will consider whether this arrangement should be extended or the additional firefighters used in a different way
- The Braunstone Blues multi-agency partnership was extended by six months to the end of September 2018. The Project Board decided to close the project at that time. The learning from the work has heavily influenced the approach being taken by the Strategic Partnership Board to create 'People Zones'. A plan is in place to withdraw the team with as little impact as possible in the community and to leave a positive legacy.
- All other corporate and IRMP service improvement objectives are on track for completion within the defined timescales.

4.4 Update – Response to Grenfell Tower Block Tragedy

The risk-based fire inspection programme operated by LFRS was suspended following the Grenfell tragedy to free capacity to carry out urgent inspections of high rise buildings across LLR. This work has since been completed and the inspection programme reinstated.

Dame Judith Hackitt's report has been issued and raises many issues for LFRS and Local Authorities, particularly around how they work together. A meeting was held with Leicester City Council (LCC), who is responsible for the majority of high rise properties in the LLR area. A number of commitments were made including closer working between LFRS and LCC regulatory staff, a joint approach to dealing with the recommendations of the Hackitt Report and production of a joint position statement setting out the position one year on from the tragedy.

4.5 Update – Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment

The firefighters recruited in 2018 are posted to three different locations during their first 18 months. This provides the opportunity to experience different stations, appliances, risks and duty systems. They have completed their first six month posting and have transferred to their second. ACFO Brodie has held one to one meetings with each new firefighter and the learning from these will influence the approach taken with the next intake of new firefighters.

A further recruitment drive will be undertaken during Autumn/Winter with a view to taking on an additional 15 firefighters. The last intake increased staffing levels above the establishment of 348. However, staffing levels will return to that number this month as a result of retirements and leavers.

4.6 Update – Firefighter Pay Negotiations 2017

Pay negotiations remain ongoing and a settlement is not yet in place. Work continues nationally to determine how the role of the firefighter might be broadened and this is linked to pay negotiations. Five areas are being explored:

1. Emergency medical response
2. Multi-agency response
3. Health and Community
4. Inspection and Enforcement
5. Environmental Challenges

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Board are considering a 20% pay rise over four years for a similar expansion to the firefighter role. This is likely to influence the expectations of Representative Bodies in the rest of the UK and may affect the outcome of the current pay negotiations.

4.7 Update – Operational Activity Levels

The CFA was advised in February 2018 that performance during 2017/18 was in line with all operational targets with the exception of fire deaths which were higher than anticipated. The number of fire deaths subsequently worsened as a result of the Hinckley Road explosion in which five people were killed.

Since April 2018, there has been a rise in calls to 'other emergencies'. These include assisting other agencies and emergency first responding on behalf of the ambulance service.

Accidental dwelling fires have shown a slight increase, but within target, and are comparable with levels in 2016/17. Pleasingly, primary fire (fires that result in an insurable loss) numbers have reduced compared to the same period last year.

4.8 Incidents of note since the last CFA meeting

Hinckley Road Explosion

Members will be aware that LFRS dealt with a major incident when a shop with a

basement and a flat above suffered an explosion and collapse on 25 February 2018. Tragically five people were killed, including three members of one family and the girlfriend of one of these. The fifth person killed was working in the shop. The police have made numerous arrests following the discovery that petrol had been poured throughout the basement a few minutes before the explosion occurred.

The response by LFRS on the night was significant and it was two weeks before they left the site. Six fire engines, and Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and Technical Rescue teams/equipment were present on the night. The crews were faced with a ferocious fire and a total pancake collapse into the basement. They immediately carried out rescues and tackled the fire. An operation was put in place to search for further casualties and during the night five bodies were recovered. The rescue phase continued until 1pm on Tuesday 27 February in case anyone else had been in the building at the time. LFRS confirmed that no further survivors would be found and moved into Search and Recovery phase.

Throughout, LFRS worked hand in hand with the Disaster Victim Identification Team and forensic fire and crime scene investigators. This included extensive use of the fire investigation dog and handler the costs for which are shared with regional neighbours. The Technical Rescue team was supplemented and relieved by colleagues from Lincolnshire and the West Midlands.

The police announced it as a 'Major Incident' in the early stages. This triggered the response of LLR Prepared and the implementation of Tactical and Strategic Coordination Groups based out of Police Headquarters. LFRS Officers chaired these groups until Thursday 1 March when the incident was handed over to the Police. LFRS requested a peer review of the Strategic Coordination Group approach via the National Fire Chiefs Council. This was conducted by London Resilience and the outcome was positive. They considered that LFRS had a firm grip of the incident and had all necessary measures in place.

The incident was discussed during Prime Ministers Questions by Teresa May, Jeremy Corbyn and Liz Kendall. Liz Kendall paid two visits to the scene and was full of praise for the response.

LFRS had an officer representative on the Leicester City Council-led Recovery Coordination Group. This group managed the return to normality following the incident including rehoming or return home those affected, the return of business owners to their properties and the reopening of Hinckley Road.

5. Report Implications/Impact

5.1 Legal (including crime and disorder)

None identified.

5.2 Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

There are no direct financial implications from this report.

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

None arising from this report.

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

None arising from this report.

5.5 Environmental

None identified.

5.6 *Impact upon Our Plan Objectives*

The matters set out in this report inform the progress that has been achieved in delivering the key corporate and IRMP service improvement objectives that the CFA have previously agreed.

6. Background Papers

None.

7. Appendices

None.