

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 12 February 2020

Subject: On-Call Review Project Update

Report by: The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Author: Group Manager Karl Anderson

For: Information

Purpose

1. This report provides the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) with information on the progress made with the On-Call Review project.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the CFA notes the progress made with the On-Call Review project and the impact it has had on the On-Call appliance availability which has increased by 8% in the last 12 months.

Executive Summary

3. The report details the progress made with delivering the On-Call Review Project which commenced in January 2019 to increase appliance availability, along with the actions that have been taken to address this.
4. These are as follows, a full description of each can be found in appendix A: -
 - a. Self-Rostering availability;
 - b. Reduced hours' contracts;
 - c. Tactical Response Vehicles (TRV's) at On-Call stations;
 - d. Flexibility in use of annual leave;
 - e. Learning and Development skills acquisition;
 - f. Alternative Crewing arrangements;
 - g. Development shifts at whole time stations.

Background

5. The composition of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland means that different crewing systems are used dependent up on the risks. In more rural areas, the use of On-Call staff is the most efficient way of providing operational response.
6. This means that staff are able to respond to their designated station within a time scale (5-7 Mins) if alerted to respond to an emergency incident. When not needed for incidents staff will continue with their everyday jobs and life.
7. The staff that undertake On-Call duties give a large personal commitment to the service and their community.
8. Nationally as well as locally this commitment is proving to be a strain, due changes to community demographics, work life balance and life commitments; has seen the decline of operational availability, as well as numbers of staff (although this relationship is complex as less staff can provide more availability depending on individual circumstances).
9. The On-Call project was initiated in 2019 with the aim of reviewing and implementing changes to improve On-Call Emergency Response provision.
10. A Project Manager has been appointed, and a project team formed from existing staff and key stakeholders being Human Resources, Learning and Development and Response. No specific funding been allocated to this project.

Project Update

11. The project has introduced a number of pilot schemes across the service (these are detailed in appendix A), but include: -
 - a. Self-Rostering availability - where individuals advise more freely on availability, based on needs of the station and their personal circumstances;
 - b. Reduced hours contracts - minimum is currently 48 hours, introduced 24- and 36-hours contracts;
 - c. Tactical Response Vehicles (TRV's) at On-Call stations - placed at stations where crewing levels are sufficient for TRV (minimum 2), where they are struggling to achieve 4 or more;
 - d. Flexibility in use of annual leave - normally minimum 24 hours, allowing time to be taken in blocks of 12 hours;
 - e. Learning and Development skills acquisition - reducing the time it takes to train staff so that they can form part of the crewing of an appliance quicker;

- f. Alternative Crewing arrangements - group individuals to form an appliance crew from one location or multiple locations ;
 - g. Development shifts at whole time stations - to reduce the time it takes to train and develop On Call Firefighters.
12. This has seen the On-Call appliance availability increase by 8% in the last 12 months from 55.33% to 63.48%.

Moving Forward

13. The project will fully evaluate all of the pilot schemes to review its outcomes and consider service wide application, alteration or cessation.
14. It will also explore and develop further areas of work and/or pilots in the following areas (more detail provided in appendix A): -
- a. Recruitment process – looking at the time it takes, can it be reduced?;
 - b. Salary and remuneration – how can this be improved against an exist budget?;
 - c. Retention – multiple areas to be addressed, such as early engagement, to understand why people stay helps to understand why people leave.
15. Large amounts of work have been undertaken but, with some significant work still to complete, the Project Board has asked the Tactical Management Team for a three-month extension to the project allowing this to be done in sufficient detail and appropriately.

Report Implications/Impact

16. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The project has identified that applying various salary pilots across the organisation is a risk, which is too great, therefore no pilots are planned to address salary. Research, engagement and team work continues to address the salary of an On-Call Firefighter; ensuring same pay for same job.

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

In reviewing the salary of an On-Call firefighter there is a potential for additional funds required to support proposed changes.

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

There is a risk that in doing nothing a number of On-Call employees will continue to leave due to low salary.

There is a risk that appliance availability will fall further given that establishment levels are currently below those agreed and recruitment still proves difficult.

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

The project will deliver a series of recommendations based on information gained and outcomes from pilots detailed in this report. It will require departments such as Human Resources, Learning and Development and Response Managers to deliver this change, if approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

Some pilots, if successful, may need local negotiation as they may be outside of the Grey Book Terms and Conditions.

20. Environmental

None.

21. Impact upon Our Plan Objective

The On-Call Review project, in particular the pilots, are actively supporting the Service's Response Strategy, by:

- a. Maximising the availability of emergency vehicles,
- b. Ensuring that staff meet the core competencies required to do their jobs; and
- c. Delivering our purpose of "Safer people, safer places"

Background Papers

None.

Appendices

Appendix A – Project pilots and Work streams

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