

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 16 December 2020

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 matters since the CFA meeting on 23 September 2020.

Recommendation

2. The CFA are requested to note the update provided on the key Service delivery matters for the period between August to October 2020, particularly the increased exposure of fire crews to fatalities either through fire related incidents or in support of assisting other agencies, and the support in place for crews following such incidents.

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 current operational position from August to October inclusive. The subject matter areas that are covered in this report include:
 - Prevention;
 - Protection;
 - Response;
 - Performance;
 - Covid-19 Update;
 - Incidents of note.
4. The current operating environment still provides a challenging period for the Service, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. By adapting work routines, delivery of core functions to the local community has continued, including an increase in home safety checks and a successful fire safety prosecution. The Service has also been able to support partners in City and District Councils by undertaking Covid compliance inspections.
5. Performance within the Service remains in line with the previous reporting period, albeit with a slight reduction in On Call availability due to the lifting of the first lockdown, although it still remains higher than previous years. The number of incidents involving fatalities has seen a recent spike during this reporting period with staff welfare being managed through the use of TRiM.

Background

Prevention

6. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions both nationally and locally, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue have had to alter their approach to undertaking Home Safety Checks. These changes include the adoption of telephone safety checks, whereby the Service will telephone those members of the community most vulnerable and discuss fire safety, health and wellbeing and make referrals to partner agencies where required.
7. Between August and October inclusive, a total of 2,353 successful safety checks were completed compared to 1,475 in the same period last year.
8. With the inability to hold open days this year, the Service have sought different ways to engage with their communities. One example of this was at Loughborough Station where the crew held a virtual open day streamed live on Facebook. This included demonstrations and a session to allow the community to ask a variety of questions on areas such as recruitment and fire safety. This proved extremely successful with over 22,500 engagements.

Protection

9. A successful prosecution was taken against a landlord who failed to properly provide or maintain fire precautions which put lives at risk. The property, a block of 70 domestic flats had a history of inadequate fire safety measures dating back to 2014 and despite the continued support from Fire Safety Officers, the landlord failed to address any of the concerns or undertake the required remedial work which left no alternative other than to pursue legal action.
10. This required significant effort from the Fire Protection Team, working in conjunction with Leicestershire County Council Legal Services and a barrister. The landlord pleaded guilty to six counts of risking people's death or injury by breaching fire regulations, despite being previously informed by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service that urgent improvements needed to be made to raise fire safety standards on site. The Judge imposed a 12-month prison sentence, suspended for 24 months and ordered the landlord pay more than £146,000 in fines and costs.
11. As part of the same case, the Service also sought to prosecute a former employee of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service who was hired by the landlord as a self-employed Fire Safety Advisor to undertake a fire risk assessment of the building. The individual pleaded guilty to failing to identify serious fire safety issues within their fire risk assessment and was subsequently fined £1600, and ordered to pay costs in the region of £8,000.

Response

12. It is worth noting the Service is receiving an increased number of requests to gain entry to premises on behalf of other agencies. This is resulting in crews having to deal with an increased number of fatalities.
13. Between August and October inclusive, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue have attended 21 fatalities at a variety of incidents, to include:
 - a) 3 fire related;
 - b) 2 Road Traffic Collisions;
 - c) 16 Special Services.
14. The monitoring of the crews' mental health and wellbeing after dealing with these type of incidents is being undertaken by a number of managers from across the Service who have completed the Trauma Risk Incident Management (TRiM) training and are supported by the Occupational Health department.
15. TRiM is a trauma-focused peer support system designed to help people who have experienced traumatic, or potentially traumatic, events. Those officers who are TRiM qualified debrief each individual attending a traumatic incident to ensure any intervention is in place at the earliest opportunity.
16. In September, the Service held two 'live fire' exercises at the Fire Service College which involved five appliances and 50 members of staff. These exercises exposed staff to both basement and high-rise fires. The outcomes from the event will now be fed into the operational learning board with a view to cascade it to the whole Service.

Performance

17. Since the lifting of the first national lockdown, On-Call availability has seen a reduction from 82% down to 72%, however this remains significantly higher than the previous year's average of 64%. Wholetime availability is consistent at 98.5%, above the previous year's average of 98.2%.
18. There was a continued sustained reduction in mobilising times for Wholetime and On-Call appliances. In 2018 the time taken for a Wholetime appliance to mobilise was 2.43 minutes, this is now 1.36 minutes. Likewise, in 2018, the time for an On-Call appliance to mobilise was 7.14 minutes, this is now 5.47 minutes.
19. Performance had slipped slightly above the target for reaching life critical incidents in an average of 10 minutes to 10.03 minutes. The majority of failures are related to deliberate fires at HMP Stocken, where there is a longer travel distance. It should be noted however, that these premises have excellent fire protection measures; including misting systems which prevent fire escalation and limit spread and damage.

Covid-19 Response

20. The Service continues to support partner agencies in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic including face-fit testing. This task requires staff to undertake the fitting of personal protective face masks to partners such as those within the care home environment.
21. The Service has seconded four members of the On-Call staff to support the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS). These staff will provide additional support to EMAS until March 2021.
22. Wholetime staff have also provided assistance to City and District Council partners by undertaking Covid compliance inspections. To-date, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue have completed 89 visits of premises to assess their compliance with the Covid regulations.

Incidents of note

23. The following are incidents of note during August – October 2020:

August 2020

Person on fire on scrub land, 1 male casualty aged 35. Fire caused by deliberate ignition of flammable liquid.

September 2020

Flat Fire, Leicester, 1 male casualty aged 95. Fire caused by electrical fault on mobility scooter.

October 2020

House Fire, Loughborough, 1 male casualty aged 46. Cause of fire is under investigation.

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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