WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JULY 2023

1. **FIRE CONTROL PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q1 2023/24**

   Report of the Chief Fire Officer

   RECOMMENDED

 1.1 THAT the operational performance of Fire Control for Q1 be noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 This report is submitted to provide the committee with an update of the operational performance of Fire Control. The report covers a three-month period.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **Emergency Calls Received and Call Handling**

   Fire Control receives the emergency calls and effectively manages the resources for both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services.

   Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control received 19,853 emergency calls between 1 April 2023 and 30 June 2023 across both brigade areas.

   This is a 25% increase on the number of calls received from the same quarter in 22/23. This can be attributed to an increase in the number of weather related calls in June, which saw flooding and spate conditions and small outdoor fires.

   The number of calls received for Q1 23/24 was split 14,650 calls for the West Midlands (73.8%), 4,639 calls for

Ref. AU/SC/2023/July/10507232

Staffordshire (23.4%) and 564 calls from outside of service areas (2.8%). This ratio is consistent with the previous reporting periods.
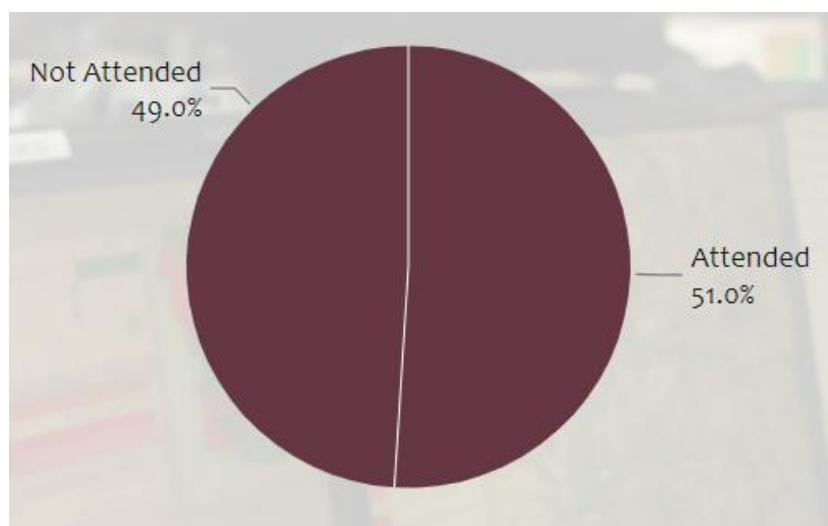
Of the 14,650 emergency calls received for WMFS across the reporting period; Fire Control mobilised to 7,583 (51.7%) of incidents.

Of the 4,639 emergency calls received for Staffordshire FRS across the reporting period, Fire Control mobilised to 2,397 (51.6%) of incidents.

This mobilisation to calls received ratio is because of several factors including –

- call challenging automated fire alarms (AFAs)

- call challenging special service calls which were deemed non-emergency

- repeat 999 calls

- use of 999eye footage and imagery

This ratio again remains the same as previous reporting periods, demonstrating a consistent approach to call challenge, and recognising when repeat calls are being received that have already been mobilized to.

3.2 Call Handling

A key performance indicator for Fire Control is the length of time from answering a 999 call to mobilising appliances to category 1 (life and property) incidents. For these critical
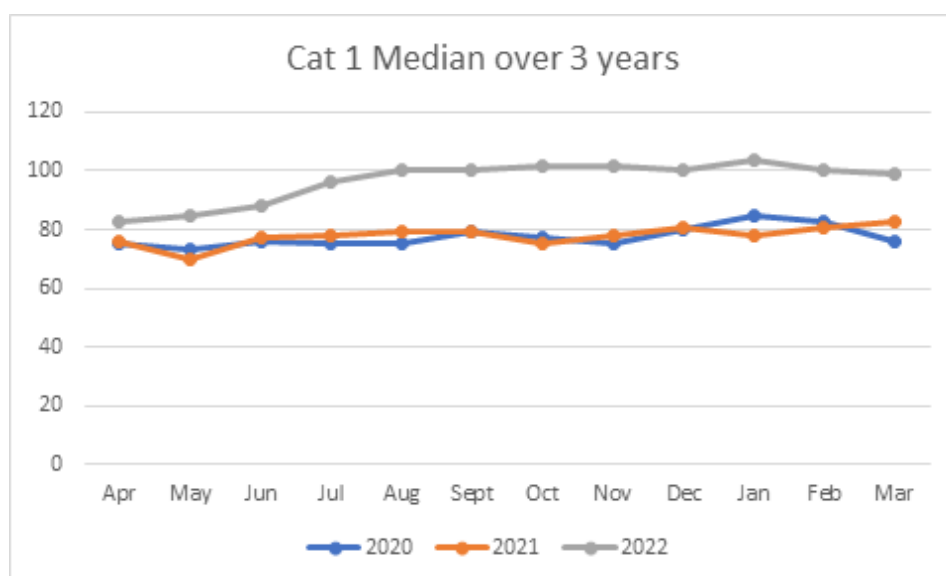
Ref. AU/SC/2023/July/10507231

incident types, we aim to mobilise in under 80 seconds. Fire Control's continued focus on mobilising with the required urgency is a key factor in survivability and limiting damage to property. The median call handling for the reporting period was 96 seconds, positively this is a seven second reduction on the previous quarter.

Quarter	Median Call Handling	Performance
Q4	103	▲
January	105	▲
February	101	▲
March	103	▲
Total	103	▲

Quarter	Median Call Handling	Performance
Q1	96	▲
April	99	▲
May	96	▲
June	94	▲
Total	96	▲

A detailed review was undertaken to try and understand why the median average category 1 call handling time has increased gradually over the past few years.

Data captured for a two-year period from April 2020 to April 2022 demonstrates that the 80 second standard was consistently achieved.

However, since April 2022 the monthly call handling median ranged from 83 seconds up to 104 seconds, with an annual median of 99 seconds.

Cat 1 Median over 3 years

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It is difficult to pinpoint an exact reason as to why the call handling has increased over the past 16 months, however the move to Vision 4 has contributed significantly.

The increase in call handling times across the periods where risk based crewing was introduced was approx. seven seconds (increased up to 85 seconds) and at the point when Vision 4 was introduced this then immediately increased to an additional 14 seconds and continued to fluctuate by an additional 1-5 seconds (median monthly average ranged between 99-104 seconds).

Therefore, the most significant contributing factor to increased call handling times can be attributed to Vision 4.

As with the introduction of most new C&C systems it can be anticipated that an initial dip in performance will be experienced whilst confidence is built by the end users, however the data in the table below indicated that we had not yet seen an improvement.

Month	Cat 1 Call time	Significant Dates
Oct 21	75	
Nov 21	78	RBC – 2 Stations go live
Dec 21	81	
Jan 22	78	RBC – Further 2 Stations go live
Feb 22	81	
Mar 22	82	
Apr 22	82	RBC – Further 7 Stations go live
May 22	84	
Jun 22	85	Vision 4 Go Live
Jul 22	99	
Aug 22	101	
Sept 22	101	
Oct 22	103	
Nov 22	102	
Dec 22	100	
Jan 23	105	
Feb 23	101	
Mar 23	103	

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FC staff have shared that they are confident in their own ability of using the system, however state that there are some areas of Vision 4 that are not as efficient as the previous mobilising system.

Whilst Fire Control System Management, Digital and Data and SSS continue to review ways to improve the efficiency of the system, we recognized that there were emergency call management process that we could change in an attempt to reduce call handling times.

In May we amended the way in which we searched for addresses and we have been trialing a new salutation which asks a direct, targeted question to the caller which enables the call taker to lead the call in a more efficient way. Whilst still in its infancy, we can see tangible improvements in the call handling average since this has been trialed.

3.3 **Dynamic Mobilising**

Dynamic mobilising involves using resources flexibly and efficiently in our approach to emergency call management and mobilising, resulting in a proportionate and appropriate initial incident response.

The approach enables Fire Control to reduce and increase an incident response to achieve the best match for the incident needs, which includes selecting the most appropriate number and type of resource.
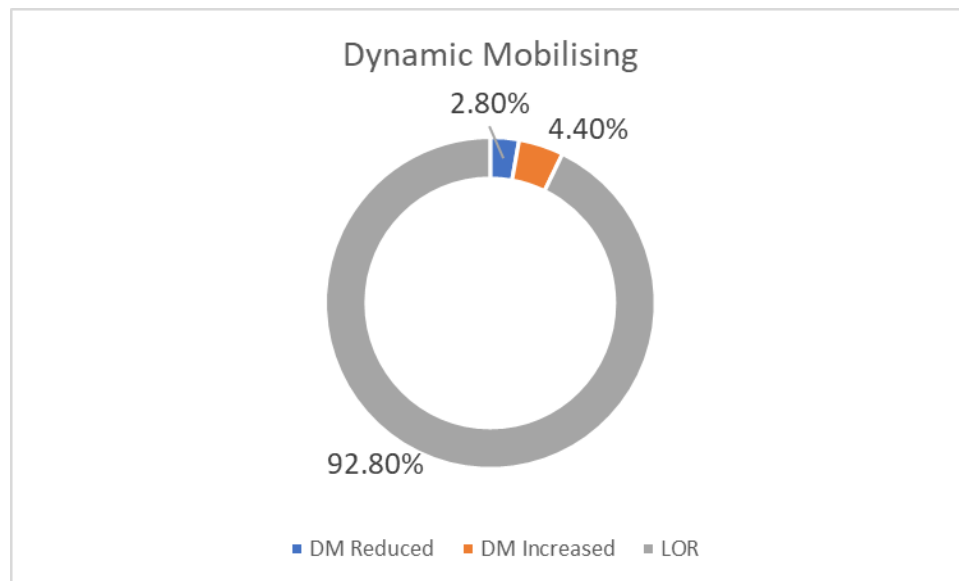
Fire Control continue to utilise several tools to support decision making including –

- Dynamic emergency call handling

- Information gathered at the time of call

- Location of the incident, both geographically and demographically

- Repeat calls

- Footage and images from 999eye

- Number and type of incidents in progress

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- Weather

- Time of day

Fire Control dynamically amended the initial level of response 721 times throughout the quarter (7.3% of all incidents mobilized to), increasing the attendance 446 times and reducing the attendance 275 times.

These totals are either an increased or decreased attendance from the standard pre-determined levels of response.

On the occasions Fire Control reduced the attendance none of the incidents resulted in a subsequent make up, demonstrating that the reduced attendance was the correct decision to make. This resulted in at least 275 resources remaining available for category 1 incidents and to support prevention and protection activities, thereby increasing the effectiveness of our resources.

On the occasions Fire Control increased the attendance, this supported the speed and weight of attack allowing for safe systems of work to be implemented leading to effective and efficient resolution of incidents.

180 resources were returned enroute (stood down before booking in attendance). We are improving the quality of our

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reporting data and debriefing so we can understand the following –

- Whether the initial attendance was increased by Fire Control or whether this was the standard level of response

- Whether 999eye was used to support decision making

- Whether the resources that were returned enroute were for incidents or standby moves

- Whether the resources that were sent matched the information that was available to Fire Control at the point of mobilisation

Dynamic Mobilising Case Study

- First 999 call received at 17.36 hours – tall building fire persons reported

- Level of response mobilised – four resources and one HP

- Multiple fire survival guidance calls in progress (this is the reason why 999eye footage was unable to be obtained)

- Crews delayed in attending due to PRIDE parade & traffic

- FC Manager dynamically increases the attendance by an additional three resources (seven in total)

- All appliances remained in attendance – none were stood down, no additional appliances were requested

- The early mobilisation of additional resources enabled them to arrive quicker and supported assertive firefighting to save life and prevent significant escalation
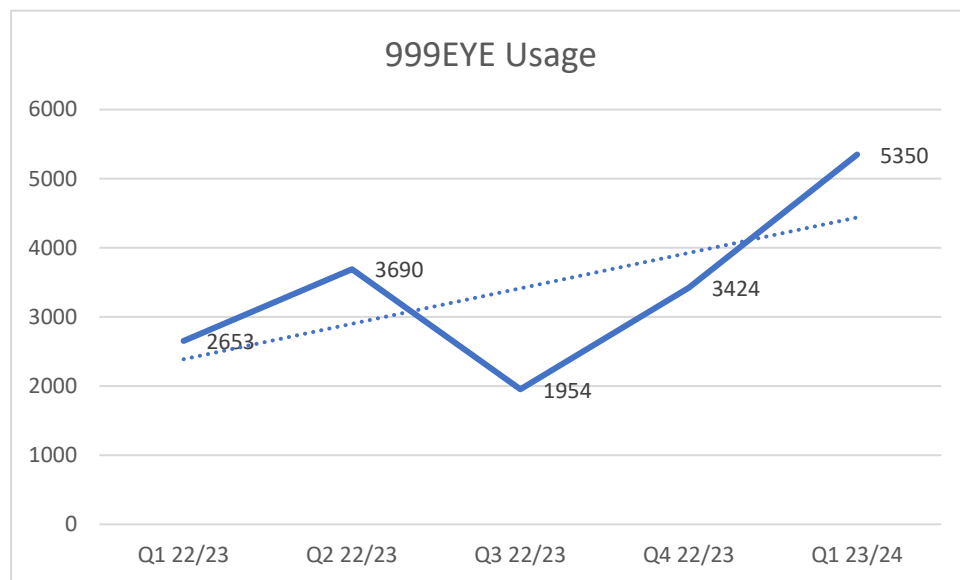
3.4 <u>999Eye</u>

Intelligence led mobilisation and resource management enables Fire Control to send the most appropriate number

Ref. AU/SC/2023/July/10507231

and type of resource based on the level of risk, this directly contributes to the achievement of our risk-based attendance standards.

999eye is enhancing the quality of intelligence and information that is received within Fire Control, thereby enabling Fire Control personnel to make more informed dynamic mobilisations using this technology; further supporting our key aim of sending the right level of resource to the right incident type.

In Q1 23/24 Fire Control used 999eye 5,350 times, this was for 27% of all calls received (including repeat calls).

The table below shows the recorded use of 999eye across the reporting periods.

Since Q1 22/23 the use of 999eye has more than doubled and the % of successful images received is at an all-time high of 67.2% of all 999eye requests.

Again, we are improving the quality of our reporting data so we can understand the 'so what' from the images received and determine how many times the 999eye footage has directly impacted on the decisions that we made.

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999eye Case Study

House Fire

- Two Pumps mobilised

- 999eye footage received & additional PRL mobilised due to severity of fire and travel time of additional SFRS resources

- Police & Ambulance requested

- Incident treated as persons reported

- Footage used to support Police investigations

Factory Fire

- Three Pumps mobilised

- 999eye footage received & additional pump mobilised

- Footage shared with Officer to support their decision making regarding attendance

- Incident dealt with as a make pumps four, even though FC make the decision to mobilise all four of the resources

- No additional resources requested

3.5 Automated Fire Alarm Calls

Fire Control continue to be an integral function supporting the introduction of CRMP projects by ensuring a proportional level of response to incidents, including those involving Automated Fire Alarms.

A total of 4,127 AFA calls were received for the reporting period. This equates to 20.7% of all emergency calls received for the quarter.

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Whilst Fire Control call challenged and did not respond to 62.7% of these calls, there is still an ongoing impact on time spent managing these types of call. Approximately 137 hours in the quarter is spent handling these types of calls based on an average of two minutes per call.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The contact name for this report is Alex Shapland Strategic Enabler.

WAYNE BROWN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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