

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 DECEMBER 2011

1. **EMERGENCY RESPONSE ATTENDANCE TIMES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee note the introduction of a risk-based attendance time framework for managing emergency response performance.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Committee of the current standard in attendance time performance and to seek approval to revise West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) attendance time standards to reflect its risk-based approach to service delivery.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following the introduction of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, all Fire Authorities are required to deploy their resources based upon risk. These plans are known as Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs), WMFS introduced its plan in 2004 which has enabled the performance of Brigade resources to be monitored.
- 3.2 A number of modifications have been made to reflect changes in working practices, such as the introduction of Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) and more recently, the ability to mobilise the task specific number of firefighters to fires in high rise buildings, through the use of the Fortek 'Vision' command and control system.
- 3.3 A paper was brought to the Executive Committee on 6 September 2010 to provide an update on current performance against the existing standards at that time. That paper also referred to the potential benefits of moving to a risk based approach for performance monitoring.

- 3.4 A presentation explaining the proposed change and its benefits was delivered to the Policy Planning Forum on 10 October 2011.
- 3.5 In line with work currently being undertaken to improve and refine service delivery through the Building upon Success (BuS) Programme, it is now necessary to revise the manner in which WMFS monitor and report on attendance time performance, so that a more flexible, transparent and risk appropriate approach can be adopted.
- 3.6 The recent BuS consultation exercise demonstrated that there is significant support, both from staff and from the wider community, for the attendance time standards to be revised, to take account of the higher risks attached to some incident types where life and property are under threat.
- 3.7 The type of approach decided upon is of some significance, as it will influence future decisions on the scale, nature and location of response resources in WMFS.
- 3.8 The Risk Based Attendance Matrix that has been developed, ensures that the highest standard of emergency response is applied to those incidents where life and property could be in danger (Category 1 incidents). A lower expectation will be applied to response times when the risk is limited. In this way, a house fire for example will attract a target response time of 5 minutes, whilst the response to a small animal rescue has a response time of 10 minutes.
- 3.9 Integral to the process of setting risk-based standards that reflect local geography and demographics, is the need to create a suitable mapping process which shows areas of high and low risk. To fulfil this need, an Area Risk Map has been developed, to underpin work in this field, and has been embedded within our ICT systems.
- 3.10 The Area Risk Map is used to highlight areas of high, medium or low risk, so that response can be tailored accordingly. A faster standard of response will be applied to areas of higher risk. An illustration of the Area Risk Map is given in Appendix 2.
- 3.11 It is worth noting that the performance for the year to 31 August 2011 (detailed within Appendix 1) shows a continuing improvement in WMFS attendance time performance, against the declining national trend described in the CLG Review of FRS's response

times.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report a Full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

The analysis of the policy shows that the impact of introducing a risk-based framework for the planning and monitoring of emergency response attendance times does not cause disadvantage or negative impact to any particular identifiable group within the community, or to staff. On the contrary, this approach ensures that resources are allocated according to need in a way that is transparent and open to scrutiny to a greater extent than the current systems.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework requires each FRS to conduct risk analysis and to evaluate performance in service delivery. The risk-based approach to reporting on emergency response attendance performance enables and enhances our capacity in fulfilling these functions.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications, but the move to a risk appropriate framework will ensure that performance is enhanced and efficiencies maximised in service delivery.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

WMFS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2003
Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11
Building upon Success consultation and responses
CLG Review of FRS Response Times
Executive Committee 6.9.2010 Minute No. 17/10

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER