

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2019

1. FIRE CONTROL PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER ONE AND TWO 2019/20

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee note the Fire Control performance update for the first six months of 2019/20.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to provide the Committee with an update of the year to date operational performance of Fire Control.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Calls received & call handling

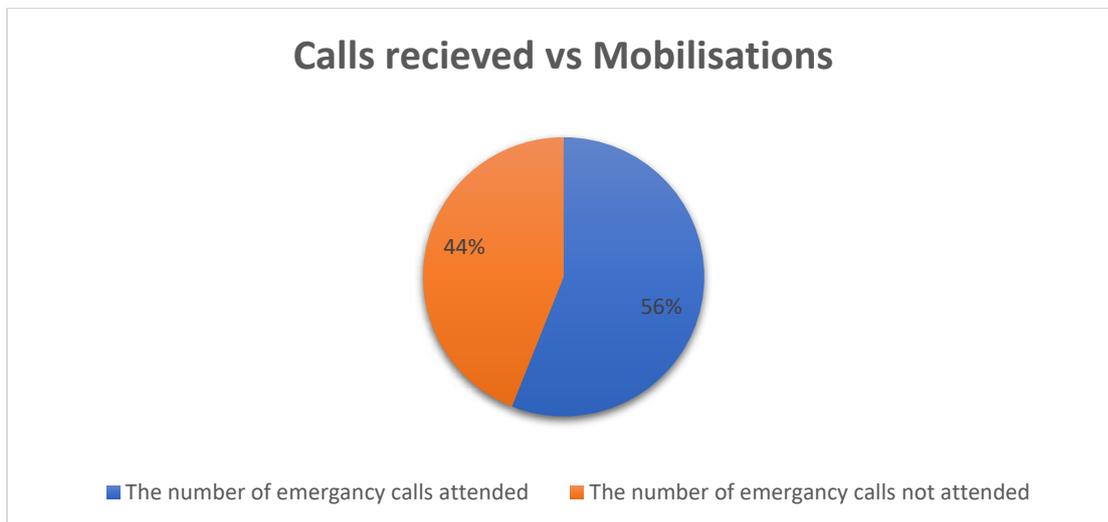
Fire Control receives the emergency calls and manages the resources for both the WMFS and Staffordshire FRS.

Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control received a total of 37,175 emergency calls between 1 April and 30 September 2019 across both brigade areas. This was split 26,496 calls for the West Midlands (71%) and 10,679 calls for Staffordshire (29%).

The table below details the calls received for the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) only and shows a 20% decrease in calls received from the same reporting period in 2018.

April – Sept 2019	2018	2019	Variance
Quarter 1 – April - June	14,207	13,150	-7.4%
Quarter 2 – July - Sept	18,832	13,346	-29%
TOTAL	33,039	26,486	- 20%

Of the 26,496 emergency calls received for the West Midlands, fire control mobilised to 14,757 (56%) incidents, this is a consistent percentage with the 12-month average. This mobilisation to calls received ratio is due to FC call challenging, this includes; Automated Fire Alarms (AFA's), Special Service Calls which were deemed non-emergency and repeat 999 calls.



3.2 Call Handling

A key performance measure for fire control is the length of time from answering a 999 call to dispatching resources to the incident for Category 1 (life and property) incidents. For these critical incident types, we strive to mobilise in under 80 seconds; this is from the time of call answered to the first appliance being mobilised. The data below shows the median average call handling times for life and property incident types:

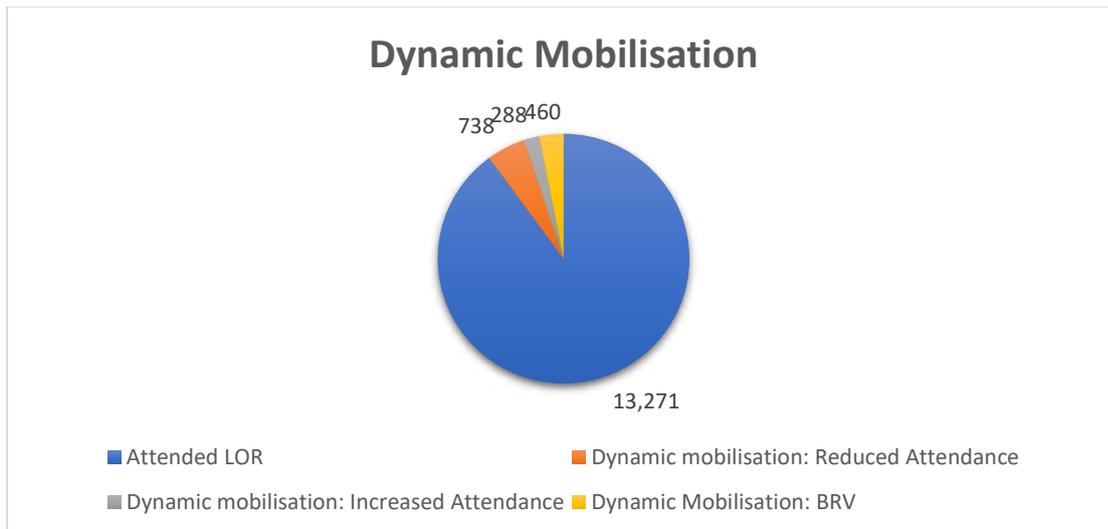
Incident Type	Call Handling Time	Count
Fire	77	925
Fire PR	79	63
House Fire	58	531
House Fire PR	58	82
RTC	82	1113
RTC PR	72	396

For this reporting period, Fire Control have successfully maintained an average mobilisation time to life and property incidents (category 1) of 78 seconds. It can be viewed in the table above that Fire Control mobilised to House Fires within an average of 58 seconds over the same period, we are able to respond this quickly due to it being easier to validate private dwelling addresses than other incident types.

This focus on the mobilising standard contributes to ensuring our communities receive support in the fastest time possible during the most severe types of incident.

3.3 **Dynamic Mobilisation**

The application of 'dynamic intelligence-led' decision-making when mobilising to incidents enables control staff to provide the most appropriate number and type of resources to match risk.



Fire Control dynamically amended the initial level of response on 1486 occasions during this period, either increasing or decreasing the number of appliances mobilised or amending the vehicle type from the regular ‘pre-determined’ levels of response. It should be noted that if a response is still maintained at the pre-determined level of response the call will still have been risk-assessed at the point of dispatch.

The occasions where the attendance was reduced represents a significant number of appliances remaining available for category 1 incidents and prevention activity within the community, and the occasions where the attendance has been increased has resulted in safer systems of work for the crews and/or quicker resolution of incidents limiting harm and damage to the community.

3.4 **999eye**

Using the principles of intelligence led mobilisation and resource management to send the right level of resource based on the risk directly contributes to the achievement of our risk-based attendance standards.

999Eye is enhancing the quality of intelligence and information that is received within the control room thereby enabling the control operators to make more informed dynamic mobilisations through the use of this technology; further supporting our key aim of sending the right level of resource to the right incident type. The ‘999 Eye’ software was used on almost 3000 occasions during this reporting period.

A really positive example of where the use of 999eye has had significant impact on the outcome of an incident:

In August of this year, Fire Control received a call to a fire in a garage in the Bordesley Green area of Birmingham. To gather more intelligence from the caller, the operator requested 999eye imagery and received the following:



Due to 999eye image received, and FC viewing the incident from the control room, an additional 2 pumping appliances and the Hydraulic Platform (HP) was mobilised (total 4 pumps and HP). This increase in the initial attendance ensured a safer system of work was set up at the earliest opportunity and reduced the spread of fire to neighbouring businesses.

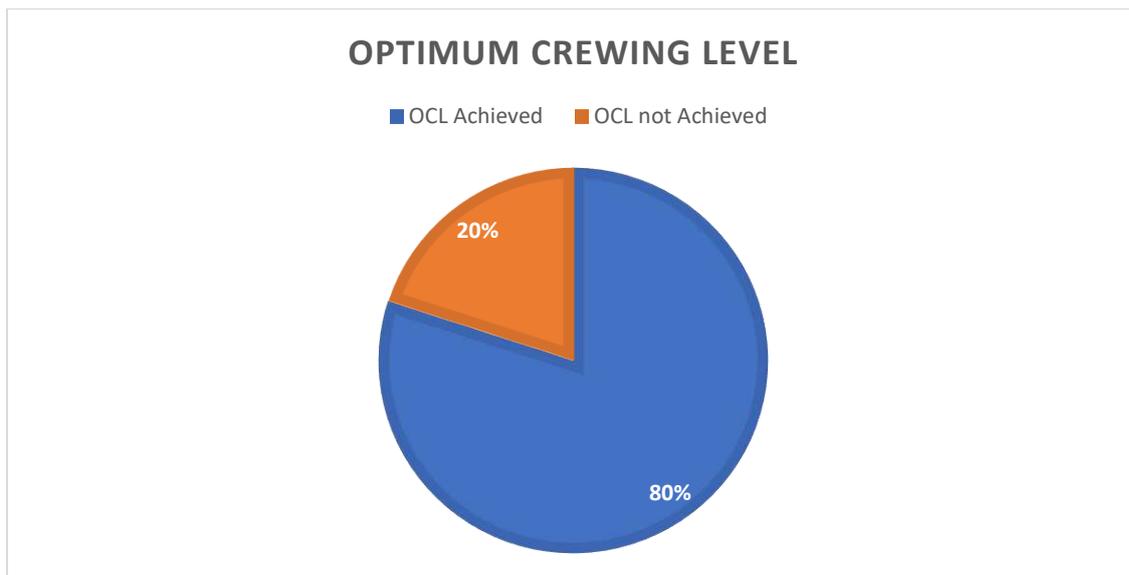
3.5 **Attendance management**

To realise the full effectiveness of the staffing model within Fire Control the staff number needs to be maintained 13 members of staff per watch, or 52 in total (this is excluding the Fire Control Support and Management teams). On occasion, due to events such as long-term sickness, leavers or those seeking development elsewhere within the organisation, the numbers of staff have dropped below this figure. Currently, there are 47.5 members of staff

available for full operational duties out of the 52 required which is impacting on our ability to resource the control room. We have subsequently recruited and selected new entrants who start their initial training on the 28th October 2019.

Out of a total of 366 shifts (day and night) for this reporting period, Fire Control have maintained Optimum Crewing Levels (OCL) 296 times, which equates to 80% overall. This takes into account the arrangements within the local collective agreement which enable the use of integrated staffing resilience (day support team) and an agreed tolerance of 1 below OCL in the event of first day sickness.

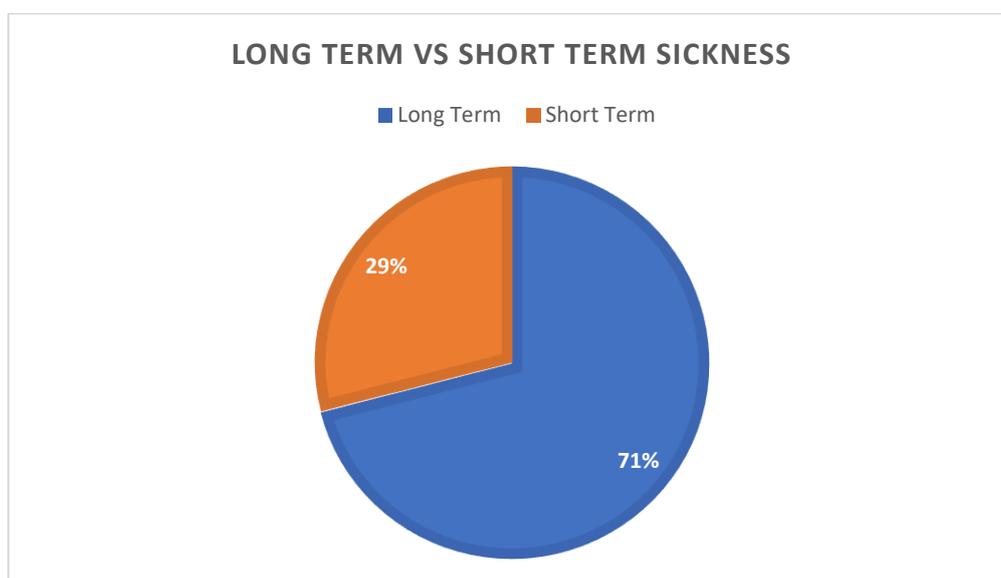
A combination of days lost due to sickness and the booking of leave, in relation to the number of staff at the beginning of 2019 (this has since reduced by 5 1/2 posts), has meant that FC have been under OCL on 20% of the shifts over this period.



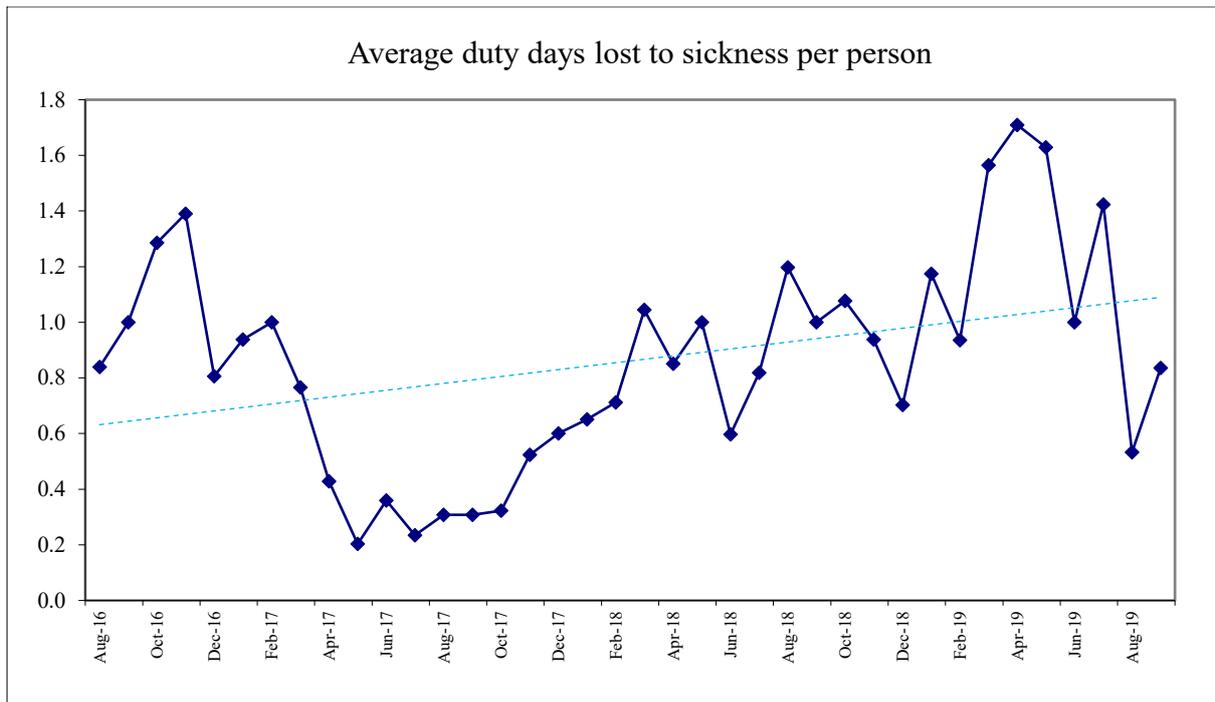
During this period Fire Control staff have 'worked' 85 flexi shifts and 'banked' 91, with 130 shifts undertaken utilising overtime (a further 28 OT shifts were used for Vision 4 training). Currently, there are a total of 38 flexi shifts owed by FC staff (under the collective staffing agreement FC staff have 12 months to repay these shifts), and there are 32 shifts 'owed' back to individuals. It must also be noted, that only members of staff who have a zero flexi shift balance are able to complete OT shifts; this is robustly managed.

3.6 Sickness Absence

There have been a total of 65 periods of absence over this period. 71% of the total absences were categorised as 'long term' (28 days or more) where 321 duty days were lost (attributed to 12 periods) and 128 duty days were lost to short term absences (53 periods). On average, each member of Fire Control has had 7.13 days of absence in this reporting period.



When comparing the attendance levels against the 3-year average, it is evident that FC is experiencing an increase in sickness, this trend is consistent with the wider organisation. The 3-year average duty days lost for sickness per person is 0.86 days per month, this year's (April - September) average is 1.19 per month per person, this is 38% increase per person. The key contributing factor for this increase is the significantly higher days lost to long term sickness (due to the low number of personnel in FC, even if 1 person is absent for a long period of time, this will significant impact on overall sickness figure)



As part of the ongoing commitment to employee Mental Health & Wellbeing, there is active promotion of Post Incident Diffusion & Trauma Risk Management which are both interventions following difficult incidents. This can help reduce the impact experienced when dealing with incidents with the potential to affect an individual’s mental health.

The effective management of the staffing is a process of continual improvement, with any recommended changes being considered based on evidence.

3.7 **New Entrants: Recruitment & Selection**

Having recruited and selected Fire Control (FC) new entrants through a recruitment agency for a number of years, this approach was evaluated and reviewed. The outcome of this is that we have now taken back ownership of the recruitment, selection and employment of all FC new starters.

The benefits to this include increased assurance that the new entrants we recruit can demonstrate the requisite skills and attributes for the role of FC Operator and the right behavioural requirements, but also shows our commitment to them by offering permanent contracts. It has also given us the opportunity to

undertake positive action in pursuit of a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

Our targeted recruitment campaign was through a series of short videos that were published via various social media sites. The videos involved a range of existing FC staff discussing the benefits, challenges and highlights of being a FC Operator. The intention was to ensure potential candidates had a deep understanding of the varied role and commitment required to be a successful operator.

The targeted social media campaign was live for 2 days and we received over 100 expressions of interest for the FC open evening, of which 94% of expressions of interest were from BAME or underrepresented groups.

Of the 39 applications that were received, 15 were invited to selection days for shortlisting. Out of these 15, 6 individuals were selected and invited to join FC at the end of October 2019 to start their initial training; these 6 individuals comprise of 3 males and 3 females.

3.8 **Vision 4 Command and Control System Upgrade**

We are currently working with our Command and Control supplier – Capita, to upgrade the current Vision 3 system to Vision 4.

This upgrade will enhance our ability to interface our system with other required systems, supporting the value release of the project, through efficiency, for both brigades and includes examples such as:

- Automatic retrieval of call location details from BT (information without manual intervention), with input into the ‘call collection screen’ for improved call handling times
- Enhanced Mobile Location (EML) – more accurate GPS location for mobile phones making 999 calls to pinpoint incident addresses
- Pre-alert for faster mobilisation
- Attribute Mobilising, i.e. the ability to tailor responses to fully utilise the blended fleet and enhance resource management
- Integration of Fire Watch (SFRS staffing system) into Vision 4, automating a currently manual and time-consuming procedure.
- It has also enabled the replacement of system hardware and Windows operating systems.

The go live for Vision 4 is currently proposed for mid-November 2019 subject to the system achieving the required standard for both functionality and performance.

Testing is carried out involving Fire Control, ICT and Capita personnel and is continuing throughout October.

3.9 **Emergency Services Mobile Communications Program (ESMCP)**

Work is continuing at all levels with the deployment planning requirements to enable optimum transition - nationally, regionally, locally and across Fire, Police and Ambulance.

To support this, further details continue to emerge of the various 'products' or the 'component elements' that make up this programme since the change to an incremental approach, along with the Emergency Services Network (ESN). This is enabling local services to start evaluating the benefits / value these may bring, to each unique service. This can then be added as a consideration in the organisations short to medium term technical/digital planning cycles.

This gap analysis cannot be completed until more details are released, including the costs of these products, including usage costs. It does, however, enable services to feedback into the Programme to identify the potential enhancements which could elicit the best value for money and technological advances possible.

Note: The Public Accounts Committee report in May 2019 - "The programme faces substantial levels of technical and commercial risk, and failures to date have undermined the confidence of users that the programme will deliver a system that is fit for purpose and meets their needs. On current evidence it seems inevitable that there will be further delays and cost increases."

3.10 **Technical and Security arrangements**

These are still evolving within the Programme and will dictate the specifications to be followed by organisations, to enable transition, through the successful achievement of the required Code of Connection accreditation.

All direct ESMCP requirements will be funded by the Programme.

- **Airwave Section 31 Grant**

No change - Official notification has now been received for the Grant for the full financial year 19/20. Although the Grant is expected to be continued in line with the Airwave extension, no information has been received for post March 2020 thus far.

- **Resource Funding**

The local resource funding from the Programme, per organisation for 2018/19, was provided at the end of March 19. There are no further details for resource funding post March 2020.

- **Efficiency savings**

Due to the complex nature of this project it is now the expectation that costs, and the Full Business Case financial details, will emerge and develop over the next few months.

3.14 **Warwickshire Collaboration**

Work was completed by the WMFS project team over a six-month period culminating in March 2019 with the production of a comprehensive business case and offer for the Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control to provide a commissioned service for Warwickshire FRS. The arrangement would have provided a bespoke robust and resilient service operating against a Service Level Agreement and would have enabled a range of improvements and collaborative opportunities for the benefit of Warwickshire FRS and its communities. Regrettably, Warwickshire FRS finally in March 2019 decided that they would not go ahead with this collaboration; citing that there were not enough cost savings. A debrief of the collaboration project has been held between the two FRS with the outcome that the two Organisations will continue to work together and share IRMP data to provide an evidence base to inform discussions around any future collaboration opportunities that may be considered.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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