

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19 SEPTEMBER 2016

1. WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE FLEET AVAILABILITY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT Members note policy changes creating an impact on the Ridership factor leading to pressures on the Staffing Model.
- 1.2 THAT Members note West Midlands Fire Service's fleet availability within the Service Delivery Model.
- 1.3 THAT Members note the delegations to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) relating to resource deployment.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to inform Members of the approach taken to determining the requirements of our Service Delivery Model and the day to day management of fleet availability.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Integrated Risk Management Planning

- 3.1.1 The strategy of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) is focused on making our communities Safer, Stronger and Healthier. To achieve this strategy requires the Service to undertake Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP).
- 3.1.2 IRMP is a duty on all Fire and Rescue Services under the National Fire and Rescue Framework which requires West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) to identify, assess and mitigate fire and rescue related risks. Our IRMP consists of four elements which include:

- Risk Analysis
- The Community Safety Strategy
- The Plan
- Statement of Assurance.

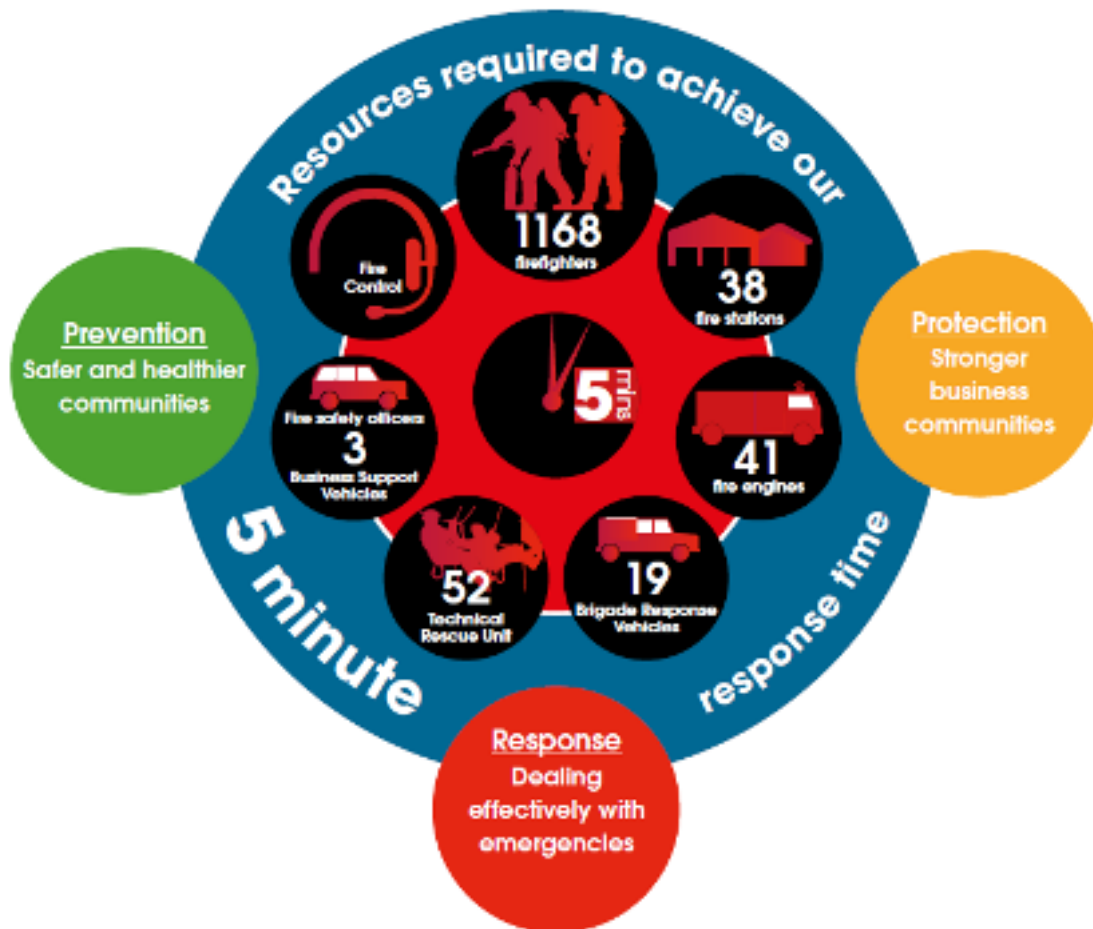
3.1.3 The ongoing analysis of incident data allows WMFS to map the risks across the West Midlands to determine where incidents are likely to occur and who is at the greatest risk. This is achieved by understanding the factors which contribute towards the risk and putting in place mitigating steps to reduce this risk through our Prevention, Protection and Response activities.

3.1.4 Since 2015 the Service has widened this analysis to include academic research around survivability which has enabled WMFS to understand response requirements. We have been able to put this alongside our incident data to determine that a 5 minute attendance time is critical to the likelihood of survival in a fire or any incident where significant trauma has been incurred.

3.1.5 An output of this risk analysis is the public facing Community Safety Strategy (CSS) which feeds into The Plan detailing how the Service intends to reduce risk through an integrated approach through the core functions of Prevention, Protection and Response Priorities. Assurance of WMFS's IRMP process is provided to the Authority through the annual Statement of Assurance.

3.2 **Service Delivery Model**

3.2.1 The Service Delivery Model (SDM) is at the heart of all planning and analysis and provides the level of resources required in order to be able to respond to high risk (life and property) incidents within a risk based 5 minute attendance standard. Our SDM utilises whole-time personnel to deliver our Prevention, Protection and Response activities.



3.2.2 We manage our performance in responding to emergency incidents based upon the principle of proportionality, dependent on the risk involved. When linked to our CSS and IRMP, the SDM ensures WMFS is able to meet the performance requirement to get the right resources to the right place at the right time and is flexible enough to adapt to changing risk overtime. We currently deliver our SDM through a fleet of 41 fire appliances, 19 Brigade Response Vehicles (BRVs) and 3 Business Support Vehicles (BSVs) strategically located at 38 fire stations whose locations are informed by our IRMP.

3.3 Attendance Standards

3.3.1 Attendance standards enable WMFS to reduce risk to firefighting whilst also reducing the impact of an incident on members of the public, the local community and economy.

3.3.2 Our response standards are categorised dependent on the level of risk an incident presents based on the analysis of incident data and outcomes. By doing this, the Service can distribute our resources most effectively across the West Midlands area not just day by day but dynamically from one minute to the next using Fire Control staff to maintain the most effective distribution of available resources at all times.

Emergency Incidents are categorised in the following way:

| Incident Risk Category | Description | First Resource Attendance Standard |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Category 1 (High Risk) | Incidents which present the most significant risk to life and/or property. | 5 minutes |
| Category 2 (Medium Risk) | Incidents where there is a potential risk, but there is a reduced likelihood of this risk being realised. | 7 minutes |
| Category 3 (Low Risk) | Incidents where there is a significantly reduced risk to life. | 10 minutes |
| Secondary Fires attracting 2 | Incidents that are secondary fires and where there is a very low risk to life. | 20 minutes |
| Category 5 | AFA | |

3.3.3 In recognition of the importance of attending high risk incidents within an average of 5 minutes, Performance Indicator 1 (PI 1) was created to measure the Service's performance against this standard. PI 1 sets the standard of an average 5 minute attendance time for category 1 Incidents, although the Service aims to reach a category 1 incident as quickly as possible. The recent performance against PI1 reported to Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) was 4 minutes 40 seconds but Section 3.6.5 further details our yearly average performance against PI 1 from 2011.

3.4 **Budget Reductions**

Over the next four years the Authority is due to receive reductions to core funding of approximately £10 million. This means that by 2020 core funding will have reduced by approximately £38 million since 2011. Over a nine year period this has seen up to a 50% reduction in our core funding.

3.5 Service Reform to Support Fleet Availability

3.5.1 A reduction in core funding has resulted in the need for the Service to develop alternative approaches to delivering our services to the communities of the West Midlands. This has seen a number of changes which includes the type of resources used in our fleet, the method in which these resources are crewed and the availability of resources during a 24 hour period. This has been alongside a progressive integration of our prevention and protection resources and services.

3.5.2 Blended Fleet

- (i) The IRMP process allows the Service to consider how a change in resource aligned to our SDM will impact on the delivery of services to our communities.
- (ii) WMFS operates a blended fleet with a range of vehicles delivering Prevention, Protection and Response activities. These include fire appliances crewed at five, BRV's crewed at three and BSV's crewed at one.
- (iii) Through adopting a blended fleet, this ensures we are able to provide a proportionate response to incidents utilising our personnel in the most cost efficient way possible. As a result of matching the resource to the risk, we are able to protect resources required for high risk incidents which affect life and property, including when carrying out our commissioning work or attending low risk incidents.

3.5.3 Staffing Model

- (i) WMFS uses the Ridership Factor to calculate how many operational personnel the Service need to employ at each fire station based on the crewing levels needed to maintain emergency cover for resources. This Ridership Factor is determined by considering a wider range of factors that will reduce staff availability to ride appliances such as leave and sickness. A number of these factors are impacted by policy decisions made by the Fire Authority such as Maternity/Paternity leave and flexible working.

- (ii) To ensure that we match the availability of resources to demand, we utilise analysis from the IRMP to run two shift patterns (Core and Lates) alongside each other to ensure that at peak utilisation times we have maximum resources available which drops during low activity times.
- (iii) WMFS has reduced the number of firefighter posts by 277 since April 2010. The introduction of a new staffing model has delivered the most significant proportion of financial savings whilst maintaining our fleet availability. Fleet availability supports our risk based 5 minute response time, maximises survivability, minimises the cost of fire and the burden on business.
- (iv) The move to dual staffing of our specialist vehicles has allowed us to maintain a fleet of specialist response vehicles whilst reducing firefighter posts by 96, securing approximately £3.6 million savings per annum.
- (v) The trial new staffing model utilises Voluntary Additional Shifts (VAS) where staff make themselves voluntarily available to provide cover either in a planned manner or at short notice. Agreement for these trials has been gained from the trade unions. Running alongside VAS is the use of uniformed personnel working in departments who provide resilience on station where required whilst sharing skills and promoting integration across the SDM.

3.6 **Fleet Availability**

3.6.1 The whole-time SDM we operate ensures the greatest level of fleet availability over alternative staffing models such as the retained or on-call duty shift systems. Further benefits of a whole-time model are:

- Improved availability of personnel to deliver Prevention, Protection and Response activities.
- The ability for the Service to develop a highly trained workforce to deliver excellence to the communities of the West Midlands.

- 3.6.2 The CFO is accountable and responsible for delivering services to the community whilst maintaining a balanced budget. Under the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution, Officers have the authority to control all matters relating to the administration of the Authority's functions under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004. This includes taking and implementing decisions that are concerned with maintaining the operational effectiveness of the Service, including varying the deployment of resources in order to ensure the effective delivery of The Plan.
- 3.6.3 It is recognised that whilst our SDM consists of 41 PRLs, 19 BRVs and 3 BSVs, the availability of these resources can fluctuate due to a number of factors which include routine vehicle maintenance, shift patterns, off shift training, staff sickness and operational commitments. This is managed through Fire Control who ensure that adequate cover is provided across the West Midlands based on risk.
- 3.6.4 The Service has previously operated a system called 'Strategic Reserve' to manage the number of resources unavailable to immediately attend emergency incidents due to conducting pre-planned events such as significant training or prevention activities. Strategic Reserve allowed up to 18 resources at times to be unavailable which was not consistent with the principles that underpin our SDM. A new system called 'Maximised Response' has been designed which supports the SDM in a more effective manner by maximising the availability of the fleet alongside a series of policy changes. Maximised Response will be implemented by January 2017 and is complemented by our Distributed Training Model (DTM). The DTM allows for greater availability of resources when training at station-based training hubs which are located in the highest risk areas of the West Midlands.
- 3.6.5 Despite the budget reductions WMFS has been able to maintain a positive direction of travel both in relation to attendance times and fleet availability which can be seen below:

| Attendance Times and Fleet Availability (Category One Incidents) | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| | Time minutes | Incident count | Average Fleet availability % |
| 2012/13 | 4:53 | 5451 | 93 |
| 2013/14 | 4:58 | 5394 | 94 |
| 2014/15 | 5:01 | 5569 | 92 |
| 2015/16 | 4:47 | 5678 | 95 |

3.6.6 To maintain our SDM we will need to operate a lean staffing model which relies on VAS. It is therefore recognised that, on occasions, due to issues such as unplanned absences and limited volunteers for VAS, there will be an impact on appliance availability. However, this model remains the most effective and efficient option available to WMFRA.

3.6.7 To more effectively manage resources WMFS is developing the Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT). The DCT analyses and models 150k historical incidents to support the decision making by Fire Control, deploying and moving resources to provide optimum response times, matching resource to risk and managing prevention and protection priorities. The DCT will be implemented during the Autumn of 2016.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Whilst this paper has been prepared for note and not to inform the Authority of any policy changes, fleet availability does have the potential to impact high risk groups across the West Midlands. However, this is mitigated by the risk based approach to resource management and distribution the Service takes where fleet availability reduces.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications.

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