

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2011 to 2014

Summary of feedback from consultation

Objective 1 We will create a business centre at one of our retained (on-call) fire stations

Summary

Both staff and the public were not clear by the 'business centre' wording, and said that this wording was slightly misleading. There were suggestions that this objective was actually more around providing 'community facilities' and not necessarily a 'business centre'.

Some members of staff were very positive about the opportunity to work from retained stations during the day to help improve availability and many staff mentioned that it was the space that they needed, and not necessarily computer or office equipment etc. This led to many conversations around what the usage of these 'business centres' would be. The facilities and equipment needed at these stations would be dependant on the activity that was going to be taking place, therefore their couldn't be one specific model.

Staff recognised that being able to work from the station, when they previously would have to worked outside of the responding time to the station would mean an increase in available and potentially a faster turn out to incidents.

Staff voiced their concerns around the logistical issues that would be faced if members of the public were to access stations regularly. This included issues around security, safety in the drill yard when retained firefighters were turning in, parking, etc

Members of the public were concerned that providing these facilities at some locations would prevent the use of community facilities already in place, that rely on the income they receive. But in locations where there are no community facilities members of the public would welcome the use of facilities or meeting areas at retained fire stations. The public mentioned that advertising these facilities and ensuring the public know these facilities are available would be an important consideration.

The voluntary sector were very positive about this idea, and would be likely to use facilities at a fire station if possible. They feel however that the locations (Alton and Petersfield) would not be suitable. They felt that a wholtime station would be more suitable.

There was also mention by staff as to whether in these times of austerity, whether the service should be allocating the resource of a station or group manager to implement this idea.

Conclusion

The wording caused confusion to both staff and the public about our intentions.

Removed as a proposed corporate objective.

Objective 2 We will have community facilities at our stations

Summary

The public were very supportive of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) sharing its facilities with other organisations, not just Hampshire County Council (HCC). They were keen to stress that they thought that sharing with other emergency services should take preference over

other organisations.

The feedback we have had from other organisations has suggested that there is interest for them to provide their service's from a retained fire station. These ideas range from the relocation of a library, the sharing of offices with other emergency services and offering health walks on GP referral schemes in rural retained stations. Although no formal proposals have been put forward to date, there are many ideas that will be considered on an individual basis.

Both staff and the public raised concerns around the cost that the Service would be faced with, if this objective were to be implemented. The view shared by staff and the public was that it should be of benefit to the Service.

Conclusion

This objective was strongly supported by both the public and staff. The Service has received many leads from Hampshire County Council and other organisations, and will implement at least one community facility at a retained station from April 2011.

Objective 3 We will respond to small fires more effectively in rural areas

Summary

The majority of feedback from the public has seen in supportive of, and agreeing with the proposal to respond to small fires with a crew of two in a Land Rover. There were many comments at the focus groups, asking 'why we didn't already do this?'. There were a number of comments received from the public that agree with the idea, but wouldn't want to see this implemented at the expense of losing a major appliance.

There was some confusion from the public as to what is a 'small fire', this led to some feedback received from the public and staff that strongly suggested that a Land Rover should not be attending any house fires. In response to these queries everyone was informed that the Service has no intention to send a Land Rover to property fires, and that the Land Rovers would only attend 'non-critical' incidents.

While our staff have commented positively on the benefits of having small fires vehicles to attend smaller incidents, some retained firefighters are concerned with the effect that crewing a Land Rover as the first response might have on the crewing (availability) of the major appliance, if it was required. They feel that the Land Rover should only be crewed, if the crewing levels allow for the first major appliance to be unaffected. E.g. if the availability at a retained station is five – the Land Rover should not be deployed as this would put the major appliance off the run. They suggested a minimum of six crew should be available – two for the Land Rover and four for the major appliance.

Some staff viewed this objective being about 'stopping the clock', to improve attendance times. There were also concerns around firefighter safety, although wholtime crews drew on their knowledge of the first response vehicle (FRV) and agreed that this is a positive proposal.

We received a number of responses from parish councils which supported the proposals, however we received a response from Ringwood Town Council highlighting concerns, which were mirrored by letters from the local community.

Conclusion

This is supported by the majority of the public and staff. We have changed the wording to reflect that the Land Rovers and small fires vehicles should only attend 'small fires in the open'. There were concerns from staff that by sending a Land Rover (rather than a fully-crewed conventional fire engine) would result in fewer 'shouts' for retained firefighters.

Objective 4 We will respond differently to automatic fire alarms which are in non-domestic properties

Summary

Although staff agreed that the vast majority of automatic fire alarms (AFAs) are false alarms, they were concerned about the 'one AFA in a thousand' that would not be a false alarm and turn into a serious incident.

Staff commented that wording around local manager was confusing, and would like this made clearer.

Some staff feel that this objective is not worth pursuing in rural areas. There were concerns raised about lone working, and the safety of one member of staff responding on their own. Retained crews commented that attending AFAs provides good training opportunities for both developed and developing firefighters, it also gets the crews familiar with the risks on the station ground. Staff said that many AFAs attended needed more than one crew member to attend due the size of the building, and the unavailability of key holders on a number of occasions. They also raised concerns around

- the Service's public image if only a 'man in a van' arrives at an incident,
- the safety of individual firefighters, and;
- the logistics – how it will work;

The public agreed it is appropriate to send a level one incident commander, as long as the Service still attend high risk / life threatening AFAs with the full pre determined attendance. The public were keen for re-assurance that the Service would still attend AFAs in care homes, hospitals, hotels etc with the full pre determined attendance (PDA).

Conclusion

In urban areas staff and the public generally agreed with the idea. However, both staff and public raised concerns over the 1 in 1000 AFA that turns out to be genuine fire.

There were concerns that, if the call turn out to be a major incident, a reduced initial response runs the risk of delaying a more appropriate response (in terms of the 'weight of attack'). It might also result in some reputational damage for the Service.

Objective 5 We will respond to road-traffic accidents in rural areas more effectively

Summary

The public were supportive of this proposal and agree that sending a level one incident commander and a co-responder to road traffic collisions (RTCs) is a positive idea that would benefit the public.

Staff were generally supportive of this objective. Although there was a difference of opinion as to whether a co-responder and an 'incident commander' should attend. Many staff agreed with the proposal, whilst many staff proposed that the co-responder and 'incident commander' could be the same person. There were comments from a minority of staff concerned that the Service would be doing the job of the ambulance Service, and was doing too much 'co-responding'.

There were concerns from some retained firefighters that the firefighters that were co-responders would often be assigned as 'casualty care' when responding on the pump, meaning that those staff that are not co-responders, would not get the opportunity to be 'casualty care', and their skills in this area would deteriorate.

Staff suggested that these additional resources should be sent to an RTC 'wash down' as well as RTC 'trapped' – this stems from the perception that many RTC 'wash downs' turn out, to be RTC 'trapped'.

There were issues highlighted around increasing the road risk, and loan working practises, as well as the moral obligation that some staff may experience if they were first on the scene.

Conclusion

Strongly supported by the public, and supported by staff, however some staff raised concerns about 'lone working'; and the added pressure and responsibilities on individuals when arriving first at an incident.

Objective 6 We will use energy more efficiently at our buildings

Summary

Staff would like to see the investment in stations, and are supportive of this proposal. They agree that reducing energy and water consumption is important.

The public are supportive, but many comments mentioned that it would be hard to spend money on improvements to buildings if the service were possibly going to be making redundancies.

Conclusion

Supported by all.

Objective 7 Improving 'Operational Diversity' to help reduce the different risks people face in the community

Summary

Staff and the public have been supportive of this objective – some members of the public have related this information to knowing our client base. There were many positive comments about the service proactively targeting and making life saver for vulnerable groups and individuals.

Staff have concerns around the collection of data, as many would not be comfortable collecting this, and asking some of the personal questions. Some ideas have been proposed to collect this data in other ways, other than face-to-face – e.g. using the after the incident survey.

There has been some confusion around the wording of the objective. Some staff and members of the public are not entirely clear about what the Service is proposing, and assumed that the service was already collating the data. Some members of staff and the public suggested that we should be focusing on peoples circumstances and lifestyles, rather than the type of incidents that they have.

Both staff and the public raised concerns about data sharing and how the data is stored. The public believe that we should be sharing data with partners and using the information currently collated by volunteer organisations and other public services to inform our decisions. They did not suggest that the Service starts something from scratch, when most the information will be

available elsewhere.

Conclusion

Supported and seen as a positive step forward by the public. Staff are generally supportive, but have concerns about face to face collection of data. We have removed the text referring to 'new software'. The objective wording has also changed to reflect that we will try to better understand the risks that people face because of their lifestyle and circumstances, and not because of the effect the incident itself.