

**Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

**Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee**

**Item**

**26 February 2010**

**The change in duty system at Havant Fire Station from day-crewing to continuously-crewing**

**Report of the Chief Officer**

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**1 Summary**

1.1 The change of duty system at Havant fire station from day crewing to continuously crewing in October 2008 has already resulted in some significant improvements. (October 2007 to September 2008). Performance data shows that in the first year of operation (October 2008 to September 2009):

- Home fire safety visits have increased by 500% from 130 to 655
- Response times to incidents have improved by 59%.

1.2 Increase in secondary arson fires October 2008 / September 2009 are due in the main to an increase in grass and car fires. Joint working will see a reduction in secondary arson in the coming months.

1.3 Feedback from the personnel at Havant shows they have embraced the change fully. This has resulted in a more family friendly working pattern, high morale and increased productivity over a range of activities including Workplace Assessments, home fire safety visits and environmental visual audits.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 That the improvements in service delivery resulting from the change in crewing arrangements at Havant fire station since October 2008 be noted.

**3 Introduction and Background**

3.1 The change in crewing arrangements at Havant fire station was a corporate objective in the 2006-09 Integrated Risk Management Plan. The change was implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008.

3.2 A project team comprising all key stakeholders was formed to manage the

change of all three day crewed stations (Winchester, Andover and Havant) to the continuously crewed duty system. Havant was the last of this trio to change over. This would ensure the stations were crewed full time as opposed to being crewed by wholetime duty system firefighters during weekdays with back up from retained duty system fire-fighters at evenings and weekends.

3.3 The project board was tasked with ensuring the production and implementation of a plan covering premises, training implications, human resources and finances. There were expectations of improved performance in a range of key areas including improved response times, more home fire safety visits and environmental visual audits, and generally more community fire safety activities.

3.4 This report summarises the improvements achieved in the first year of operation compared with the last year at Havant as day crewed.

#### 4 Outcomes

4.1 The change in duty system – with personnel now on active duty at nights and weekends – has provided greater opportunity to engage in community safety activities / initiatives. The best example being the increase in home fire safety visits from 130 in 2008 to 655 in 2009 – an increase of 500%.

4.2 Additional activities now undertaken by crews also include:

- Environmental visual audit training to all personnel to reduce arson
- Youth engagement activities
- Working closely in partnership with vulnerable groups, disabled and autistic
- Road safety activities

4.3 The change from day crewing to continuous crewing, and the demand for the station to attend primary and secondary arson, has increased by 22% and 9% respectively. (table attached)

	1 October 2007 – 30 September 2008	1 October 2008 – 30 September 2009	Difference %
Primary	57	73	22%
Secondary	139	153	9%

(Source: Community Risk Intelligence – Command & Control)

	Dwelling	Vehicle	School	Other	Grass	Derelict Vehicle	Derelict Building	Outdoor Structure	Refuse
2007/2008	3	39	0	14	35	12	1	2	90
2008/2009	5	55	0	13	61	5	0	6	81

(Source: Community Risk Intelligence)

- 4.4 An increase in secondary arson fires October 2008 / September 2009 is mainly due to an increase in grass and car fires.

A formal operation – “Operation Stout” – ran between Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Group Manager Havant / Arson Task Force and Community Risk Intelligence in conjunction with both Hampshire and West Sussex Constabularies. This involved the history of the current pattern, the likely vehicles to be targeted and significant intelligence involvement relating to the suspects.

- 4.5 A key part in the process has been partnership working. A particular strength has been the single points of contact between police and the fire service that made the sharing of information that much easier. At the time of this report the vehicle fires for the Havant Group have significantly reduced since the start of the operation. With suspects being arrested in October 2009, we anticipate a reduction in secondary arson in the coming months.

The overall demand for the station to attend emergency calls has increased by 2%:

- Oct 2007– Sept 2008 = 632
- Oct 2008– Sept 2009 = 642

- 4.6 It is possible that the Incident Recording System has had an impact on the figures above by re-categorising some incidents that would previously have been recorded using the old FDR3 secondary fire reporting system. The Incident Recording System now requires that on all occasions the form is required to be completed in full, and this more robust reporting may be responsible for the apparent rise in calls.

- 4.7 It is recognised that the factors affecting emergency call rates are wide and varied, however, it is also acknowledged that the additional community safety and intervention activities that the station personnel are involved in can only have a positive influence on forthcoming reductions.

## **5 Staffing improvements**

- 5.1 Firefighters at Havant were asked to comment on the change on year one and the following two replies were typical. "The day crewing system was onerous on staff and their families." "Although it attracted an enhanced payment, personnel were restricted to remaining within four minutes of the station for sometimes five days at a time". The shift system gives ex-Havant day crewed staff more stable working hours which has enhanced their family life, despite a reduction in their earnings. It is also acknowledged that the continuous crewing system is also compliant with the Working Time Directive.
- 5.2 The change in duty system enables supervisory managers to better organise training and community safety events. This is reflected by the fact they have a more stable shift working routine and workforce. It means crews are available to arrange home fire safety visits in the evenings and weekends and allow for a more joined up approach with partners to deliver community safety approach in Havant.
- 5.3 The four-watch duty system means that each firefighter is likely to attend fewer incidents. This can result firefighters taking longer to complete some aspects of their development programme. This is a problem common to the four-watch system and becomes a particular issue on stations with comparably lower numbers of emergency calls.
- 5.4 The day crewing system attracted a number of benefits to those working that style of shift. These included: Service housing/rent and mortgage allowance, retained contracted salary with turnout fees resulting in personnel receiving payments in addition to their basic salary. These payments were in recognition of the system they worked and the restrictions imposed upon them. When the station changed to continuous crewing, these additional benefits ceased. To compensate for this the Service made a one off transitional payment of £10,000 to each individual affected, and provided additional travel costs for one year where these increased.
- 5.5 There were some issues in relation to the additional training required for Copnor staff on the multi role vehicle and large animal rescues, even though a minimum of six months' notice was given to staff at Copnor prior to closing. This was due to a variety of factors including not identifying early on who was transferring to Havant, a lack of available driver training places, and the short time scales available in which to train staff.
- 5.6 It has taken approximately a further 12 months since Havant became continuously crewed for all staff to be trained in the multi role vehicle and large animal rescues.
- 5.7 Eighteen fire-fighters were transferred to Havant from Copnor fire station in October 2008. Although initially concerned about the move, most appear to

have settled in quickly to create effective and professional watches – describing themselves as being positive, motivated and Havant fire station as a good place to work.

- 5.8 The change in duty system has had an impact on the retained duty system (RDS) section at Havant. Under the former arrangements the RDS represented 50% of the workforce. They would 'mix-crew' appliances with the wholetime personnel. This in turn helped to build a very close working relationship between the retained and wholetime firefighters. We were concerned about this, but it is pleasing to report that good relationships have been maintained and, one year on, there is good interactivity with positive impacts on training and team working.

## **6 Contribution to Corporate Aims and Objectives**

- 6.1 This review of the change in duty system at Havant fire station from day crewing to continuously crewing completes objective RE1 from our 2006/09 IRMP.

## **7 Resource Implications**

### **7.1 Human Resources**

The station's establishment was increased from 13 operational personnel to 32 to accommodate the new shift system. This resulted in an establishment of four watches of eight personnel.

- 7.1.1 The increase in Havant's establishment was resourced by the closure of Copnor and re-deployment of 18 personnel and two whole time trainees from training school, and one retirement from Havant.

### **7.2 Physical Resources**

The station was refurbished to accommodate the needs of a continuously crewed duty system. The alterations were discussed in detail with the personnel. This was important in the smooth transition to the new system. The firefighters continued to operate successfully from the site despite the significant disruption to the day to day running of the station caused by the building works.

### **7.3 Financial Implications**

- 7.3.1 The building works cost £493, 696.

- 7.3.2 The planned cost of running Havant Fire Station in 2008/09 was £915,291.03. The actual cost was **£943,066.23**

- 7.3.3 The planned cost of running Havant Fire Station in the first six months of the

current financial year 2009/10 is £650,459.51. The actual cost to end of September 2009 is: **£637,091.11**

7.3.4 This covered factors such as:

- an increase in the cost of establishment
- overtime
- allowances
- National Insurance
- pensions
- transitional allowances made to former day crewing staff as one off payments
- travel allowances

7.3.5 Havant's wholetime establishment increased from 12 to 32 personnel which resulted in an increase in station salary costs of 20 posts. The closure of Copnor resulted in an overall decrease in Service salary costs.

## **8 People Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 This assessment was completed by the Project Manager. A positive outcome from this process was enhanced female and male shower facilities, ensuring that the station could support the needs of a wide variety of personnel.
- 8.2 The proposals within this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

### **Background Information (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)**

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

None

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.