

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2010 to 2013

Summary of feedback from consultation

Objective 1 New risk based response standards

Summary

The public are supportive of, and agree with the proposed new response standards. They said that it is important for the public to know how long it will take an appliance to get to an incident – this makes it easier for them to cope at the incident, as they know when the fire and rescue service (FRS) will be arriving.

Staff have concerns that the service are changing the response standards so it can meet its targets more easily. There are many comments about the Service 'massaging' the figures and changing response times so that it meets its targets. They also worry that with the changes in response times – there could be incidents when a small fires vehicle, drives on blue lights past another closer station to deal with small incidents, when the closer station could respond to that incident quicker.

Retained firefighters have also expressed concerns that a wholetime appliance may come onto retained station grounds to non-critical incidents, thus reducing the amount of calls a retained station could respond to.

The majority of staff believe that eight minutes is the correct amount of time to attend a critical incident – however staff views varied over the attendance times for non-critical incidents. Some staff opinions were that these incidents were not life threatening and shouldn't be responded to on blue lights, whilst other felt that all incidents should be critical incidents with a blue light response within eight minutes. There were also many comments from staff and the unions about setting attendances times for the second, third, fourth pump etc in attendance at an incident, this is something that they would like the service to do.

Staff in general accepted the classification of incidents into each of the three categories (see below), with the exception of road traffic collisions (RTC) wash downs. Staff feel that these should be classified as a critical incident, often a call comes in from another emergency service requesting a fire service attendance at an 'RTC wash down' – when in fact there have been persons trapped in a vehicle.

Many members of the public and staff questioned why the Service was attending 'other incidents'

Conclusion

The public would like to know how long it will take the FRS to be in attendance at an incident.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) staff have concerns that the new response standards are being introduced so that the service can achieve its targets, and are not convinced that these new standards will improve the response times to incidents. Staff and the unions would like to see standards in place for each pump attending in the pre determined attendance (PDA) for each incident.

Staff feel strongly that RTC wash downs should be upgraded into the 'critical incident' category.

Objective 2 Making best use of our firefighters

Summary

This objective is linked to objectives 3 and 5. Please consider feedback for this objective, when considering the feedback for objectives 3 and 5.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and it's members are opposed to the removal of any front line appliances into the strategic reserve.

Many members of staff have questioned why the strategic reserve would only operate between 10am and 10pm, if implemented they thought it should not be limited to 10am to 10pm.

Southampton / Redbridge – staff are opposed to the introduction of the strategic reserve in Southampton because they feel it will reduce the quality of service. Currently the first response vehicle (FRV) is available to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is dual crewed with the aerial ladder platform (ALP). The proposal suggests the new small fires vehicle (SFV) will operate between 10am and 10pm and be crewed by a pump coming off the run in Southampton and placed into the strategic reserve – thus reducing cover across the city by one pump. Staff at Redbridge wish to see the current crewing arrangements remain in place, so that the SFV and ALP are jointly crewed, although not all staff across the service believe that the SFV and ALP be dual crewed. Some members of staff commented whether Redbridge would be the best location for the SFV – suggesting the SFV be located more centrally.

Rushmoor – staff are strongly opposed to the removal of the second pump into the strategic reserve, they have concerns around the resilience in the north east of the county with only one wholetime appliance being backed up by retained stations, that cannot guarantee availability 100% of the time. The nearest wholetime appliance is Basingstoke 22 miles away – whose second pump is also proposed to go into the strategic reserve. Staff at Rushmoor have identified that there is a potential increase in costs of approximately £100,000 per annum should the second wholetime pump be placed into the strategic reserve for training. This is due to the increased cost of stand-by moves for the retained stations in the area. Environmental concerns were also raised by staff; Rushmoor is the station furthest away from all the other wholetime stations, so travelling distances to cover another station would be large – this would have a greater impact on the environment, as well as reducing the time available for training.

Basingstoke – all feedback received about Basingstoke has been against the removal of the second wholetime pump into the strategic reserve. Staff have concerns about the amount of cover that will be left in Basingstoke and the surrounding retained stations if the second pump is placed into the strategic reserve. There have been many options put forward as alternatives, so that the SFV and mobile community contact point (MCCP) could still operate in the town without the need for the strategic reserve. These include –
 crewing the SFV and ALP in the way that is currently used at Redbridge Hill fire station.
 crewing the MCCP with firefighters from the personnel reserve (in future the staff bank).
 crewing the SFV with retained firefighters.

Group, station and watch managers have also indicated that they felt they could manage the introduction of the SFV and increased community safety work better locally on their stations, instead of the introduction of the strategic reserve.

Conclusion

While our staff have commented positively on the benefits of having small fires vehicles to attend smaller incidents, some oppose what they perceive is the removal of front line appliances from the four locations where the strategic reserve will operate.

The freeing-up of staff to be able to engage with the public and deliver community safety activities has been generally welcomed.

Objective 3 Tackling small fires in a better way

Summary

This objective is linked to objective 2 – please also consider the feedback on objective 2 for this objective.

Staff and the unions agree that the introduction of a small fires vehicle in locations across the county is a good idea – but they don't want them introduced at what they perceive is at the expense of a front line fire appliance. Many members of staff and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have suggested that the three proposed SFV could be crewed more effectively by using the personnel reserve and not the removal of firefighters and appliances into the strategic reserve.

Staff and the FBU stated their concerns about the increased road risks, as the travelling distance under blue lights will increase if the SFV is responding to incidents across more than one station ground. They are worried about the increased affect on the environment the SFV might have by driving further to incidents, and in increasing the attendance time, the fire would potentially burn for longer.

The retained firefighters are concerned about a possible reduction in calls if a SFV from a wholetime station attends secondary fires on their fire ground and the possible staff retention issues this may have. Retained duty system (RDS) staff have also said that they would see the benefits of having a SFV or using the land rovers currently at RDS stations to attend small fires and other non-critical incidents on their station grounds. They would encourage the exploration of using Land Rovers to attend non-critical incidents.

Southampton / Redbridge – staff are supportive of the SFV, but only if it is crewed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and not at the expense of placing a wholetime pump from the city into the strategic reserve.

Basingstoke – crews support the introduction of a SFV, but do not want this at the expense of a wholetime pump.

Staff have also commented that the SFV could also be used for community engagement, when it is not responding to incidents – many staff suggested doing this instead of buying the MCCPs.

Conclusion

The small fires vehicle concept is widely supported, however, staff have concerns about how these vehicles should be crewed.

Objective 4 Getting to incidents in rural areas faster

Summary

Both the public and staff were divided on whether people living in rural areas should receive the same attendance time to incidents as people living in urban areas. Some members of the public / staff accepted that because they live in rural areas, they will receive a slower response to an incident compared to an incident in an urban area. All staff and members of the public felt that it is right that the service looks at ways to getting to incidents in rural areas faster. Our staff explained that they have many financial, logistical and health and safety fears about this proposal, which include: -

The cost of the four vehicles will be very expensive

The increased road risk with four HFRS vehicles on blue lights converging on the same point to attend an incident, when currently there is only one. This is on top of the stop put on the special equipment unit (SEU) self mobilising, because it's an increased road risk.

The security of vehicles – at incidents and at firefighters home / place of work

Parking at incidents / home / work

The potential increase in carbon emissions and effect on the environment of four vehicles responding to an incident instead of one.

There will be less flexibility for RDS firefighters

There will be logistical problems in swapping the vehicles between firefighters

The logistics of everyone getting a turn

There are potential training issues – will everyone be a crew manager or be able to act up?

How does this affect non-competent firefighters and the recruitment of retained firefighters

This proposal would not be suitable for some firefighters that work a trade and need their own vehicle e.g. plumber

The logistical and health and safety issues associated if one of the vehicles doesn't turn up to incident – alerter failure / crash on the way / personal emergency.

The moral pressure put on a firefighter who is the first on the scene of a persons reported fire, and cannot safely go into the building until support arrives.

Staff and the unions have expressed concerns that this is about meeting attendance targets and not improving the service. Staff are concerned that the 'clock will stop' when the first resource arrives at the incident. They have argued that if the proposal (which they do not support is accepted) the 'clock should stop' when all four vehicles are in attendance.

Staff believe that there are things that can be done at local level to improve the turn out times for RDS stations . For example retained firefighters at Lyndhurst can get stuck in the one way traffic system when responding to the alerter and driving to the station, if the traffic lights were changed so that the crews could get through the traffic lights more efficiently, the turn out times for Lyndhurst would improve.

Our staff have suggested many alternatives to the proposed idea, they include increasing rural community safety work, and putting more money aside for home fire safety visits in rural areas. The Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) have suggested sending first responders to incidents (more detail can be seen in the attached paper).

Conclusion

Staff agree that the service should look at ways to improve attendance times to incidents in rural areas, however, they have serious concerns with the proposed method, and do not support it.

Objective 5 Increasing our contact with the public

Summary

This objective is linked to objective 2 – please also consider the feedback on objective 2 for this objective.

Our partners and stakeholders welcome the idea of the mobile community contact points (MCCPs) and have spoken positively of them, and suggest sharing the resource.

The public, unions and staff agree that engaging with our local communities is a key prevention activity, and support increasing our contact with the community. Concern is expressed about the cost of the (MCCPs) and whether they should be purchased in the

current economic climate. There are concerns from staff that the public do not approach a corporate type vehicle in the same way they would a fire appliance. Staff have suggested the M CCP is trialled before purchasing any further M CCP.

Staff have suggested many ways in which the service can engage with our local communities without the need for these mobile community contact point. These include –

Using current resources (vehicles and staff) to carry out the community engagement work.
Using the SFV with a community liaison officer to carry out community engagement work.
Using a fire appliance to visit doctors surgeries, community centres, libraries, supermarkets etc
Using the schools unit when it's not being used.

Conclusion

Strong support for increased community engagement. However, there is strong opposition to the cost of the mobile community contact points.

Objective 6 **Creating a dedicated fire investigation service**

Summary

We have received little feedback on this proposal. In the feedback we have received, staff have been supportive – but have said they want the proposal to benefit HFRS as much as our partner FRS's in the region. Our partners have also shown their support.

Conclusion

Supported by all but viewed as business as usual

Objective 7 **Reviewing our staff numbers**

Summary

All staff believe that equal scrutiny should be given to all staff working for the Service, however firefighters believe that front line operational jobs should be the last to be reviewed. Staff have questioned what the right staffing numbers are in relation to firefighters and headquarters departments.

The RFU are concerned about the salary scheme mentioned for RDS staff. They have been told it is not a foregone conclusion – but in the consultation document it reads like the decision has been already made. The FBU also feels this will be unpopular with RDS firefighters. Staff feel that the salary scheme will not help with RDS recruitment and have a negative effect on current RDS retention.

The FBU strongly oppose cuts to front line operational staff. Staff are concerned that reducing the number of front line firefighters would affect firefighter safety and reduce the high quality service the people of Hampshire currently receive.

Conclusion

Staff want more information on what is the 'right number of staff', this is causing concerns over job losses and redundancies.

Distributed with this document

FBU response to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2010 to 2013 consultation

RFU response to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2010 to 2013 consultation

RFU proposal for objective 4

GM Walters Rushmoor feedback

GM Carr Southampton feedback

GM Norgate Basingstoke feedback