



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

22 FEBRUARY 2019

EMERGENCY RESPONSE REVIEW UPDATE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER – SERVICE DELIVERY

Purpose of the report

1. This report provides members with an update on changes to the Emergency Response (ER) arrangements which are set to be trialled from 1 April 2019, following the ER Review and the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) consultation carried out in 2018/19.

Background

2. Following the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) planning day on 10 May 2018, members were informed that the options generated by the ER Review would be presented to staff as part of a wider consultation exercise and that their comments and concerns would be captured and considered. This consultation took place at two Leadership Forums in November 2018 and during a round of station visits by Service Leadership Team (SLT) members. This provided an opportunity for staff to feed in their own ideas on additional or alternative efficiency saving options.
3. In addition, the proposed changes to the Service's ER provision were included in the IRMP public consultation which ran from November 2018 to February 2019. The results of the consultation are set out in a separate report (item 7 on today's agenda). Within a separate paper on the agenda for today's meeting (item 10), members were asked to agree a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which shows a balanced budget for 2019/20 and a shortfall in funding of £0.460m in 2020/21 rising to £1.531m in 2022/23. It is therefore essential that work continues through the ER Review to identify savings options to assist in balancing the budget in future years.

Additional Ideas for Efficiency Saving

4. Previous ER Reviews generated suggestions for efficiency savings by staff and from these, 2 were identified to be trialled during 2018/19:
 - 4 Whole Time (WT) staff crew the fire appliance instead of 5 and 2 WT staff crew the Special Rescue Unit (SRU). This would ensure the Type B Swiftwater Rescue capability would remain immediately available utilising the staff on duty at Bishop Auckland;
 - Reduce the pool of staff used to crew the Day Crewing Plus (DC+) stations at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe from 14 to 13.

2018/19 Emergency Response Review Trials

Crewing at Bishop Auckland Fire Station

5. Following consultation with the representative bodies and staff, the Service agreed to trial this alternative crewing option at Bishop Auckland from 1 April 2018 to identify any issues and capture lessons learned from this alternative staffing model. For the purposes of the trial the staffing at Bishop Auckland was incrementally reduced from 36 (9 per shift) to 32 (8 per shift) and if successful, the staffing would reduce further to 28 (7 per shift) from 1 April 2019. This would realise a total saving of 8 WT posts from 2019/20 onwards.
6. The total saving of £280,000 per annum from this option is less than the original option identified in the 2017 ER Review however, additional savings were also suggested involving staffing arrangements at the Service's 2 DC+ stations.
7. Following a successful ongoing trial and supportive feedback from the IRMP consultation, the recommendation is to embed this new way of working permanently from 1 April 2019.

Crewing at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe

8. There are 14 staff allocated to each of the DC+ stations at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe. This allows a self-rostering system that ensures 5 DC+ staff are available every day to crew the appliances at each station. The suggestion put forward from staff, including those working at the DC+ stations, was that this pool could be reduced to 13 for each station with no negative impact on cover or increase in the total number of shifts worked by the DC+ staff. This is due to the contingency built in to the current DC+ system for sickness, training, etc.
9. The retirement profile at both DC+ stations allowed for the pool at each station to be reduced to 13 by the end of Summer 2018 through natural wastage. The Service therefore decided to conduct a trial with the DC+ shift system operating with 13 staff from the end of Summer 2018 until 31 March 2019. The revised staffing arrangements produce an annual saving of £110,000.
10. Consultation has taken place with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and whilst they have raised concerns as both options will result in a reduction of staffing, they are aware of the need to address the current MTFP deficit.
11. The total savings to be realised from both trials, if fully implemented on 1 April 2019, would be £390,000 per annum. Although this is less than the saving estimated in the original ER review option, the Service feels, when balanced against the reduced training requirements for the RDS staff, the ability to maintain an effective Swiftwater Rescue capability and to promote continued staff engagement in the efficiency savings process, these options should be implemented from 1 April 2019. These savings have been incorporated into the 2019/20 budget and MTFP presented to members today.

2019/20 Emergency Response Trials

12. The Service's IRMP public consultation included 3 alternative options in relation to the removal of the DC+ shift system at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe. The Service's preferred option was number 3 which saw the introduction of a Day Crewing (DC) only shift system at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe along with the movement of Durham's second WT appliance from Durham to Spennymoor fire station which would leave the allocation of resources as:
 - Durham – 1 x WT appliance (5 riders) / 1 x RDS appliance;
 - Spennymoor – 1 x WT appliance (5 riders) / 1 x RDS appliance.

13. When modelled, based on the last 3 years of incident data, these proposed changes would see an overall improvement of the Service's Response Standards to life risk incidents as well as releasing efficiency savings to help meet the projected MTFP budget deficit.
14. Although ongoing work to find a mutually acceptable system to replace DC+ has continued with both the FBU and DC+ staff, as of the date of writing this report, no acceptable alternative shift system to that proposed by the Service has been identified.
15. Consultation and negotiations will continue with these stakeholders however, it is the Service's recommendation that a trial of the DC system, as outlined in the IRMP consultation, be implemented at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe on 1 April 2019 which will protect the CFA from continuing to operate a DC+ system that has been legally ruled as being non-compliant with the Working Time Directive.
16. Following feedback from the public, staff and local elected members during the IRMP consultation period, the Service has decided to trial a staffing system similar to the successful trial at Bishop Auckland that would see Durham fire station staffed with 6 WT firefighters instead of the proposed 5, with them operating a 4 and 2 system:
 - 1 x WT appliance (4 riders);
 - 1 x Targeted Response Vehicle - TRV (2 riders);
 - Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) – dual crewed with staff from the TRV.

Conclusion

17. This alternative staffing system would see a reduction in the projected annual efficiency savings as Durham would be riding with 6 staff and not 5 but the Service considers that it will provide a more effective use of resources based on the demand and risk profiles of Durham station area as well as improving the response and availability of the ALP based at Durham.
18. The Service will continue to work with staff and their representative bodies to ensure these changes and trials are implemented with the least disruption possible. We will continue to review the ER capability to ensure resources are allocated to risk, we provide the most effective and efficient Fire and Rescue Service and we continue to work towards our vision of *Safest People, Safest Places*.

Recommendations

19. Members are asked to:

- (a) **agree** to the permanent introduction of the revised staffing system of 4 and 2 at Bishop Auckland and reduction of the Day Crewing plus staffing pool from 14 to 13 at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe from 1 April 2019.
- (b) **agree** to the 2019/20 Emergency Response Review trials of:
 - a. Introducing a Day Crewing only shift system at Seaham and Newton Aycliffe from 1 April 2019;
 - b. Moving the second Whole Time Durham appliance to Spennymoor from 1 April 2019;
 - c. Operating a 4 and 2 staffing system at Durham.
- (c) **receive** further reports on the progress of the Emergency Response review options.

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