

Rescue Tender Performance Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Deputy Chief Fire Officer Rod Hammerton on 01743 260204 or Area Manager John Das Gupta on 01743 260284.

1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an update on the impact to the public of Shropshire of changing the crewing of the Rescue Tender (RT) at Wellington Fire and Rescue Station from “primary” to “switch” crewed.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Support the Service recommendation to continue with the current crewing arrangement for the Rescue Tender.

3 Background

Following the 2010 Public Value consultation, the removal of primary crewing for the RT was identified as a means to assist in meeting the predicted budget cuts, which faced the Authority over the period 2011 to 2015.

This was the most significant change within the Public Value programme, having potentially the greatest impact on public safety within Shropshire. As a result, the Fire Authority decided to introduce these proposals in the last year of the programme, 2014/15.

The managed reduction in staffing levels throughout this period, allowed the cessation of primary crewing of the RT to commence in January 2014. This entailed a staffing reduction of 2 firefighters per watch, resulting in watch strength decreasing from 10 to 8, totalling a reduction of 8 staff across the wholetime establishment.

4 Summary

Between 2 January and 31 August 2014 the RT has been mobilised to 164 incidents to act as a specialist support to crews already in attendance. The average time taken for the RT to attend incidents has been 27 minutes, across the County area. On 59 occasions, dedicated specialist equipment, carried on the RT, was used to supplement equipment already deployed, following the initial attendance of local crews.

To increase the availability of the RT, the Wellington pump is ring fenced. As such, it is not used for relief or as a Firefighter Assist and Safety Team (FAST). This has had the potential to increase the workload of other stations, as they are now required to cover those occasions when Wellington would have been used. The evidence has shown that the impact on other stations and crews has been negligible, in that between 2 January and 31 August there have been no occasions where other crews have been deployed on relief duties, when the RT has been requested.

On two occasions wholtime pumps have been mobilised on FAST duties, as opposed to mobilising Wellington. Again, this should be considered negligible impact.

On six occasions, involving a road traffic collision, the Wellington appliance has had to return to the station to pick up the RT. This resulted in a mobilising delay of less than ten minutes. On five of those occasions the RT did not make an attendance, as the extrication had been successfully dealt with by local crews, utilising equipment carried on all fire appliances. On one of these occasions the RT arrived, however the specialist equipment carried was not required.

As part of business continuity planning a scenario was considered where Wellington might be committed to a protracted incident, and a request for the RT is made. The response to such an event would be to mobilise a replacement crew to relieve Wellington from the incident, thereby freeing them up to return to their station to collect the RT, before proceeding to the incident. The potential impact on such an occasions could be a 20 minute delay in RT mobilisation.

An event of this nature has not been experienced between 2 January and 31 August, and would suggest that the likelihood of such an event taking place is very low. This risk is further mitigated following the equipment upgrade carried out over the past 12 months, enhancing RTC equipment on pumping appliances. This has provided all crews with an increased capability to extricate people trapped in vehicles or machinery.

5 Conclusions

In terms of the data gathered during the period, there has been negligible impact on the public. The programmed upgrading of rescue equipment on fire appliance carried out over the past 12 months has increased the Service's capability to deal effectively with a high proportion of rescues attended. There is a flexible mobilising policy in place, which allows the officer in charge of Wellington to determine what resources attend, dependent upon the information received.

6 Financial Implications

The end to permanent crewing of the RT has realised a financial saving of 8 operational posts. The watch establishment at Wellington has been reduced from 10 personnel to 8, which has realised saving within the revenue budget of £297,000.

7 Legal Comment

There are no legal issues emanating from this report

8 Initial Impact Assessment

As this is an update report it does not require an initial impact assessment.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.