

## Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring October to December 2014

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Chief Fire Officer John Redmond on 01743 260201 or John Das-Gupta, Area Manager Service Delivery, on 01743 260284.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding the ongoing performance and management in terms of the availability of wholetime and Retained Duty System (RDS) appliances in Shropshire.

### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

### 3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has 23 fire stations, 19 of which are solely crewed by RDS staff, and a further 3 stations have both a wholetime and RDS complement. Only Telford Central Fire Station is solely crewed by wholetime firefighters.

### 4 Wholetime Availability Update

Whilst there is no graphical illustration regarding the availability of the wholetime appliances, officers can confirm that strike action and action short of strike continued to have an impact during the reporting period.

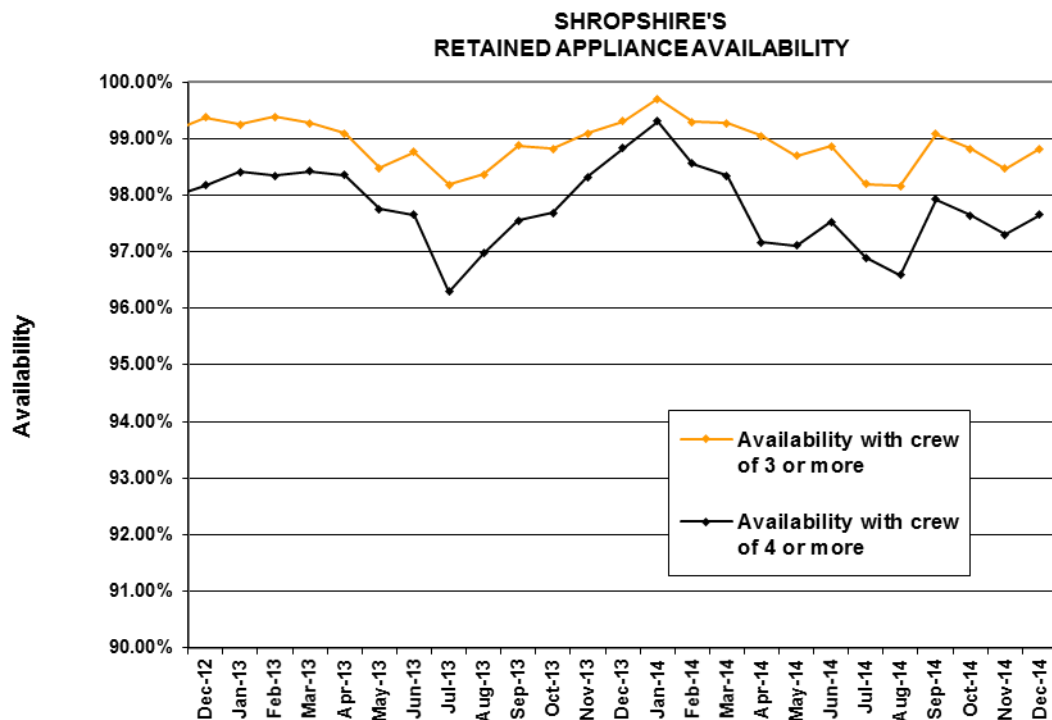
Between 1 October and 31 December 2014, appliance availability totalled 93.78%. This was a direct result of 5 x 24 hour strike periods during November and December.

Action short of strike, introduced on 21 July 2014, has resulted in the Telford second appliance being unavailable across 10 shifts, totalling 114 hours. On these occasions the Service has operated with four wholetime appliances. On 9 occasions the Service have been unable to deploy a wholetime appliance to Tweedale overnight.

### Retained Availability

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 97% (see Graph 1 overleaf). This graph shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 16 are available for between 97% and 100% of the time, which is an outstanding level of performance. The Fire Authority’s target is, however, always for 100% availability for all of its fire engines.

Night-time cover remains at almost 100% availability between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00 am across all stations. The exception to this is the occasional shortfall with the ‘second’ fire engine at Oswestry, which, whilst not ideal, is tolerated, as the remaining ‘primary’ fire engine remains available 100% of the time during these hours. Please see the appendix to the report for maintenance of between 70% and 80% performance since May 2014.



Graph 1 – Retained Duty System Crew Availability

## 5 Performance

Graph 1 reveals an overall upward trend in availability during 2013 until January 2014. Performance has seen a gradual decline since then to just below 98%. Notably, Albrighton and Minsterley Fire Stations, where recruitment has proved challenging in recent years, have been largely responsible for the decline in performance. Conversely, Much Wenlock and Cleobury Mortimer, who have consistently experienced similar recruitment difficulties, have each significantly improved performance to over 96%.

To improve on overall level of performance, the Service is focusing attention on those fire engines / stations that are currently failing to meet the Service average. An outline of the factors affecting availability and the actions to improve performance is provided below.

## **6 Factors Influencing Availability**

In order to understand better the factors affecting availability the Service has recently completed an RDS survey. Feedback has been analysed and the results of such will enable officers to identify progress subsequent to the review conducted in 2006.

## **7 Background Station Specific Performance**

There are currently six fire stations, whose performance during this quarter falls below the mean of 97% to 100% achieved by the remaining stations. An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report. This includes the Oswestry second appliance, Albrighton, Minsterley, Cleobury Mortimer, Much Wenlock and Newport, with all but Albrighton and Minsterley at 80.4% and 90.4% respectively, currently achieving over 96%. Availability will continue to be closely monitored over the next quarter and Newport data will be added to the appendix in the event of a continued reduction in performance.

## **8 Recruitment Campaign**

The first course of 2015 has a full complement of recruits, (10) and key stations, such as Oswestry, Cleobury Mortimer, and Tweedale are represented.

Positive action taster days have been scheduled for the next three years, an initiative driven by our Equality and Diversity Team and Steering group. Based on the results of similar events during 2014 where a significant number of women have positively engaged with the service, we anticipate a positive response. The last course of 2014 included two female firefighters and the first course of 2015, currently underway, also has a female candidate, who is assigned to one of our priority stations.

All aspects of the recruitment campaign, including the Service's decision to venture into social networking as a method of engagement, have been hugely successful. Similar recruitment tactics will, therefore, be employed in the future along with engagement with local employers and seeking support from local councilors and elected Members to raise the profile of "on call" teams.

## **9 Retained Support Officer (RSO) Cover Quarter 2**

Table 1 below shows those fire stations that have required the highest level of support (for reasons detailed earlier in this report) during 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15. These stations accounted for **85.4%** of all RSO cover during 2012/13 and **85.3%** during 2013/14.

The deployment of RSOs during the third quarter of 2014/15 has been significant in supporting performance at Albrighton, Cleobury Mortimer and Minsterley in particular.

The table below accounts for **91%** of all RSO activity during that period. The figures support other indicators relating to our priority recruitment areas.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15				
Stations	Total	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Albrighton	472.00	276.50	197.00	174.50	318.00		
Bishop's Castle					39.00		
Bridgnorth		203.25	77.50	52.00			
Cleobury Mortimer	565.25	902.50	89.00	69.00	149.25		
Craven Arms					46.00		
Ludlow	419.70	156.25	39.75	24.50			
Market Drayton	240.75	88.50	20.75	5.00			
Minsterley	371.50	449.25	395.75	280.00	345.75		
Much Wenlock	194.75	226.25	52.00	17.25			
Oswestry 16 (P4)	532.75	460.00	35.00	53.00	72.50		
Wellington					39.25		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,796.70</b>	<b>2,762.25</b>	<b>906.75</b>	<b>675.25</b>	<b>1,009.75</b>		
<b>Total RSO hours</b>	<b>3,275.95</b>	<b>3,239.75</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>847.50</b>	<b>1103.75</b>		

**Table 1 – Retained Support Officer Cover**

## 10 Retained Availability System

The Service has initiated work to develop an option for cover outside the full and three-quarter cover levels that operate at present. The intention is to provide more flexibility for people, who are available in areas where the Service struggles to provide cover at certain times. The presentation to the Senior Management Team in March included a proposal to set up a working group comprised of key stakeholders to drive such initiatives following the recent review. To support increased flexibility, Area Command are working to introduce an electronic availability system, which allows for remote, web-based access.

The Information and Communications Technology Department is currently engaged in a programme to refine the application at all RDS stations following initial roll out.

A progress report will be provided to the Committee at its meeting in July 2015.

## **11 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **12 Legal Comment**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **13 Initial Impact Assessment**

This report contains merely statements of fact / historical data. An Initial Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

## **14 Appendix**

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

## **15 Background Papers**

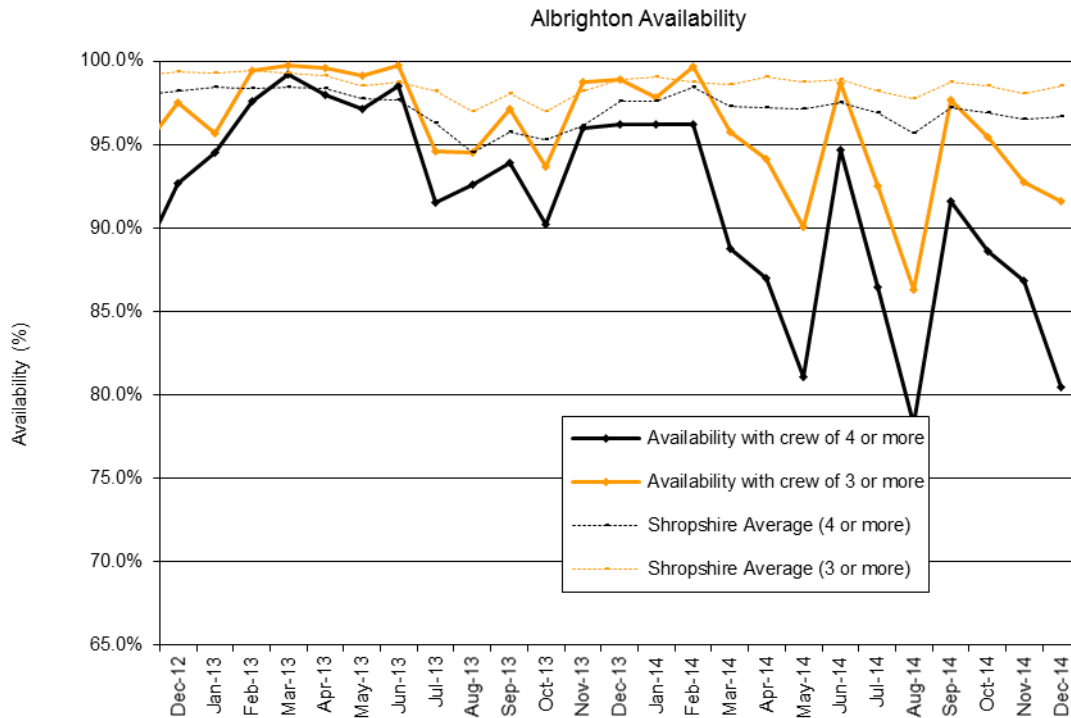
A quarterly RDS performance review summary is presented to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. Previous reports can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-service/fra/meetings>

## Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

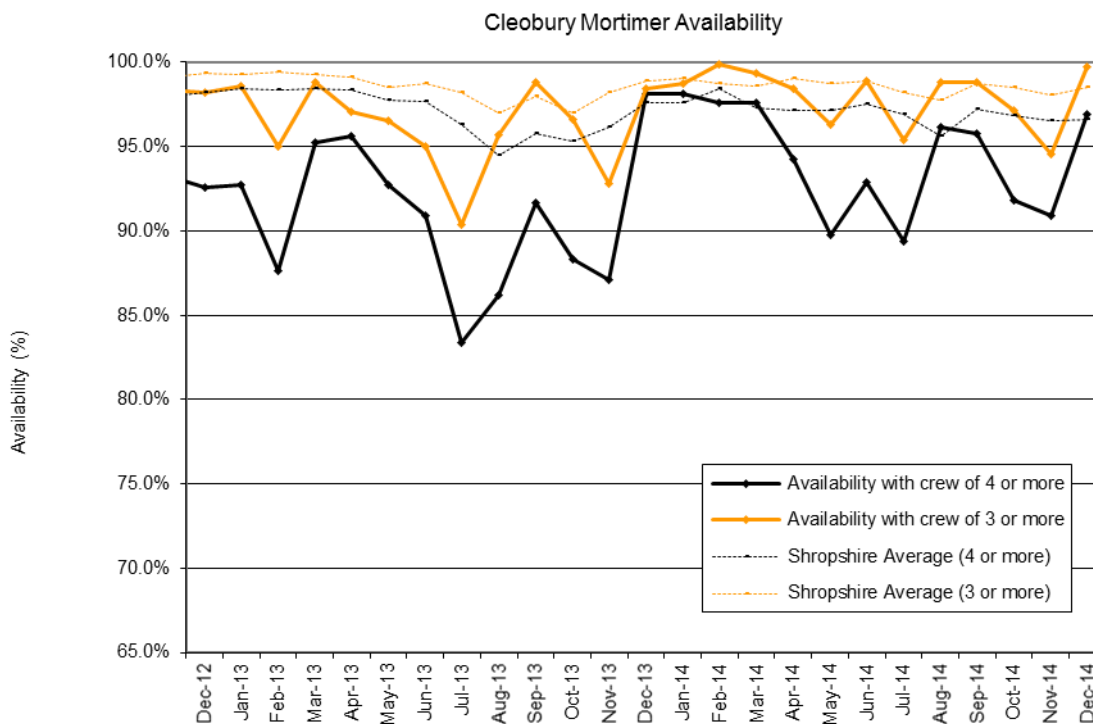
**NB:** One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

### Albrighton



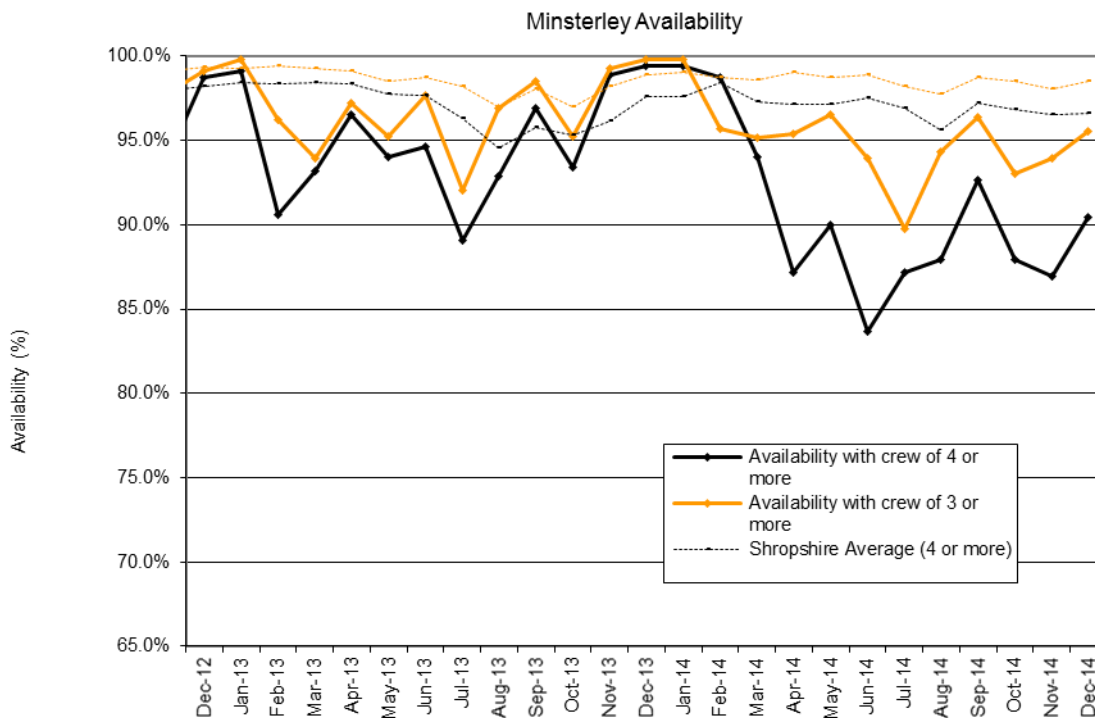
Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>13 units (10.25 units available = 12 personnel)</p> <p>Historically, it has been extremely difficult to recruit in the Albrighton area, with daytime cover the key problem.</p>	<p>Recent medium-term absences and the likelihood of a further resignation are driving a renewed recruitment campaign. Currently 5 personnel unavailable.</p>	<p>The Group Support Team will engage with the local traders association to increase the profile understanding of the “on call” service.</p> <p>Two female applicants have now been put forward for tests and both could provide daytime cover. The Station is due a refit later this year. A recruitment session is scheduled to coincide with the open day.</p> <p>A leaflet drop recently covered all properties within a 5 minute radius of the station and posters have been placed at the recently opened gymnasium at Cosford. We are currently having recruitment details for Albrighton added to the Albrighton Traders’ website.</p>

## Cleobury Mortimer



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 11.25 units = 13 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>It remains difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area.</p>	<p>An ongoing recruitment campaign has focussed on providing additional daytime cover.</p> <p>One recruit completed initial training in February 2015 and is now attending incidents and providing daytime cover during the week. A further recruit is attending the current course and, if successful, will also be available for daytime cover.</p> <p>We are currently designing (working with our Communications Officer) posters and signs to be displayed on appliance lockers, whilst also creating adverts in the local press.</p>

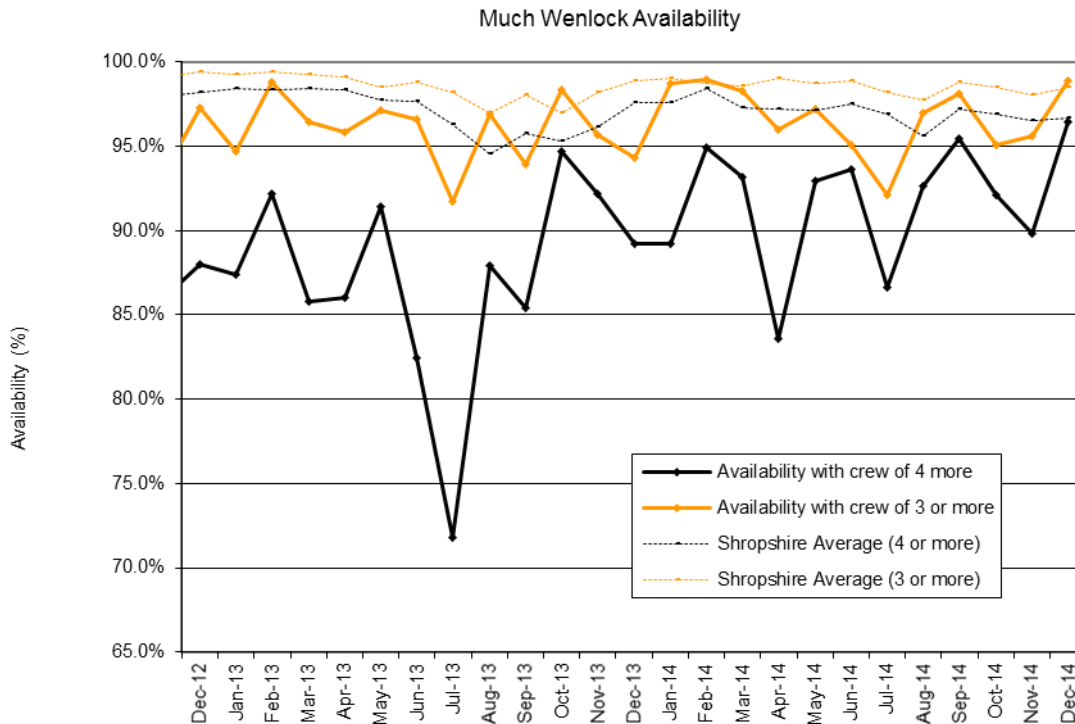
# Minsterley



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10.75 units = 13 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing is presenting the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>A reduction in employment opportunities in the area has resulted in personnel relocating.</p>	<p>One recruit completed training in June and is now available for operational calls. Performance dropped significantly during 2014 and a new recruitment campaign was started in April 2014 by the Group Support Team. A new recruit who had been undergoing a period of additional development is now attending operational calls. Further work is being done and the Assistant Group Commander is looking to hold positive action sessions in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Team, with a view to attracting more female recruits. The need for daytime cover is driving the initiative.</p>

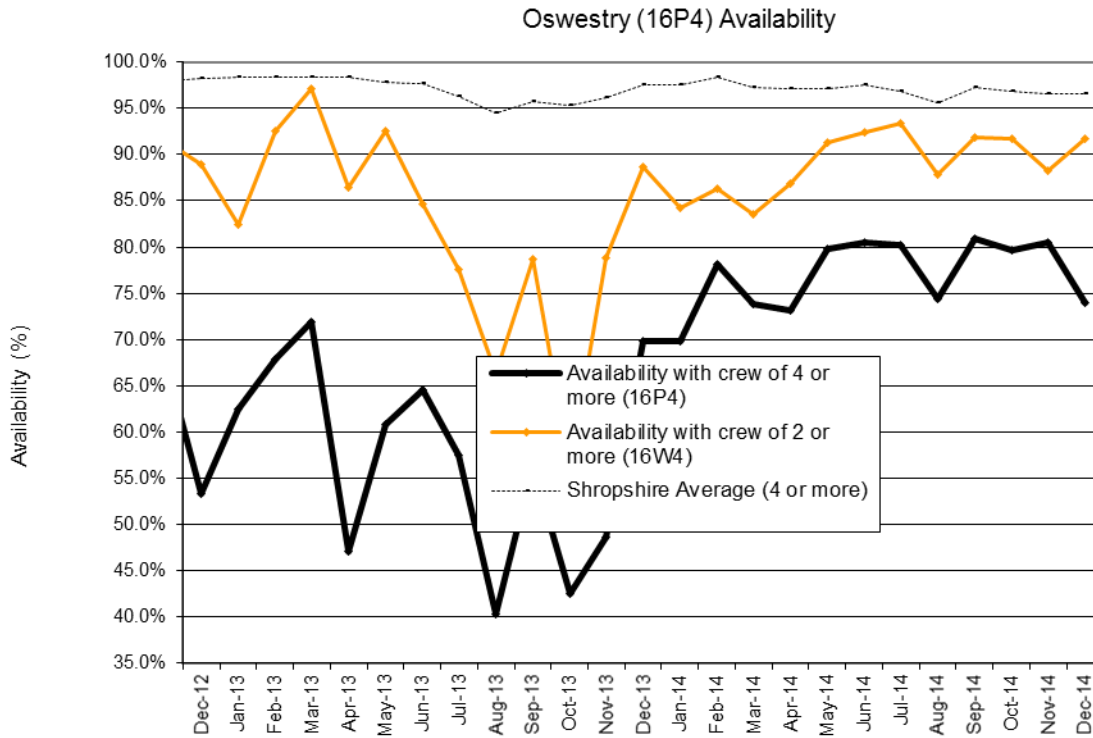


# Much Wenlock



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 13 units are budgeted for, only 10 units = 10 personnel are currently on station strength.</p> <p>Daytime crewing still remains the greatest challenge.</p>	<p>It is difficult to recruit from the local population, because of the high number working outside Much Wenlock.</p>	<p>Two recruits completed their course in June last year and are now attending operational calls and performance has improved. A further recruit is attending the current course and will be available for calls in June 2015, providing daytime cover. A further applicant is awaiting a medical and, if successful, will attend the June 2015 course.</p> <p>There are plans to hold a station open day in the summer, which will include recruitment activity.</p> <p>We are currently designing (working with our Communications Officer) posters and signs to be displayed on appliance lockers, whilst also creating adverts in the local press.</p>

# Oswestry



**As of September 2012 Oswestry’s second appliance report shows availability with crew of 4 or more and availability with crew of 2 or more.** The second appliance availability has fluctuated considerably over the last 18 months, reflecting several personnel changes, as communicated at earlier Committee meetings. There are positive signs for the future, with recruitment at Oswestry remaining a priority and a number of personnel currently in the system, as indicated below. The latest data demonstrates the commitment of the team, who have been able to maintain between 75% and 80% availability for the second appliance since May 2014.

Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 14.50 units = 17 personnel are currently on station.</p> <p>This is Oswestry’s second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p>	<p>The first pump at Oswestry currently has 100% availability. Availability of the second appliance has fluctuated continually since June 2012, because of difficulties with retention of personnel, as a result of the level of commitment required. However, since October 2013 the upward trend has been largely maintained. Second appliance availability has remained stable at between 75% and 80% for the last year.</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the current level of recruitment and greater retention of staff will be sufficient to maintain and potentially improve on recent performance. One recruit completed training in February and we have two further recruits on the current course. Retention at Oswestry is the issue rather than recruitment. Efforts to improve retention of staff continue.</p>