

Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring April to June 2012

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding the ongoing performance and management of the Retained Duty System in Shropshire.

2 Recommendations

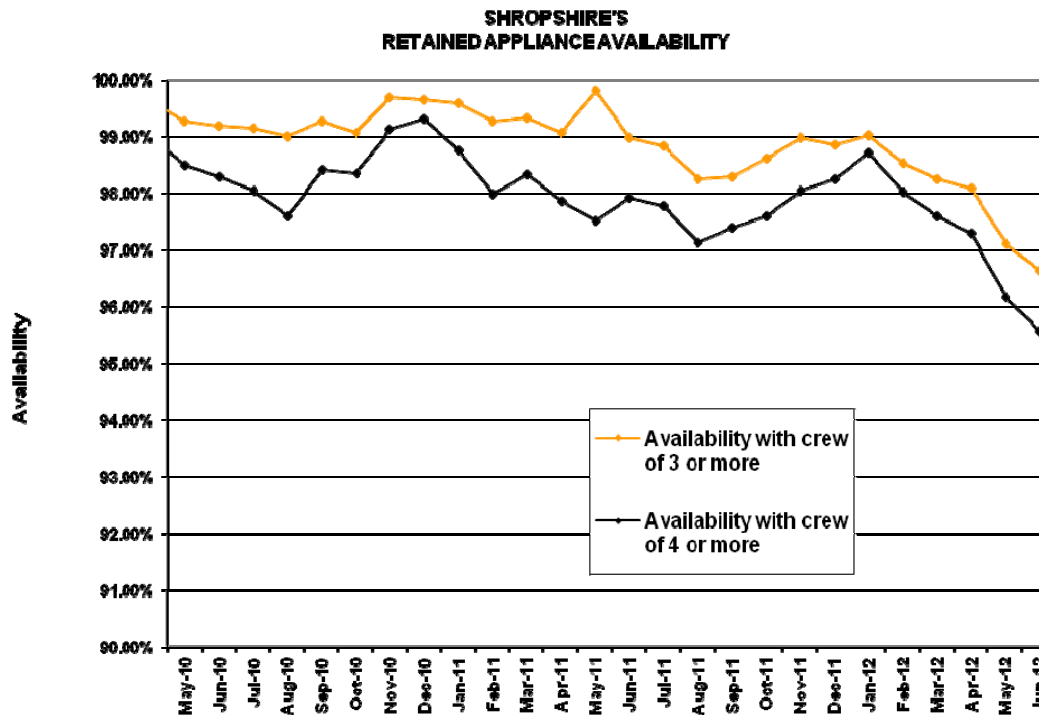
The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel are fundamental in providing fire cover for the major part of Shropshire. The 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.

Overall availability of RDS fire engines, by comparison with many other fire and rescue services, remains high at over 97% (see Graph 1 overleaf). Graph 1 shows the average performance for all 23 RDS fire engines, which includes two based at Oswestry Fire Station. Of the 23 RDS fire engines, 19 are available for 98% to 100% of the time, an outstanding performance. The Fire Authority's target is, however, always for 100% availability for all of its fire engines.

Night time cover is excellent with almost 100% availability between the hours of 6.00 pm and 8.00 am across all stations. The exception to this is an 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.



**Graph 1
SFRS Retained Duty System Crew Availability**

4 Improving Performance

Scrutiny of Graph 1 reveals a concerning trend, i.e. a gradual decline in availability. To improve performance the Service is focusing attention on those fire engines / stations that are currently providing reduced availability. An outline of the factors affecting availability and the actions to improve performance is provided below.

5 Factors Influencing Availability

In recent years it has become increasingly challenging to ensure that all 23 fire appliances crewed by RDS personnel are available '24 x 7.' There have been a number of legal, economic and societal changes in recent years that have affected the RDS, namely:

- The introduction of specific requirements of the Part Time Workers Legislation for RDS firefighters, which has increased the costs of employing staff on the RDS system
- Full recognition by the Fire Authority of the Drivers Hours Regulations has resulted in an inability to employ RDS staff, who are professional drivers. This is because the actual or potential interruption of required rest periods would be in breach of the Regulations.
- The reduction in economic activity has meant people travelling further to find work, taking Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service staff outside of their callout areas during the day.

Furthermore, a significant number of RDS staff are self-employed and are now having to work away from their home areas.

- Reductions in the number of fire calls, resulting in less likelihood of being mobilised and reducing take home pay. It is, however, recognised that many RDS staff are not motivated primarily by money.
- Increasing concerns regarding the ability of operational staff, including those on the RDS, to meet the health and safety requirements and expectations of both the organisation and of third parties

6 Background Station Specific Performance

There are five fire stations, whose performance over the past 12 months falls significantly below the 97% to 100% achieved by the remaining stations. An analysis of performance is provided at the appendix to this report.

7 Recruitment Campaign

A concerted recruitment campaign is underway across the Service area with particular focus on the stations with reduced establishments. The campaign is co-ordinated by the Service's Group Commander - Shropshire Rural Performance Group and involves local station personnel, the Area Command teams, and Human Resources Department. Specific activities completed are:

- A full-page article in the Shropshire Star, focusing on the role of the RDS and recruitment;
- For the first time, the use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to advertise RDS posts, which is very effective and has resulted in 110 enquiries to date;
- Canvassing by Retained Support Officers and local staff of local businesses to encourage them to support RDS staff in their organizations;
- Leaflet campaigns in local station areas;
- Open days and tester opportunities held at a number of stations, including Newport and Whitchurch.

To date the campaign has resulted in the Service taking on 48 people, who are now going through the recruitment process.

8 Retained Support Officer Cover – Quarter 1

Table 1 overleaf indicates those fire stations that have required the highest level of support for reasons detailed earlier in this report during 2011/12 and Quarter 1 of 2012/13. These five stations account for 3335.5 hours. This equates to 82% of Retained Support Officer (RSO) cover from 4057.5 hours provided. The availability of the RSOs has improved performance at all the stations with availability issues. Year 2012/13 indicates that the 5 stations listed account for 720.7 hours of the available 843.95 available RSO hours. This represents 85% of all RSO cover for the first quarter.

	2011/12					2012/13
Stations	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1
Albrighton	85.75	201.50	204.25	126.50	618.00	223.50
Cleobury Mortimer	196.50	101.75	325	66.50	689.75	92.75
Ludlow	5.50	116.25	173.75	376.25	671.75	98.20
Much Wenlock	433.25	302.25	505.50	9.00	795.00	61.50
Oswestry 16 (P4)	96.75	171.25	122.75	170.25	561.00	244.75
Totals	817.75	893	876.25	748.50	3335.50	720.70
Total RSO hours	1019.25	1063	1083	892.25	4057.50	843.95

**Table 1
Retained Support Officer Cover**

9 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

11 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

12 Appendices

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability Analysis

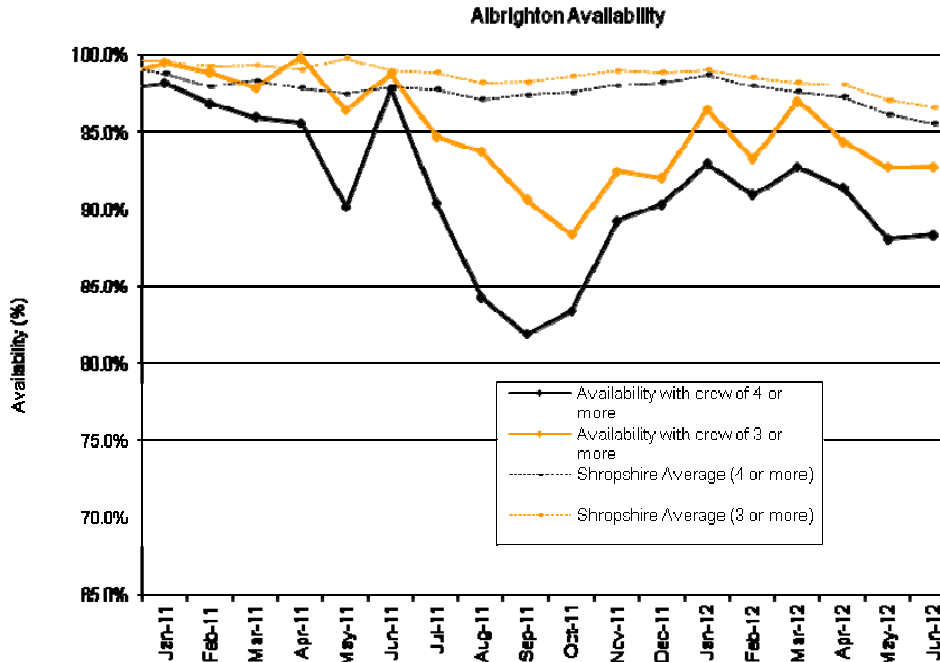
13 Background Papers

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:

<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-the-service/fra/meetings/Audit-and-Performance-Management>

Retained Duty System Fire Station Availability: Analysis

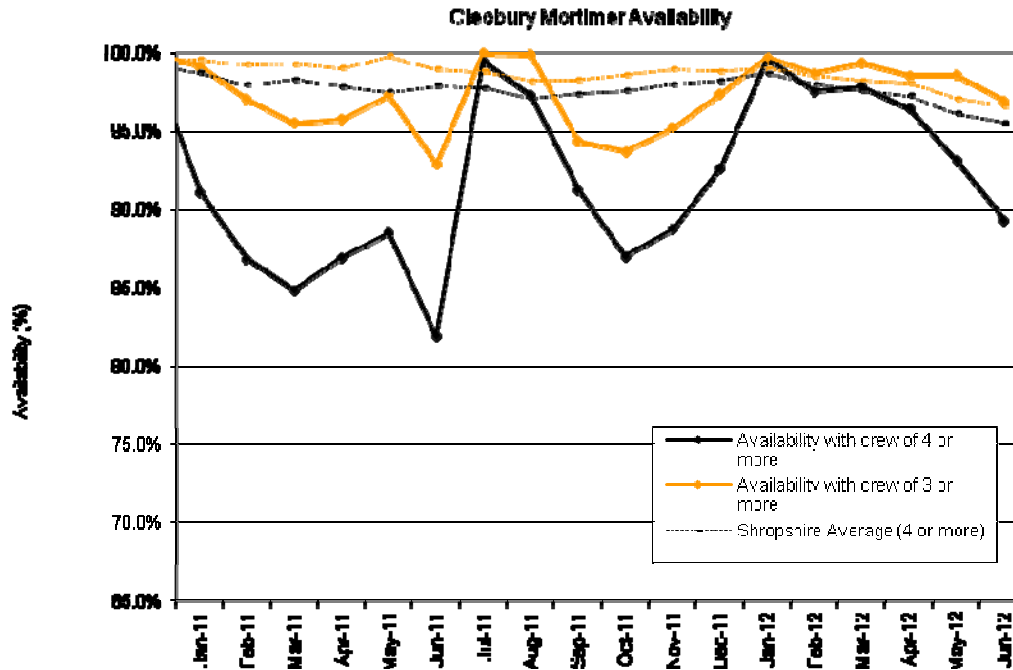
Albrighton Fire Station



Station profile	Reasons for availability issues	Actions taken
14 units (see NB below) (11 available)	Lack of supervisory officer cover leading to the station being off the run for periods	Development Crew Manager in post
Historically extremely difficult to recruit in Albrighton area		Recruitment campaign underway
Daytime crewing difficult to achieve	Work patterns of personnel changing, affecting availability	Recruitment campaign focussed on daytime cover

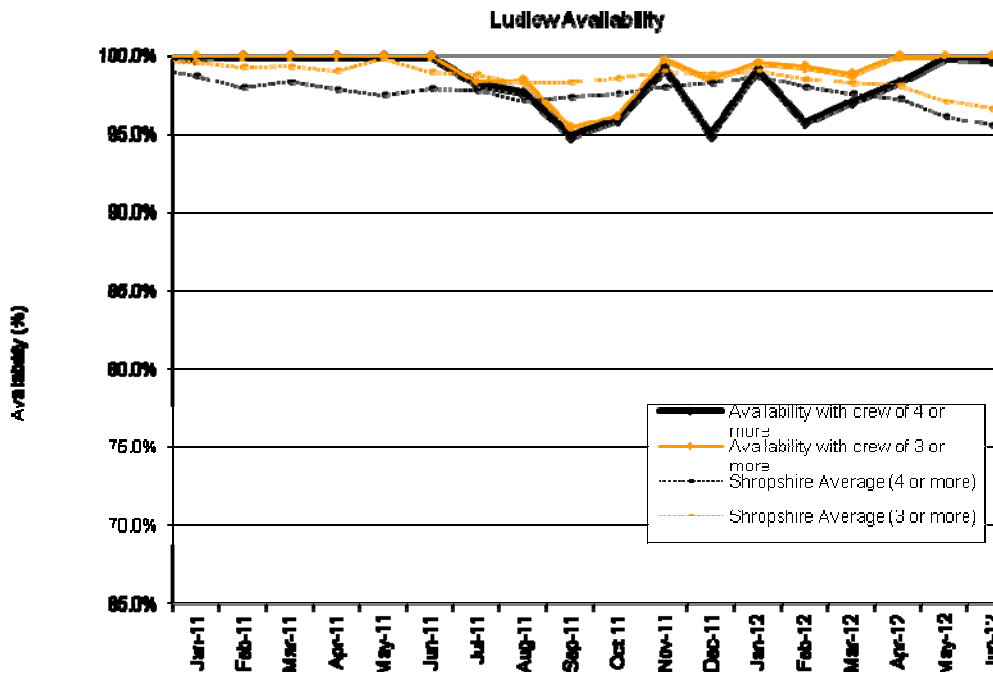
NB: One (1) unit is equivalent to one person being available for full cover (over 120 hours a week), so two crew members each committing three quarter cover (up to 120 hours but no less than 84 hours per week) would equate to 1.5 units.

Cleobury Mortimer Fire Station



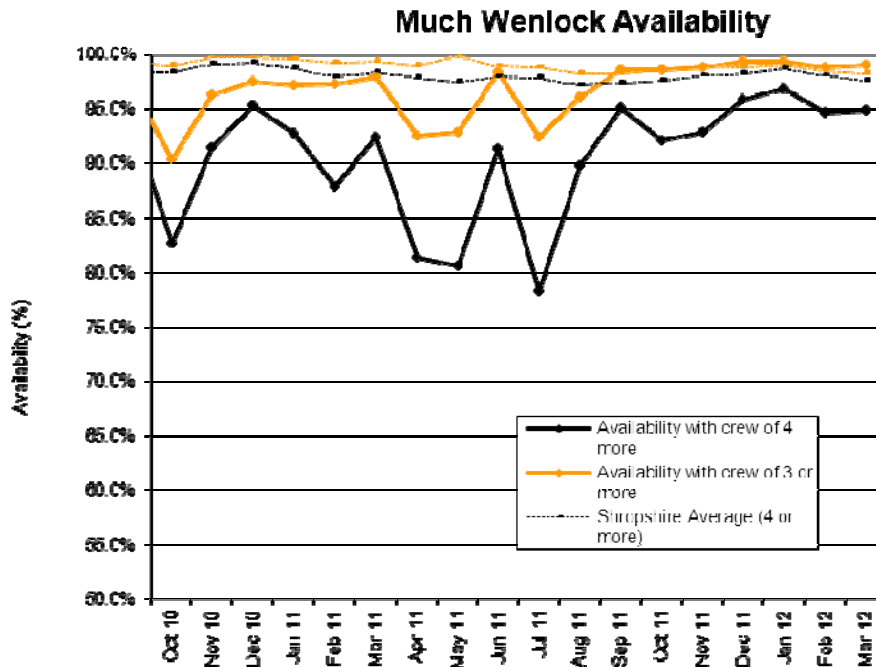
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 10.25 units are currently on station	Difficult to recruit firefighters in the Cleobury Mortimer area	Recruitment campaign in progress
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Latest applicants have failed medical or job tests	Current recruitment campaign will focus on providing additional daytime cover. So far 7 people are in the recruitment process.

Ludlow Fire Station



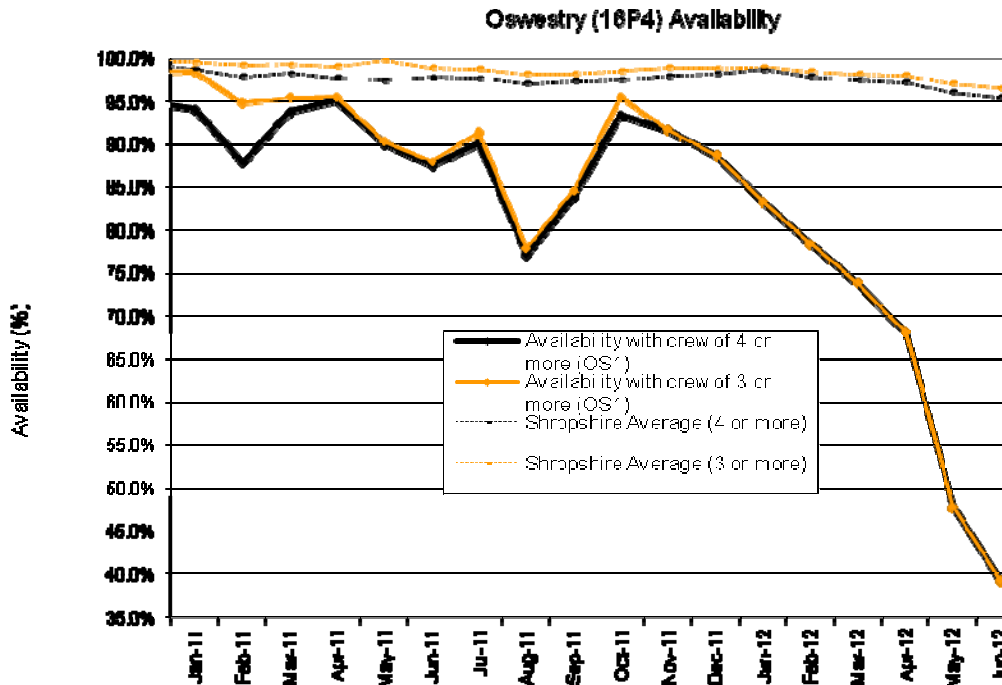
Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 11.75 units are currently on station	4 leavers in last 12 months due to work and family issues	Command and driver training has been prioritised in order to ease the situation.
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	A number of staff are employed as wholtime firefighters at Hereford and Worcester, West Midlands and Shropshire and the knock-on effect is linked to station deficiencies at key periods.	Recruitment campaign focussing on providing daytime cover. Further WT/RDS will not be considered at this stage. New application received awaiting interview

Much Wenlock Fire Station



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
Although 14 units are budgeted for, only 8.75 units are currently on station	Much Wenlock has managed to maintain over 90% since September 2011 through recruitment of new staff	Recruitment campaign in progress
Daytime crewing presenting greatest challenge	Difficult to recruit from local population, because of high number working outside Much Wenlock	Recruitment campaign is geared towards recruiting for daytime crewing.
Improved availability this year as a result of movement into the area of 2 wholetime firefighters		

Oswestry Fire Station



Station profile	Reason for availability issues	Actions taken
<p>Although 18 units are budgeted for, only 14.5 units are currently on station. This is Oswestry's second appliance, which has a dual role as a water ladder and water carrier.</p>	<p>First pump at Oswestry has 98% availability.</p> <p>Second pump has dropped to less than 50%. 5 leavers in recent months and 2 long-term sick.</p>	<p>Recruitment focussing on daytime cover</p> <p>Long-term sickness issues resolved</p>