

MEETING: 16th July 2012

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF PROVISION AND STAFFING OF AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER AND PERSONNEL ADVISOR

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the findings of the review into the provision and staffing of the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) and to seek approval to implement staffing changes.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members will recall following an extensive public consultation exercise for the current IRMP, approval was given by the Authority for a review to be undertaken into the provision and staffing of the three specialist Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) appliances to ascertain future requirements. This action formed part of the 2011/2012 Integrated Risk Management Annual Action Plan.
- 2.2 Broadly speaking, fire appliances can be allocated to two main categories. Firstly, front line pumping appliances, which deal with the overwhelming majority of incidents attended within Tyne and Wear. These vehicles and their crews respond immediately to all types of incident that occur in the area.
- 2.3 The second category of vehicle comprises the Special Appliances, which as the name indicates, are provided in order to undertake specialised functions. These are not required as frequently as front line pumps, and neither are they typically required within the same timescales as the front line pumping appliances. This category of vehicle includes the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), Fireboat, Rescue Tender, High Volume Pump, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and the Emergency Tender.
- 2.4 Currently the Service uses two main types of staffing for fire appliances; Primary Staffing, where crews staff appliances 24/7, 365 days a year for an immediate response, and Dual Staffing, where appliances are only staffed when required for an operational incident or training. The latter is undertaken by staff switching from the Primary Staffed Vehicles to a Dual Staffed vehicle.
- 2.5 All front line pumping appliances are Primary Staffed and all Special Appliances, with the exception of two of the three ALPs, are Dual Staffed.

2.6 The specific staffing for ALP appliances is:

- Gateshead East (Low Fell) and Sunderland North (Fulwell) ALPs are primary staffed with one Crew Manager and one Firefighter
- Gosforth ALP is dual staffed

2.7 In considering this review a number of areas have been investigated including:

- ALP locations and incident data for ALPs.
- Workload modelling which has looked at the patterns of incidents attended by the ALPs.
- Consultation with staff at Gateshead East (Low Fell) and Sunderland North (Fulwell) Fire Stations.
- Potential for Dual Staffing, taking into account the impact of this in the rest of the specialist fleet, where phased dual staffing has been introduced over a number of years.
- Financial considerations.

2.8 This work has now been completed and the results of the review are set out below for the consideration of Members.

3 OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

3.1 The control room mobilises appliances to all incidents in accordance with pre-determined attendances (PDAs), which set out the pre-arranged operational response that should automatically be mobilised to a defined range of incidents.

3.2 By their nature, Special Appliances are not utilised at incidents to the same extent as the front line pumps and as such our approach to their inclusion on PDAs was reviewed in 2008, in line with good practice. This was to ascertain the genuine requirement to have the Special Appliances on the majority of PDAs, as was the case at the time.

3.3 The outcome of this work was that the Special Appliances were removed from a large number of PDAs and placed mainly on a request-only basis. As a result of this change in policy, there has been a reduction in the number of incidents which are now attended by Special Appliances and within the group the ALP vehicles follow this trend. Table 1 provides further information.

Date Range	No of Incidents Attended by ALPs
1 st Jan 2008 to 31 st Dec 2008	202
1 st Jan 2009 to 31 st Dec 2009	115
1 st Jan 2010 to 31 st Dec 2010	110
1 st Jan 2011 to 31 st Dec 2011	132

Table 1

- 3.4 This approach represents a more targeted use of resources in line with the principles of integrated risk management (IRMP). Since Special Appliances are mostly mobilised when there is a request for their use based on risk assessment of the incident, they continue to effectively support operational activity, through a more targeted approach.
- 3.5 This targeted use of Special Appliances, and the consequential reduction in the number of incidents they attend, has also helped to enable more dual staffing of Specials, including the ALP at Newcastle, resulting in greater efficiency. Practical experience has demonstrated that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service has not had any significant issues, with such vehicles continuing to be mobilised and utilised effectively when needed.
- 3.6 In terms of location, the three ALPs are strategically located to provide specialist high reach access and support at operational incidents, which are essential for the nature of the risk within the Tyne and Wear area to perform rescues, support firefighting and special service operations as a key part of our safe systems of work.
- 3.7 Workload Modelling has been used to analyse the current locations. Results indicate that the current arrangements for having an ALP situated in Sunderland, Gateshead and Newcastle districts provide for the best operational response model. As part of the regular review cycle, further detailed work is planned in ensuring Special Appliances continue to be appropriately located to best support emergency operations.

4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Chief Fire Officer is of the opinion that due to the low level of activity experienced by these vehicles, the crewing arrangements for the two ALPs at Gateshead and Sunderland should be brought in line with all other Special Appliances within Tyne and Wear through the adoption of Dual Staffing as highlighted in section 2.4 of this report.
- 4.2 Dual staffing these appliances will reduce the overall service establishment by 20 posts and it is proposed that this change in crewing arrangements will be implemented during this financial year and monitored in respect to its impact on service delivery.
- 4.3 As part of the monitoring arrangements, and in line with section 3.7 above, the location of each ALP will be examined to ensure the optimum level of service is provided across communities within Tyne and Wear to ensure both public and firefighter safety.

5 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The dual staffing of the ALPs would realise a reduction in establishment, inclusive of an adjustment to the ridership factor, of 8 x Crew Managers and 12

x Firefighters without adversely impacting on Service Delivery. This reduction would be managed within the normal turnover of staff in the organisation, in line with the Authority's commitment to avoid redundancies

6 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 states that that a Fire and Rescue Authority must make provision within its area for extinguishing fires, protecting life and property and ensuring the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to meet all normal risk requirements.

6.2 The proposals have no legislative implications.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no environmental implications in respect of this report.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the Authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The combined cost of the provision of three ALP's:

9.1	2011/12 (Budget allocation: 20 Personnel)	
	Staffing	£785,908
	Vehicle costs (Lease, maintenance & fuel)	<u>£75,000</u>
		£860,908

9.2 The review of ALP's would realise a reduction on establishment of 8 x Crew Managers and 20 x Firefighters; realising a **total saving of £785,908** (91% reduction in operating cost of the ALP provision), if approved this would be implemented during 2012/13 financial year with full savings achieved 2013/14 financial year.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Fire Brigades Union has been consulted on this proposal and offered the following comments:

Creating the Safest Community

“It is the professional opinion of the Fire Brigades Union that the only appropriate staffing model for an appliance that is an integral part of an emergency response is a model that ensures an immediate response. Dual staffing fails to do this.

Dual staffing is considered by the FBU to be a second rate system designed solely to reduce expenditure, rather than a means of increasing efficiency. Firefighters and managers at locations currently operating a dual staffing system often highlight the inadequacies of such a system with delays in the response times to incidents unavoidable.

Of equal if not greater concern is the impact a further expansion of the dual staffing system will have upon appliance availability, for every Special appliance mobilised to an incident will result in a pumping appliance being ‘taken off the run’ as the crew to staff the ALP will have to be drawn from a pumping appliance.

This will greatly impact upon the ability of TWFRS to provide adequate resources and safely manage a large incident, or indeed several smaller incidents, should they occur at a similar time. This will of course result in an increased risk to public and firefighter safety.”

11 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this specific report.

12 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no Health and Safety implications in respect of this report.

13 RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Approve the dual staffing of the Sunderland and Gateshead ALP, in line with the remainder of the specialist fleet.
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Review of Provision and Staffing of ALP’s Report

