

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING: 20 APRIL 2009

**SUBJECT: INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN; DUAL STAFFING
REVIEW**

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out, for the consideration of Members, a proposal to introduce dual staffing arrangements for the Emergency Tender (ET) based at Colby Court Community Fire Station and the Rescue Tender (RT) based at Hebburn Community Fire Station.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, there is a requirement for the Authority to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan that provides a framework for how services will be provided and developed, with the specific intention of:

- Reducing the number and severity of fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents occurring in the area for which it is responsible.
- Reducing the severity of injuries in fires, road traffic accidents and other emergency incidents.
- Reducing the commercial, economic and social impact of fires and other emergency incidents.
- Safeguarding the environment and heritage (both built and natural).
- Providing value for money.

- 2.2 The IRMP must specifically reflect local needs and, in doing so, set out a framework that will enable potential risks to the local communities to be effectively addressed. In addition, the Authority should also:

- Produce annual action plans to support the main IRMP on which they have fully consulted their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for the consultation.
- Have regard to central government guidance in producing its plan.

- Make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the Annual Action Plan, including using more efficient working practices where appropriate.
- 2.3 The Authority has, once again, complied with this requirement and, in September 2008, produced a draft IRMP strategy document covering a three-year period from April 2009 to March 2012 and an associated Annual Action Plan covering the period 2009/2010.
- 2.4 This draft document was presented at the Authority meeting held on 15 September 2008 where Members considered and subsequently approved the 2009/2012 Draft IRMP and the 2009/2010 Draft Annual Action Plan for public consultation (Minute 51 (ii)/2008 refers).
- 2.5 Subsequent to this approval, a public consultation exercise commenced on 22 September 2008, that ran for a period of 12 weeks. During this time consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders in order to seek their views on the overall IRMP strategy and the specific proposals contained within the draft Annual Action Plan.
- 2.6 The response to this public consultation exercise, whilst limited in numbers, was very positive, with 90% of those responding indicating both that the consultation information provided was easy to understand and also supporting the overall aim of the draft IRMP strategy document.
- 2.7 This high level of approval also applied to all of the specific action points contained within the 2009/2010 IRMP Annual Action Plan, with 93% of those who responded to the consultation exercise indicated that they supported the review of the Special Appliances, both in relation to crewing levels on the appliances and their actual location.
- 2.8 Consequently, this report sets out the findings in respect of the appropriateness of the current primary crewing arrangements on the ET and the RT and whether dual crewing of these appliances would be more appropriate.

3 THE ROLE OF SPECIAL APPLIANCES

- 3.1 Broadly speaking, fire appliances can be allocated to two main categories of vehicle. Firstly, there are the front line pumping appliances, which deal with the overwhelming majority of the incidents attended within Tyne and Wear. These vehicles and their crews respond to all of the types of incident that occur in the service and it is this category of vehicle that, as Members are aware, has the fastest average attendance time in England.
- 3.2 The second category of vehicle comprise the Special Appliances, which as the name indicates, are provided in order to undertake specialised functions that, by their very nature, are not required as frequently as front line pumps. Neither are they typically required within the same timescales as the front line pumping appliances. This category of vehicle includes the Aerial Platforms, the Fireboat, the Rescue Tender, the High Volume Pump, USAR and the Emergency Tender.

- 3.3 Currently, in Tyne and Wear, there are a two types of crewing arrangements in use with regard to these Special Appliances, namely primary and dual staffing. Primary staffing refers to the system of allocating full-time operational staff to a special appliance on a 24 hour a day basis throughout the year. Dual staffing refers to a system where the Special Appliance do not have operational staff specifically allocated to them but utilise the crews of the front line pumping appliances on the fire station to operate the Special Appliance when required.
- 3.4 As intimated above, historically, Special Appliances have never been utilised at incidents to the same extent as the front line pumps and this situation has been reinforced in recent years, due to two main factors.
- 3.5 Firstly, the fire and rescue service has been the beneficiary, over time, of the gradual availability of improved specialised cutting and lifting equipment at an affordable cost. This has made it possible to provide front line pumping appliances with an enhanced capability to effectively deal with a far wider range of incidents than was once the case. Road traffic collisions, for example, are now routinely dealt with by pumping appliances without recourse to the ET because of the sophisticated Holmatro cutting equipment that is now standard issue on these vehicles.
- 3.6 One implication of this has been the gradually reducing requirement to mobilise Special Appliances within the service to operational incidents. This is particularly noticeable with regard to the ET, as the information set out in the attached report indicates.
- 3.7 The second issue leading to a reduction in operational activity of the Special Appliances is associated with the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning. Within the IRMP framework, one of the many aspects of service provision that has been subject to review has been that of Pre-determined Attendances (PDA's). This phrase refers to the pre-arranged operational response that is automatically mobilised to a defined range of incidents by the control room command system.
- 3.8 In line with good practice the opportunity was taken to carry out a critical review of these PDA's in order to assess whether there was a genuine requirement to have the Special Appliances on the majority of the existing PDA's, as was the case at the time.
- 3.9 The outcome of this work was that the Special Appliances were removed from a large number of PDA's and placed 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 these vehicles.

4 USE OF THE EMERGENCY TENDER AND RESCUE TENDER

- 4.1 Both the ET and the RT are typical in this respect, with the operational use of these two vehicles being relatively limited. For example, as the attached report highlights, the ET was only used on a total of 170 incidents over the two years

covered by the report. The RT was used more frequently than this, being utilised at operational incidents on 200 occasions over the two year period. Nevertheless, when it is considered that, on average, a front line pump will attend around 860 operational incidents over the same period of time, the difference in activity levels is significant.

- 4.2 It is also a pertinent fact that, due to the nature of the equipment carried on these two vehicles and the operational duties which they typically carry out, the minimum number of crew required to effectively utilise the vehicles in question is four. This means that a pumping appliance, which is crewed by four firefighters, must always accompany these special appliances, currently primary crewed with two staff, to an operational incident, which, results in a total of six operational staff being in attendance. This existing arrangement means that one of the key requirements of a dual staffing system, namely the requirement to have a pumping appliance crew respond with the Special Appliance when it is required, is already broadly in place.
- 4.3 In essence, therefore, whilst both Special Appliances are used to excellent effect at those operational incidents they do attend, such incidents are increasingly limited in number and when the vehicles do respond they are always accompanied by an operational crew of four in addition to the crew of two on the Special Appliance.
- 4.4 What is proposed, therefore, is that the low level of activity experienced by these vehicles is reflected in their crewing arrangements and that they are brought into line with the majority of the other Special Appliances within Tyne and Wear through the adoption of dual staffing.
- 4.5 Practical experience has demonstrated that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service has not had any significant issues arising in relation to those Special Appliances that are already dual staffed, with such vehicles continuing to be mobilised and utilised effectively when needed and there is no reason to expect that the proposal in this paper would produce results different to this.

5 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Taking into account the above information and that contained in the accompanying report, the Chief Fire Officer proposes to dual staff the ET from April 2009, thereby reducing the overall service establishment by 12 posts. This change in crewing arrangements would then be monitored over the following months in respect to its impact on service delivery and it is further proposed to move to dual staffing on the RT in March 2010 resulting in another reduction in the overall establishment of 12 posts from that date.
- 5.2 Phasing in the changes will enable the impact of the proposals to be carefully monitored and the reductions in the establishment to be achieved through natural reductions in staff numbers through retirements.

- 5.3 Should Members approve the proposal contained within this paper the Chief Fire Officer will consult with the Fire Brigades Union with regard to the implications of implementing the move to dual staffing.

6 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Fairness implications associated with the specific content of this report.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 7.1 Currently there are no outstanding health and safety issues associated with this report. However, as the dual staffing arrangements are implemented the impact of the changes will be monitored over the coming months in order to ensure that the revised system is working effectively.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Having taken account of all the available information the risk to the organisation in implementing this proposal has been evaluated as low.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The efficiencies that would be realised for potential re-investment in Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service through the implementation of these proposals would be in the region of £920,000 per annum, once fully implemented. This will be factored into the Authority's Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy amended accordingly as appropriate.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Authority is requested to:
- i) Consider the contents of the report and;
 - ii) Approve the proposal to dual staff the ET from April 2009 and, subject to the outcome of the monitoring exercise,
 - iii) Approve the proposal to dual staff the RT from March 2010

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of this report;

- Dual Staffing Review 2009

