

9. IRMP Recommendation 3 – Reduction of Attendances at Automatic Fire Alarms

Purpose of report

1. To deliver the outcomes of the review from the IRMP 2011/12 Action Plan - Recommendation 3, which states:

“We will reduce our attendance at false alarms caused by Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) after a review of our policies and procedures and the implementation of our findings.”

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the Policy and Resources Committee consider this report and endorse further engagement with stakeholders in order to support a future FRA submission.

Introduction

2. IRMP 2011/12 Action Plan - Recommendation 3, proposed a review and the potential for subsequent changes to established practices to reduce the number of attendances that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) makes to unwanted fire signals (UwFS). This review has been completed and highlights where efficiencies (both financial and capacity based) can be made. It assists in future decision making through the provision of data, statistical analysis, staff engagement and anecdotal evidence from national practise that highlight the issues.
3. This recommendation and review was consulted on in 2010, as part of the IRMP action plan consultation for 2011/12 and subsequently approved by the Authority. The recommendation not only stated the intent to review this issue, but to also implement outcomes based upon its findings in order to reduce the level of attendances at this type of incident. It is proposed that prior to submission to a future Fire Authority meeting that further engagement is undertaken with those external stakeholders most likely to be affected by the proposed changes in this review.
4. The Service currently attends over 3,000 AFAs per year, of which only a very small fraction subsequently turn out to be “real” fires. Firefighting action was only used to extinguish 25 incidents out of 6,067 incidents that originated as AFA calls (0.4% of AFA calls) over a recorded two year period.
5. It is also worthy of note that these incidents currently often involve multiple vehicle deployments per incident, therefore any changes in current practice may

have a greater effect than one appliance per incident and realise a proportionally greater level of efficiency.

Findings of the Review

6. This review challenges existing practises and highlights areas that could be more efficient in relation to the Service's attendance at incidents reported as fire alarms actuating and which subsequently turn out to be false alarms. Areas that have been considered include:
 - Pre-Determined Attendances (PDA) and mobilising criteria
 - Risk categorisation and premises type
 - Time of day considerations
 - Unoccupied premises
 - Call filtering
 - Repeat offenders
 - Cost recovery
7. The findings of this review (Appendix 1) identifies a series of proposals which would realise a significant reduction in the number of Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) or Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) the Service attends. The key recommendations of this review can be found on pages 43 and 44 of Appendix 1.
8. In summary it is proposed that Pre-Determined Attendances are reduced to one appliance only in most cases, call filtering is implemented, certain premises types are no longer attended (unless a fire is confirmed) and repeat offenders are more stringently dealt with. This is broadly in line with the approach now being taken by many other FRSs around the country.

Conclusion/Summary

9. Implementation of the recommendations of this review will realise a reduction in costs to the Service, however the main area of improvement will be the release of staff capacity enabling a greater focus on other priorities; such as training and community safety. There will also be a substantial reduction in vehicle movements of emergency response vehicles on the roads of both counties. This reduces the inherent risk to the public and our staff under these conditions and realises the associated efficiencies of less road journeys.
10. The review has identified that only a very small proportion of calls originating as AFAs result in "real" fires requiring Firefighting action. Most of these calls (AFAs becoming fires) receive duplicate or multiple calls identifying that it is a fire and not only an alarm actuating. Where any call is received indicating a fire or other related cause (smoke or smell of burning, etc) by a person, then a full emergency response will always be made. This review and recommendations only apply to those calls (approximately 3,000 per year), where the caller is requesting the attendance of the Service to an alarm actuating. In many cases where higher risk is identified (sheltered housing, domestic premises etc) the Service will still continue to respond.

11. Further engagement with external stakeholders will allow the Service to reduce any misunderstanding and ensure that those who are potentially affected by these proposals are aware of their responsibilities and the impact of these proposals.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	No	

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	Yes	App 1

Additional Considerations

12. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	No	
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	Y	Entire report
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	Y	Entire report
Consultation with Representative Bodies	Y	Further engagement required post P&R

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: IRMP 2011-12 Action Plan Recommendation 3, Review of Attendance at False Alarms caused by Automatic Fire Alarms

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