

6. Development of Crewing Changes to Bromsgrove and Reduction in Watch Levels across the Service

Purpose of report

1. To inform the Policy and Resources Committee of progress towards the implementation of the changes to crewing, and staffing at Bromsgrove Fire Station, aligned to the 2011/12 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), Recommendation 4.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee note this Report.

Background

2. The 2011/12 IRMP Action Plan, Recommendation 4, approved by the Authority in June 2012, proposed reducing the number of wholetime (WT) staff at Bromsgrove Fire Station from 28 to 14 by introducing a new crewing model known as Day Crewing Plus (DCP). It was also agreed to reduce overall Watch numbers across the Service leading to the reduction of 18 additional posts at other Fire Stations.
3. This proposal will not only maintain the same level of operational response across the Service with less staff, but will realise annual revenue savings of circa £1m, when fully implemented. Staff will be reduced through natural loss (not redundancy) over the following years.
4. Bromsgrove was deemed suitable for the transition to this new crewing model due to its comparatively low call volume and levels of risk, especially at night.
5. At the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 June 2012 Members requested that a paper be brought back to this Committee to keep them informed of progress towards implementing the reduced watch numbers and the new DCP system at Bromsgrove.

Current Situation

6. Currently 11 of the 18 posts, identified through the watch size reductions across the Service, (excluding the DCP proposal) have been removed from the overall Service WT establishment since June 2012. It is anticipated that the remaining posts will be removed through natural loss within 2013.
7. Following Authority approval for the DCP crewing system at Bromsgrove, a Working Group was established. This group is chaired by the Area Commander, Head of Operations and consists of WT staff from Bromsgrove,

Service Delivery management representatives, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), Retained staff and representatives from various support Departments.

8. Two main areas of debate for the Working Group in the early stages have been regarding the station facilities and accommodation, which are now largely resolved, and the terms, conditions and levels of remuneration for the new crewing system. The level of remuneration for the necessary additional on-call time provided by staff to facilitate this crewing system varies across the country. This allowance has now been nationally and legally determined as being pensionable. The Service has now concluded discussions with the Working Group and trade union regarding the level of allowance and has not reached agreement in the matter. The Service is offering a 25% pensionable allowance, against the desired 27% requested by the trade union and employees. 27% reflects the maximum amount paid across the country by any other Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). The Service believes that the offer of a 25% pensionable allowance is fair and reasonable in the current climate and is higher than some other FRSs nationally. 25% also maintains an overall saving of circa £400,000 as outlined in the initial proposal. The Service intends to proceed to advertise for applicants for DCP at Bromsgrove with a 25% pensionable allowance early in 2013.
9. To inform the development of the new crewing system, detailed research has been carried out with other Services who run similar systems, such as Leicestershire, South Wales and Lancashire FRS. Representatives from Lancashire FRS who currently work a DCP system have visited personnel at Bromsgrove and given a presentation to many of the staff.
10. DCP will operate a self rostering system whereby the 14 WT employed staff at Bromsgrove will be expected to provide 148 twelve-hour day shifts per person, per year. These day shifts meet the requirement of their standard firefighter's salary based upon a 42 hour average working week. There is no fixed rota pattern and staff will manage their availability locally to provide at least five suitably qualified firefighters at any time.
11. The additional on-call element will require in the region of 133 twelve-hour night shifts per firefighter to be worked to receive the agreed allowance. During these night shifts staff will be on-call only and will be at liberty to undertake personal activities during this time in the vicinity of the station and will be provided with appropriate rest and leisure facilities during this period.
12. Staff will be required to opt out of the Working Time Directive, based upon the number of hours they will average "at work". Because of this, the DCP system is voluntary and staff cannot be mandated to work it. A "fatigue" management policy is also being incorporated into the DCP policy which will aim to minimise and manage fatigue levels through extended periods at work.
13. Appropriate accommodation and facilities will be invested in and have been designed into the new Bromsgrove combined Fire and Police Station that is currently under construction.

14. All existing staff at Bromsgrove have been extensively consulted and continue to be engaged with alongside their trade union. Clear commitments regarding future expectations have been given and the staff generally feel well informed and involved in this project.

The Future

15. It is anticipated the new combined Fire and Police Station, and DCP crewing system, will go live simultaneously in spring 2014. The final selection of staff to work the new crewing system, contract, agreements and protocols should be completed by summer 2013, thus allowing sufficient time to manage the transfer and movement of staff and facilities in the interim period.
16. Existing staff at Bromsgrove will be given the first opportunity to volunteer, where they have the appropriate skills and qualifications, followed by applications from the wider WT Service as required.
17. Prior to spring 2014, permanent staffing and postings at Bromsgrove will be reduced and managed locally. This will not affect fire cover, but is likely to disrupt the management of the station through this transitional period. It is hoped that the staff being transferred out of Bromsgrove can have their preferential alternative work location, however this cannot be guaranteed.

Conclusion/Summary

18. This proposal is on target to achieve the reductions in staff across the Service. Bromsgrove DCP should go live early in 2014 at the new combined Fire and Police Station. This will ultimately realise anticipated revenue savings of circa £1m annually, subject to the anticipated leavers and retirements within 2014.
19. DCP is seen as innovative and beneficial to both the staff who work it, the Service and our communities we serve. It will not suit all staff and is dependent on volunteers, but will provide those staff that choose to work it with more flexibility in their working patterns and an opportunity to earn more income.

Financial Considerations

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

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	Paras 9 & 11

Additional Considerations

20. 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).	Yes	HR related issues within entire report
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	Yes	Entire report
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	Yes	Para 11
Consultation with Representative Bodies	Yes	On-going with DCP proposal development

Supporting Documentation

None

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