

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Resource Review Update Report

Purpose of report

1. To allow the Fire Authority (FRA) Members to scrutinise and approve the benefits and outcomes of the Resource Review.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the Fire Authority note the benefits and outcomes of the Resource Review. In particular that by reallocating existing funding from some of the fire engines with low average availability and low number of incidents, the Service has:

- ***Increased crewing and resilience on its busier front-line fire engines.***
- ***Improved the support for On-Call fire engines.***
- ***Reduced overtime costs.***
- ***Improved the longer-term sustainability of the On-Call duty system.***
- ***Continued to explore new ways of working (crew carriers).***

Introduction and Background

2. In 2024 Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) conducted a review of its resources to examine the arrangements of its operational response and how it could be improved in terms of efficiency and usage, alongside attempting to address some long-standing issues with On-Call availability at certain locations.
3. It was proposed that by reallocating existing funding from some of the fire engines with low average availability and that attended a very low number of incidents, the Service could increase crewing and resilience on its busier front-line fire engines. In addition, it was proposed that this reinvestment would support some improvements across the On-Call duty system, whilst reducing the cost of excessive overtime shifts for regular deficiencies in Wholetime staff.
4. In June 2024, following public consultation, the FRA agreed with the Chief Fire Officer's (CFO) proposals and approved the Resource Review. This reinvestment of public money and the removal of seven fire engines on fire stations with more than one fire engine and the alteration in availability of another On-Call fire engine, has improved the efficiency of the Service's operational resources.
5. At the FRA meeting in June 2024, the CFO agreed that the proposals would be reviewed and reports would be presented to the FRA in 2025.

Resource Review Findings

6. It is important to note that the Resource Review did not propose to close any fire stations, nor remove or reduce any first responding fire engines at any location and it only directly affected locations where there was more than one fire engine. Consequently, since its implementation, there has been no impact on the response times of the first fire engines attending incidents because of the Resource Review, nor have there been any resilience issues at larger incidents. However, the additional benefits predicted in the review that have been realised are detailed below.

Increasing crewing levels up to Five Firefighters on some Wholetime Fire Engines

7. Prior to the Resource Review, and due to historically acute financial reductions for over a decade, the ten fire engines crewed by Wholetime staff at the busiest locations have, for many years, nearly always been mobilised with four firefighters (the minimum required in HWFRS). Crewing above that level, e.g. five firefighters on a Wholetime fire engine was a rare occurrence as per the [CRMP 2021-2025](#)
8. The reinvestment of some of the funding realised through the Resource Review used to employ more Wholetime firefighters on all Watches enables some of the busier fire engines to be crewed by five firefighters and provides on-duty some immediately available resilience for Wholetime staffing shortages, or training, without the need to call staff back to work on overtime. To achieve this the Service increased the number of Wholetime firefighters employed at Hereford, Worcester and Wyre Forest Fire Stations. This is in addition to the additional Wholetime firefighters that are already employed utilising existing funding at Malvern, Evesham and Droitwich Fire Stations, just prior to the Resource Review.
9. Prior to the Resource Review and as a comparator, in the fourth quarter 2023/24, (Q4, Jan to Mar 2024), there were only eight shifts on Wholetime fire engines that deployed with a crew of five firefighters. However, in Q4 of 2024/25 (after the Resource Review changes were implemented) there have been 91 shifts on Wholetime fire engines with a crew of five firefighters. **This equates to 1,113 hours of Wholetime fire engines crewed with five firefighters in that period of three months.**

Station	Q4 2023/24	Q4 2024/25	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Hereford	5	32	5	31
Worcester	2	32	4	25
Wyre Forest	1	27	10	24
Total	8	91	19	80

Decreasing the Cost of Overtime

10. The Increase in the number of Wholetime firefighters on duty has had, as proposed in the Resource Review, the additional benefit of reducing the number of times that crewing deficiencies or shortage of Wholetime staff (for example due to sickness) have needed to be covered by overtime payments.
11. Where some locations have a crew of five it is now possible to reduce that crew to four and to detach the additional firefighter to other locations at no additional direct revenue cost to the Service if there is a shortage of staff causing a fire engine to be unavailable.
12. In the second quarter in 2024/25 (Q2, Sept to Dec 2024) the overtime payments totalled £91,943. However, in the first quarter of 2025/26 **post-Resource Review, (Q1 April to Jun 2025), those overtime costs fell to £22,403**. Whilst these costs fluctuate monthly and the reduction would also fluctuate accordingly it is predicted that the overtime reduction will far exceed the predicted £100k in the Resource Review and stabilise at a much lower annual amount. However, as previous levels of overtime were excessive and unfunded not all the financial impact above £100k per annum of the Resource Review can be taken as a revenue saving.

Crew Carriers

13. Often at larger incidents it is actual firefighters that are needed at an incident and not necessarily additional fire engines or equipment. Therefore, following the Resource Review at the locations where changes were made and where the least used (second, third or in one case fourth) fire engines were removed, the On-Call crew at stations were provided with crew carrier vehicles. These vehicles can take additional firefighters at normal road speed to an incident if they cannot crew their fire engine, such as when more than six firefighters respond to a call (a Fire Engine has a maximum crew of six).
14. From July 2024 to the end of June 2025, the crew carriers have attended 50 incidents (including 14 primary fires) at various locations across both counties. **This enabled an additional 146 personnel to attend incidents, who otherwise may not have been able to attend** on a fire engine, as it is important to note that the average number of firefighters in the crew carriers was three, which would have been insufficient to crew a fire engine.

Watch Commander Cover

15. The Service has always used some of the departmental (non-station based) Watch Commanders to provide operational cover for crewing deficiencies at both Wholetime and On-Call fire stations, usually during week daytimes. These operationally qualified staff work in departments such as Training, Fire Safety, Operations Dept or District Support and do not normally work on fire stations or on fire engines as part of the main role. Prior to the Resource Review a significant amount of their available resilience was being utilised to keep

Wholetime fire engines fully crewed, in addition to the already detailed (above) high levels of overtime payments to other staff.

16. Increasing the crewing and resilience at the busier Wholetime fire stations has not only reduced the overtime costs, but as proposed in the Resource Review, it has allowed these departmental Watch Commanders to provide more operational cover at the On-Call fire stations as very little of this resilience is now needed on Wholetime stations. This assists in increasing the availability of some On-Call fire engines during periods of lowest cover (week daytimes).
17. In the first quarter of 2024-25 (Q1 Apr to Jun 2024) the departmental Watch Commanders provided 584 hours of cover at On-Call stations. In the same quarter of 2025-26 (Q1 Apr to Jun 2025) after the Resource Review was implemented, **they provided 1,420 hours of cover at On-Call fire stations a nearly threefold increase**, thus significantly increasing the availability of some On-Call fire engines during the week daytimes at no additional direct revenue cost to the Service.

Worcester City High Rise Buildings

18. During the Resource Review some questions were raised about the removal of the third fire engine in Worcester City and the potential impact on a fire in a high-rise building. For context, HWFRS across both counties have extremely low numbers of high-rise buildings, of which none have flammable cladding, are not complex and are not considered to be high risk premises. A full report was published on the high-rise buildings following the Resource Review consultation. This report showed that Worcester City high-rise buildings have very low numbers of emergency calls and extremely low numbers of fires in the buildings.
19. When a fire detection system or member of the public alerts the Service to a potential fire in a high-rise premise, the Service will mobilise at least three fire engines. Since August 2024, there have been 41 attendances to the high-rise premises in Worcester City for fire signals and since the removal of the third fire engine in Worcester City the most frequent third fire engine to now attend is from Malvern Fire Station.
20. The average response time for the third fire engine to these incidents in Worcester City since the Resource Review was implemented has been 13 minutes and 55 seconds. **The removal of Worcester's third fire engine has not significantly impacted the response time of a third fire engine to these high-rise premises**, as can be seen in the table below, where the previous average time to attend was 13m and 49s, an increase in the average by 6 seconds.

High Rise Attendance in Worcester City as Third Pump	Average Third Pump Response Time (mm:ss) (Number of incidents)
Worcester's Third Fire Engine (Removed) between 2020/21 and 2023/24	13:49 (26)
Third Fire Engine since August 2024	13:55 (17)

Conclusion/Summary

21. By reallocating existing funding from some of the fire engines with low average availability and low number of incidents, the Service has increased crewing and resilience on its busier front-line fire engines, improved the support for On-Call fire engines and reduced overtime costs. In addition, the Resource Review reinvestment programme improves the longer-term sustainability of the On-Call duty system and explores new ways of working (crew carriers).
22. As detailed in the Resource Review the full range of reinvestment changes will take some time to fully implement. However, most changes are in place and in the next 12-18 months the final elements will be implemented to provide even greater resilience, performance and availability at two On-Call Fire Stations (Leominster and Bromyard) in North Herefordshire when a new blended crewing model during the daytimes of Wholetime and On-Call staffing goes live.
23. This new model will not only improve daytime availability at these locations, but it should also speed up the local response times, deliver higher levels of prevention and protection in those areas and support other On-Call station availability with any spare capacity. It will also improve the support, risk management (Intel) and training for the On-Call staff at those locations which are all key elements of the [Response Strategy 2021-2025](#)

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The report highlights the efficiencies made from the reallocation of money from seven of the most under-used fire engines into the front line.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework).	The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the document assist in delivering the aims of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Core Strategies.

<p>Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)</p>	<p>The reinvestment of money has increased the number of Wholetime firefighters at our busiest locations, decreased the overtime for cover moves and increased resilience in the On-Call duty system.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks the proposed control measures and risk evaluations scores)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Extensive public and Representative Body consultation.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>An EIA is not required for this report.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>Not required – no personal data is identified.</p>