Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority
Policy and Resources Committee
8 May 2024

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention

2023-24 Performance Report: Q4 (01 January – 31 March 2024)

Purpose of report

1.   To summarise the Service's performance for Q4, 2023-24.

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Recommendation

It is recommended that the details of the Q4 2023-24 performance headlines be noted, in particular that:

   i)   *A total of 1,841 incidents overall were attended in Q4 2023-24 which was an increase of 6% on Q4 2022-23.*
   ii)   *Fires (289) were 15% lower than Q4 2022-23 and lower than the five-year average of 364.*
   iii) *Special Services (680) were 13% higher than the corresponding quarter of the previous year and higher than the five-year average of 603.*
   iv)   *False alarms (872) were higher by 10% compared with Q4 2022-23 and above the five-year average of 796.*

Introduction and Background

2.   The Service gathers performance data relating to incidents attended and activities carried out to report to the Policy and Resources Committee and the Strategic Leadership Board on a quarterly basis. The Q4 2023-24 Performance Report is attached as Appendix 1 and provides information on overall incident numbers for Prevention, Protection and Response activities with an overview of the Service workforce. A cumulative summary of the performance is reported separately in the Annual Service Review.

3.   The Performance Report relates closely to the Prevention, Protection and Response strategies as well as the Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25.

Incident Overview

4.   A total of 1,841 incidents were attended in Q4 2023-24, an increase of 6% on Q4 2022-23 and an increase of 4% on the five-year average of 1,763 incidents. The Service also attended 12 'Over the Border' incidents during this quarter.

More context is provided later in this report. However, analysis shows that this is made up of:

a. 289 Fires: The number of fires attended in Q4 2023-24 was 15% lower than Q4 2022-23 and was also significantly lower than the five-year average of 364. This year, storms had significantly influenced and contributed to a decrease in the lower than usual number of outdoor fires.

b. 680 Special Services: The number of Special Services attended in Q4 2023-24 was 13% higher than Q4 2022-23, and also higher than the five-year average of 603 incidents. This increase was mostly driven by a rise in the number of flooding (up by 100%) and rescues or evacuation from water (up by 90%) incidents as a result of the three storms recorded in Q4 2023-24 (storms Henk, Isha and Jocelyn).

c. 872 False Alarms: The number of false alarms attended in Q4 was 10% higher than Q4 2022-23 and 9% higher than the five-year average of 796. These incidents fall into the following incident types: False Alarm due to apparatus, False Alarm - Good intent and False Alarm - Malicious. This increase was mainly caused by an increase in the number of False Alarms due to apparatus (an increase by 9%, 58 incidents) and partially due to increase in the number of Good Intent False Alarms (an increase by 12%, 18 incidents). In contrast, the number of Malicious False Alarms decreased by 1 incident when compared to Q4 2022-23.

Prevention

5. 1,856 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) were completed in Q4 2023-24. Although the quarterly target of 1,875 HFSVs per quarter was not achieved on this occasion, the overall annual target of 7,500 was exceeded by 160 HFSVs (2.13%). Out of,1856 HFSVs, 432 were delivered by Prevention Technicians with 1,424 delivered by Wholetime crews. HFSVs are targeted at those at greater risk of fire, based upon data and analysis as outlined in the Prevention Strategy. Trends are monitored on a monthly basis and fed into adjusting and focusing prevention activity as required.

Protection

6. The Service continues to conduct the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) of business premises. Qualified Fire Safety Inspectors from the Protection Department conducted 241 inspections in Q4. The total number of inspections carried out by the department in 2023-24 is 1,151, which exceeds the annual target of 1,000 Fire Safety inspections.

7. Whilst total enforcements have decreased by 50% compared to Q4 in 2022-23, there are no targets for this work. Enforcements are based upon inspection findings, including positive and proactive responses by business owners. This reflects positive engagement with businesses, by the Protection Department, as detailed in the Service Protection Strategy.

Enforcement Type	Q4 2023-24	Q4 2022-23
Alterations	3	5
Enforcements	1	11
Prohibitions	6	4
Total	**10**	**20**

8.	All fires in commercial premises are subject to a Post Fire Audit, so again there are no targets for this work. For context, the number of post fire audits increased from 46 to 49 in Q4 2023-24, when compared to Q4 2022-23.

9.	New Building Safety legislation was introduced on 1 October 2023 and the department have proactively identified business leads to highlight their fire safety responsibilities and offer support along with signposting to other assistance where needed. The department continue to proactively identify business leads to support them in their fire safety responsibilities and offer assistance when needed.

Response

Fires

10.	Both the numbers of Primary Fires and Secondary Fires have decreased by 2% and 33%, respectively in Q4 2023-24 when compared to Q4 2022-23. Among the Primary Fires, the highest decrease was among Building Fires by 11% (down by 17 incidents), while amongst the Secondary Fires the highest reduction was observed in the Other Outdoor (including land) fires, decreasing by 50% (down by 15 incidents).

11.	Fortunately, during this quarter there were no fatalities in Primary Fires with no further casualties going to hospital where an injury appeared to be serious.

12.	83% of the Primary Building Fires were classified as accidental and the majority of them (36%) started in the kitchen area. 34% of the property types for these incidents were recorded as a house of a single occupancy. For those incidents where household occupancy type was recorded, 36% concerned people living alone and 29% concerned person over pensionable age. This information is fed back into the Prevention department to further focus relevant activity and for trend analysis.

13.	There were five incidents in Q4 2023-24 where five or more pumps attended, four Primary Fire and one Special Service incidents. Of these large incidents, two incidents occurred in Worcester and Hereford and one incident happened in Upton upon Severn.

14.	In Q4 2023-24, Secondary Fires saw a 33% reduction, dropping from 94 incidents in the previous year to 63.

This decline spanned all Secondary Fire categories, including Grassland, Woodland and Crop, Other Outdoors, Outdoor Structures, Buildings & Transport and Outdoor Equipment & Machinery, with the number of incidents falling by 3 to 15 compared to the same quarter last year.

Special Services

15. The largest increase amongst Special Service incident types was flooding. This incident category resulted in a 100% increase over the same period in 2022-23 and concerned mostly houses of a single occupancy (47% of all incidents) in Worcester and Wyre Forest station areas (40% of incidents).

16. The rescue or evacuation from water incident types saw the second highest increase of 90% over the same period in 2022-23 can be attributed to storms recorded in Q4. The highest numbers of rescues took place in Tenbury Wells and Hereford station areas (21% of all incidents) and concerned road vehicles surrounded by moving or rising water (68% of incidents).

Road Traffic Collisions

17. There were 197 Road Traffic Collision incidents during Q4 2023-24, 19% more when compared to the same period in 2022-23. Although the overall number of RTC incidents appears to be slightly increasing when examining the last five years, 79% of RTCs attended in Q4 2023-24 concerned either making a vehicle or the scene safe. A person extraction was carried out at 21 incidents only.

18. The number of fatalities resulting from RTCs in Q4 2023-24 was 7 and slightly higher when compared to the same period last year. The same applies to the numbers of casualties suffering serious (an increase by 8) and slight injuries (an increase by 10). Information related to RTC's is fed into the Prevention department for review and to inform future training and awareness activities.

Attendance Performance Measure (APM)

19. The Service evaluates the time taken for the first appliance to get to a much wider range of incidents and compares that against the expected travel time over three time zones (10, 15 and 20 minutes). Q4 2023-24 is only the fourth time the Service is reporting on this measure, therefore there may be a need to adjust the way data is collected and analysed that will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

20. Incident types that usually attract an emergency response (blue light conditions) are mainly used for this report and these are then split into three time zones based upon the expected travel time from the station to the incident location. The use of the new APM now means that the Service is able to examine attendance at a far greater number of incidents, providing a much larger range of useful data. The previous attendance standard would only have examined 132 incidents (primary building fires) in Q4 2023-24, whilst the new APM has exceeded this by 279%.

21.　　Out of the 501 incidents examined this quarter, 362 (72%) met the APM. This equates to meeting the APM in:

      a. Zone 1 (10 mins) on 73% out of 355 occasions.
      b. Zone 2 (10-15 mins) on 68% out of 125 occasions.
      c. Zone 3 (15-20 mins) on 81% out of 21 occasions.

22.　　In this quarter, 71% of the incidents examined by the APM were in Zone 1 (10 minutes). Please note that the number of times an appliance had to attend an incident outside of its own station area was removed from the analysis.

23.　　This is a very useful baseline for future analysis and comparison, as the Service progresses through this reporting year. It also provides the Service with accurate data to identify areas of improvement when responding to emergencies.

24.　　The three main reasons why the APM was not met during this quarter were: Road obstruction/Traffic conditions etc (16 incidents), Turn in time (On-Call including Day crewing at night) (12 incidents) and Difficulty in locating incident address (11 incidents). The information has been passed on to Response managers who will review this data to ascertain which delays that may be unavoidable and also to determine what learning outcomes and improvements can be made. This will ensure that the Service can understand the reasons, put in relevant mitigations and improve response times where there is scope to make a difference.

On-Call Appliance Availability

25.　　The first On-Call appliance availability has decreased by 0.53% to 83.28% during Q4 2023-24 when compared to the same quarter of 2022-23. Availability for all On-call appliances fell by 6.85% to 66.45% in Q4 2023-24. For the first On-call appliance, 16 fire stations (64%) had over 85% availability. In comparison, 14 fire stations (56%) had over 85% availability over the same period in 2022-23. This information is fed back to managers in Response and directly links to the project work presently being undertaken with a strategic intent to improve On-Call availability to build a sustainable recruitment model for the future.

People

26.　　In terms of workforce diversity, the proportion of female representation has slightly increased by 1% reaching the level of 20% when compared to Q4 2022-23.

27.　　The 2021 Census data has recently been released and this has provided a more up-to-date picture of the Service's workforce profile. The population of ethnic minorities within the community has increased from 7% to 10%. Ethnic minority representation in the Service has slightly decreased by 1% when compared to the same period in 2022-23 and it is currently at 5%.

The Service continues to monitor employment trends and in the coming year will focus on positive action for under-represented groups as well as exploring development opportunities to support career progression for women.

28.   Overall absence due to staff sickness returned to more typical levels of 2.25 days lost per person compared to 6.38 days in the same period in Q4 2022-23. Input for managers is continuing on the recently updated Attendance Management policy with an emphasis on early intervention and support. By putting measures in place early, this can influence the length of absence or even prevent the absence occurring e.g. welfare support or occupational health advice.

29.   All staff groups, including Wholetime, Fire Control and Support showed a decrease in sickness rates in comparison to the same period in 2022-23. In terms of the split between long-term and short-term absence, long-term absence represents 51% of all staff sickness absence in this quarter. Respiratory – Chest Infection, Respiratory - Cold/Cough/Influenza and Mental Health – Stress categories were the main reasons for absence in this quarter. These figures and trends are monitored by the Health & Safety Committee who meet on a quarterly basis.

Conclusion/Summary

30.   Further information on the headlines set out above is included in Appendix 1.

31.   The Strategic Leadership Board will continue to receive performance reports and oversight of the measures being taken to address any issues arising. Where improvements are required any necessary action will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The figures reported may change due to increasing scrutiny over the Command & Control, Incident Recording System, Community Fire Risk Management Information System and HR Connect, and improved data quality control measures put in place.
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	The areas included link with the Annual Service Review and Annual Service Plan and the strategic objectives of the Service as outlined in the CRMP and three core strategies. The data considered directly links with the ethical principle of Putting Our Communities First.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Relevant data is fed into the Health & Safety Committee as appropriate.

Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	No, the report concerns operational activity and other areas of general performance data.
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	Not required – no personal data is identified.

Supporting Information: Appendix 1 – Performance Report: Quarter 4 2023-24