

Report of Area Commander, Head of Operations

Day Crewing Plus Review

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the outcome of the recent Day Crewing Plus (DCP) duty system review.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that an extension to the DCP trial at Hereford and Worcester Stations be agreed for a further 12 months (until March 2018) whilst further options are explored to meet the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Introduction and Background

2. The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2012/13 action plan included a fire cover review which made a number of recommendations in terms of fire cover, one of which was to remove a Wholetime crewed appliance from both Worcester and Hereford stations. This along with a number of other changes to the fire cover model would release savings between £0.9m and £1.7m. It was agreed that the second whole-time fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations would be changed to the Day Duty crewing system (12 hours permanently crewed and 12 hours Retained Duty System crewed in each 24 hours)
3. The FRA was however, keen to explore other options whereby these two appliances could remain as part of the establishment but crewed in a different way, thus maintaining the existing standard of fire cover in both Hereford and Worcester but realising some, if not all, of the original savings. (These are detailed in the Community Risk Management Plan 2014-20 (CRMP), *Fire and Emergency Cover Review*).
4. A Day Crewed Plus arrangement (DCP) was tabled whereby Wholetime staff employed a self rostering system providing blocks of 24hr immediate fire cover. Following the FRA meeting in February 2015 it was decided to run a 2 year Day Crewing Plus (DCP) system trial at both Hereford and Worcester Fire Stations to ascertain whether this was a viable proposition in terms of cost (savings) and fire cover in the longer term.
5. The DCP review has been compiled as a direct response to the decision made by the Fire Authority on 1 October 2014 which states:
 - (i) *the Authority approves a two year trial period of the Day Crewing Plus duty system for the second fire engines at Hereford and Worcester; and*

(ii) *the Authority approves the capital expenditure (from existing resources) to enable the changes to facilitate the Day Crewing Plus crewing model at Hereford and Worcester Fire Stations and instructs the Treasurer to include the revenue expenditure in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 budgets forecasts.”*

6. The trial began in April 2015 and is scheduled to run until March 2017.
7. The DCP system implemented provides the same level of cover as a traditional shift cover pump but utilises only 12 staff as opposed to 24 for the equivalent shift pump. This is achieved by the staff covering 24 hr shifts using a combination of 12 positive work hours and 12 on call hours, where they remain on, or very near, to the station so they can still provide immediate cover. This differs from the RDS in that with this model, they respond from home and can take up to five minutes to mobilise the appliance. There is a 25% salary enhancement for those working the DCP system to compensate for the evening cover provided as this is in addition to the standard 42 hour week worked by shift staff.

Review

8. In order to evaluate the DCP trial, a review was completed in November 2016 based upon the following criteria:
 - Is the system efficient in terms of staff numbers?
 - Does the system provide effective fire cover?
 - Is the system cost effective?
 - Is DCP productive compared to shift system?
 - Is DCP staff friendly?

Findings

9. The DCP system at Hereford and Worcester has to date been very successful in terms of meeting its objective of providing 24 hour a day immediate fire cover at a significantly reduced cost over the 2,2,4 shift it has replaced. It has other advantages as well, such as being a largely self-sufficient model where short term crewing deficiencies are managed in-house without the need to bring staff in on overtime. Also productivity has proved greater than the shift watches at each location and the nature of the model where two systems work side by side has increased skill levels across each station providing resilience for the crewing of specialist appliances at each location.
10. There have been challenges to the trial. The greatest and most problematic has been the covering of long term crewing deficiencies caused by long term sickness, where cover is only required for a defined period of time. This issue has been successfully managed during the trial but further consideration will have to be given if DCP is to be adopted as a permanent model at both Hereford and Worcester. In addition call volume, particularly at night remains low so DCP could be viewed as an expensive option for providing emergency cover.

11. Opting out of the Working Time Directive is voluntary meaning that working the night cover aspect of DCP is and will remain on a voluntary basis. As expected, the crewing system does not suit everyone's lifestyle and seems particularly unsuited to those with young families or single parents. That said turnover of staff has been minimal in terms of those requesting a return to the 2,2,4 shift system and there has been a steady stream of staff putting themselves forward to work on DCP. As the system sits outside of "Grey Book" terms and conditions and asks staff to opt out of the Working Time Directive it relies of members of staff "volunteering" to work it, which could also make the system vulnerable over the longer term.

Conclusions

12. The trial of the DCP system at Hereford and Worcester stations has successfully provided an appliance giving 24 hour cover at both locations but at an increased cost to the approved Day Duty system. However, it could be argued that as call volumes at night are low (particularly at Hereford) this is still an expensive option for fire cover at those times.
13. DCP provides for improved productivity and provides resilience for the specialist appliances but the system has a vulnerability in that it is still voluntary and staff can opt back in to the Working Time Directive at any time. This means that at short notice, the system could become inoperable and the Service would need to revert to an alternative Grey Book compliant crewing arrangement.
14. The review shows that DCP has worked during the trial and demonstrates that it has a place in HWFRS. DCP can now be considered as a crewing option along with other established systems but there is a financial cost associated with it, which has to be seen in the context of the Authority's overall Medium Term Financial Plan.
15. The revision of the Medium Term Financial Plan approved at the Authority's last meeting on 11 October 2016 identifies a budget gap of £1.657m by 2019/20 and additional savings will be necessary to meet this. Rather than ending the trial and reverting to the Day Duty system or accepting DCP as a permanent system now that may need to be changed further in the future, it would be prudent to extend the DCP trial for a further 12 months whilst this, and other crewing systems, are explored to provide further options to meet the Medium Term Financial Plan, at which time the Chief Fire Officer will report back to the Authority.
16. The Medium Term Financial Plan already contains financial provision for this trial to be continued for a further 12 months pending future decisions.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	MTFP already has provision to extend the trial.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications)	Trial continues to provide a crewing option for appliances at Hereford and Worcester.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores)	There is a risk that volunteers will not be available to the DCP system. At which point the trial would end and the agreed Day Duty system would be implemented.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	FBU were consulted as part of the review. Further consultation will begin if the trial extension is agreed.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Considered throughout original proposal and implementation. .

Supporting Information

Background Paper – Review of DCP at Hereford and Worcester

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