

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

7. Day Crewing Plus – Hereford and Worcester Fire Stations

Purpose of report

1. To report back to the Authority regarding the feasibility of introducing the Day Crewing Plus duty system to crew the second wholetime fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations.
 2. To seek approval to introduce Day Crewing Plus on a two year trial basis for the second fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations.
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Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- (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.**

Introduction

3. On 1 October 2014 the Authority approved the reduction of 28 wholetime posts from Hereford and Worcester fire stations. It was proposed that this be achieved through introducing day staff crewing for the second full time (wholetime) crewed fire engines at these locations. This change proposes that the second fire engines would be crewed by wholetime firefighters for 12 hours during the daytime, but during the 12 hour night time period these fire engines would be crewed by on-call Retained Duty System (RDS) staff.
4. At the same meeting the Chief Fire Officer was instructed to instigate a feasibility study to examine the potential to introduce the Day Crewing Plus (DCP) crewing model as an alternative to the day staff crewing model detailed in paragraph 3 above. DCP is a relatively new model of crewing system that was successfully introduced at Bromsgrove fire station in early in 2014.

Background

5. DCP is a crewing system that requires approximately half the number of wholetime firefighters of the traditional (2-2-4) crewing system – in this case it is the same

number as would be allocated for the day staff crewing model proposed in paragraph 3 above. However, an important difference is that DCP maintains the current immediate response 24 hours a day rather than the RDS on-call response during the 12 hour night period.

6. DCP requires firefighters to work shifts of 24 hours on station; 12 hours on stand-by and 12 hours carrying out normal working duties. Up to four 24 hour shifts can be worked in succession, but all shifts are self-selected by the firefighters on a self rostering basis; fatigue management protocols are in place to safeguard against excessive tiredness.
7. Firefighters selected to work this shift system work a 42 hour basic week for which they receive their normal salary. However, they also receive a 25% pensionable pay enhancement to provide on-call cover from the fire station during the 12 hour night time periods.
8. Due to the significant time spent at the fire station, although 50% is on call and not actively working, individuals working DCP need to sign a waiver to the European Working Time Directive in relation to length of the periods worked, i.e. 24 hours. However, those individuals also have a legal right, with three months' notice, to remove that waiver which means the night cover element of this shift system is voluntary and as such firefighters cannot be contractually forced to work this system. This is in contrast to the other duty systems operated within the Service which carry a contractual obligation.

Viability Criteria

9. The evaluation of the feasibility of the DCP model at Hereford and Worcester has been subjected to the following areas of investigation:
 - Staff interest in working this voluntary system
 - Representative Body engagement and agreement (notably the FBU)
 - Capital set-up costs
 - Revenue Costs
 - Operational suitability of DCP at these locations

Staff interest in working this voluntary system

10. In November 2014 operational staff from across the Service were asked to submit a non-committal expression of interest in working DCP at either Hereford or Worcester; a total of 66 staff expressed an interest. At this stage registration of an interest is non-binding. The responses received were as follows:

Hereford: 49 of the 66 staff would be prepared to work DCP at Hereford

Worcester: 41 of the 66 staff would be prepared to work DCP at Worcester

11. For DCP to operate effectively the Service would require 12 suitably qualified Firefighters at each location; the volume of expressions of interest received indicates an over-subscription of staff from across the Service willing to undertake DCP.
12. As would be expected in any selection process some of the staff that have expressed an interest may not be suitable to work the DCP system. Experience from implementing DCP at Bromsgrove has shown that there is a need for individuals who demonstrate a high degree of self ownership, reliability and flexibility to be part of a DCP crew. The selection process to identify individuals with these characteristics has an unknown attrition rate but it is anticipated that there would still be more than adequate interest to fill both stations' DCP establishment. It is further anticipated that there will be additional suitable volunteers to replace leavers to sustain DCP into the future.

Representative Body Engagement

13. Following consultation with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) their local representatives have stated in writing;

"Following the decision of the FRA tasking the CFO to look into the possibility of applying a DCP system the H&W FBU are formally stating that it will not oppose the implementation of such a system should it be deemed suitable for either or both Hereford and Worcester fire stations.

Although this duty system falls outside the National Conditions of Service in that it is a duty system which does not fulfil point 3 of the Systems of Duty Framework: -

(3) It should comply with relevant United Kingdom and European law, including the Working Time Regulations 1998, and Health, Safety and Welfare at Work legislation

It is felt by the membership that it would be possible for this system to provide the fire cover needed for both cities and, therefore, the local FBU will not oppose its implementation and would also wish to be part of any negotiations affecting its members who may eventually volunteer to work this system."

14. Therefore, although the proposal has yet to be fully agreed it can be seen that the local FBU is broadly supportive.

Capital Costs

15. As this system requires staff to spend up to four successive 24 hour periods on or very near to the station (with half of each 24 hour period on-call), it is necessary to ensure proper and adequate rest and welfare facilities, especially for the 12 hour on-call periods. Ideally these facilities should be separate from the other station accommodation which would be used by the crew of the first fire engine who will continue to work the existing 2-2-4, 24 hour immediate response duty system.
16. Estimated capital set up costs for each location are approximately £0.275m (total £0.550m). It is anticipated that this capital expenditure can be contained within the existing capital expenditure resources.

17. At Worcester it is anticipated that an additional small accommodation block would be built within the curtilage of the new fire station which would adequately accommodate the DCP firefighters' needs.
18. Due to the nature of the existing station at Hereford, an interim solution may be necessary to provide the appropriate level of facilities locally. The subsequent delivery of a replacement fire station for Hereford could have bespoke DCP facilities included in any new build program.
19. If following the two year trial of the DCP duty system (as proposed in this report), these two fire engines are reverted to the originally agreed day staff crewing, the additional accommodation can be utilised as office or training accommodation and thereby ensure this capital investment continues to be effectively used.

Revenue Costs

20. When considering the allowances and capital debt charges, the revenue cost for the introduction of DCP for the second fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations would be £0.164m per annum (net) over and above the costs of the previously agreed day staff crewing.
21. It is proposed that the DCP duty system be introduced for the second fire engines at Hereford and Worcester fire stations for an initial trial period of two years. This trial is suggested both from a 'does it work?' viewpoint, but also more importantly, due to the uncertainty around future revenue budgets. During this two year period it is envisaged that additional clarity will emerge regarding future cuts in government grant to the Authority and therefore whether this expenditure can be sustained beyond the trial period.

Suitability of DCP at each Location

22. Prior to the introduction of DCP at Bromsgrove in early 2014, an in-depth examination of the suitability of such a crewing model at that location was undertaken. This was based upon call activity, call types and times, management implications and staff suitability. Whilst this has provided a core DCP model, policy and contracts to work from, it has been necessary to review the information supplied in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2014/15 against these criteria and carry out an assessment of the suitability at each location.

Hereford

23. Against the criteria outlined above it is suggested that the second fire engine at Hereford fire station is suitable for this type of crewing model. On average during the night time period it is estimated (from current activity levels) that Hereford's second fire engine will receive just fewer than **1.5 calls per week**. The station's call profiles, risks and activities present no barriers to the implementation of DCP.

Worcester

24. Whilst the second fire engine at Worcester has a slightly higher call volume and different activity profile to that of Hereford's, it is still considered to be low and well within the accepted professional threshold of activity for a DCP fire engine. On average during the night time period it is estimated (from current activity levels) that

Worcester's second fire engine will receive just over **2 calls per week**. The station's call profiles, risks and activities present no barriers to the implementation of DCP.

25. It should also be noted that measures to introduce revised mobilising protocols in the near future will see a further reduction in mobilisations, predominantly those that often result in false alarms. This call type currently makes up approximately 32% of Worcester's and 23% of Hereford's second fire engine night time call profile.
26. It is also worthy of note that the DCP system allows the second fire engines at Hereford and Worcester to respond immediately, as is currently the case under the traditional 2-2-4 duty system, rather than having an additional delay of up to 4-5 minutes if crewed by the on-call RDS crewing model

Conclusion/Summary

27. As an alternative to the day staff crewed option agreed on 1 October 2014, and subject to the agreement of the Authority, there is no reason why, for a trial period of two years, both Hereford and Worcester fire stations' second fire engines cannot be operated on a DCP system.
28. The adoption of DCP at Hereford and Worcester will require additional finance and some significant local cultural change, however, it will continue to provide two immediate response fire engines in each city.
29. Introducing the DCP duty system on a trial basis will allow the Authority to review this decision against the changing financial landscape, changing risk and operational activity profiles.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	This paper requires significant capital and revenue resource allocation.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	This paper fully supports the existing CRMP proposals and is as a result of an Authority decision previously taken. It also aligns with core strategy in all areas, in particular resourcing for the future.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Existing control measures are in place for the DCP model used at Bromsgrove.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Consultation on this matter has been extensive, regarding the CRMP and this proposal. Further local consultation will take place as appropriate.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	No, however the 3 aims of the Equalities Act have been considered at all stages of the paper and will be taken into account in any outcome. An Equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of any future potential implementation of this paper.

Background Papers

- Community Risk Management Plan 2014 – 2020
- Minutes from the Authority Meeting on 1 October 2014

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