

# CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE  
DATE: 16 NOVEMBER 2016  
REPORT OF: HEAD OF OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ASSURANCE  
AUTHOR: SM STEVE WHITE

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SUBJECT: NW FIRE CONTROL – ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

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## Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members about the performance associated with North West Fire Control (NWFC) during the year 2015-16 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016).

**Recommended:** That

- [1] Members note the performance information relating to North West Fire Control.

## Background

2. This report is based on quarterly performance management reports produced by NW Fire Control Limited (NWFC Ltd). The format and content of the reports produced by NWFC Ltd has changed slightly over the reporting period. Where necessary some commentary is provided.

## Information

### System Performance

#### 3. Availability

- 3.1 NWFC Ltd relies upon the call handling and mobilising system in order to provide an effective, efficient service. The contract for the system contains a requirement for the system to be available for 99.9% of the time, measured on an annual basis. Performance is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Availability	100%	100%	100%	100%

#### 4. Faults

- 4.1 The contract for the system categorises faults by severity and includes a target time to remedy the different fault categories. Category One faults are those that cause a total loss of availability of the system or a material deterioration of operational effectiveness (to such an extent that NWFC Ltd is unable to deliver all or part of its service). The target time to fix a Category

One fault is 6 hours. The definition of Category Two faults include the terms 'material malfunction' and 'material deterioration in ... operational effectiveness'. Category Three faults involve minor impacts to the system and/or operational effectiveness.

4.2 Performance is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Category One</b>	0	0	0	1 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Category Two</b>	20	10	30	16
<b>Category Three</b>	198	149	172	135

<sup>1</sup> Category One fault in Q4. Improvements to the visual display on the operators' screens were implemented in January 2016. Initially, the change adversely affected the screens. This meant that NWFC Ltd had to operate in fall back mode whilst the fault was rectified. Telent was on site implementing the change so the fault was rectified quickly and the improvements successfully made.

4.3 Overall, there is a general downward trend in faults as the system becomes increasingly stable and processes are improved.

## 5. Speed

5.1 The system needs to operate quickly. The performance standard in the contract is complex. In essence the contract requires actions (referred to contractually as 'transactions') that are carried out by the system to be completed within a range of very short periods (e.g. less than one second to load the gazetteer address information on 95% of occasions).

5.2 Performance is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Total no. of transactions</b>	109,019	130,458	149,564	118,622
<b>No. failed to meet standard</b>	238 (0.22%)	218 (0.17%)	85 (0.06%)	53 (0.04%)
<b>Average transaction speed</b>	0.342 secs	0.229 secs	0.2 secs	0.2 secs

## **Call Handling and Mobilising Performance**

### **6. Time to Answer Emergency Calls**

6.1 The target is 95% of emergency calls answered in 10 seconds or less. This is a national target set by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA).

6.2 Performance is shown in the table below.

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds</b>	Data not <sup>1</sup> available	94.7%	70.68% <sup>2</sup>	95.27%

<sup>1</sup> Initially, the system could not provide performance data against the 10 second target. During Q1 the percentage of calls answered within 5 seconds was: April 74%; May 80%; June 82%.

<sup>2</sup> Performance during Q3 was impacted significantly due to spate conditions occurring during widespread flooding in Cumbria and Lancashire (storms Frank and Eva). Call volumes were much higher than normal for a number of days.

### **7. Time of Call Answer to Time of Alerting the First Resources for all Emergency Calls**

7.1 The target is that the 'average' time to mobilise a first response to an incident of Priority level 1, 2 or 3 should be no more than 90 seconds. These include life risk incidents and most types of fires and road traffic collisions.

7.2 Performance is shown in the table below.

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Call to Alert in Seconds</b>	100	104	107	104

7.3 As can be seen NWFC Ltd is struggling to meet the target. Whilst the difference is between 10 and 17 seconds, various actions are being pursued by NWFC Ltd with a view to reducing the average time to mobilise resources. These include further enhancements to the way that the system

presents information for particular types of incident and individual staff performance (learning from the best performers). Of course speed must not be allowed to compromise accuracy – resources must be despatched to the right location.

### **Costs of Service**

#### **8. Percentage of Incidents by FRS 2015/2016**

- 8.1 The cost of the service provided by NWFC Ltd is paid for in proportions agreed by the FRSs.
- 8.2 The table below shows the percentage of activities in each quarter per FRS area and then contains the overall percentage for the year compared to the cost paid by each FRS.

	<b>Cheshire</b>	<b>Cumbria</b>	<b>Greater Manchester</b>	<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Other Calls</b>
<b>Q1</b>	16.7%	8.65%	48.9%	24.36%	1.39%
<b>Q2</b>	18.60%	8.71%	46.86%	24.53%	1.30%
<b>Q3</b>	16.16%	11.07%	47.04%	25.73%	0%
<b>Q4</b>	16.24%	8.46%	49.67%	24.39%	1.24%
<b>Overall Average</b>	16.9%	9.41%	47.86%	24.88%	1.27%
<b>Annual Percentage of Cost per FRS</b>	18%	8%	48.5%	25.5%	N/A

### **Staff**

#### **9. Performance**

- 9.1 The author visits NWFC regularly in his role as Operational Support Manager. This allows him to observe staff working in control, taking emergency calls and mobilising resources on a number of occasions, notably during the reporting period of this report on bonfire night 2015.
- 9.2 On the whole, the staff work well, and the majority of calls are handled correctly, within agreed timescales and the right resources are mobilised. There have been a number of occasions where staff have found themselves working in 'spate conditions' (floods at Christmas/New Year 2015) meaning a great many calls being received, a high number of incidents created and very many resources being mobilised in a short period of time. Staff have worked well, rising to the occasion.

Through the robust monitoring and feedback processes we have in place between CFRS and NWFC, issues are regularly identified, investigated and dealt with. There are occasions when the issues are caused by 'human error' but performance issues are robustly managed.

## **10. Training and Skills**

- 10.1 NWFC Ltd takes training and improving the skills of staff very seriously.
- 10.2 Each new recruit initially has an intensive 4-week classroom based training programme run by Team Leaders from the Ops Support department. After that 4 weeks training and providing they have reached the required standards they then join their teams for a further 3 weeks of on-the-job training or until their Team Leader thinks they are ready to be counted as part of the team.
- 10.3 The new recruits then have 12 months to complete their Level 1 workbooks. In this they have to evidence completing certain tasks that form part of their everyday duties and also producing reports on NWFC policies and procedures.
- 10.4 Once their Phase 1 workbook is completed and signed off by their team leaders and verified by an Operations Manager, they have to then complete Phase 2 and 3 workbooks before being deemed competent. Once competent each Control Room Operator (CRO) has an ongoing maintenance programme to complete. All of this training is mapped to National Occupational Standards.
- 10.5 Each team allocates two training sessions per day; this is when team briefing and specific training such as bonfire or spate conditions can take place.
- 10.6 Identified in the appraisal process was the view that staff would like some refresher training. This is being undertaken in January – February 2017, and will be conducted on an annual basis. NWFC Ltd has purchased a software package which will help identify any further training requirements from the appraisal process.
- 10.7 Any training needs/requirements are also identified by call handling audits, these are conducted by Team Leaders and audited by Operations Manager.
- 10.8 Staff also have a voice when it comes to making improvements. Views and issues can be fed back via CRO, Team Leader forums or Ops Managers meetings or the System Development User Group.

## **Meetings**

### **11. Ops Group/CAB**

- 11.1 Ops Group meet every six weeks and a Change Advisory Board (CAB) meeting is scheduled for every fortnight.

- 11.2 Ops Group is attended by a representative (usually the Single Point Of Contact) from each of the four FRSs and representatives from NWFC Ltd (Operations Managers and Ops Support). These meetings are held regularly and are well attended. The group discuss a wide range of items relating to mobilising and communications.
- 11.3 CAB's function is to report on the more technical issues, usually relating to the mobilising system, iCAD, and the progress being made with improvements, or requests from FRSs to make changes or to develop new functionality. CAB meetings have seldom taken place as there has been a lack of business. However, these are now being programmed.

### **Financial Implications**

12. None resulting from the information in the report. The arrangement continues to deliver significant savings to the Authority. The Authority reduced its revenue budget in 2014-15 by £335k.

### **Legal Implications**

13. None resulting from the information in the report. An agreement for services exist between the Authority and NWFC Ltd. This provides a framework for managing the relationship.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

14. None

### **Environmental Implications**

15. None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE**