

Minute Annex

Annex to minutes of Cheshire Fire Authority 14th February 2018

1F Questions from Members of the Public

In accordance with procedural rules no 4.47 to 4.54 questions had been submitted by members of the public from within the area covered by the Authority. The following questions were asked and responded to at the meeting.

Michael Jones:

What was the number of full time fire fighters employed by CFRS in 2010, and what was the number of non operational staff employed by the service in 2010 in comparison with the number of full time fire fighters employed by CFRS in 2017, and the number of non operational staff employed by the service in 2017?

Response:

The number (headcount) of full time (wholetime duty system) firefighters employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2009/10 was 524 and the number (headcount) of non operational staff (support staff) employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2009/10 was 262.

The number (headcount) of full time (wholetime duty system) firefighters employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016/17 was 407 and the number (headcount) of non operational staff (support staff) employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016/17 was 227.

It will also be worth noting that the number (headcount) of on-call firefighters employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2009/10 was 196 and the number (headcount) of on-call firefighters employed by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2016/17 was 268.

In accordance with the Constitution the questioner asked a supplementary question summarised as follows:

Does the Chairman agree, that the reduction in the number of whole time operational staff, explains why Cheshire in 2012 achieved its attendance target for dwelling fires on 98.7% of occasions, whilst this success rate dropped to only 88% of occasions last year.

In short, does he agree that reductions in whole time firefighter posts give rise to increased attendance times bearing in mind that speed and weight of attack have always, and will always be, fundamental to any successful firefighting and rescue?

The Chair stated that he did not propose to ask Members to provide a response at the meeting. He confirmed that a written response would be provided in due course.

Response provided:

The attendance target of 98.7% mentioned within the question was the projected attendance standard for residential properties in 2011/12 (see IRMP 9 page 17), which is based on the definition for the Cheshire Standard detailed below. The risk categories were determined on a ward level.

Risk level	Response Standard
Very High	0-5 mins
High	6-10 mins
Medium	11-15 mins
Low	16-20 mins
Very Low	Within 21 mins

The current Cheshire Standard was adopted on 1st April 2013 in which a blanket response standard of 10 minutes was introduced for all dwelling fires and road traffic collisions for which the current performance is 88%.

Accordingly, it is difficult to compare the two figures that are quoted.

Andy Spencer:

The Chief Fire Officer and the DCFO are remunerated as part of their salary and given vehicles for being on call as Gold Incident Commanders.

During the 2 Year period 2016-2018 on how many occasions were either the CFO or the DCFO mobilised to an incident type as a Gold Commander.

Additionally have any of the two officers responded to any incidents on Blue Lights.

Response:

The Fire Authority provides appropriate vehicles for the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer in order for them to fulfil their contractual and operational duty requirements.

The Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer each attended one incident during the two year period 2016-2018.

Both the Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer have not responded to any incidents on Blue Lights during the same period.

In accordance with the Constitution the questioner asked a supplementary question summarised as follows:

Given your response and the obvious cost implications of having dedicated luxury vehicles for the Senior management team, which are not used operationally for Blue Light incidents.

Might the Fire Authority consider Pool Vehicles which would reduce costs significantly.

Derbyshire CFO currently drives a 4 year old pool car which is a Toyota Avensis valued at less than £4k. That demonstrates real austerity.

The Chair indicated that a written response would be provided in due course.

Response provided:

Not all members of the service management team have vehicles which are supplied by the Authority.

The Authority operates a lease scheme, which is cost-neutral, because of the contributions made by those taking a lease car.

The Authority also has pool cars for those staff who do not wish to have a lease car.

Some staff use their own vehicles and are reimbursed reasonable expenses for business use.

The Authority provide cars for two officers: the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive; and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The Fleet Manager arranges for these cars to be sourced in the most cost-effective way (lease or purchase). The vehicles may be retained in the fleet and used for operational duties, or sold at the optimum time.

The suitability of the vehicles is a matter for the Fire Authority, but is also governed by the terms and conditions of employment of staff.

Terry Coe:

What is the total sum of the budget under-spend from service delivery department (operational) for the 7 year period 2010-2017?

Response:

The total underspend for the 7 year period amounts to £1.9m.

The total amount of expenditure during this period is over £142m. Therefore the underspend equates to 1.3% of expenditure.

SERVICE DELIVERY - OUTTURN
POSITION

Year	Budget £000	Outturn £000	Variance £000
2010-11	21,131	21,135	4
2011-12	21,177	20,984	-193
2012-13	20,682	20,454	-228
2013-14	20,787	20,454	-333
2014-15	20,251	20,094	-157
2015-16	19,855	19,560	-295
2016-17	20,086	19,388	-698

In accordance with the Constitution the questioner asked a supplementary question summarised as follows:

Given that we have lost over 160 operational posts between 2010-17, the Fire Authority intend to employ over 30 non-uniform staff.

How will this improve Service Delivery?

The Chair indicated that a written response would be provided in due course.

Response provided:

The information below includes figures that were provided in response to a question dealt with at the Fire Authority meeting on the 14th February 2018.

Operational Staff

	Wholetime	On-Call	Total
2009/10	524	196	720
2016/17	407	268	675
Change	-117	+72	-45

Non-Operational Staff

In 2019/10 there were 262: in 2016/17 there were 227, a reduction of 35. The reference to 30 non-uniform staff is not understood.

Changes to service delivery have been made for a variety of reasons, not least as a result of pressure on the Fire Authority's budget.

Ted Wall:

Since the implementation of cuts to fire services in Cheshire East we have seen a rise in the occurrence of fires as well as the stretching of remaining services, as a result all settlements in cheshire east will suffer as a result of the proposed plan to downgrade Crewe's second pump. Is it not time to rethink this idea which could cause a great deal of damage to an already woefully served Cheshire East?

Response:

Item 7 on the agenda deals with the plans to change the duty system from wholetime to on-call for the second fire engine at Crewe. The report contains statistics about the number of fires. Your question is noted and will be taken into account when we deal with Item 7.

In accordance with the Constitution the questioner asked a supplementary question summarised as follows:

Would this be a greater idea to perhaps implement the austerity proposals these gentlemen have proposed rather than cause a great deal of suffering to residents.

The Chair indicated that a written response would be provided in due course.

Response provided:

I am attaching a copy of one of the other supplementary questions and the response (see question and response re: vehicles above). This contains the only obvious reference to austerity.