

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 2nd SEPTEMBER 2020
REPORT OF: HEAD OF OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ASSURANCE
AUTHOR: SM HUW COATES

SUBJECT: NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL – ANNUAL
REPORT 2019-20

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members about the performance of North West Fire Control (NWFC) during 2019-20 (1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020).

Recommended: That

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

Background

2. NWFC has been providing call handling and mobilising functions to the Service since 2014. It provides regular reports about performance. This report is based on the Quarterly Performance Management reports produced by NWFC. NWFC has now appointed an officer with specific responsibilities for data and reporting and during 2019-20 some changes have been agreed on how performance is reported.

Information

3. The following headings deal with call handling performance, costs of service, staff performance, staffing levels and business continuity.
4. Since the publication of the last report, the following changes have been incorporated into these sections:

Call Handling Performance

The total number of both emergency and admin calls received by NWFC is now reported in order to provide a more complete picture of the overall workload. Additionally, calls that generate a 'call-challenge' from the Control Room Operator (CRO) are also reported in order to show the effectiveness of these processes in reducing unwanted fire calls.

Mobilising times for appliances are now broken down into incident type, to show a more complete picture of call handling performance. It is

recognised that certain incident types require a longer call management time than others.

Staffing Levels

Staffing levels and employee absenteeism are now included within the reports as well as the overall percentage of optimum staffed shifts. This provides an indicator as to the effectiveness of the existing staffing arrangements and highlights any requirement for additional human resources.

Call handling performance

Number of Calls

5. The total number of emergency calls and admin calls per quarter is shown in the table below for all Services.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Emergency Calls	28,237	26,965	24,650	22,485
Admin calls	28,679	29,655	27,679	27,762

6. Overall, call volumes are broadly comparable with the previous two years. There are occasional significant spikes in activity, for example during the Moorland Fires in the summer of 2018, but proven systems are embedded to allow NWFC to deal with these seasonal fluctuations or spate conditions.

Call Challenging

7. Control Room Operatives are trained to challenge specific call types and ask additional questions to identify if fire and rescue service attendance is required. These include Automatic Fire Alarms, (AFAs) Animal Rescues, Bonfires and Gaining Entry incidents on behalf of other agencies. The table below shows a breakdown by quarter of the numbers of calls that were challenged and their subsequent outcomes.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Calls challenged	6652	7786	7715	8958
Not mobilised	2450	2854	2718	2455
Mobilised	4202	4932	4997	6503

8. The majority of non-mobilisations relate to calls from AFAs where approximately half of all calls received for this incident type do not generate a fire and rescue service attendance. It should be noted that the call challenge protocols in place for the Service have generated recent interest from neighbouring services wishing to emulate this performance.

Time to Answer Emergency Calls

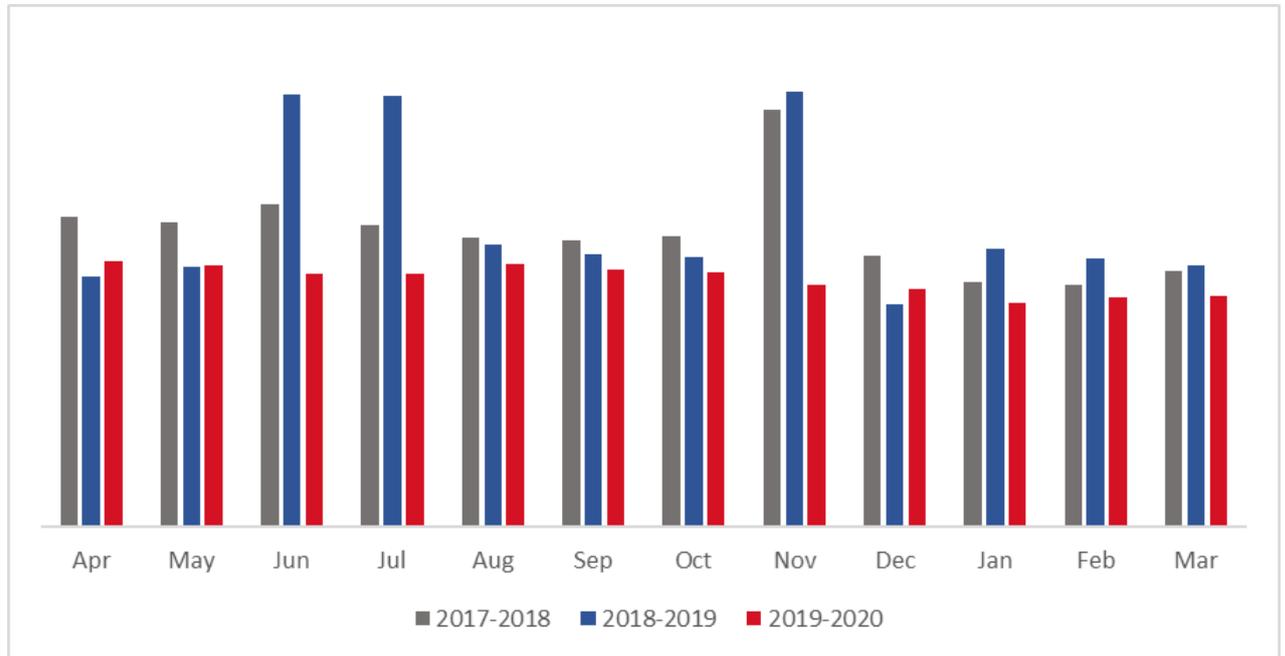
9. A national target was recommended some years ago by the Chief Fire Officers Association, (now the NFCC) and it is against this target that NWFC has been reporting. The target is that 95% of emergency calls should be answered in 10 seconds, or less
10. Performance is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds	95.00%	95.64%	95.83%	95.60%
Average time taken to answer emergency calls	7 seconds	5 seconds	4 seconds	4 seconds

Time of Call Answer to Time of Alerting the First Resources for all Emergency Calls

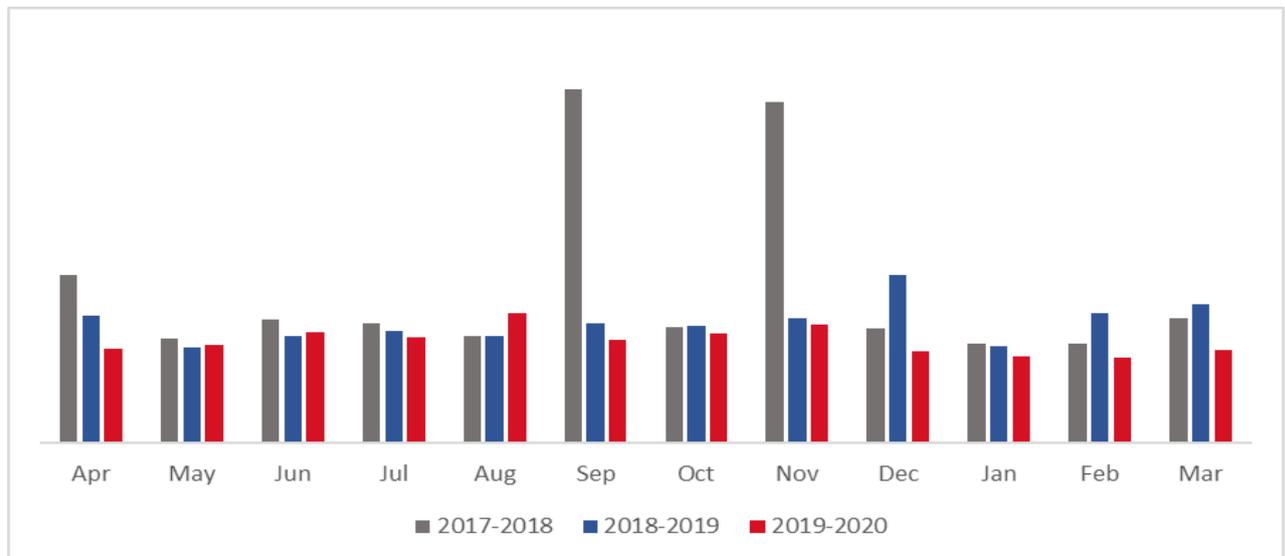
11. A national target was recommended some years ago by the Chief Fire Officers Association, (now the NFCC) and it is against this target that NWFC reports. The target is for resources to be mobilised within 90 seconds of a call being answered. This obviously only relates to calls where a mobilisation is necessary.
12. It is recognised that different incident types involve different call handling requirements. Special Service calls typically occur at non-addressable locations, for example motorways or waterways and so generally require additional questions to be asked to correctly identify the locations of incidents.
13. The following tables illustrate Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service mobilising times specific to incident type with comparison data from the previous two years.

CFRS Mobilising times: Fires



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2017-2018	114	112	118	111	106	105	107	153	100	90	89	94
2018-2019	92	95	159	158	104	100	99	160	82	102	98	96
2019-2020	97	96	93	93	97	94	94	89	88	82	84	85

CFRS Mobilising times: Special Service Calls



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2017-2018	249	154	182	177	158	523	171	504	170	146	146	185
2018-2019	189	140	157	165	158	177	174	183	248	144	191	205
2019-2020	139	145	163	155	192	152	162	174	135	128	126	137

14. The average time to mobilise to fire incidents was 91 seconds. However, two small vehicle fires in October 2019 had a significant delay in mobilising due to difficulties in locating the incidents. With these removed, the average time to mobilise for the year would be 89 seconds.
15. The average time to mobilise to Special Service Calls was 151 seconds.
16. Work is ongoing within NWFC to streamline mobilising rules and pre-mobilising actions to further improve times taken to mobilise appliances across all incident types.

Costs of Service

17. The cost of the service provided by NWFC is paid for in proportions agreed by the fire and rescue services.
18. CFRS currently pays for 18% of the total costs. This is commensurate with activity levels.

	Cheshire	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Lancashire
Q1	18.08%	12.05%	40.78%	29.07%
Q2	20.90%	12.10%	38.50%	30.50%
Q3	20.14%	13.16%	36.48%	30.22%
Q4	18.28%	13.85%	36.09%	31.78%
Overall Average	19.35%	12.79%	37.96%	30.39%
Annual Percentage of Cost per FRS	18%	8%	48.5%	25.5%

Staff Performance

19. CFRS staff regularly attend NWFC. Their observations form an important aspect of performance monitoring as they can take a view about aspects of the service provided by NWFC that are not measured statistically, e.g. the approach to call handling. There is close working for significant events and during certain periods, e.g. major disruption such as flooding and during the bonfire period. On the whole, the staff at NWFC continue to work well with the vast majority of calls leading to the correct mobilisation of resources. Systems and people are fully tested when conditions are the most challenging and staff at NWFC worked well on each occasion. There are clear channels through which to communicate feedback between operational crews within CFRS and staff in NWFC.

20. NWFC continues to take the training and improvement of the skills of its staff very seriously. This is evident from the management and integration of new starters and approach to the ongoing maintenance and improvement of skills. NWFC now use the same Competence Management and eLearning system as the service, PDRPro.
21. Performance statistics are also considered by Team Leaders so that they can see how well their team members are performing and where additional support or training may be required. Individual performance also provides evidence for appraisals and is considered when performance related pay is determined.

Staffing Levels

22. Staffing levels within NWFC will fluctuate over a 24 hour period in line with expected activity. Additionally, specific staffing arrangements are in place to allow NWFC to respond to spate conditions such as during the bonfire period.
23. The table below shows the amount of time that the optimum staffing level was available in the Control Room without requiring the use of existing resilience within their support departments, overtime or recalling on-call personnel.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Optimum Staffing Available	91.6%	98.3%	91.6%	98.6%
Shifts lost per person	2.45	2.30	1.62	1.20

24. The annual average number of shifts lost per person due to sickness is 7.57 days, slightly down from the previous year, 7.93. These figures do not include staff members who self-isolated for Covid-19 related reasons.

Business Continuity

25. One full business continuity exercises has been carried out at NWFC during the reporting period (Exercise Delorean in December 2019). Such exercises take place whilst there is a complete shut down of the mobilising system, necessitated by a requirement to complete essential updates. Business Continuity arrangements are now fully embedded at NWFC with an effective management system in place.
26. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, NWFC have worked with the 4 fire and rescue services to set up effective systems to deal with the additional risk the virus poses to crews as well as ensure their own core functions can continue to operate safely. Some recently retired staff underwent refresher training to provide extra resilience to the staffing system and extra measures were implemented within the Control Room to reduce the

risk of passing on infection. This has been effective and at least minimum staffing levels have been maintained at all times.

Financial Implications

27. None resulting from the information in the report. The arrangement continues to deliver significant savings to the Authority.

Legal Implications

28. None resulting from the information in the report. An agreement for services exists between the Authority and NW Fire Control Ltd. This provides a framework for managing the relationship.

Equality and Diversity Implications

29. None

Environmental Implications

30. None

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE