

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 8 SEPTEMBER 2021
REPORT OF: HEAD OF OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ASSURANCE
AUTHOR: SM TAM BLAIR

SUBJECT: NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL ANNUAL
REPORT 2020-21

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members about the performance of North West Fire Control (NWFC) during the year 2020-21 (1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021).

Recommended: That

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

Background

2. This report is based on the Quarterly Performance Management reports produced by NWFC.

Information

3. The following headings deal with call handling performance, costs of service, staff performance, staffing levels and business continuity. These are the agreed performance measures reported on for the four Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) for whom NWFC provides Control Room functions.

Call handling performance

Number of calls

4. The total number of emergency calls and admin calls per call is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Emergency Calls	39,128	34,879	31,248	31,666
Admin Calls	28,226	25,772	24,399	25,981

- Overall, emergency calls are slightly lower than last year. It is difficult to identify emerging trends from such a short time period, but it should be acknowledged that societal behaviour patterns changed considerably during the Covid-19 pandemic and this may have had an impact on emergency calls. Call volume continued to be lower in comparison to previous years in Q4 despite the spate conditions brought on by the wide area flooding in Cheshire and Greater Manchester. Societal behavioural changes on trends should become evident in the performance report of 2021-22.

Call Challenging

- 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, (AFA's) Animal Rescues, Bonfires and Gaining Entry incidents on behalf of other agencies. The table below shows a breakdown by quarter of the number of calls that were challenged and their subsequent outcomes.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Calls Challenged	5620	7334	7790	13628
Mobilised	3769	4403	4512	8106
Not Mobilised	1851	2931	3278	5522

- The majority of non-mobilisations relate to calls from AFAs where approximately half of all calls received do not generate a fire and rescue service attendance. The success of the call challenge protocols introduced by Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) has prompted neighbouring services to implement similar policies.

Time to Answer Emergency Calls

- A national target was recommended some years ago by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), now the National Fire Chiefs Council (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.
- Performance is shown in the table below.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Average Time to Answer	5 seconds	5 seconds	5 seconds	5 seconds
Percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds	95%	95%	95%	95%

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

10. A national target was recommended some years ago by NFCC and it is against this target that NWFC reports. The target is for resources to be mobilised within 90 seconds of a call. Obviously, this only relates to calls where a mobilisation is necessary.
11. Performance is shown in the table below (average in seconds).

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Call to Alert in Seconds – Average Across FRS'	96	95	94	94
Fires – CFRS	77	79.6	77.6	73.6
Special Service Calls - CFRS	153	135.6	120	130.6

12. The time taken to mobilise resources to Fire Incidents within Cheshire is an improvement on recent years and consistently falls under the average time for this incident type across the four regional FRS'.
13. It should be noted that different incident types require differing amounts of information to be taken during the call handling processes to ensure correct mobilisation. Mobilisations to Fire related incidents are consistently within the 90 second national target.
14. The table above shows a measure of all 'attended' incidents with the following omissions:

Any incident classified as Incident Recording System (IRS) or NWFC 'Other' – these are predominantly test and admin incidents some of which do not feed into the Fire Service Incident Recording Systems.

- Chemical suicide
- Concern for welfare
- Gaining entry
- Calls to assist other agencies non-life risk (i.e. Police or Ambulance)
- Suspect package/White powder/bomb
- Arson threat
- Threatening to Jump (from height or into water)
- Attendance to be made to a non-critical incident within 2 hours

15. These incident types have been removed due to them not requiring an immediate attendance or where consultation with an officer such as a

National Inter Agency Liaison Officer (NILO) determines the required attendance.

Costs of Service

Percentage of Incidents by FRS 2020/2021

16. The cost of the service provided by NWFC is paid for in proportions agreed by the FRSs.
17. 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. As previously, the figures show a very close alignment between activity and cost.

	Cheshire	Cumbria	Greater Manchester	Lancashire
Q1	16.62%	7.08%	50.03%	24.98%
Q2	17.18%	7.27%	49.72%	24.35%
Q3	18.35%	7.71%	47.07%	25.98%
Q4	18.08%	7.77%	47.36%	25.83%
Overall Average	17.55%	7.45%	48.54%	25.28%
Annual Percentage of Cost per FRS	18%	8%	48.5%	25.5%

N.B. The overall average figures do not add up to 100 as there is a small proportion of 'other' calls that are not accounted for in the table.

Staff Performance

18. 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.

19. 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 CFRS, PDRPro.
20. Performance statistics are also considered by Team Leaders so that they can see how well their team members are performing and where additional help or training may be required. Individual performance also provides evidence for appraisals and is considered when performance related pay is determined.
21. This year, the National Operational Guidance Program (NOGP) run by the NFCC program team has initiated their Control Room project, which will provide a set of standards and practices that all Control Rooms in the Country can utilise to develop their internal policies, procedures and training packages.

Business Continuity

22. Two full business continuity exercises have been carried out at NWFC during the reporting period. Both exercises took place whilst there was 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.
23. NWFC has continued to operate a full service throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, adopting remote working practices to maintain close liaison with CFRS and ensure that the needs of our organisation continue to be met.

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

25. 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

26. None

Environmental Implications

27. None

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