

**For Publication**

**Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting  
14 December 2021**

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**REPORT AUTHOR: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: PILOTS AND TRIALS TO IMPROVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

Building upon the presentations and discussions held with Members at the Community Risk Management Plan & Budget workshop on 23 November 2021, this report seeks the support of Members to develop proposals designed to improve emergency response that can be piloted/trialled over a time-limited period to provide real-time data to underpin the modelling analysis undertaken so far as part of the ongoing Emergency Cover Review elements of the Authority's strategic Community Risk Management Plan 2019/23 (CRMP).

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Members are asked to:

- a) note and comment on the intended approach to develop proposals to pilot/trial new ways of working; and
- b) support the principles of this approach being incorporated into the public CRMP/Budget consultation for 2022/23; and
- c) to receive further briefings prior to implementation.

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The current Community Risk Management Plan (2019-2023) seeks to ensure the Service is more data driven and evidence based in our decision making, a key enabler for our mission to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer. Responding to fires and other emergencies promptly and effectively is one of the 6 key aims of the CRMP.
- 1.2. We constantly strive to ensure we maximise our resources and deliver value for money. An emergency cover review is one way to ensure this. Significant research, data and evidence informs our approach to improving our service to the public including estates, station productivity, on call review, and special equipment and fleet review, and optimum locations.
- 1.3. By doing this we will make sure we triangulate our evidence, consolidate our findings, and make the best use of our data. By doing this we can assure our Members, staff and stakeholders we are presenting proposals based on the best evidence available to us to deliver the best possible service to the people of Bedfordshire.

### 2. Response standards and performance analysis

- 2.1. Our current CRMP sets out the Authority's local emergency response standards which set out how quickly we aim to respond to key emergencies within our area. The standards relate to the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time it is alerted by our Fire Control Centre.

- 2.2. For critical fire incidents, (threaten life, structures or the environment), we will provide an initial response of:
- 2 fire appliances (total 9 riders) on 90% of occasions; and
  - Arrive within 10 minutes on 80% of occasions.
- 2.3. For road traffic collisions (RTCs), we will:
- Arrive within 13 minutes on 80% of occasions.
- 2.4. For secondary fire incidents (non-life risk), we will provide an initial response of:
- 1 fire appliance with 5 crew; and
  - Arrive within 20 minutes on 96% of occasions.
- 2.5. As part of the ongoing Emergency Cover Review, five years worth of incident data was analysed and benchmarked against national data to identify areas where emergency response performance could be improved.
- 2.6. We have previously shared with Members our performance and benchmarking analysis which show there is work to do in improving our ability to meet our response standards.
- 2.7. Notably, analysis of our performance against the emergency response standards for critical fires and RTCs shows a deterioration in performance over recent years.

Measure	Target	5 yr average 15/16-19/20	20/21	YTD 21/22
Critical (Primary) Fires % 1 <sup>st</sup> response within 10 mins	80%	74%	65%	60.42%
RTCs - % 1 <sup>st</sup> response within 13 mins	80%	86%	69.03%	67.26%

- 2.8. When benchmarked against other fire and rescue services, our response times to all incidents is 12th slowest nationally and 3rd slowest in our family group.
- 2.9. Our analysis so far has concluded that improving on-call availability is key to improving response times. Our modelling analysis has also identified opportunities for improving emergency response performance by either changing the crewing

model or relocating our resources. As we are committed to being data driven and evidence based in our decision making, this paper seeks to pilot/trial different ways of working in two key areas in order to gather real-time data over a time-limited period to evaluate the impact and underpin our modelling analysis.

2.10. A limited trial to test various scenarios will allow the service to gather data on what is possible and what could be achieved. This will assure Members of any benefit in making permanent changes without committing substantial investment, evidencing the service commitment to continuous improvement whilst ensuring the public purse is protected.

### 3. Testing, piloting and examining innovative use of fire appliances to reinforce operational cover

3.1. We are initially proposing to carry out two pilots:

- Base a fire appliance in the Luton Borough Council area to an alternative temporary location in the northern part of Luton at key times to test how this affects response times and response standards – including all incident types and first and second appliance performance; and
- Position an additional appliance within the eastern part of the county during specific time periods to examine the impact of mobilising from different locations on response times and response standards. This may inform both crewing requirements and an optimum location for a new community fire station

3.2. The principles of these tests are:

- Maintain or improve public and firefighter safety;
- Improve operational attendance standard attainment
- Work within our service values;
- Provide operational crews with mobile information and communication technology (ICT) such as tablets so they can remain productive during non-emergency response times, increasing other prevention and protection activity;
- Reduce costs of 'over the border' calls where we request support from our neighbours
- Compare like with like and compare performance accurately; and
- Involve operational crews in evaluating the pilots.

4. Next Steps

4.1. Our timetable is as follows:

<b>Action</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>By</b>
Initiate a project team to explore repositioning of a fire appliance in the south of the County	February 22	DCFO
Initiate a project team to delivery an additional peak time fire engine	April 22	DCFO
Continue to deliver critical success factors from the on-call view to support continued attendance standard improvements	Sept 22	HOR

4.2. Officers will ensure Members and staff representatives are briefed on any specific proposals developed within the scope of this report prior to implementation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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- b) support the principles of this approach being incorporated into the public CRMP/Budget consultation for 2022/23; and
- c) to receive further briefings prior to implementation.

**CHRIS BIGLAND**  
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