

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Executive Committee
11 October 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY RESPONSE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE CALL-IN
- A FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSION

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Background Papers: Quarterly performance updates on Key Performance Indicators

PURPOSE:

To support Members in scrutinising progress in meeting key performance indicators relating to the Authority's emergency response standards.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Executive Members consider the contents of this paper and agree the approach to the 'performance call-in' of service performance against the Authority's emergency response standards.

1. Background

- 1.1 According to HMCFRS national benchmarking data we are seeing longer response times across Fire and Rescue Services in the UK. This is caused by a variety of other operational issues including vacancies in the on-call duty system, various road design and congestion issues, and others. Bedfordshire FRS is not immune to this.
- 1.2 At the last Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) meeting on 8th September 2022, at which the latest Q1 Performance Report was presented, Members expressed concern about performance against the Authority's Emergency Response Standards and agreed to commission a 'performance call-in' to afford Members the opportunity to scrutinise in more detail this important area of service performance.

2. Performance Call-In options

- 2.1 Option 1 – 'Performance Call-In' undertaken at a full FRA meeting.
- 2.2 A key advantage is that all members get to discuss and scrutinise the issues together in one body.
- 2.3 A key disadvantage is there may be insufficient time for an in-depth discussion of performance issues and scrutiny of important functions.
- 2.4 Option 2 – Commission the Audit and Standards Committee (ASC) to undertake the 'call-in' and report back to the full FRA.
- 2.5 A key advantage is that this gives a clearer scrutiny role for the ASC.
- 2.6 A key disadvantage is the 'performance call-in' process and role is not yet clearly defined in our governance framework or Members Handbook but this could be an opportunity to further develop this role as part of the independent review of governance. In addition, the terms of reference of the Audit and Standards committee do not yet include this activity. In addition, as the ASC meets 'virtually' the committee cannot make decisions without being ratified by the full FRA.
- 2.7 Option 3 – Involvement of relevant Member portfolio lead
- 2.8 Involve the Member portfolio lead to scrutinise and make recommendations and/or we could include the topic in a Member Development day.

2.9 A key advantage is that the number of members involved is limited so easier to facilitate but this could also be seen as a disadvantage.

3. Potential scoping questions

3.1 Potential lines of questioning:

- What are the specific definitions for each of the key performance indicators relating to the standards?
- What is the current 5-year trend for meeting response standards?
- What is behind the underperformance?
- What elements of mobilising and responding to incidents have the greatest impact on response times?
- How does Bedfordshire compare with other comparable FRS?
- National research by ORH Ltd on response times in 2020 found no link between response times and fire deaths. Is there a link in Bedfordshire?
- Are our current response standards still appropriate?

4. Next Steps

4.1 Once agreed, to convey the preferred approach to the relevant stakeholders, arrange the necessary forum and to report the preferred option to the next FRA meeting on 31st October 2022.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members discuss the contents of this report and advise on their preferred approach. Members are invited to comment on and make suggestions for scoping methodology and review questions.

**CHRIS BIGLAND
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