

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>6 DECEMBER 2022</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY BY CREWING TO MEET CORPORATE MEASURES 16 AND 17 – QUARTER TWO</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>DOUG BUCHANAN, AREA MANAGER RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TO NOTE</b>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides information on quarter two performance with supporting narrative on the whole-time duty system and the On-Call duty system appliance availability.
- 1.2 Whole-time availability across the quarter was **97.4%** against a target of **99%**.
- 1.3 On-Call appliance availability through the quarter was **40.3%** against a target of **60%**. This represents a 4% drop from the previous quarter.
- 1.4 For a number of reasons, crewing and availability across both duty systems is likely to continue to be volatile for some time, so it is imperative that workforce planning and effective service delivery management and monitoring continue with sharp focus.
- 1.5 The Service experienced an extremely busy summer in relation to incident mobilisations amid an enduring national heatwave. Whilst the Service put in arrangements to enhance resilience, it is unsurprising that the response standard has been impacted, achieving **69.3%** against a target of **75%** of emergency incidents attended in 10 minutes.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

That Management Committee:

<sup>1</sup> Corporate Measure 16: Percentage of wholetime frontline pumping appliance availability (fire engines).

<sup>2</sup> Corporate Measure 17: Percentage of hours per month where there is adequate crewing on On-Call appliances (fire engines).

- 2.1 **NOTE** the 2022-23 quarter two performance of **97.4%** appliance availability of the Service's 14 whole-time appliances in line with Corporate Measure 16<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 **NOTE** the 2022-23 quarter two performance of overall On-Call appliance availability of **40.3%** in line with Corporate Measure 17<sup>2</sup>.

### **3. REPORT**

#### **Whole-time Duty System Appliance Availability**

- 3.1 This report provides the 2022-23 quarter two update of performance against Corporate Measure 16; *percentage of whole-time frontline pumping appliance availability.*
- 3.2 RBFRS employ a lean operating model including the whole-time duty system provision. With an establishment of 324 staff (81 per duty line), maintaining sufficient minimum numbers of qualified firefighters requires effective management combined with flexibility and commitment to provide additional hours from staff on a pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) basis.

#### **Response activity:**

- 3.3 Summer heatwave: Response activity was exceptionally high during this quarter. During the period, there were four occasions where appliance availability was affected by the switch crewing of specialist appliances. For example, on three separate shifts the Bracknell fire engine was unavailable due to the duty crew being utilised on the Zetros, the Service's off road water carrier. Similarly, on one occasion, the Windsor appliance was unavailable for a full shift as the staff were redeployed to crew the off-road firefighting vehicles based at Maidenhead. These examples were directly linked with the summer heatwave and our response to fires in the open. In addition to a significant increase in incident response within Berkshire, the Service also attended a higher than usual number of incidents over the border in line with 13/16 mutual aid agreements.
- 3.4 Operation Bridge (the Queens funeral) also fell within this quarter. There was significant focus on ensuring crewing and availability supported the event, with appropriate levels of resilience built in for Business as Usual (BAU). This had additional impacts in terms of pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) usage.
- 3.5 There were two full shifts during the quarter where a single appliance was taken off the run so the crews could conduct operational training, which couldn't be delivered whilst remaining available for incidents.
- 3.6 Of the 184 shifts in the quarter, there were 24 in which there was insufficient crewing to provide our optimum cover of 14 appliances and the Service had to enact its degradation guidance.

#### **Ongoing pressures:**

- 3.7 Operational staff sickness levels continue to add pressure to the Services ability to meet its target for corporate measure 16, in relation to crewing. Through the quarter the WDS sickness was 6.1%.
- 3.8 Additionally, the leaver profile has continued to present challenges in maintaining full establishment levels across our whole-time duty system. During quarter two, there were 6 WDS leavers.

**Mitigation:**

- 3.9 To help mitigate these pressures a number of actions have been taken:
- Service Delivery continued to lead a cross-departmental response resourcing group, to closely monitor and manage crewing deficiencies. This oversight has provided opportunities to make a number of interventions to maintain appropriate response standards balanced across immediate and longer-term impacts for the organisation. These included:
- i. Monitoring the impacts of planned training events and either delivering in a different way or postponing these where they had a direct impact on appliance availability.
  - ii. Realigning operationally competent staff performing other duties (such as projects or resilience planning) to targeted operational shifts. Staff on restricted duties were used to backfill this impact where possible.
  - iii. Recruitment of a further 13 transferees who started on stations in early August.
  - iv. Ensuring that the Service's degradation policy was consistently applied to reduce the impact on response standards.
  - v. Utilising On-Call during peak periods as immediately available appliances.
- 3.10 As reported in quarter one, the Service expect to see continued pressures in relation to maintaining establishment levels over the coming months. The leaver profile due to retirement continues to be high and with the cost of living challenges (particularly impactful in Berkshire) retention of staff will be more difficult than usual. Combining these two factors and also a continued higher than usual sickness profile, the Service developed a summer strategy to ensure our resources are best deployed, on some occasions favouring the crewing of special appliances, over fire engines. Additionally, in August we recruited a further cohort of apprentice Firefighters who will be available for crewing from early next year.

**On-Call Duty System Appliance Availability**

- 3.11 The report also details performance against Corporate Measure 17, which sets a target of *60% of hours where there is adequate crewing on On-Call frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)*. This measure being applied across the individual and overall availability of the Service's five On-Call appliances.

3.12 The overall availability for On-Call appliances in Q1 was **40.3%**.

3.13 The table below shows a breakdown of the year on year appliance availability identifying how with the exception of the Covid impacted year (Highlighted in yellow) appliance availability during Q2 is the highest it has been since 2017.

Year	Q1.	Q2.	Q3.	Q4.
2022	44.4%	40.3%		
2021	59.8%	34.7%	36.5%	43.8%
2020 (Covid)	72.4%	60.9%	61.1%	68.2%
2019	45.0%	36.2%	42.5%	45.4%
2018	37.1%	33.0%	38.3%	47.6%
2017	36.3%	33.7%	31.6%	35.8%

Data Source CM16% Adequate Retained Overall Availability (with qualifications)

3.14 Additionally the table below shows the breakdown of On-Call station performance across the quarter measured against Q1 along with the individual station target.

STATION	TARGET	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT	QTR 1 2022	QTR 2 2022 TOTAL
HUNGERFORD	70%	47.31%	37.37%	44.31%	53.4%	43.0% ↓
LAMBOURN	30%	6.72%	5.65%	19.31%	9.3%	10.5% ↑
MORTIMER	70%	64.11%	54.84%	45.42%	58.8%	54.9% ↓
CROWTHORNE	80%	70.30%	45.43%	70.00%	66.7%	61.8% ↓
MAIDENHEAD	50%	24.60%	33.74%	36.53%	33.9%	31.6% ↓

Data Source CM16% Adequate Retained Overall Availability (with qualifications)

3.15 Whilst the table above indicates a decrease in appliance availability across all of the On-Call stations with the exception of Lambourn (highlighted in Green)

the performance during Q2 remains an increase over the same period in previous years.

- 3.16 Additionally the significant increase in availability for Lambourn during this period can be attributed to the allocation of the On-Call Learning support role which has had a positive impact on cover in the West hub since the inception of the role.
- 3.17 A target of 60% is a stretched target which will always be challenging and subject to some of the volatility of the On Call model. There are a number of factors that have contributed to overall On-Call appliance availability falling short of the 60% overall target during Q2, but it is predominantly related to the challenge of attracting and retaining individuals who are able to offer daytime appliance availability and the loss of individuals with key qualifications such as ICSL1 and ERD and the prolonged time it takes to build sufficient knowledge and experience to progress into these roles.
- 3.18 Individual station performance:
- Hungerford –Decrease of almost 10% from Q1 2022-23. This is predominantly related to key individuals being successful within the On-Call to WDS transfer process. This has resulted in an ICSL1 & ERD qualified staff member reducing On-Call availability and another ERD qualified staff member resigning from the On-Call role at this station.
  - Lambourn – Continues to present challenges as there are currently only five crew members qualified and available to crew the appliance. Of the five qualified crew members three are in Dual contract roles and only one member of staff is ICSL1 qualified. A programme of recruitment has been successful at this station with the station now having 9 crew members, however the impact from this is unlikely to be felt until the 2023/24 financial year due to the time taken for staff to complete the relevant training and acquisition of skills to be qualified to positively impact crewing.
  - Mortimer – Decrease of 4 % from Q1, however this is largely due to the long term absence of a key individual ERD qualified staff member and the allocation of leave for staff during the summer period. Mortimer were particularly busy during the spate period resulting in a number of crew members requiring leave moves toward the end of the Quarter in order to satisfy primary employment commitments.
  - Maidenhead – Decrease of 2% from Q1. This station presents slightly different challenges to the other On-Call stations. Whilst the establishment number is healthy, most of the staff are dual contract and therefore are limited in the amount of availability that can be offered to the On-Call appliance availability. A programme of recruitment is ongoing for the station and is likely to achieve results during Q3 however it is unlikely that benefits

will to be felt until the 2023/24 financial year due to the time taken for staff to complete the relevant training and acquisition of skills to be qualified to positively impact crewing.

- Crowthorne – continues to achieve good availability and has a resilient mix of experience and qualifications, however some challenges have been apparent due to the absence of key individuals.

- 3.19 Hub-based management teams continue to provide support to all On-Call station-based teams to promote and increase the availability of On-Call fire appliances across the Service through management of provided hours and the use of the On-Call crewing policy.
- 3.20 Additional resources have been allocated to supporting On-Call availability with the recruitment of an On-Call learning support Watch manager. In addition to providing much needed support to the On-Call staff in development, the role will also provide some operational resilience to Hungerford and Lambourn. This has been successful with the significant improvements identified at Lambourn during September of Q2.
- 3.21 On-Call recruitment has been ongoing, with particular successes at Lambourn where two additional recruits have commenced employment. However due to the long lead times for recruits to become qualified the full benefits of this is unlikely to be fully felt until the end of the financial year.
- 3.22 A recruitment campaign is currently underway with interest from candidates for all stations that are currently recruiting with the use of the positive action Fire fit programme at Lambourn and Maidenhead successfully attracting recruits from underrepresented communities into the service.
- 3.23 There is also a focus at Maidenhead to bolster new recruits to mitigate the impacts of dual contract employment. The Service have also changed the on call crewing policy, allowing greater flexibility in relation to station detachments.

#### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS**

- 4.1 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The use of PAOT continues to be utilised to support a lean crewing model and to mitigate other extractions. Due to some of the pressures experienced through the quarter, expenditure is above planned levels. Recognising the

financial pressures the Service is currently experiencing and anticipating going forward, a task group will be established in quarter 3 to scrutinise PAOT usage with a view to bringing the financial cost back in line with budget expectations.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None identified.

**7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None identified.

**8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The provision of sufficient minimum qualified firefighters and therefore appliance availability is listed as a corporate risk under risk number 681. It is monitored by the Director of Service Delivery and, as necessary, treatments are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and the Audit and Governance Committee.

**9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

9.1 None identified.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Annual Plan 2022-23

**11. APPENDICES**

11.1 None.

**12. CONTACT DETAILS**

12.1 Doug Buchanan – Area Manager Response and Resilience, Service Delivery  
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