

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	11 MARCH 2019
SUBJECT	SERVICE REDESIGN: WARGRAVE FIRE STATION PROGRESS REPORT
LEAD OFFICER	STEVE FOYE, DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR EMMA WEBSTER
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The closure of Wargrave fire station was part of option one of the Response proposals included in the Service redesign IRMP consultation that ran from December 2016 to March 2017. At Fire Authority on 18 April 2017 Members selected option one with an amendment to defer the implementation of the closure for twelve months based on the fulfilment of two key criteria:
- (1) The required savings be found elsewhere within the RBFRS budget;
 - (2) Wargrave to demonstrate an increase in availability to 60% within that twelve month period
- 1.2 The twelve month period elapsed in October 2018. Information provided to the Management Committee on 22 October 2018 demonstrated that the 60% target had not been reached, outlined the reasons why, offered projected forecasts in availability and described the relationship to the medium term financial plan.
- 1.3 At the Fire Authority meeting of 19 November 2018, members considered and agreed the recommendations of Management Committee that; the decision made by the Fire Authority in April 2017, to close Wargrave Station, should be deferred for a further 9 months to see if the criteria in 1.1 above can be fulfilled.
- 1.4 This paper provides an update to the Audit and Governance committee in respect of progress against those criteria.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Audit and Governance committee:

2.1 **NOTE** the report.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 The availability of a retained station is dependent on a number of factors. Primarily you have to recruit to and maintain sufficient establishment levels. For RDS stations this can be between 13 and 17 personnel depending on the type of cover individuals provide. When recruiting new personnel, managers will take account of the hours and times of the day/night that individuals are able to offer to maximise the spread of available cover each week over an eight week rolling cycle.
- 3.2 New personnel have to attain the relevant number of qualifications to be able to crew a fire engine. Across the suite of qualifications some are essential to provide a minimum crew of four personnel that make the fire engine available, e.g. Breathing Apparatus (BA), Emergency Fire Driving (ERD) and Incident Command (IC). Managers must therefore plan for the time required for new personnel to achieve necessary qualifications and consider succession planning for those skills that take more experience and confidence to undertake, such as Incident Command.
- 3.3 Availability can also be affected by sickness absence, personnel not achieving the required fitness standard and the taking of leave, particularly where staff work both Wholetime and Retained Duty Systems (known as dual contract.)
- 3.4 The table at figure 1 below details the current establishment and spread of qualifications at Wargrave. Note that individuals can hold more than one qualification:

Wargrave Fire Station	Total
Station establishment	15
RBFRS dual contract personnel	4
Level 1 Incident Command	3
Emergency Response Driver (ex. Watch Manager)	4
BA Team Leader (ex. WM)	7
BA 2 (ex. WM, ERD, BATL)	3
Fire Ground Safe (ex. WM, ERD, BA)	4

Figure 1

3.5 The graph at figure 2 below details Wargrave's availability since October 2017 and forecasts up to June 19/20. The graph shows that for January, Wargrave

achieved 46.7% (based on a rolling 28 day cycle from 1 January) and current forecasting predicts that this should reach 60% in May this year.

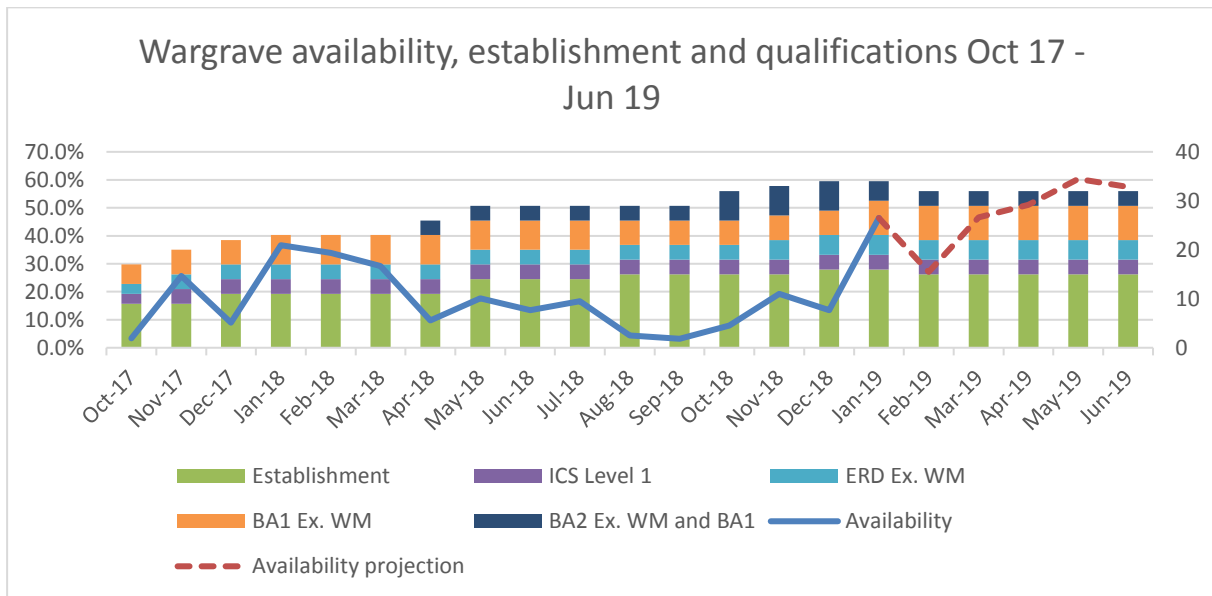


Figure 2

- 3.6 This forecast has not taken account of planned future achievement of qualifications. Previous forecasts had included this, however personnel were not always initially successful at passing qualifications impacting improvement in availability. Consequently this revised calculation provides more accurate reporting. Training and assessments have been planned through the remainder of 18/19 and into quarter one of 19/20. This could assist in increasing availability further.
- 3.7 As shown in figure 2, there is an expected drop in availability for February 2019. This accounts for key personnel who are currently on restricted duties and demonstrates how this can disproportionately affect the statistics. Current expectation is that this situation will be resolved during March. Some of the planned training outlined in 3.6 will provide more resilience should this occur in the future. This said, as an example it highlights the sensitivity that can exist in on-call crewing, where small changes, such as long term sickness or a leaver, can have a significant impact on appliance availability.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and effective 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 Medium Term Financial Plan shows a budget shortfall of £458,000 in 2019/20. This shortfall will need to be funded from reserves. Nevertheless, the net effect is that by 2020/21, recurring savings or additional income of £422,000 will need to be built into the base budget to avoid depleting reserves.
- 5.2 The use of reserves during 2019/20 will give the Authority time to develop plans to find the additional income or savings. If additional income cannot be generated the Authority may need to revisit both the Wargrave and Grenfell investment commitments.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The implementation by officers, or otherwise, of the closure of Wargrave fire station is contingent on the specified criteria being either met or not being met. Legal assurance shall be obtained by officers dependent on these defined outcomes.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no identified equality and diversity impacts.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The risk implications relating to the closure of Wargrave are detailed in the Response evidence base that formed part of the service redesign consultation documentation. This is available in the managing section of the RBFRS website <https://www.rbfrs.co.uk/your-service/managing-risk/integrated-riskmanagement-planning/>
- 8.2 As described in section 5 there is potential financial risk in the ability to deliver on going savings.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Wargrave personnel have undertaken co responding duties for South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and this agreement will be reviewed pending any future decisions. There are currently no further collaborative opportunities to consider that would be in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer has noted the contents of this report.
- 10.2 The Chief Finance Officer has noted the contents of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Agenda item 10 'Service Redesign: response option one, Wargrave fire station' presented at Meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority 19 November 2019.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 No appendices.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Area Manager, Jim Powell
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