

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE:	4TH OCTOBER 2012
REPORT NO.	CFO/140 /12
REPORTING OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	AREA MANAGER MOTTRAM
SUBJECT:	IMPACT OF THE BUDGET CUTS ON THE DYNAMIC RESERVE SEPTEMBER UPDATE

THERE ARE APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

APPENDIX	A	TITLE	DAILY APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY
	B		WEEKLY AVERAGE AVAILABILITY
	C		APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY (GRAPH)
	D		APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY - 17th MAY

ATTACHED – HARD COPY

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update on the impact of the budget cuts in years 1 and 2 of the spending review on the dynamic reserve (appliance availability).

Recommendation

2. That Members note the contents of this report and request the Chief Fire Officer to continue to use delegated powers for operational management under the Authority scheme of delegation to mitigate the impact of the budget cuts on operational response.

Introduction & Background

3. The impact of the budget cuts in years 1 and 2 of the spending review on the dynamic reserve (appliance availability) has previously been reported to Members at the Authority meeting on 17th May (CFO/066/12). Following on from report CFO/066/12 the Chief Fire Officer committed to providing Members with regular updates on the impact of the cuts on appliance availability.
4. The update provided within this report covers the period 1st January 2012 – 9th September 2012. This is as a result of Authority submission deadlines however all future updates will align with standard quarterly performance updates.
5. A breakdown of daily availability, a summary of weekly average availability, a graph illustrating appliance availability over the period and a graph of appliance availability from 17th May are all attached at Appendixes A – D of this report.

6. Members will note from the graphs at Appendices C and D that the numbers of appliances unavailable has decreased since the introduction of the use of Voluntary Additional Hours in August. The Chief Fire Officer has directed that the Support Pumps utilised to complimentary crew aerial appliances (Liverpool City and Wallasey) and the Support Pump at Crosby (providing cover across Sefton during the Southport PFI demolition and rebuild) be prioritised for availability given the specific functions they undertake. This prioritisation will extend to the Support Pump at St Helens when the aerial appliances moves from Eccleston to also be complimentary crewed.
7. Operational Firefighters continue to retire and the average sickness absence level for operational Firefighters (per person) is currently 7.28 shift losses per year against an assumed 4 shift losses. As Members are aware, both of these issues create pressures on appliance availability. There is a need however to ensure that as a Service we balance the use of Voluntary Additional Hours with appliance availability so as to maximise reserves in anticipation of the cuts for years 3 and 4 of the spending review (see paragraph 16 below).
8. The Authority has on average 8/9 appliances (2nd (support) pumps on identified two pump stations) unavailable. Despite the increased numbers of appliances unavailable in the early part of the reporting period response performance has consistently remained above the 90% attainment target although it did fall during June and July. Response performance against target for April – August inclusive is detailed in the table below.

	April	May	June	July	August
Performance against 90% target	94%	94.59%	92.10%	91.2%	93.7%

Equality & Diversity Implications

9. There are no Equality and Diversity implications contained within this report.

Staff Implications

10. When an appliance is placed on the dynamic reserve one or more of the crew are detached to another station to make up the staffing shortfall there. There are long standing arrangements in place for the management of detached duties.
11. Expressions of interest have been sought from all personnel to work Voluntary Additional Hours in accordance with the collective agreements reached with the Representative Bodies. The utilisation of Voluntary Additional Hours is managed by Time and Resource Management to ensure equity of distribution amongst volunteers.

Legal Implications

12. The undertaking of detached duties is a contractual requirement for all personnel.
13. The undertaking of Voluntary Additional Hours is a matter of individual choice and is done so in accordance with the parameters set out in the collective agreement.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

14. The implementation of the placing of Support Pumps on to the dynamic reserve is necessary to deliver a target saving of £3m towards the overall total of £9.2m necessary to address the cuts to the Authority budget in years 1 and 2 of the spending review.
15. The reduction of 80 posts required to deliver the £3m saving will be achieved by 2013. The funding deficit this creates will be met from reserves to avoid the need for compulsory redundancies.
16. The cost of Voluntary Additional Hours is met from reserves. This will be managed robustly to ensure the appropriate balance between appliance availability and the need to maximise reserves to mitigate against the threat of compulsory redundancies following the cuts to the Authority budget in years 3 and 4 of the spending review due to be announced in December.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

17. The dynamic reserve is determined through an extensive analysis of operational performance and will be implemented in such a way so as to minimise the impact on operational response.

Contribution to Achieving Our Mission:

“Safer, Stronger Communities, Safe, Effective Firefighters”

18. The effective implementation of the dynamic reserve minimises the impact of the spending review cuts on operational response as much as is possible in the circumstances.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/066/12 Impact of the Budget Cuts on the Dynamic Reserve