

Ceasing of Permanent Crewing of the Rescue Tender

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report advises Members that permanent crewing of the Rescue Tender (RT) will cease as of 1 January 2014, in line with the Public Value recommendations set out in 2010, and that the RT will then be switch crewed.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note:

- a) Cessation of permanent crewing of the Rescue Tender as of 1 January 2014; and
- b) That the Rescue Tender will be switch crewed from that time.

3 Background

The Public Value document set out the need to review the way in which the RT is crewed and determined that, in the absence of any change in the financial climate, permanent crewing of the RT would cease on 1 January 2014.

In line with the then retirement profile, it was expected that this would mean a reduction of 8 wholetime firefighter posts at Wellington, resulting in a revenue saving of £297,000.

4 Consultation

Staff were consulted extensively to seek satisfactory alternatives to crew the RT. A wide range of proposals was put forward including, but not limited to:

1. Downgrading the Rescue Pump to a Ladder Pump and riding 4 and 2, thereby maintaining permanent crewing;
2. A variety of switch-crewed arrangements;
3. A dedicated Retained Duty System watch to crew the RT.

These options assumed a staffing level of 8 per watch at Wellington. The reality facing the Service now is that the retirement profile is such that staffing will reduce to 7 per watch at Wellington during 2014, thereby ruling out option 1.

Option 3 would require capital investment and ongoing revenue costs, which in the light of the 2020 issues, and pending the outcome of that process, means that officers are not at this time in a position to commit to that option.

This leaves option 2: switch crewing.

5 Method of Switch Crewing

Taking into account the variety of incidents which the RT attends and applying the lessons learnt from the Aerial Ladder Platform project, a method of switch crewing has been devised for the RT.

The principles are as follows:

- The crewing at Wellington fire station is 5 firefighters per shift.
- There is a fire engine and the Rescue Tender available from Wellington.
- Either the fire engine or the RT can be crewed at any one time.
- If the fire engine is required, then all 5 firefighters will crew it. This will make the RT unavailable with no crew.
- If the RT is required, then 2 of the crew will “switch” to the RT. The 3 remaining crew will be unavailable (see below).

In order to maximise the availability of the RT a number of steps have been introduced:

- If the fire engine is committed on another incident and the RT is required, fire control will conduct a risk assessment and determine if it is feasible for the fire engine to return to base and pick up the RT to mobilise to the incident. This may entail a relief crew being mobilised to replace the fire engine at the incident.
- In all cases, when the RT is mobilised, the Fire engine will accompany it with a reduced crew, consisting of the 3 remaining firefighters.

- RT availability will be taken into account, when Wellington are considered for relief duties.
- Making the best use of the RT by intelligent mobilising from control, such as availability on request in some circumstances, following a risk assessment.

6 Financial Implications

The end to permanent crewing of the RT meets in full the expected financial savings of £297,000 per year.

7 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8 Initial Impact Assessment

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

9 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.