



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Full Authority

Purpose: Noted

Date: **14 DECEMBER 2021**

Title: **MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. The Mid-Year Performance Report (Appendix A) explains how the Service has performed over the last six months against our core purpose of making life safer. The report, which covers the period 1st April to 30th September 2021, explores how the Service performed against a range of strategic measures, with comparisons made against previous years. The report also highlights current progress in delivering Year 2 improvements of our 2020-25 Safety Plan.
2. We use performance and assurance reporting to assess our effectiveness, efficiency, and financial position; and to supplement our wider assurance activities. Our performance measures help us identify areas for improvement, as well as successes and good practice to be shared.

HIGHLIGHTS – SERVICE MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE 2021/22

3. Incident volumes increased compared to the previous six months - but this is to be expected given the reduction in COVID-19 restrictions which occurred within this reporting period and the fact that incident volumes fluctuate naturally at particular points within the year. A more valuable comparison is to the same period (April to September) in 2020. This comparison shows a stable number of incidents (decrease of 37, -0.3%), owing to a similar pattern last year where the country came out of a national lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions towards the mid part of the year. There has, though, been a change in our incident profile – with a reduction in fires

but growth in special service calls. The continued impact of the pandemic on incident volumes can also be seen by comparing to April – September 2019 – with a 12% reduction between 2019 and 2021.

4. Our average critical response time increased very slightly (by 6 seconds) compared to the previous six months and by only 1 second compared to same period (April to September) in 2020. This has been achieved despite lower availability and higher levels of sickness as we have managed resources effectively through Control and our Emergency Staffing Cell. Furthermore, we have not seen an adverse impact on our communities with 0 fire fatalities (with two pending coroner's reports), comparable to the previous year. The number of casualties did increase but that is to be expected given the greater lockdown conditions in 2020, which meant fewer people were undertaking activities in the community and more people were at home. Furthermore, 2021 has seen significant demand pressures on partners, such as the ambulance services, partly as people are now more forthcoming with medical issues, which also impacts the 2021 increase in casualties.
5. The number of Safe and Well visits has increased significantly (29%) compared to the same period (April to September) in 2020, while the number of visits where we were refused entry or could not contact the individual reduced by 3% compared to last year, which is positive. This is owing to continued focus on our prevention activity and because the initial pandemic lockdowns made it harder to visit individuals and reduced their likelihood to engage with our services.
6. Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions we have also been able to increase our protection activity, including fire safety audits - of which we undertook 678 between April and September 2021, significantly up (by 252, +59%) on the previous six months and up by 509 (+301%) compared to the same period last year when national lockdown restrictions were in place. This delivery of audits means we are on track to be above our target level of audits by the end of the year. Similarly, following the easing of lockdown restrictions, we have seen a significant increase in business regulation and licensing consultations - maintaining high levels of performance in this area too.

HIGHLIGHTS – CHALLENGES

7. Staff sickness has increased compared to both the previous six months and the same period (April to September) last year. This was driven partly by the 'pingdemic' impact of COVID-19 self-isolations in July and August (though COVID-19 related absences subsequently reduced significantly and remain low). It was also impacted by a significant increase in other

sickness absences, particularly musculoskeletal related – 69% of which were long-term sickness absence (over 28 days). It is also important to note that locally and nationally sickness in 2020 was lower than usual owing to the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Therefore, it is important to also compare to April to September 2019, where the average days/shifts lost was just under 5 (compared to 6.12 in the same 2021 period, and 4.54 in the 2020 period).

We continue to undertake a wide range of activity to both understand and support further the wellbeing of our staff – a key area of our Safety Plan and one that was validated by the 2020 HMICFRS COVID-19 inspection where they concluded staff wellbeing was a clear priority for the Service and that a wide range of support is available for our staff.

8. Sickness increases meant that availability decreased slightly to 96.1% for whole-time. On-call availability decreased to 64% and was also impacted by sickness, as well as challenges in the availability of drivers. It is also important to note when comparing to 2020 figures that last year on-call availability in the early parts of the pandemic increased to very high levels during the initial lockdown restrictions and the early furlough period.
9. As noted above, there were some challenges around sickness and availability, but these were mitigated through effective Emergency Staff Cell and Control Management, which saw our critical response time remain stable.
10. Despite the continued increase in the number of Safe and Well visits undertaken, we are set to be below our target for number of visits delivered this year. We also have a large number of Safe and Well jobs that are open but the visit is yet to be undertaken. This is partly due to the significant number of referrals we generated by proactively engaging our communities at vaccination centres, including Basingstoke. There does, however, continue to be significant organisational and operational focus on our Safe and Well activity, as demonstrated by our published 2021-22 Community Safety Strategy. Furthermore, new ways to deliver Safe and Well visits are being considered, in conjunction with the Group Managers, which, with the aid of a new prevention risk heat map, will help the Service focus on those most vulnerable.
11. Finally, Appendix A shows a growth in our cost per population figures compared to last year. This is reflective on the new combined fire authority and the impact of costs on the island. The Isle of Wight is the UK's largest inhabited island without a permanent link to the mainland, and a previous study by the University of Portsmouth evidenced that separation from the

mainland has an impact on the cost of delivery of public services on the island.

HIGHLIGHTS – SAFETY PLAN IMPROVEMENTS

12. The five-year Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) Safety Plan was launched in April 2020, setting out our priorities, values, how we will build on our strengths, and how we will address the areas that require more focus and improvement.
13. This year – the second year of the Safety Plan – we committed to completing 35 improvements. By Safety Plan priority, Our People and High Performance (19 activities) are our top two areas of focus. As at the end of September, we had completed seven (20%) of these activities, as detailed in Appendix A. However, across all activities progress is assessed at 56%, meaning we are on track, with most improvements scheduled to deliver later in the financial year. The activities completed so far include, but are not limited to:
 - Continued alignment of business processes and operating models under new Combined Fire Authority (CFA) arrangements;
 - Development of a new Organisational Development function;
 - Ensuring we embed our values by, for example, developing and launching a 'Who We Are' guide to our values and associated behaviours; and
 - Maturing processes to capture and act upon learning across the Service.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

14. The Mid-Year Performance report provides a view of performance in different Safety Plan priority areas, with specific progress against the Safety Plan improvements reported too. We regularly check and report progress against the Safety Plan across our Directorates and within our Executive Group.

CONSULTATION

15. There has been a range of internal consultation and collaboration to help develop this report, as well as to refine its content. This report was also taken to and discussed within the Operations Management Board and the

Policy, Planning and Assurance Board. External consultation has not been required.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

16. The cost associated with the production of the Mid-Year Performance report is within existing resource plans.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

17. This report does not lead to any change activity, so no impact assessments are required. However, it is worth noting that, more widely, internally there has been a significant organisational focus on impact assessments, an area assured by various teams, including the Organisational Assurance team.
18. In line with guidance from the British Dyslexia Association, we have ensured we utilise dyslexia friendly fonts and colours in our appendix to ensure the report is as accessible as possible. The slide background and text colours also support accessibility from individuals with colour-blindness. Once noted by the Authority we will publish the appendix on our website in PowerPoint format so the narrator and translator functions can also be utilised to further increase its accessibility.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no legal implications resulting from this report.

RISK ANALYSIS

20. Failure to regularly report on and scrutinise our performance and progress against our Safety Plan could result in no action being taken to address reducing deficient performance which may affect the outcomes for our communities and our people. The information may, in some cases, show increasing (or reducing) risks for the Authority.

EVALUATION

21. Monitoring and assessing performance and progress against the Safety Plan are a key part of various evaluation activity that the Service carries out – it is also used by the Service to identify areas for continuous improvement and to flag and share good practice across public services and the Fire Sector.
22. Evaluating performance, and change activity more widely, are core activities of the Integrated Performance and Assurance Group and of management

teams across the Service. This is aided by an increasing amount of data and reporting available, with the breadth and depth of real-time performance and assurance information accessible to our staff increasing.

CONCLUSION

23. Our overall incident volumes have been consistent with the same period last year; however the incident profile has changed significantly – with a reduction in fires and an increase in special service calls. For example, we have seen a reduction in fires mainly influenced by a reduction in primary and secondary grass fires. Our ‘special service calls’ have increased owing to the additional activity assisting other agencies, effecting entry/exit, lift release, RTCs (Road Traffic Collisions) and co-responding, as a result of partners needing additional support, as well as there being fewer lockdown restrictions in the 2021 period.
24. Despite sickness increases and availability decreases, we have been able to maintain our average critical response time at around 7 minutes 30 seconds, with only a one second increase compared to the same period last year. This is testament to our stations and Groups, and the support they have received from Control and the Emergency Staff Cell. Fatality figures have also remained low and comparable to last year.
25. Concurrently, reflective of reduced COVID-19 restrictions and our organisational focus on these areas, we have significantly increased the number of Safe and Well visits and Fire Safety Audits that we have undertaken compared to both the previous six months and the same period (April to September) in 2020. We have also increased our business regulation and licensing consultation activity – while maintaining strong performance in this area; as well as exceeding our High-Rise Risk Based Inspection Programme targets.

RECOMMENDATION

26. That the Mid-Year Performance Report 2021/22 be noted by the HIWFRA Full Authority
27. That the progress of the Safety Plan Year 2 Improvements is noted by the HIWFRA Full Authority

APPENDICES ATTACHED

28. Appendix A: Mid-Year Performance Report 2021/22.

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