



Dorset Fire Authority

MEETING	Dorset Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	23 September 2015
OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Command Support Unit
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Until recently, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) had a dedicated bespoke Command Support Unit (CSU) based at Hamworthy fire station.</p> <p>In June 2015, the CSU was involved in a road traffic collision whilst travelling to an incident and has subsequently been declared a 'write-off'.</p> <p>The Service has two Breathing Apparatus Support Units which were designed to offer command support resilience while the CSU was unavailable or already deployed. These vehicles have been operating as dedicated Command Support Units since the accident in June 2015 and this paper identifies some enhancements that are being made to improve their existing capability.</p> <p>Wiltshire FRS have also made available their command vehicle located at Devizes should it be needed at a significant incident within Dorset.</p>
RISK ASSESSMENT	The absence of suitable and sufficient command support arrangements at a larger incident could impact upon firefighter safety.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	<p>Not required for the purposes of this progress report.</p> <p><i>Note: If the matrix indicates negative impacts on the community or staff, an equality impact assessment (EIA) will need to be completed.</i></p>
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	<p>Total cost of £6,210 to survey, design and install technical equipment and produce dedicated wall mounted aide memoirs.</p> <p>Enhancements covered within existing 2015/16 budgets.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that Members note and comment upon this report.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Colin Chapman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Tel: (01305) 252610

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Command Support Unit (CSU, Figure 1 below) was introduced into the Service in 1999 and has been based at Hamworthy Fire Station, crewed by an 'on-call' crew. The vehicle was due for replacement in 2014/15 but was kept within the operational fleet, and its replacement deferred so that a wider review could take place post combination with Wiltshire FRS.
- 1.2 The DFRS Draft Capital Programme contains £300,000 to purchase a replacement vehicle in 2018/19.
- 1.3 On 12 June 2015, the Command Support Unit was travelling from Hamworthy fire station to a six pump fire at ASDA Stores, Gillingham.
- 1.4 At approximately 0800 hours, whilst proceeding under blue lights and sirens, it was involved in a road traffic collision (RTC) on the Lower Common Road in the area of Fontmell Parva (north west of Blandford). The RTC occurred as the CSU attempted to negotiate a left hand bend on a rural road.
- 1.5 There were no other vehicles or persons involved. There were no serious injuries to the crew. Dorset Police attended the scene, but confirmed that they would not be taking any further action.
- 1.6 The damage to the CSU was assessed by Leeline Body works. In their letter to DFRS of 15 June 2015, they stated that 'in view of the extensive damage to body, chassis, steering, engine and the age of the vehicle, we would consider this to be beyond economical repair.'
- 1.7 The incident has been investigated at Level 2. The investigating officer attended the scene and interviewed two independent witnesses (members of the public). The CSU was not fitted with a data logger.



Figure 1: DFRS Command Support Unit

- 1.8 As a result of this investigation and conclusions, the Investigating Officer made a number of recommendations. A formal review of the Level 2 investigation was undertaken internally, and on 13 July 2015 the Strategic Management Team 'signed off' four of the recommendations which are being implemented:
- 1.8.1 **Recommendation 1** - All crews including drivers and ICs should be reminded that Satnavs, routeplanners, etc, do not take into account the size of the vehicle being driven nor the conditions that it is being driven under. They should be advised to consult road maps when they are unfamiliar with a location and that the route should stick to main 'A' and 'B' class roads where possible.
- 1.8.2 **Recommendation 2** - Route selection should be discussed as part of the Emergency Response Driving (ERD) Course and refresher training.
- 1.8.3 **Recommendation 3** - The driver in this particular RTC should undergo an ERD refresher before carrying out response driving again.
- 1.8.4 **Recommendation 4** - All special appliances that are required to be driven under ERD conditions should be checked on a weekly basis. These checks are to be recorded on the Miquet system.

2. Background

- 2.1 At several large incidents and exercises within the last two years, the Breathing Apparatus Support Unit (BASU, Figure 2 below) has been used as a Command Support Unit (CSU) due to the unavailability of the CSU based at Hamworthy. These vehicles were designed from the outset to operate as a fall-back CSU when required (eg when the Hamworthy vehicle is away for maintenance or when there is dual demand from concurrent incidents).
- 2.2 The BASUs are crewed by 'on call' staff at Maiden Newton and Christchurch. The vehicles are already mobilised on a request only basis for breathing apparatus support and to incidents of five or more pumps or when requested for command support.
- 2.3 Since the incident, the provision of a command support vehicle has been carried out wholly by the BASUs. There are two of these vehicles (Christchurch and Maiden Newton) and, whilst they do not currently have the same technological functions, they have proven to be adequate in a command support role. They are both equipped so that they can be established as 'mobile offices' on the fireground and have the benefit of awnings for briefings.



Figure 2: DFRS Breathing Apparatus Support Unit

- 2.4 Should there be a simultaneous need for both a Breathing Apparatus Support Unit and a Command Support Unit at the same incident, then the Incident Commander will determine whether one vehicle can supply dual functionality or both vehicles are required.
- 2.5 Discussions with Wiltshire FRS took place immediately after the incident in June and it was confirmed that their Command Support Unit (based at Devizes, Figure 3 below) would be available for deployment to a Dorset incident if required. There is also a smaller, older, less well equipped CSU based at Stratton fire station in Swindon.



Figure 3: Wiltshire FRS Command Support Unit

- 2.6 The Devizes CSU is a bespoke vehicle. DFRS Flexi Duty Officers are able to link their Service laptops to the Wi-Fi in the vehicle via the satellite. There is a video conferencing

facility and five mobile CCTV cameras similar to those currently on DFRS aerial ladder platforms.

3. Interim Improvements

3.1 Following consultation with various individuals and departments, some additional equipment has been identified which would maximise the use of the BASU. The majority of this equipment can be sourced from within the Service, or from within existing budgets:

- ◆ Airwave Radio, Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) and printer - The Airwave radios and MDT have been removed from the CSU and are available to be installed into the BASUs. Telent will survey, design and install this equipment into each of the BASUs. The de-installation has already taken place and two Airwave radios, MDTs and printers are now ready to be installed at a cost of £3,000 per vehicle. The total installation cost of £6,000 is available within a budget for cascading Airwave radios.
- ◆ Resource Chart and Decision Making Models - These necessary 'aide memoirs' and white boards will either be transferred from the CSU or replicated by DFRS teams. There is a cost of £210 to supply both vehicles which will be met from existing budgets.
- ◆ Command Laptop - The current CSU has a laptop with mapping and site risk information documents installed. This laptop can be removed from the CSU and installed in one of the BASUs. ICT are able to supply a second laptop which can have the additional software installed. There are no licencing implications. No cost.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Enhancements can be made to the existing BASUs at Maiden Newton and Christchurch at a relatively low cost to provide an improved command support facility at incidents. The majority of the equipment required to upgrade the BASU can be sourced from the existing CSU.

4.2 Carrying out the enhancements to the BASU will provide DFRS with a command support unit capability which can be used while the disposition and provision of command support units is considered across Dorset and Wiltshire FRS from 1 April 2016.

4.3 There is confidence within the operational officer cadre that the existing provisions within Dorset are suitable and sufficient, and that with the availability of Wiltshire's CSU, the situation is further enhanced.

4.4 There is an emerging piece of work within the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership to consider the provision of a number of specialist functions and appliances across the partnership area of Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire. It is expected that command support at incidents is included within this workstream.

- 4.5 With the BASUs established within Dorset, and the full support of the Wiltshire CSU, it would be prudent to defer any decisions on replacement until this piece of work across the wider Partnership is completed.

DARRAN GUNTER

Chief Fire Officer

14 September 2015