



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
AUTHORITY**

Item 9

MEETING	Policy and Resources Committee
DATE OF MEETING	19 May 2016
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	SCC Travel and Welfare
STATUS OF REPORT	For publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For information and decision
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Service Control Centre (SCC) has been fully operational, handling calls for Dorset, Wiltshire and the NFCSP partners since August 2016.</p> <p>Dorset staff were fully consulted on how the relocation might affect them and a flexible package of benefits, based on their entitlements for excess travel and time was explored along with whether or not this was reasonable for them.</p> <p>Due to the exceptional operational circumstances an extended trial period of six months was also used so that staff could experience the full range of conditions when considering working in the SCC.</p> <p>An audit was undertaken in February 2016 to consider the impacts on those ex-Dorset staff's health and wellbeing. There were fourteen staff affected, three staff were absent due to sickness and eight out of the eleven responded to the audit questionnaire.</p>
RISK ASSESSMENT	<p>The Fire Authority has a statutory duty for handling calls and mobilising resources to fires, road traffic accidents and other emergencies. It must ensure that Fire Control arrangements are resilient and safe.</p> <p>Delivery of the SCC had to ensure that these requirements were met and staff made a successful transition to working in the new environment.</p> <p>An internal audit of ex-Dorset staff was undertaken using South West Audit Partnership's (SWAP) risk based audit approach whereby the controls were identified documented</p>

	and evaluated in relation to the risks that could impact on the service.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	An Inclusive Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to the Fire Authority meetings in December 2014. The Impact Assessment considered the effect of the relocation in relation to all staff groups, was reviewed in January 2015 and updated in September 2015.
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None associated with this report
RECOMMENDATION	That Member's agree that the Finance and Audit Committee monitors the wellbeing and the attendance of the Fire Control Staff.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None
APPENDICES	Appendix A: Relocation of DFRS Command & Control Centre – SWAP review, February 2016.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	ACFO John Aldridge

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The relocation of Dorset's control has resulted in a change of working arrangements for ex-Dorset staff now working in the Service Control Centre (SCC) in Potterne.
- 1.2 The South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) agreed as part of the DFRS annual internal audit plan to provide assurance that DFRS has provided options to the relocated Dorset staff; to ensure their safety was not compromised now they have relocated to the SCC.
- 1.3 The SWAP team interviewed the SCC Project team and sent a questionnaire to all ex-Dorset staff in the SCC. These results were collated by SWAP's Assistant Director, Rupert Bamberger. The SWAP findings are attached in Appendix A.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 In December 2013, both Dorset and Wiltshire's Fire Authorities agreed to establish a joint Service Control Centre (SCC) in Potterne, Devizes. Dorset staff were given the ability to decide whether or not it was reasonable for them to transfer to the SCC. Staff were fully consulted individually, as part of a group and online. An intranet portal was created for all staff with Frequently Asked Questions published.
- 2.2 Any Dorset staff who transferred were entitled under DFRS's procedures (RS72 'Reorganisation redeployment and Redundancy' & FM02 'Travel and Subsistence') to three years compensation for extra travel time and four years of compensation for the excess distance travelled.
- 2.3 An individually based monthly package was agreed with staff and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to amalgamate the compensation for travel distance and travel time. To give staff the maximum amount of flexibility it was also agreed that this payment could be used to alternatively pay for accommodation instead of having to travel home every shift.
- 2.4 Any staff showing an interest in transferring were encouraged to take the opportunity to trial working in Potterne. Staff were also actively encouraged to trial the different types of accommodation available locally. The project team provided accommodation for staff consisting of local hotels, bed & breakfast and considered the potential for renting rooms as it was recognised from the outset that the travelling distances involved could be deemed to be onerous.
- 2.5 The shift start times for 2-2-4 Control staff were different in the two organisations (08:00 in Wiltshire and 09:00 in Dorset). The same start time was identified as an organisational requirement for the SCC to function correctly. As such, Wiltshire's start times were agreed as a Measure for staff transferring.

- 2.6 A trial period was also agreed with unions and staff for a longer than normal period of six months. This was because it was recognised that staff undertaking the travelling would need to experience different weather and traffic conditions to determine whether or not it was achievable. This was also considered to increase operational resilience because this meant that we could have experienced Dorset staff transferring, if only for the first six months, on a trial period.
- 2.7 Staff who transferred from Dorset were:
- 5 staff on fixed term contracts accepted permanent roles in the SCC
  - 6 permanent fire control
  - 3 other permanent staff transferred to Station Management, Watch Manager training and corporate data roles

### 3. Mitigations

#### Consultation

- 3.1 Staff were encouraged to consider the impact of the transfer on them during their individual consultation meetings and it was discussed how the additional travelling time in their home to work journeys may not be compatible with their home life commitments.
- 3.2 It was recognised that the location of the SCC and the operational requirement of the role were exceptional and as such a reasonableness criteria was developed with staff having the ability to demonstrate why it might be unreasonable to transfer. Staff that wished to transfer were consulted on a flexible package of arrangements around accommodation, travelling and time subsistence.

#### Shifts in the SCC

- 3.3 Wiltshire's changeover times of 0800 and 1800 were adopted for all watch based staff in the SCC. This means that in-between night shifts there is a ten hour gap; previously in Dorset this had only been a nine hour gap. This 2-2-4 shift pattern is common throughout the UK FRS and is adored by staff.

#### Stress audit

- 3.4 A team stress audit was planned and carried out for the SCC staff after go-live. This has resulted in a team stress action plan which is now in place and this is being cascaded to the individual level.
- 3.5 Wiltshire's Occupational Health provider has carried out training with the Station and Watch Managers in the SCC, which included how to manage stress, health and wellbeing for themselves and their teams.

### **Change Management training**

- 3.6 Some Watch Managers in the SCC have already received this training since go-live and the remainder have been programmed to receive it over the next few months.

### **Relocation**

- 3.7 One ex-Dorset member of staff has recently relocated to an area closer to the SCC and during the consultation period the potential for a relocation package was explored and offered to staff.

### **Rest facilities and Breaks**

- 3.8 Adequate and appropriate welfare facilities are provided for all staff at the SCC. Managers ensure that adequate breaks are taken, where possible. In addition there is the facility for staff to take turns to have a period of rest during a designated period at night, if not operationally busy.

## **4. Current situation**

### **Sickness absence**

- 4.1 One member of ex-Dorset staff is currently long term sick and there may be elements of the additional travelling which have contributed to their issues. But there is also a Wiltshire member of staff long term sick and so this is not particularly predictive of issues purely relating to travel. Most other absences tend to be due to viral issues and much the same as the rest of the organisation with regard to seasonable absences.

### **Leavers**

- 4.2 One ex-Dorset member of staff left during the trial period; they did state that the travel distance to the SCC was the cause.

### **Review of Trial Period**

- 4.3 One member of ex-Dorset staff has asked for the trial period to be additionally extended, this is not yet resolved as they are currently absent from work.

### **Overtime**

- 4.4 Both ex-Dorset members of staff and Wiltshire staff regularly volunteer for additional overtime shifts.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The Authorities have procedures in place to eliminate or reduce known risks to an acceptable level to both staff and the public we serve. We ensure we comply with

all relevant aspects of health, safety and welfare legislation, appropriate codes of practice and any fire service related best practice standards.

- 5.2 Staff must take also care of their own health safety & welfare but also other's health and safety at work and recognise the important part they play in making our policies work.
- 5.3 It can be seen from the SWAP audit that 5 questions were asked of eight staff, (See Appendix A)
- 5.4 Although the majority of staff stated that their well-being, health or welfare had been affected by the relocation of control this was not attributed to the increased travel time.
- 5.5 As the survey was anonymous it is not possible to say whether or not all or many staff are using accommodation or not. It is known that two staff, who are day duty staff, do use accommodation for some or all of the time that they are in Potterne to alleviate the travelling issues. But it does not seem that the shift based staff do.
- 5.6 The larger number of ex-Dorset staff who transferred to the SCC than expected has been beneficial, by having more experience in place from the outset and meaning that comprehensive external recruitment did not have to take place. One member of ex-Dorset staff has now relocated closer to the SCC. A few ex-Dorset staff live a similar distance from Potterne as they did from Poundbury but for those staff who live some way away there may still be additional leavers especially when approaching the third and fourth year anniversaries of the payment entitlements.

## 6. **Recommendation**

- 6.1 That Members agree that the Finance and Audit Committee monitors the wellbeing and the attendance of the Fire Control Staff.



# MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** Rupert Bamberger – Assistant Director

**TO:** Jason Moncrieff – Station Manager Professional Standards

**c.c.** David Hill – Director of Planning

**DATE:** 9.02.2016

**SUBJECT:** Relocation of DFRS Command & Control Centre – SWAP review

## **Background**

South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) were asked to carry out a review in relation to the safety of relocated Dorset staff to the Wiltshire Command & Control Centre. We structured our review around a questionnaire that asked a series of questions in relation to health, safety and well-being which was sent to all affected staff as part of the relocation.

In total the questionnaire was emailed to 14 members of staff. We were informed that three members of staff would not be able to complete the questionnaire in the given timescales (two members of staff were on sick leave, and one on career break).

Out of the remaining 11 members of staff, we received eight responses which represents a very good response rate. All questionnaires were fully answered/ completed where requested.

A summary of the findings has been included below in order to provide a level of assurance in relation to the safety of the Dorset staff relocated to the Wiltshire Command & Control Centre. Comments have been summarised where necessary in order to maintain the confidentiality of respondents.

## **Findings:**

**Q1. Following the relocation of the Fire Control Centre, have the changes affected your well-being, health and/ or safety?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75.0%	6
No	25.0%	2
Don't Know	0.0%	0

The majority of respondents (six out of eight) commented that their well-being, health and/ or safety had been affected by the Control Centre Relocation.

The most common reason given related to the additional travel time and the impact this has on the individual's personal life.

**Q2. If your travel time has increased as a result of the Fire Control Centre relocation, has this affected your ability to carry out your duties effectively?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	25.0%	2
No	75.0%	6
Don't Know	0.0%	0

The trend is reversed when asked whether the increase in travel time has adversely affected the individual's ability to carry out duties effectively. Six out of eight responded no.

An individual who answered yes to this question commented how the increased travel time had made them feel more emotional at work as well as feeling tired/ low.

**Q3. Are there sufficient options/ mitigations available to counter any increase in travel time you have incurred?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.5%	3
No	50.0%	4
Don't Know	12.5%	1

Respondents were split when asked whether sufficient options/ mitigations were available to counter any increase in travel time.

Interestingly, of those that responded no to this question, only one respondent referred to the mitigation of overnight accommodation. Other respondents focussed on mitigations that had not been adopted i.e. changes in shift times to avoid rush hours, or the inclusion of additional travel times in shift hours.

**Q4. If you have raised well-being, health and/ or safety concerns, have these been dealt with sufficiently by Fire Control Centre management?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	50.0%	4
No	25.0%	2
Don't Know	25.0%	2

Two out of eight respondents raised comments in this section although analysis of the responses did not indicate specific concerns that had not been addressed. All other respondents appeared satisfied.

**Q5. Please provide any comments/ concerns/ suggestions in relation to well-being, health and/ or safety as a result of the relocation of the Fire Control Centre.**



There were numerous references to increased stress in this section. A suggestion was made that a stress risk assessment should have/ could be carried out. On the whole, references to increased stress did not make the direct link to increased travel time, but were instead focussed on the move/ merger in general.

A comment was raised that staff were potentially not using the combination payment for intended purpose i.e. overnight accommodation, and instead treating purely as additional salary.

**Conclusions:**

Due to the relatively small surveyed population, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from this exercise. However, whilst the majority of respondents recognised that the relocation had affected their well-being, health and/ or safety, a majority also responded that it had not affected their ability to carry out their duties effectively.

The payment for overnight accommodation did not feature prominently in the responses when asked whether there were sufficient mitigations in place to counter increases in travel time. This may indicate that this option is not being fully considered or utilised.