



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	RC/10/6
MEETING	RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	8 FEBRUARY 2010
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SPECIALIST RESCUE
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO (SERVICE SUPPORT)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the further advice in respect of payments to members of staff who undertake Specialist Rescue activities at level 3, as requested by Members, is considered.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>At the Resources Committee Meeting on 14th September 2009, a paper was presented outlining the issues associated with the role and responsibilities for level 3 Specialist Rescue (SR) Activities. At this meeting, the Committee questioned the need for these additional payments and questioned the requirement for the Service to undertake and fund SR activities at Level 3, particularly in the light of the lack of clarity regarding inclusion of this in the role map.</p> <p>In seeking clarification on this issue, additional advice has been obtained indicating responsibilities at Level 3 may be outside of the firefighter role map. Consequently if elevated nationally, the cost to the Service would increase, based on our obligations within the Conditions of Service for Additional Responsibility Allowances (ARA).</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Estimated cost of up to £84,700 relating to the original proposal, and an additional £20,020 if paid as an ARA, to be funded from existing budget provision.
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	There are no Equality Impact Assessment issues associated with this report.
APPENDICES	A. Report to Resources Committee RC/09/06
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	As above

NOT FOR PUBLICATION BY VIRTUE OF PARAGRAPH 4 OF PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A (AS AMENDED) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Resources Committee Meeting on 14th September 2009, a report was presented outlining the issues associated with the role and responsibilities for level 3 specialist rescue activities (Minute *RC/7 refers). Earlier discussions with the representative bodies had centred upon whether this work was a feature of the firefighter Role Map and, as such, whether it warranted the payment of an Additional Responsibility Allowance (ARA). Consequently, a Special Activity Allowance of £550 per person per annum was agreed, this being less than a payment under ARA.
- 1.2 At the meeting on 14th September 2009, the Committee questioned the need for these additional payments, asking for national clarification. Consequently, both the National Joint Council (NJC) and the Fire and Rescue Sector Vocational Standards Group (FRSVSG) were again consulted.

2 ADVICE

- 2.1 The FRSVSG have confirmed that their role is as an advisory group who have no jurisdiction or responsibility for the interpretation of individual circumstances, confirming that this is currently the preserve of the NJC.
- 2.2 Informal advice received through the NJC suggests the description of the 'Level 3' specialist role and equipment implies that this activity would fall outside of the role map and therefore require the payment of an ARA.
- 2.3 Given the clarification received, if the Committee wishes to continue elevating this formally through the NJC, then it appears likely that the cost to the Service would increase, as prescribed with the Service Policy for ARA as an obligation within the Conditions of Service. This cost would equate to £104,720 in a full year. The difference between the figure originally proposed and the costs associated with ARA will be an additional £20,020. The total requirement will be met from the within existing budget provision for allowance payments.

3 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Finally, although there appears to be only a modest difference in costs if the ARA figure was required, other factors need to be considered should the decision be taken to elevate through the NJC. The current programme to implement Specialist Rescue at Level 3 would almost certainly have to be suspended leaving the Service with no capability at that level. There would also be concerns regarding the ability of the Service to support Rope and Water Rescue at our fire stations (level 2). In addition, the Fire Brigades Union would almost certainly advise their members to cease any activity related to specialist rescue at level 3, including training.
- 3.2 As the process to resolve this issue through the NJC, which could possibly be furthered for judicial review, would take some considerable time, there is a danger that much of the training that has and currently is, being provided, would need to be revisited. This would require a significant re-investment in training costs and time. There would also be an impact on relations between staff and management regarding this issue that would affect the on-going implementation of the project.

4 **CONCLUSION**

4.1 All of this now needs to be weighed against the ability to continue rolling out the Specialist Rescue programme as agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2008 and the delay escalation nationally would inevitably create.

4.2 The outcome of such an elevation is unlikely to favour DSFRS with inevitable additional costs and future consideration in effecting change within the Service under similar circumstances. Given the clarification requested, Members may be minded to support this continuation of the programme.

**TREVOR STRATFORD
ACFO (Service Support)**



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	RC/09/6
MEETING	RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	14 SEPTEMBER 2009
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SPECIALIST RESCUE - PAYMENTS
LEAD OFFICER	ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (OPERATIONS)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>(a) <i>that the introduction of payments relating to specialist rescue activities, to be funded from within existing resources in the current financial year, be noted;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>that, at this stage, the Authority be asked to recognise that funding to facilitate continuation of the payments in 2010/11 and beyond will constitute a commitment on the base budget for future years.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This reports sets out the current position in relation to discussions with Representative Bodies on the introduction of financial recognition for undertaking specialist rescue work.</p> <p>The Fire and Rescue Authority supported a proposal to introduce the integration of water and rope rescue provision into a single capability known as 'Specialist Rescue', strategically located at four stations.</p> <p>Funding for equipment and training was reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority at the 2008/09 budget meeting on 15 February 2008. (Appendix B, 'Essential Spending Pressures', to report DSFRA/08/4 refers). As a consequence, expenditure was approved in support of this proposal (Minute Reference DSFRA/79/(a) refers). However, phased implementation was deferred pending the outcome of discussions with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on the introduction of some form of enhanced payment in recognition of the technical, physiological and psychological nature of the work.</p> <p>These discussions are now by and large complete and a proposal has been developed for payment which has the support of the FBU. While the additional costs associated with implementation of this proposal can be contained from within existing resources for the current financial year it will be necessary to include an appropriate amount in the base budget for 2010/11 and thereafter to facilitate continuation of the payments.</p>

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RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As set out in Section 3 of this report.
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	An initial assessment has revealed that there are no equality issues arising from this report.
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Nil.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The recommendation to introduce Specialist Rescue Teams was agreed by the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (DSFRA) on 15 February 2009 (Appendix B, 'Essential Spending Pressures', to report DSFRA/08/4 refers). The following recommendations were approved:
- To train level 2 and level 3 water rescue instructors as a priority
 - To train all operational staff within DSFRS to water rescue level 2 standard
 - To establish a Service-wide level 3 water rescue capability through the establishment of Specialist Rescue Teams (incorporating both water rescue and rope rescue) at Camels Head, Barnstaple, Bridgwater and Special Ops
 - To select and train Technical Rescue Officers in the management of major flooding events including search and rescue coordination
- 1.2 The project commenced in March 2008 and a progress report was submitted to the Community Safety and Corporate Planning Committee on the 6 November 2008 (Report CSCP/08/4 - Operations and Resilience Summary Update).
- 1.3 Whilst good progress has been made, commencement of the phased implementation of the project, to commence in January 2009, was deferred pending the outcome of discussions with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on the introduction of some form of appropriate financial recognition linked to the technical, physiological and psychological nature of the work.
- 1.4 This reports sets out the current position in relation to these discussions.

2. RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES

- 2.1 Whilst a great deal of progress has been made with the project, there remains a number of outstanding issues that still require resolution prior to implementation. These include:
- Specialist instructor payments/benefits;
 - Additional Responsibilities Allowance (ARA); and
 - Specialist rescue duties forming part of the firefighter role on designated stations, with some form of financial recognition associated with this.
- 2.2 The first two issues are both linked to the payment of an additional allowance for instructional staff for which the Service has an agreed process. This will be dealt with through the current Service policy on Additional Responsibility Allowances, which were provided for by the current terms and conditions of service for firefighters (the "Grey Book").
- 2.3 In respect of the third issue, however, the following agreements have been reached with the Fire Brigades Union:
- FBU support the introduction of specialist rescue within DSFRS
 - This undertaking is too be considered compulsory for personnel currently serving on any of the identified Specialist Rescue (SR) stations
 - Those considered as not having the aptitude (physiological & psychological) for the role will be transferred to another non-SR station and this may involve compulsory transfers.

- Safety at Height and Confined Space (SHACS) activity at level 1 and 2 is within the FF role map based on the existing parameters set out for this activity
- Water Rescue at level 1 and 2 is within the FF role map based on the existing parameters set out for this activity

2.4 Linked to these agreements, the Service has also agreed, in principle, payment of an interim Special Activity Allowance (SAA) of £550 per person per annum for those individuals undertaking specialist rescue activities. This is subject to the outcome of national discussions aimed at clarifying whether this activity is included within the Role Map and to inclusion of funding to facilitate continuation of the payments within the base budget for 2010/11 and onwards. Implementation of the payment, however, supports the central Fire and Rescue Service guidance regarding the additional technical training required and the physiological and psychological attributes to undertake this type of work.

3. FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

3.1 In proposing this payment, the Service considered the fact that the national picture remains unclear as to whether or not this activity is within the Firefighter Role Map. This situation remains unresolved at present.

3.2 If subsequently deemed to be outside of the Role Map, the Service would almost certainly need to consider payment based on its current Additional Responsibility Allowance (ARA) policy. This would delay implementation of the project and could lead to increased costs, particularly in terms of training.

3.3 The costs associated with introduction of the Special Activity Allowance (SAA) of £550 per person per annum (for those individuals undertaking specialist rescue activities) are based on a position of there being specialist rescue stations with a total of 140 operatives (124 from Barnstaple, Bridgewater and Camels Head; and 16 from Special Ops (Stn 60)). On this basis, the total annual cost of providing the payment will be £77,000. However, a case has been made to train the members of the 'call back' team at Stn 60. This increases the overall total number of operatives to 154 and the associated total full annual cost to £91,500 (including on-costs).

3.4 The part-year cost of £68,600 associated with implementation of the payment for the remainder of the current financial year can be met from within existing resources. It will, however, be necessary to include an appropriate amount in the base budget for 2010/11 and thereafter to facilitate continuation of the payments.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Following lengthy negotiations with the FBU, a Special Activity Allowance of £550 per person per annum (for those individuals undertaking specialist rescue activities) has been agreed. This represents a lesser cost to the Service than if payment had been based upon the current Additional Responsibility Allowance and it is contended represents a pragmatic solution to facilitate implementation of the specialist rescue initiative given the current uncertainty as to whether or not this activity features as part of the Role Map. Consequently, the Committee is commended to approve implementation of the payments, with the costs being borne from within existing resources for the current financial year but with a recognition that this will represent an on-going commitment on the base budget for 2010 and subsequent years.

TREVOR STRATFORD
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations)