



Falkirk Council
*Corporate &
Neighbourhood Services*

Briefing Note

To: Group Leaders and Portfolio Holders

Title: Scottish Fire & Rescue Service – Specialist Equipment Consultation

Date: 19 November 2014

Background

1. Scottish Fire & Rescue Service has undertaken a series of consultation events on their Review of Specialist Equipment. This is a review of Equipment across Scotland. Prior to the establishment of the Single Fire Service provision of Specialist Equipment was determined and managed by each individual Fire Service, this review aims to rationalise the specialist equipment available so that there is equitable access to equipment and assistance based on evidence of need.
2. The review looked at the following areas of Specialist Equipment:-
 - Water Rescue
 - Offshore Firefighting and support
 - Line Rescue
 - High Reach
 - Rescue Pump
 - Heavy Rescue/Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)
 - High Volume Pump (HVP)
 - Mass Decontamination (MD)
 - Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM)
 - Hazardous Materials
 - Prime Movers
 - Command and Control
 - 4x4xVehicle
 - Wildfire
 - Incident Logistical Support

Special Appliance Review

The SFRS delivers an emergency service within a complex framework of law, regulation and operational guidance. As the role of the fire service has developed over the years, beyond just firefighting, the range of activities undertaken has continued to expand and widen. Correspondingly, the range of equipment and skills training required to meet this developing role has increased greatly. This historical deployment of specialist resources (appliances and equipment) required to be reviewed to ensure it conforms to the needs of community and firefighter safety across Scotland now that the historical geographical boundaries have been removed.

This review commenced in May 2013, with the aims of delivering on the SFRS' key objectives of delivering operational services efficiently and equitably across the communities of Scotland. In undertaking the review a number of key principles were acknowledged, notably:

- The underlying expectation was of delivering improved outcomes for Scotland's communities, with greater equity of access to a standardised range of resources.
- Recognition of the fact that 'Resilience' assets (USAR, HVP, MD, DIM) are not devolved matters to Scottish Government, therefore cognisance was required to be taken of our contribution to UK security.
- An imperative to assure competency in our crews by reducing the present overburdening of certain specialist resources at fire stations.
- In this regard, wherever possible only wholtime crews will be utilised due to the availability of sufficient training time.
- In addition to the restrictions encountered through training requirements, stations were selected based on their strategic locations and the surrounding risk profile.
- Where services are or can be delivered by partner agencies, this is reflected in future approaches.
- Capital costs for appliance and equipment replacement will be factors in the final delivery timeline of these changes.

Implications For The Falkirk Area

On completion of the review, the 'Review of Specialist Equipment Report' was developed by the Response and Resilience Department of the SFRS. The report is currently in draft format and awaiting approval by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board (SFRB). It is envisaged that the SFRB will approve the report in at its next meeting (November 2014). On approval by the SFRB a detailed implementation plan will be developed to implement the recommendations contained within the report.

In recognising that the 'end state' of the Review of Specialist Equipment may take up to 3 years to implement, and that there may be changes in the final status of some of the recommendations due to the dynamic nature of the environment the SFRS works in, the implications for the Falkirk area are;

- The mass decontamination assets (which are all contained with POD units) based at Falkirk fire station will be removed and the equipment re-distributed to the stations that are allocated to have mass decontamination assets in Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- The line rescue assets and recall to duty team based at Falkirk fire station will be removed and cease to operate. Assets and teams from Lochgelly fire station in Fire , Tollcross fire station in Edinburgh and East Kilbride fire station in East Kilbride will provide specialist rope rescue teams in the event of an incident in the central belt of Scotland.
- The specialist appliances based at Falkirk and Bo'ness fire stations will be staffed by wholetime firefighters as opposed to retained duty firefighters. (note as part of preparatory work, this part of the Specialist Appliance Review implementation project has been completed under the terms of the SFRS Resource Based Crewing project).
- The water bowser currently based at Denny fire station is out of scope of the Review of Specialist Equipment Report, and as such remains unchanged.
- A High Volume Pump will be located at Alloa fire Station (in recognised that Alloa fire Station sits outwith the Falkirk area, the siting of the HVP at Alloa secures an additional resource in a state of readiness to respond to incidents at the Grangemouth petro-chemical complex)

Commentary

We recognise that this review is an operational review of how to best manage specialist resources across Scotland to meet current needs, demands and risks for communities. It is also noted that there will be increased flexibility in the deployment of resources by whole time staff fully trained in the use of the equipment as opposed to the current system where specialist equipment is the responsibility of retained firefighters who have less training in the use of the equipment and are more difficult to mobilise at any given time. There is also acknowledgement that specialist equipment is used over and above the normal Fire Service response to emergencies.

The main area of concern to Falkirk is the removal of the mass decontamination resources at Falkirk fire station. The nearest sites will be at Coatbridge and Dunfermline. Reassurances are given that mass decontamination is a national resource that is predominantly concerned with decontaminating very large numbers of people who have been exposed to contaminants associated with terrorist or extremist activities and that under current risk assessments and planning assumptions, decontamination equipment help on front line appliances is suitable and sufficient to remove contaminants from people exposed to contaminants released from a local industrial adverse safety event. The redistribution of the national mass decontamination resources whilst maintaining local decontamination resources not only provides a safe and efficient way forward, but will result in an improved service with dedicated resources being delivered competently and by better trained and better prepared crews.

Falkirk area will still retain its' High Volume Pump, High Reach Fire appliance and will have a Command & Control unit at Bo'ness.