

## REDUCTION OF UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

### SUMMARY

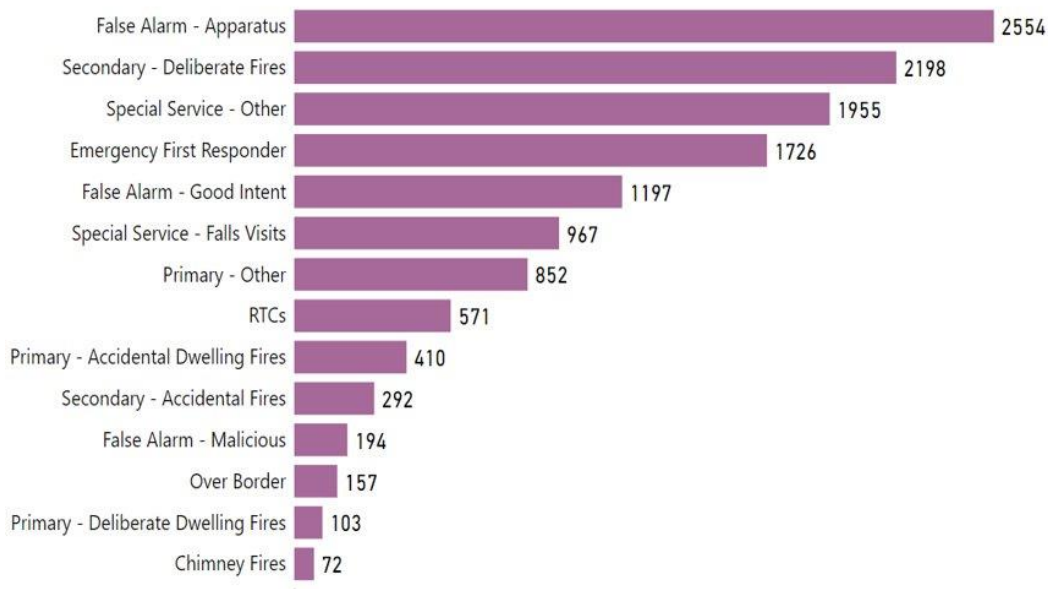
1. Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) account for 14% of operational mobilisations to commercial premises. Despite a robust call challenge process, Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) continues to respond to 1400 (three year average) Automatic Fire Alarms incidents per year.
2. Public Safety delivery is now becoming core work within Emergency Response teams, as such the Public Safety SRP has now progressed to a position of more effectively addressing the demand presented by UwFS.
3. The impact of crews attending UwFS reduces the opportunities to deliver Public Safety activities (Community and Business Safety), train for operational incidents and attend genuine 999 calls requiring an emergency response.
4. Within the HFRS Family Group, Humberside was 6<sup>th</sup> highest for automatic fire alarms in non-domestic premises last year.
5. In the HFRS Family Group, the top 5 performing services (exhibiting the lowest volumes of UwFS) all have a non-attendance approach supported by policy. In the Yorkshire and Humber Region all 3 other FRS have a non-attendance for UwFS and 2 have charging mechanisms within their policy provision.
6. Nationally, over 20 services have a non-attendance policy (Fire Industry Association, 2015).
7. The proportionality of incidents attended by HFRS in 2017/18 (excluding Emergency Medical Response) is currently dominated by UwFS, that can be engineered or managed out of existence, returning capacity opportunities to the Service.
8. Following public consultations undertaken in 2017, the Director of Public Safety believes it is appropriate to revise the services approach to reducing UwFS, utilising an education, influence and enforcement approach underpinned by a change of policy position to reduce the demand from UwFS.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

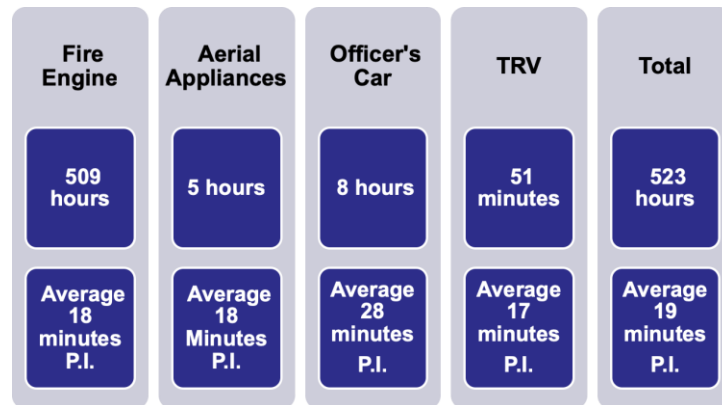
9. That Members endorse the recommendation for the Service to re-consult with the public to ask for views upon future changes to Unwanted Fire Signal and AFA policy position statements specifically to support:
  - A non-attendance approach to commercial (non-sleeping risk, non COMAH) sites within identified regular business hours;
  - A cost recovery mechanism to support and influence fire alarm management practises with false alarm frequent callers.

## REPORT DETAIL

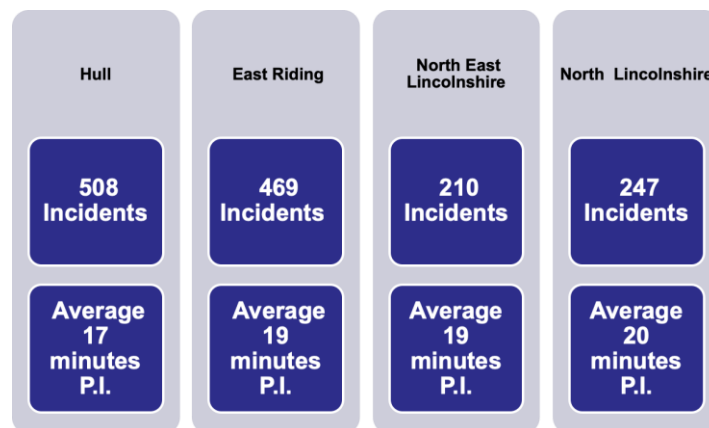
10. Despite a robust call challenge process, HFRS continues to respond to Automatic Fire Alarms, with an average of 1400 incidents each year over the last 3 years. Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) account for 14% of operational mobilisations to commercial premises.
11. With the movement of Public Safety delivery work across to Emergency Response teams, the 2017 Public Safety SRP has now progressed to be in a position to more effectively address the demands presented by UwFS.
12. Attendance of UwFS reduces the opportunities to deliver Public Safety activities (Community and Business Safety), train for operational incidents and attend genuine 999 calls requiring an emergency response.
13. Nationally, over 20 services have a non-attendance policy (Fire Industry Association, 2015). Within the HFRS Family Group, Humberside was 6<sup>th</sup> highest for automatic fire alarms in non-domestic premises last year.
14. In the HFRS Family Group, the top 5 performing services (exhibiting the lowest volumes of UwFS) all have a non-attendance approach supported by policy. In the Yorkshire and Humber Region all 3 other FRS have a non-attendance for UwFS and 2 have charging mechanisms within their policy provision.
15. The proportionality of incidents attended by HFRS in 2017/18 (excluding Emergency Medical Response) is shown below and is currently dominated with UwFS (False Alarm – Apparatus). With the correct support and engagement, these false alarms can be engineered or managed out of existence, returning capacity opportunities to the Service.



16. The Emergency Response resourcing implications for UwFS in 2017/18 are as follows:



17. The resourcing demand for UwFS in each Unitary Authority area are as follows:



Only 68 premises account for over 400 UwFS attended by HFRS appliances and crews

Responding to such incidents represents a total exposure of the public and the Service to over 139 hours of operational (blue light) road risk, excepting where a confirmed false alarm is encountered, and the Service are requested to attend at normal road speed.

It is notable that the 2018 HMICFRS inspection had particular focus upon UwFS. It is anticipated that recent NFCC work undertaken on UwFS with the Home Office will translate into a further thematic focus in future rounds of inspection

18. In 2017, HFRS publicly consulted upon the Strategic Plan Consultation and also separately to the Business community and asked:

Strategic Plan Consultation (Sept. 2017)

*"In the last two years we have attended over 3000 false alarms at business premises where automatic fire alarms have activated but no fire has occurred. We have already asked our business community how they feel about being charged in the future for these types of incidents. Apart from the financial cost of sending fire engines to repeated, avoidable false alarms, our fire engines are also not available to attend other emergencies at the same time. If we did decide to charge businesses that are responsible for repeated, avoidable, false alarms and invest the money back into public safety activity, would you support this decision?"*

- The returns were 49 in total with 34 declaring support for charging against repeated, avoidable false alarms.

#### Business Community Consultation (Jan. 2017)

*“In the future, we may decide not to attend an automatic fire alarm (AFA) if it occurs during the normal working hours of the business concerned, only attending if we receive confirmation that there is a fire at the premises. As a member of our business community, would you support this decision?”*

- The returns were 34 in total with 23 declaring support for non-attendance of an AFA during normal working hours of the business concerned

*“In the event of a false alarm, we may begin to charge businesses for attending automatic fire alarms (AFAs) in the future. As a member of our business community, would you support this decision?”*

- The returns were 33 in total with 23 declaring support for charging businesses for attending automatic fire alarms (false alarms).

19. Following on from the 2017 consultations, the Public Safety SRP has now progressed to a stage to revise the services approach to reducing UwFS to utilise an education, influence and enforcement approach underpinned by a change of policy position to reduce the demand from UwFS.
20. In order to raise the profile of UwFS, provide more detail around the proposals to reduce UwFS and obtain an increased level of responses from our communities, Public Safety recommends;
21. That the Service re-consults with the public on UwFS and ask for views upon future changes to policy to;
  - A non-attendance approach to commercial (non-sleeping risk, non COMAH) sites within identified regular business hours;
  - A cost recovery mechanism to support and influence fire alarm management practises with false alarm frequent callers.
22. It is recommended that consultation commences 10 December 2018 for six weeks until 18 January 2019, with the results and subsequent recommendations provided to HFA on 11 February 2019.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

23. This paper supports the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, contributing towards the Director workstreams of Making our Community Safer and Responding Effectively.

#### FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

24. Within existing consultation budgets.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

25. Part two of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, provides a legal basis from which charges may be made, specifically:

...’there is a persistent problem with false reports of fire at the premises that are made as a direct or indirect result of warning equipment under common control having malfunctioned or being mis-installed’.

Challenges to this would be ascertaining the exact nature of the false alarm and being assured that the cause is indeed a result of the warning equipment. Legal challenge has been brought in other service areas and often leads, (where it is brought), to the charges being dropped.

The introduction of the charging mechanism is primarily to encourage behavioural change in business/property owners and will work in conjunction with advice, engagement and non-attendance approaches to reduce the number of mobilisations to UwFS.

#### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

26. An Equality Impact Assessment for public consultations is available.

#### CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

27. None arising.

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

28. None arising.

#### COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ARISING

29. Public consultation across all media channels for key stakeholder in the Humberside locality.

#### DETAILS OF CONSULTATION AND/OR COLLABORATION

30. Prior consultation with the Humberside Business Community (January 2017)  
Prior consultation with the Humberside Public (Strategic Plan September 2017)

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

31. Business Community Consultation (January 2017) & Strategic Plan Consultation (September 2017) are available.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS RESTATED

32. That Members endorse the recommendation for the Service to re-consult with the public to ask for views upon future changes to Unwanted Fire Signal and AFA policy position statements specifically to support:
- A non-attendance approach to commercial (non-sleeping risk, non COMAH) sites within identified regular business hours;
  - A cost recovery mechanism to support and influence fire alarm management practises with false alarm frequent callers.

**P McCOURT**

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28 November 2018

