

UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS POLICY AND STRATEGY COST RECOVERY



REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Approval

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members approval to implement cost recovery arrangements in relation to the Unwanted Fire Signal Strategy and Policy, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 25 September 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the introduction of cost recovery arrangements in relation to the Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy and Policy, set out as Appendix 1, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 25 September 2020.

3. THE AUTHORITY'S UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS STRATEGY AND POLICY

- 3.1 Cleveland Fire Authority will take a leading role in reducing the incidents that the Brigade attends to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) that are classed as Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS).
- 3.2 The existing UwFS Strategy commenced in October 2017 and was reviewed in March 2019 to evaluate its effectiveness. The review identified a number of options to further develop the strategy and reduce the number of UwFS.
- 3.3 The preferred option resulted in the commencement of a trial in April 2019, which prescribed the timeframe in which the UwFS Policy would be in operation. The results of the trial were positive, delivering significant safety and efficiency improvements through a reduction in the number of UwFS that the Brigade attends.
- 3.4 Following evaluation in July 2020, the trial was extended for a further 12 months from 1st September 2020 to cover a full 24 hour period. If approved, this will form the basis of the proposed cost recovery arrangements.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Authority will provide the following response to AFAs:

The Authority will not attend AFAs to low and medium risk premises unless a confirmation of fire is received from the premises via the 999 system;

4.2 High risk, special risk and domestic properties will receive the following response:

The Authority will mobilise one fire appliance to the AFA address, unless a risk assessment or back up call determines otherwise.

4.3 Examples of high risk properties may include COMAH sites, factories with dangerous processes, premises with a 'sleeping' risk deemed to be high which may include hospitals, care homes, hotels, halls of residence or HMO (houses in multiple occupation).

4.4 Special risk properties will include those buildings that have a heritage factor for example Ormesby Hall, Preston Park Hall, and Wynyard Hall etc. Special risk also includes those premises that contain equipment or data that is of significant importance to the National Infrastructure.

4.5 In addition, the Authority will not attend Automatic Fire Alarms from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs) unless they are backed up with a 999 call from the premises to either the ARC or to Fire Control. At premises where there is no one present, one appliance will be mobilised.

4.6 This applies to the following premises;

- Industrial premises
- Business premises
- Commercial premises
- Schools
- Public buildings
- Leisure complexes
- Hospitals
- Residential Care Premises.

*Sheltered housing (including bungalows and flats) and private dwellings are exempt from the conditions outlined above.

4.7 The Authority will continue to provide advice to the business community (in line with resources available) to ensure that all non-domestic premises are aware of their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

4.8 Where a premise can demonstrate that there are exceptional circumstances for that premise to receive a full AFA PDA, then an exception can be granted.

5. PROPOSAL TO LEVY A CHARGE FOR POOR PERFORMANCE

5.1 The Authority recognises its ability to levy a charge for responding to a report of a fire, where the call is made within certain circumstances associated with UwFS. The ability to recover costs through charging for persistent unwanted fire signals is enabled under section 18C of the Fire Services Act 2004, as amended.

- 5.2 Subject to approval, the Authority will charge for attending UwFS where poor performance is displayed. This may form part of a wider enforcement action under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 5.3 If approved, the introduction of a charging mechanism is primarily to encourage a positive behavioural change in business/property owners. Cleveland Fire Brigade will continue to work in conjunction with businesses to reduce the number of mobilisations to UwFS.
- 5.4 The introduction of cost recovery arrangements will provide the Authority with an additional means of influencing responsible persons to manage automatic fire detection systems effectively.
- 5.5 At the Executive Committee meeting on 25 September 2020, Members fully supported the introduction of cost recovery arrangements in connection with the Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy and Policy and recommended this for approval by Cleveland Fire Authority at its meeting on 16 October 2020.

6. **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Extensive consultation has been carried out with the business community and the wider public. The results demonstrate a good level of support for the introduction of cost recovery and full details of the consultation can be found at Appendix 1.

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