

# WHOLETIME DUTY SYSTEM EVALUATION

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



**For Information**

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the 2024 Wholetime Duty System Evaluation, attached as Appendix 1.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members note the Authority's Wholetime Duty System Evaluation, attached as Appendix 1.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following a strategic review in 2023, on 1 January 2024, the Brigade introduced a new wholetime duty system, with the intention of:
- Increasing the efficiency of the old duty system
  - Increasing the effectiveness and improving resilience
  - Increasing the productivity of Grey Book Station-based personnel
  - Improving morale
- 3.2 The new system, agreed with the Fire Brigade's Union, through a Local Agreement, was initially planned as a 12-month pilot, following which a comprehensive evaluation would be performed to determine success, through fulfilment of the Brigade's strategic objectives, including increasing productivity and reducing gaps in appliance availability, the amount the Brigade pay in overtime and staff sickness.
- 3.3 The main changes to the duty system included the removal of 'blue' and 'grey' days (standby days), removal of annualised hours, new start and finish times (0900-1800 hours) and the introduction of a 'Resilience Pool'.
- 3.4 Alongside changes to the Duty System, the Brigade continued its ongoing work to understand the Productivity and Capacity of wholetime firefighters, as directed by data requirements from the Home Office. Subsequently, a new Productivity & Capacity system was developed to record activities carried out by wholetime Firefighters each shift. Development of this system, including updates to mirror Home Office reporting requirements, led to a slight delay in robust data recording resulting in the decision being taken to extend the pilot into 2025.

**4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The evaluation was performed by the Risk and Performance Department and subsequent report produced by the Head of Risk and Performance.
- 4.2 The evaluation utilised a quantitative approach to assess whether changes have been observed in three key areas, aligned to the following evaluation objectives:
- Did changes to the wholetime duty system make the service more effective by improving appliance availability, and subsequently emergency response to fires and other emergencies?
  - Did changes to the wholetime duty system make the service more efficient through improvements to productivity and capacity, utilisation of a staff resilience pool, and subsequently a reduction in overtime?
  - Did changes to the wholetime duty system have an impact on CFB's people, evidenced by reduced sickness absence and increased staff morale?
- 4.3 Data to support the review was taken from a range of source and systems, including, but not limited to, appliance availability data, mobilisation data, overtime payments and staff sickness. The Community Volunteer Policy and Procedure has been established to recognise the diverse range of skills, perspectives and enthusiasm that volunteers can bring to an organisation, whilst presenting opportunities to the volunteers and the achievement of corporate objectives.

**5. EVALUATION FINDINGS**

- 5.1 The aim of the evaluation was to investigate the effect of the implementation of the new duty system for wholetime station staff. At the outset it was stated that the main objectives of the move to new working hours and conditions were to boost morale, improve availability and subsequently productivity.
- 5.2 Using the framework of the three initial questions, the findings indicate that all three questions regarding the improvement of effectiveness, efficiency and people (sickness/ morale) have been met.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The evaluation contained several recommendations set out below:
- Continue operating under the new duty system working arrangements
  - Implement improvements to Brigade systems to ensure the service is equipped with accurate data to inform operational and strategic decision making
  - Reconsider procedure for utilisation of Resilience Pool staff
- 6.2 At the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Performance Meeting on 10 June 2025, the evaluation report was presented and discussed, with the outcome being that ELT approved the recommendations in entirety.

**7. NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were informed of the evaluation, recommendations and subsequent approval by ELT, at the joint senior management / FBU meeting on 17 June 2025.
- 7.2 All staff will be informed of the ELT decision at the Communications Forum on Friday 27 June 2025.
- 7.3 Recommendations 2 and 3 will be considered by the Operational Policy and Planning department and arrangements established to address the changes within each recommendation.

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