



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Service Leadership Team Meeting</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	6i
	<b>Performance &amp; Resources Board</b>		12
<b>Meeting Date</b>	9 June 2020		
	29 June 2020		
<b>Report Author:</b>	Portfolio & Programme Manager, Future Fire		
<b>Presented By</b>	Director of Innovation, Risk & Future Development		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>On-Call Conversion Project – Progress Report</b>		
<b>Type of Report:</b>	Information		

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Board are asked to note the contents of this paper for information only.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The On-Call Conversion Project (OCCP) was established in 2018 to manage the conversion of a number of stations from day crew to on-call status. Clacton's second appliance converted from wholetime to on-call status in 2019, and Dovercourt, Waltham Abbey, Great Baddow, and South Woodham Ferrers continue in transition phase.

The project is scheduled to run until October 2021 by which point it is planned that all stations within the scope of the project will have transitioned to on-call status. This will depend on the Service's ability to recruit and retain on-call employees.

### 3. STATION PROGRESS

Two assessment days and one basic training course had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. As a result of this, there are no new joiners to report since the last report of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. There have also not been any new leavers.

The training department are currently working through how the Service can safely approach on-call basic training and how, once on station, the new recruits can safely progress through their development phases to become fully competent firefighters.

The full impact of Covid-19 on the OCCP is still being assessed. We currently have a reassuring number of applicants at various stages of the recruitment process, but until we are in a position to progress with assessment days and basic training courses we are unable to establish how many of those will convert to new recruits.

## Progress Summary

	Current Headcount	Required Headcount	*** New Applicants	Leavers FY 19/20	Leavers FY 18/19	OICs
Clacton	18	18*	-	2	2	2
Dovercourt	16 (- 7)	23**	5	2	4	4
SWF	5 (- 13)	18*	27	1	0	0
Waltham Abbey	13 (- 5)	18*	20	0	0	0
Great Baddow	6 (-12)	18*	10	0	1	1
	<b>57</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>

It is worth noting that the 'required headcount' figure is higher than that of an established on-call station. It was agreed to increase the headcount during the project to provide more resilience and in recognition that turnover may be higher in the short term.

\* Single appliance stations budgeted headcount of 14

\*\* Two appliance stations budgeted headcount of 18

\*\*\* 'New Applicants' are at various stages of process and not guaranteed to progress to appointment.

**DOVERCOURT** converted to on-call on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. In order to support the transition and ensure the availability of both appliances the station is being supported by day duty personnel.

The station currently has 16 on-call employees with five applications awaiting progress.

**WALTHAM ABBEY** has a positive level of interest and applications. The station are likely to lose three existing OC firefighters, with two joining Essex as wholetime firefighters, and one joining Hertfordshire. The anticipated conversion date is February 2021, due to the development stages of the other employees.

The station currently has 13 on-call personnel with 20 applications awaiting progress.

**SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS** Day crew firefighters are being recruited to bring the wholetime establishment to the planned level to support the transition to on-call. A new Station Manager has been appointed to focus on South Woodham Ferrers and Great Baddow. The earliest conversion date for the station is October 2021.

The station currently has five on-call personnel with 27 applications awaiting progress.

**GREAT BADDOW** has a reasonable level of interest and applications. A new Station Manager has been appointed to focus on Great Baddow and South Woodham Ferrers. The earliest conversion date for the station is October 2021.

The station currently has six on-call firefighters and 10 applications awaiting progress.

#### **4. OCCP RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGNS**

The On-Call Development Programme initiated the targeted campaign approach to raise community awareness of on-call opportunities and help drive recruitment at the converting stations. To date there have been two campaigns; the first in September 2019 and the second in January/February 2020.

The purpose of the campaigns are to widely publicise on-call opportunities, as well draw people to the stations to encourage interaction and engagement with the local communities and provide an opportunity to find out more about becoming an on-call firefighter in a supportive environment.

Between the first campaign and the second, there was a noticeable increase in interest shown from people enquiring about joining the stations, showing that raising the profile of the stations was effective. Outside of campaign periods social media activity and leaflet drops have continued to have a positive effect.

Following the successful of previous campaigns, it was agreed that the targeted campaign approach will continue on a three-monthly basis, followed by debriefs and reviews to assess continued effectiveness.

The next campaign was originally planned for April 2020 but had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. This campaign has now been rescheduled and will start again w/c 29th June 2020.

As current guidance does not support station-based campaigns, events and visits, the project team have designed different ways to approach this. This includes:

Activities ahead of and during the campaign weeks;

- Targeted social media campaigns
- On-Call Liaison Officer (OCLO) videos promoting the roles and how to get involved
- Information booklets – tailored to each station and delivered to addresses within response area
- OCL Manager contact with local companies and employers by telephone
- On-call firefighter case studies – specific to each station.

Activities during the campaign weeks will include;

- Videos from OCLOs introducing the role and promote virtual station visits
- Case studies and social media activity
- Virtual station visits and information about the station
- Fitness assessment day videos and information
- Signposting to Service website to find out more the roles and how to apply.

#### **5. BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Risks & Issues**

##### **Recruitment and training of on-call employees**

The Service's ability and capacity to process recruits, run assessment days and train on-call employees, during this period and after, will need to increase in order to achieve the conversion of the remaining stations within the current timescales.

### **Station Manager and Station Support**

OCLOs are key in supporting the conversions. They are the consistent point of contact for enquiries and applications and are a vital support to the Station Managers and Group Manager, who otherwise would not have the capacity to manage. All Station Managers for converting stations have reported they would be unable to sustain the current level of activity without OCLO support.

### **Targeted promotion and recruitment campaigns**

OCLOs are key in the coordination and delivery of the targeted campaign weeks. Without the OCLOs support, the stations and departments required and involved to deliver campaigns would be unable to continue with this approach.

### **On-Call Liaison Officer Pilot**

The OCLO Pilot is due to end June 2020. A project evaluation, recommendations and closure report has been submitted to programme board and approved. A business case for business as usual implementation of the roles has been submitted to SLT for decision on 9th June 2020. It is likely to have an adverse effect on the conversions if the OCLO support is ended.

### **Proactive engagement of Station Managers**

In order to fully support the conversions, it is essential that the Station Managers have the capability and capacity to provide the level of support and engagement. This includes leadership at the converting stations and encouragement of new on-call recruits coming into the stations.

### **Proactive and positive engagement of existing day crew and on-call employees**

In order to fully support the conversions, it is essential that current day crew and on-call employees are actively and positively engaged. This includes engaging with and encouraging interested candidates, supporting promotion activities and campaigns, and supporting the training and development of new recruits. All employees at all converting stations have confirmed their commitment to Station Managers.

### **Public and community assurance**

During the October 2019 campaigns, there was considerable concern reported from the local community and businesses. The January 2020 campaign experienced lower levels, but some concern and misunderstandings still exist. It is vital that the Service continue engagement on a local level with communities to help address concerns and remain aware of local campaigns to stop the conversions.

### **Wholetime Recruitment**

On-call employees successfully appointed to wholetime posts may result in reduction in numbers at converting stations.



Planned financial benefits linked to the sale of day crew houses will be delayed in some cases due to the requirement for continued day crew employee support during the transition period.

Agreed additional funding for day crew posts remaining for extended transition period at Great Baddow, South Woodham Ferrers and Waltham Abbey.

Agreed funding for day duty roles at Dovercourt for an initial 12-month period: Station Manager, Watch Manager, Crew Manager and two firefighter-drivers to support the daytime availability of both appliances. These posts are not eligible for Service housing or rental allowance.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

None specific to this report.

## **8. WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT**

Key stakeholders continue to be involved in the project.

Station Managers and Group Managers of converting stations are invited to attend monthly meetings to discuss plans, progress and issues – these continue to take place via video calls. It is the responsibility of the Station Managers to continue to engage with and disseminate information to the day crew and on-call employees.

On-Call Liaison Officers and Project Team continue to engage with key stakeholders, ensuring the appropriate information is provided in the right way, to the right people, at the right time.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None specific to this report.

## **10. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Concern has been raised by representative bodies regarding safe approaches to on-call basic training courses, on boarding processes at stations, and integration with day crew employees as a result of Covid-19. The concerns relate to recruitment and training for all on-call employees and Portfolio and Programme Manager advised directing concerns to the Assistant Director, Prevention, Protection and Response, Health & Safety.