

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

DATE: 26 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT OF: MRS HELYN CLACK - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

LEAD OFFICER: SARAH MITCHELL - STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

SUBJECT: SPECIALIST RESCUE AND CONTINGENCY CREWING EXTENSION



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SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

This report provides a summary of activity and effectiveness of the private sector professional specialist rescue and contingency crewing (SRCC) pilot contract. The report highlights the positive impact of the contract through the current period of on-going industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union.

Further opportunities for improving operational impact and value for money are currently being explored. This report seeks permission to extend the contract pilot period to March 2015 in order to undertake a full evaluation of the pilot and ensure that new opportunities can be fully assessed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the current pilot contract for the provision of specialist rescue and contingency crewing capability is extended to 31 March 2015 with a break clause at 31 May 2014 to ensure suitable long term funding has been identified.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. SFRS has utilised the contingency crewing element of the contract during all periods of industrial action - this identified that the contractors are able to meet the minimum criteria established in the contract and have capacity to provide additional resources on request.
2. The additional capacity and flexibility provided by the SRCC contract offers potential to provide better value for money in a number of aspects of service delivery pertaining to SFRS, blue-light partners and other agencies. However, it is suggested that the current industrial action makes this an inappropriate time to take a long term decision on the SRCC arrangements, the benefits of which can be more fully assessed once the series of strike actions have concluded.
3. The Service intends to review and refresh the Public Safety Plan taking account of new information and government guidance. The recommendation will enable this activity to be completed prior to a decision on the future of the Specialist Rescue and Contingency Crewing contract, ensuring that the specification can take full account of SFRS requirements.
4. SFRS is therefore requesting approval from Cabinet to further explore these options by extending the current contract to 31 March 2015. The Service proposes to present the full year evaluation and proposals for consideration by

Cabinet prior to the expiration of this extension.

5. The confidential annex (item 15) details the effects required and delivered through the contract.

DETAILS:

6. On 23 October 2012, the Cabinet agreed that SFRS commence a one year pilot scheme with a private sector partner for the provision of professional specialist rescue and contingency crewing capability. Recommendation three of that paper was to report to Cabinet within six months of the commencement of the pilot contract, assessing the costs and benefits of the arrangements, taking account of developing partnership opportunities and emerging national practice in this area. The specialist rescue capability became operational on 1 February 2013 and full operating capability since June 2013, with all staff having completed the standard firefighting and rescue training courses.
7. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) announced on 29 August 2013 that a majority of its members who voted were in favour of strike action regarding the trade dispute with the Department for Communities and Local Government. The dispute is around pension reforms in the fire and rescue service. At the time of writing, industrial action has taken place on four occasions; 25 September 2013, 19 October 2013 [postponed], 1 November and 4 November and 13 November 2013. A further ballot commence on 13 November 2013 seeking a mandate for action short of strike.
8. The decision by Cabinet in October 2012 put in place a suitable solution to meet the capability gap in the event of industrial action and which enabled SFRS to meet in full the legislative requirements. SFRS mitigated a significant risk by entering into a contingency contract with a private sector partner. This enhanced the provision of contingency crewing with highly skilled and specialist staff using the best equipment.
9. The current contract expires on 30 November 2013

CONSULTATION:

10. Consultation with staff and trade unions will be undertaken as part of the business planning activity. The Fire Brigades Union have been informed about the intended approach to the contract extension.
11. Consultation with other stakeholder will be undertaken as the opportunities are explored and detailed stakeholder analysis has commenced.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

12. The existence of the current contract continues to mitigate significant risks to the Fire Authority. The Service continues to monitor and manage risks in line with the pilot project plan.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

13. Refer to item 15, the confidential annex.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

14. Refer to item 15, the confidential annex.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

15. Legal Services confirms that the contract for the specialist rescue and contingency crewing capability services can be extended for a period of between 6 months and 2 years.

Equalities and Diversity

16. By ensuring that SFRS has sustainable services and minimal disruption to Surrey communities then there are no adverse equality and diversity implications.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

17. The Chief Fire Officer will:
- Implement the recommendations stated above
 - Establish the longer term funding arrangements with the Finance Department and Cabinet Member for Community Services
 - Present to Cabinet the outcomes from the SRCC Review

Contact Officer:

Liz Mills Chief of Staff, Surrey Fire and Rescue 01737 242444

Consulted:

Kay Hammond	Cabinet Associate for Fire and Police Services
Sarah Mitchell	Strategic Director for Adult Social Care
Paul Carey-Kent	Strategic Finance Manager, Adult Social Care and Fire and Rescue
David Kelly	Corporate Group Legal Services Manager, Legal and Democratic Services
Ross Duigood	Category Manager, Procurement and Commissioning

Annexes:

Annexe (item 15) – Specialist Rescue and Contingency Crewing

Sources/background papers:

- PSP 2020
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, July 2012

Mid term report – Specialist Rescue and Contingency Crewing

Current situation

1. Specialist Group International (SGI) provide Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) an enhanced specialist rescue capability (beyond its ability to self provide economically) and a contingency which gives continuity to a life saving public service in times of difficulty e.g. Under any circumstance when normal capacity is degraded, exhausted or stretched due to widespread sickness, industrial action, large or unusual events occurring which could also be over long periods of time.
2. The specialist rescue capability that is supplied by SGI through the contract consists of one crew of five personnel available on an immediate response basis on weekdays from 08:00 – 17:00 hours, with the same capability available on a one hour delay at all other times. Additionally other crews are available on request and the whole of SGIs capability can be brought up to immediate readiness at any time with just a few hours notice.
3. This provision of staff, vehicles and equipment (capability) for Fire and Rescue in accordance with Surrey competency standards plus specialist rescue operations including, but not limited to, search and rescues from water, air operations, subsurface search and rescue, confined space and high rescue, as well as a human remains search and body recovery capability is a unique model which gives both flexibility in how capability is drawn together and the ability to rapidly change the focus and priority of the rescue effect required as the situation changes.

Current experience

4. It is a requirement of the national framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) to assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities (from local fires to terrorist attacks) and put in place arrangements to mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, more effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability. The FRA need to deliver effective and proportionate prevention and protection activities and be ready to respond to incidents within their areas and across the country to keep communities safe.
5. SGI's ability to provide a wide range of capability to SFRS enables it to guarantee a minimum capability to meet its statutory requirements of Fire, Rescue and Civil Protection at all times. In addition it is a capability multiplier insofar as it provides a simultaneous response to traditional Fire and Rescue incidents when required and also specialist rescue teams and equipment at the same time. By undertaking normal Fire and Rescue tasks during times of degradation it not only fills this gap but also frees specialist SFRS officers to undertake some of their specialist tasks e.g. command and control, fire investigation, national resilience roles such as dangerous substance identification. During the current strike SFRS was 1 of only 4 nationally available teams that provide Detection and Monitoring. Also with SGI providing water rescue during the strike Surrey were also able to provide a local, regional and national boat rescue capability too.

6. SGI has proven that it can be relied upon to provide the minimum capability SFRS needs to have an effective response during industrial action. They have also proven that they can, during normal operations, provide an enhanced capability which is also needed and contributes to the SFRS mission of saving life, relief of suffering, protecting property and the environment.
7. During the pilot period SGI have responded to traditional Fire and Rescue calls where they have replaced SFRS staff at incidents during times when SFRS staffs were striking. Additionally they work alongside SFRS crews on a daily basis, during the recent high winds and the aftermath they were called upon on two separate occasions to rescue persons trapped under fallen trees, and to cut a path through fallen trees for normal fire and rescue crews to proceed to incidents. They were also called to make safe dangerous structures at height; all of this was within a 3 hour period. Working alongside SFRS they have been deployed with their unique surface and subsurface water search and rescue equipment and personnel to find and recover both the living and dead from Surrey waters on numerous occasions. They also have been called upon to deploy their height rescue teams to support both SFRS and the Police in rescuing people or provide safe systems of work for emergency crews including both the Police and Ambulance Services.
8. The tables below provide a summary of the number of incidents SGI have been requested at or mobilised to over the pilot period. It also provides a summary of the impact on available crews during the recent periods of industrial action.

Table 1 – SGI use during strike for traditional fire and rescue duties

<u>Traditional Fire and Rescue duties – Only undertaken during strike</u>		
Date	Non striking crewed fire engines	SGI crewed fire engines¹
25 10 2013	8	4
(Total incidents attended 3)		
01 11 2013	6	4
(Total incidents attended 2)		
04 11 2013	4	4
(Total incidents attended 7)		
13 11 2013	8	4
(Total incidents attended 9)		

¹ SGI crewed fire engines during strike will also have a SFRS Officer in charge. At all other times they deploy independently and integrate into the command structure at the incident.

Table 2 – SGI use for specialist rescue at times outside of strike

<u>Total special rescue duties undertaken at times outside of strike</u>	
Rescue from water	6 (2 of these were with London)
Rescue from height	5
Making safe dangerous structures	3
Chain saw	3 (1 of these was in Kent)
Total	17

9. Since the beginning of the pilot the trend for use of SGI is now significantly upward as SFRS Officers gain confidence in SGIs ability and cultural difficulties are starting to be overcome. Therefore we expect their use to increase.
10. Included below are two examples from a number of recent incidents where SGI have attended and made significant contribution to their successful conclusion.

Case Study 1
01.08.13 - Sadlers Ride, West Molesey,

SFRS received a call to a “person lost in river”. Whilst SFRS have water rescue capability, we are unable to deploy teams under the water. SGI were deployed to take advantage of their unique side scanning radar equipment and highly trained specialist dive teams. SGI carried out a swift river search and recovered one deceased person. The nearest alternative resource would have been despatched from Sussex Police, should they have been available. This would normally see a response within 6 hrs, causing considerable distress to family members who had arrived at scene and significant opportunity and financial costs through restricting resources across SFRS and other services.

Case study 2
28.10.13 - Tess Barn, Lydens Lane, Edenbridge

SFRS were called to assist Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) at an incident involving a young woman trapped underneath a fallen tree at an incident on the Surrey / Kent border. KFRS did not have an asset with the suitable skills or equipment to deploy. One Surrey fire appliance from Lingfield attended along with a rescue unit from SGI, equipped and trained to deal with this type of incident. SGI deployed a chain saw rescue team who were able to bring the incident to a quick conclusion. Unfortunately the young woman suffered fatal injuries, however with the assistance of SGI the incident was dealt with swiftly and in a dignified manner.

Future possibilities

11. SGI have qualified instructors in various techniques (working at height and water rescue), training for SFRS staff in these skills is currently provided under contract by a third party outside of the county, we are investigating the viability of SGI providing this more cost effectively locally. Additionally; as a result of the current pilot, SGI also now have qualified instructors in some fire and rescue techniques too and we are also investigating how we can make use of this to our mutual advantage.
12. During the pilot it has become clear that the SGI offer can be expanded to include a response to:
 - Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack capability – from those qualified and experienced to work under such conditions
 - Incident Support Unit(s) – delivery and set -up
 - Animal Rescue
 - Environmental Protection Unit
 - Confined space rescue
 - Rope rescue
 - Dive rescue, search and recovery
 - Boat capability, search and recovery, swift water rescue
 - Helicopter(s) – transport region-wide, viewing platform for wildfires, firefighting media, supplement Police and Air Ambulance
 - Mass decontamination and disrobe and re-robe functions*
 - High volume pumping*
 - Detection, identification and monitoring*
 - Urban Search and Rescue*
 - Enhanced emergency medical technician capabilities in line with but expanding remit of Ambulance Hazardous Area Response Team overcoming their deployment limitations
 - Contingency to other FRS
 - Maritime response capability
 - Contingency crewing for special appliances e.g. Aerial Ladder Platform
 - Supplementary ad hoc use in times of community crisis – using enlarged Land Rover fleet for example during times of electricity outage, heavy snowfall, pandemic flu – supporting other agencies e.g. Adult Social Care.
 - Training

** National assets in particular must remain available during industrial action – option to have a multi-agency approach to Mass Decontamination. Incident Command Units are to remain separate crewed by JECC personnel but we may need to consider contingency arrangement for this function.*

Conclusion

13. It is clear that during the first 6 months of operation SGI has provided SFRS a unique and extremely valuable service which has the potential to save lives that could ordinarily be lost; they have already made a positive contribution to the relief of suffering and the protection of property and the environment. The opportunity to expand their offer to us and partners for operational budgetary benefit plus income generating opportunities exists and there is an appetite for this both in SFRS, SCC, with blue light partners and commercially (airport fire services) too.

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