



Matt Wrack General Secretary

Fire Brigades Union

Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road,
Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE
fbu.org.uk | @fbunational
020 8541 1765 | office@fbu.org.uk

Circular: **2018HOC0204AD**

TO: **ALL MEMBERS**

29 March 2018

Dear Brother / Sister

BOMB ATTACK AT THE MANCHESTER ARENA: THE KERSLAKE REVIEW TEAM REPORT

From the wide media coverage it has received, members will be aware that a report into the detonation of a bomb at Manchester Arena that took place on 22 May 2017 has been published. The report was produced by a Review team headed by Sir Bob Kerslake. The Review was commissioned by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.

The report is available at <https://www.kerslakearenareview.co.uk/> and has been placed on the FBU website: <https://www.fbu.org.uk/publication/kerslake-report-independent-review-preparedness-and-emergency-response-manchester-arena>

The report is 224 pages long, and members will want to read the report in full. This circular brings attention to the key issues identified for the fire and rescue service. Members will be mindful that the inquest into the deaths of the 22 people killed are yet to take place.

Fire and Rescue Service Response

The report identifies that the bomb, packed with almost 2000 nuts, was detonated at 22:31.

There was no fire and rescue service attendance at the incident until 00:37.

The Executive Summary in paragraph 15 makes a damning comment in respect of the fire service response: *"The Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) did not arrive at the scene and therefore played no meaningful role in the response to the attack for nearly two hours. This compares with an average response time for the Service of less than six minutes. The effect of this was that a valuable resource was not available to assist on the scene, particularly when the movement of those who were injured from the foyer to the Casualty Clearing Station. The Fire Service was effectively 'out of the loop', having no presence at the rendezvous point established by the Police, little awareness of what was happening at the Arena and only a very limited and belated presence at Strategic Gold Command."*

However, in paragraph 16 the Review team makes clear *"There is not one single reason nor one individual that caused this failure. Rather, it was a combination of poor communication and poor procedures. GMFRS will need to reflect on the wider issues it raises for their operational culture and approach to multi-agency working."*

/Cont....

Fire and Rescue Service Response/Cont....

The Review team provides a detailed narrative on the GMFRS response in paragraphs 3.137- 3.175. Whilst the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) received 240 calls in the first hour following the explosion, in contrast, the North West Fire Control Centre (NW FCC - which services all the fire and rescue services in the North West except Merseyside) received only three calls over the entire night. One was from the ambulance service; one was from the police and one was from a member of the public. NW FCC was largely unsighted on what was taking place as it received no information from the instant. The first and only call into NW FCC by the GMP control room was at 22:35 – 22:36.

The information received from GMP was of there being an explosion and possibly gun fire at the Arena. In accordance with control procedure, an on duty National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer (NILO) was notified at 22:40 who took steps consistent with pre-planning arrangements for a MTFA incident.

He designated the fire service rendezvous point at Philips Park Fire Station and instructed that four pumps should assemble, which included two pumps from Manchester Central Fire Station which was nearer to the Arena, but too close as a suitable rendezvous point in accordance with national procedures. The NILO had not been informed that Operation PLATO had been declared, and he was unable to reach the (GMP) Force Duty Officer on the telephone.

The NILO arrived at Philips Park FS at 23:40. The fire and rescue service appliances which assembled there comprised the four pumps plus two Special Response Teams (SRTs - with MTFA-trained crews), one of which had redeployed from an unrelated RTC. Two additional NILOs were mobilised to the fire service RVP, with an additional NILO self-deploying and attending the GMP Force Command module.

One of the NILOs appointed himself as the OiC and at 23:53 contacted the CFO who was the Duty Principal Officer who had based himself (and all other GMFRS senior officers) in the Command Support Room at Fire HQ in Swinton. (ie. not at the GMP HQ). Following this, at 23:58, the four pumps, two SRTs and three NILOs relocated to Manchester Central Fire Station. After what can be referred to as informal liaison, appliances then mobilised to the incident ground arriving at 00:37 (1 hour 59 minutes after NW FCC had first logged the incident.) There was no GMFRS representation at the GMP Force Command Module until 00:04.

Once deployed and in attendance at the incident, fire crews did what fire crews do best, that is getting on with the job, including assisting in the removal of casualties. Fire personnel were involved in crucial activity including assessing the structural safety of the foyer, providing safety and hygiene provision during the removal of the deceased, providing tactical and public reassurance advice across the Greater Manchester area during the following week.

FBU response to the Report

The FBU met with members of the Review team on 17 November 2017 and the Kerslake report identifies the FBU as the sole trade union body to do so. From the beginning, the FBU has taken a measured and professional approach to its dealings with the Review and has acted similarly during its evaluation of what happened on the night of the incident, and the wider implications for the fire rescue service to the media.

On the release of the report, an FBU press release was issued which read:

FBU statement on Kerslake report into the Manchester bombing

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) welcomes the publication of the Kerslake report into the Manchester bombing. There are hard lessons for all emergency services to learn in the report.

/Cont....

FBU response to the Report/Cont....

The FBU has been considering the implications of what happened on the night and will review those in the light of the report. The FBU looks forward to early discussions with the appropriate parties including: the national fire service employers; the national fire chief's council and the Home Office to discuss the issues outlined.

The FBU also looks forward to discussions with relevant parties in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Andy Dark, FBU Assistant General Secretary, said:

"The report has some important lessons for the fire service and for all emergency services. It raises important questions on the issue of communications that are central to the criticisms made of the fire service not least the impact of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service being the only emergency service in Manchester without its own dedicated service control room.

A major cause of the problems encountered was the absence of any information being received by the fire service from the police. The wider issue of course is that government requires only small teams of firefighters to be trained and equipped for such incidents. There is currently a dialogue with the Home Office on the issue of funding for these arrangements.

The FBU will be addressing these matters with vigour to find solutions to the problems identified in order to ensure that the fire service is prepared for such events in the future".

Local and national officials were contacted by the media and a number of interviews were given.

Addressing the key issues

The Review Panel's conclusions, including recommendations, are presented in *chapter 5* and its summary of findings are presented in *chapter 6 "What went well and recommendations"*.

The FBU will be working systematically through each of the recommendations and will redress the relevant issues and solutions with other stakeholders and at stakeholder forums.

A particular area of attention will be the recommendations in respect of NWFFCC. Whilst the Review report recommends making adjustment in the arrangements in respect of NWFFCC, the FBU believes that the concept of a control room servicing more than one fire and rescue service needs to be reviewed in its entirety in the light of what transpired on 22 May 2017.

Final remarks

Members

Immediately after the Arena attack the FBU was conscious at the distress and alarm amongst FBU members in Greater Manchester, particularly those who had first-hand experience of being mobilised to the rendezvous point and then facing the frustration of not being able to carry out their operational function, particularly during the period when it was apparent that other emergency service personnel had received the clearance the area was safe to enter.

The FBU wishes to commend those firefighters - whether on the appliances or in the control room. Insufficient appreciation of their frustration, which is a reflection of their commitment to the fire and rescue service and the public has been given.

/Cont.....

Knee-jerk responses

In briefings and interviews given to the media by politicians and pundits, we have witnessed and heard a number of knee-jerk reactions that suggest that arrangements need to be massively overhauled and be subject to change and revision. The FBU is not convinced that operational procedures and operational guidance needs to be overhauled. The failings which were identified and experienced on the night were largely the result of the guidance and procedures not being implemented and applied. The procedures needs to be practised, tested and embedded, and altered only when and where the process is identified to be in error.

Treatment of casualties and MTFA and the fire and rescue service

Whilst the Manchester Arena attack was not an MTFA incident, it does bring into focus the fact that the fire and rescue service would have a clear role to play in such an event. The FBU will continue to do all that it can to shine a light on the fact that the government and fire and rescue services need to address the issues which the FBU has been raising since 2010, on the need for adequate equipment and training to deal with MTFA incidents - once the necessary measures are in place that will allow this activity to become contractual. Had the incident been a Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack, the question must be asked "*what personal protective equipment did the firefighters have and what training had they been given to deal with the triage treatment of casualties with gunshot wounds*"? This situation is not confined to Greater Manchester but is a problem which needs to be faced up to across the UK.

Members will be kept informed of developments on these matters.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



ANDY DARK
Assistant General Secretary

AD/jh