

## **REPORT OF THE HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO THE CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2006**

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### **OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY**

1. During the period 1 April 2006 to 30 September 2006 the Service attended a total of 55,922 incidents (this includes all types of Fire, All False Alarms and Special Service Incidents). More statistics and details of notable incidents have been reported to the Authority and can be found on the Service's website ([www.hwfire.org.uk](http://www.hwfire.org.uk)).

### **INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

2. The Constituent Authorities have previously been advised of the requirement under the Fire and Rescue National Framework that all Fire and Rescue Services must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and associated annual action plans. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a strategic overview of all aspects of service delivery and determine current and future policy. It is intended to make the Service more responsive to locally identified needs and better able to deliver community safety. Plans must undergo a full public consultation process for twelve weeks before being adopted by the Authority.
3. Consultation on IRMP 4, an amended action plan defining objectives for the period 2007/08, has been completed and the Authority will consider a report on the outcome in December.

### **RELOCATION OF FIRE STATIONS**

4. One of the main themes of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is to ensure that Fire Stations are appropriately located and have the necessary facilities to provide an efficient, effective and economic service in compliance with statutory duties. The IRMP states that areas where the Authority plans to build new Fire Stations are Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Hereford, Malvern, Pebworth, Redditch, and Worcester (2 sites). These proposals will take a number of years to implement and will be subject to consultation when detailed plans are available.
5. The Authority has appointed the services of a consultant to assist in delivering business cases for these schemes. Redditch Fire Station has been highlighted for the production of the initial business case as this is the premises in most need of updating. This project will involve working closely with Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council whose land adjoins the current Fire Station site. A further report will be made to the Authority's meeting in December.
6. The Authority has already approved the relocation of Pebworth Fire Station, subject to the successful conclusion of contractual negotiations.

### **REGIONAL FIRE CONTROL**

7. The Constituent Authorities have previously been advised of the replacement of the existing 46 local Fire Service control rooms across the Country with 9 regional control centres by the end of 2009. The Regional Fire Control for the West Midlands is to be located in Wolverhampton.
8. The project continues to raise a number of issues for the Authority. These are being

monitored and action taken to mitigate their effects. The formation of a Company to manage the Control Centre for the West Midlands is still scheduled to be completed by January 2007. The Authority will receive further reports on this project as necessary.

## **URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE**

9. The Constituent Authorities were informed last year that the Authority had accepted the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) request to take receipt of an Urban Search and Rescue Unit. This was under the New Dimension Programme designed to provide the Fire and Rescue Service with a national capability to respond to major emergencies. One part of the programme includes the development of a national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability with specialist staff vehicles and equipment. Funding has been negotiated with the Department of Communities and Local Government. It is planned to develop the site at Droitwich to incorporate this capability. The Authority is expected to declare the availability of its team to fulfil this new role in early 2007.

## **BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

10. The Authority has reviewed its Strategic Risk Register designed to ensure that strategic risks are identified, that effective controls of those risks are in place and that there are appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements also in place. It has also approved a Business Continuity Policy and Strategy which is a key part of risk management.

## **AUDIT OF 2005/06 ACCOUNTS**

11. The Authority's external auditors have issued an unqualified audit opinion on the 2004/05 accounts.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

### **Community Fire Safety**

12. The Community Safety Department has now established a "Disability Working Group" with the intention of providing a full range of safety advice. The Group includes Worcestershire Association for the Blind, Herefordshire Association for the Blind, and Deaf Direct.
13. With the assistance and guidance of these organisations a successful "Disability Awareness Day" was held at Service Headquarters in May, to highlight the communication barriers that need to be understood and addressed by the Service. Further training will be provided by these organisations.

### **Water Safety Strategy**

14. As part of the first Integrated Risk Management Plan the Authority approved the provision of a water rescue service as part of an overarching Water Safety Strategy (WSS). Over £150,000 has to date been invested in training, equipment and prevention activities and set in train a number of partnership arrangements to reduce risks to the local community and the considerable numbers who visit the area to enjoy the waterways for leisure purposes.
15. In the past 12 months alone 34 people have been rescued from the water by the specialist teams. These statistics continue to rise, partly as a result of the marked increase in the recreational use of the waterways, a trend replicated in many other parts of the UK.

16. Flooding incidents also feature extensively in the Service area with actual frequencies far outstripping established statistical models. Over the past 15 years, one-in-ten year floods have occurred every two years on the River Severn and there has been a one-in-fifteen event on the River Teme each year for the past five years. In addition the Service has experienced two x one-in-fifty year wide area flood events since 1998. The social and economic impact of these events obviously has a very real and direct impact on the community.
17. The Service has worked in partnership with the Royal Life Saving Society and a voluntary river rescue agency to develop and deliver a water safety education pack for schools, as well as producing water related community safety leaflets based upon guidance from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.
18. In the absence of legislative clarity around rescue from inland water related incidents, the Fire and Rescue Authority has entered into a ground breaking partnership with all local blue light and voluntary agencies, taking the lead on all water related incidents. This includes the co-ordination of attendances at incidents and adoption of common responder training standards. These changes have resulted in an improved multi-agency rescue service to the community, improved Firefighter and other responder safety on and near the water, reduced organisational risk to the Authority and a positive contribution to partnership working. This expansion of services and partnership working is fully in line with the Service's modernised role, is cost effective, and continues to receive strong support from the community and partners.
19. As part of the ongoing development of the WWS and a key element of the provision of an effective and safe response to water related emergencies, the Service recently sent 12 special rescue personnel to the United States for high level training. This venture was part of the ongoing partnership with the Charlotte Fire Department and is linked to the Chief Fire Officer's Association Management of Major Flood Emergencies initiative.
20. This proved to be a tremendous and unique learning opportunity. The intensive training has greatly strengthened the water rescue response, improved safety for rescuers and provided much valuable information. The visit was filmed as part of a major documentary film looking at the development of a framework for dealing with major flood emergencies. Producers hope that the final documentary film will be shown on the BBC in Spring 2007.

### **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

21. Commercial awareness and publicity sessions in partnership with Chamber of Commerce and Redditch Learning Zone have been continuing throughout the quarter. It is anticipated these will be revisited closer to the law coming into force.
22. In conjunction with the other Fire and Rescue Services of the West Midlands region a package called "Keep Your Business in Business" has been developed. The information that includes fire risk assessment, arson prevention and business continuity advice is available in a folder form, on compact disc or via a dedicated website with links to the Service's internet site.

### **Education Activity**

#### **Dying to Drive**

23. Dying to Drive is a hard hitting road safety initiative aimed at reducing the number of Road Traffic Collisions involving young people.
24. In June 2006 the initiative ran for a week at Peterchurch Fire Station. Designed and co-ordinated by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, the project worked

in partnership with the Youth Offending Team, the Road Safety team, Police and Ambulance Service.

25. The drama is as true to life as possible and shows the horrific reality of a crash scene, played by actors and the emergency services. A series of workshops follow to further raise the awareness of the consequences of poor driving and target the age group that are starting to think about driving or are tempted to get into vehicles driven by older friends or siblings.
26. The programme was offered to every Year 10 pupil attending schools in Herefordshire, reaching over 1,000 pupils throughout the week. Highlighting the consequences of reckless driving aims to promote positive attitudes for our potential new drivers.
27. Evaluation returns from Herefordshire Schools show the project as a crucial element of Year 10 Personal, Social and Health Education. In six months time a further evaluation with a random selection of pupils at all the involved schools will highlight the retention of this knowledge over time.

### **Summer Initiative**

28. Throughout the summer term a most successful pilot of a water safety programme reached 90% of Year 5 pupils in Worcestershire. The school initiative involved working in partnership with the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS).
29. Feedback was positive and the intention is to provide water safety education annually during a six week intense period of teaching throughout the Summer term.
30. With the immense success of the programme in Worcestershire we are now intending to expand the programme into Herefordshire in Summer 2007.

### **Fire Safety Education**

31. The Key Stage 2 education packs on Fire Safety are currently being updated to include exciting new resources and an interactive programme to engage children and heighten their learning experience.
32. Fire Safety education at Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 is reaching numerous children throughout the two counties.
33. A new programme of study at Key Stage 4 'Facing up to Fire' will arrive in all High Schools in both Counties during the new academic Autumn term 2006, to reinforce previous learning with regard to accidental house fires, arson, hoax calls and road traffic collisions. The delivery will involve Year 11 teachers engaging their own classes using the pack, following sufficient training from the Service.

### **Arson Combated Together toolkit (ACT)**

34. The ACT Toolkit is a drama based education programme to combat arson in the community. The programme looks at issues around arson and fire related crime, but also looks at influences and issues faced by young people.
35. A workshop has since been delivered to Drama students from Stourport High School, with the intention of forming a partnership to deliver the ACT Toolkit. This is still in the developmental stages and will hopefully expand in the coming academic year.

## **Youth Work Partnerships**

36. Partnership working with Alternative Learning Pathways (ALPS) is looking at future work which could involve the service delivering accredited courses through ALPS for young people. ALPS also has connections with Taste for Adventure (Outdoor activity centre) and it is hoped that links here can also be made in the near future.
37. Working with a Prince's Trust Team is also being explored to provide an intense two day work experience taster on a Fire Station. This will provide teamwork and communication activities for young people to gain an insight into the Fire Service.

### **LASER Project (Learning About Safety through Experiencing Risk)**

38. Two Young Citizen Challenges (YCC) have taken place at Bromsgrove and Trimley. YCC is a multi agency delivery of safety messages. Year 5 school children rotate around each activity in small groups receiving short, interactive and thought provoking workshops around safety.

### **Phoenix Project**

39. A recent visit to Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Fire Service explored an exciting initiative named Phoenix Project. The project offers an excellent opportunity to reach socially excluded young people, a key target group for the Service at present.
40. The Project is aimed at young people who are known to be offending, or those who are at risk of offending. The young people who fall into this target group are often those who have little or no life skills, low self-esteem/confidence, and a poor attitude to society.
41. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Phoenix Project will look at reducing fire related crime and anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that the Project can run as an 'intensive five-day work experience course' with an opportunity to develop life skills. It will offer young people the opportunity for personal development, promote self-discipline, self-respect and confidence, while highlighting the need for excellent communication skills to work effectively in a team. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their communities and become active citizens. The programme will engage young people with education, employment, or training and help prevent and combat further criminal activity.

### **Draft Worcestershire Young Peoples Plan**

42. The Service is contributing to this multi agency forum which is in the process of developing services for the Children and Young People of Worcestershire.

## **Equality and Diversity**

### **The Equality and Diversity Strategy**

43. A full review of the Service's action plan has been completed and a generic equalities scheme has now been drafted, which will ultimately replace the action plan. Work is ongoing towards the Service's ambition to achieve level 4 of the Equality Standard.

### **The Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Duty**

44. A full audit of policies and procedures for their impact on disability has been conducted previously, and has now been reviewed in accordance with the new Disability Equality Duty, which requires public bodies to positively promote disability equality. The Service has already engaged in a variety of work in this area.

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HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
OCTOBER 2006**

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to seek further information on this report should contact Carole Williams on 0845 12 24454

Further information on the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service can also be found on the Internet at ([www.hwfire.org.uk](http://www.hwfire.org.uk)).

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Agenda papers of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 28 September, 2006.