

REPORT OF THE HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO THE CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

Meeting Held on 15 February 2007

1. During the period 1 April 2006 to 31 December 2006 the Service attended a total of 7,727 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).
2. The Constituent Authorities were advised in the last report to them that the level of operational activity experienced in the second quarter of the year was higher than at any time since 2003/04. The majority of this additional activity was caused by the unusually hot summer and periods of flash flooding. It is pleasing to report decreases in the third quarter in all types of incidents when compared to the second quarter. The total number of incidents is also 3% lower than in the third quarter last year.
3. The Authority has, however, noted the continuing nuisance caused by the number of false automatic fire alarms. This potentially diverts the Service from attending real incidents putting the community at risk and draining resources. The Authority is to discuss this issue in further detail at its next meeting.

BUDGET 2007/08

4. The Authority has set its 2007/08 budget, the net Budget Requirement being £28.286 million, an increase of 4.5%. The effect on the precept is to give a Band D Tax rate of £65.01 representing a 4.94% increase on 2006/07. (This is an increase of £3.06 a year.)
5. The Authority continues to receive the lowest government grant per citizen of any Fire and Rescue Authority. It receives only 75% of the average for precepting Fire and Rescue Authorities.
6. Work is in hand to be ready to assess the potential impact of the Government's review of public spending which may have very serious and adverse consequences for the service the Authority can deliver.

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

7. 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.
8. The Authority has received a further progress report on progress against the IRMP (3) action plan 2006/07.

Regional Fire Control

9. The Constituent Authorities were informed in the last report to them of the action being taken to establish a Local Authority Company to run the new Regional Control Centre for the West Midlands, located in Wolverhampton. The Company was formed by the required date but the Board has yet to meet. The Centre itself is now under construction. The Authority is to be kept informed of developments.

People Strategy 2006-09

10. The Authority has approved a People Strategy providing a three-year framework to support the Service's aims and objectives by providing the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills across the Service. The Strategy has been developed in line with national and regional Strategies. Its objectives are: to ensure the Service creates and maintains a workforce committed to and able to achieve the Service's mission; to support employee improvement processes to enable staff to undertake diverse and changing roles; and to select and retain a diverse workforce in terms of the staff group's composition to reflect the Community the Service serves.

Recruitment

11. The Authority has been informed of the Service's recent recruitment campaign for Wholetime Firefighters. It has welcomed the steps taken to make the process as open and transparent as possible and to attract a wide range of applicants, with particular efforts made to encourage applications from groups currently under-represented in the workforce.
12. It has been informed that new national criteria are due to come into force which may have adverse implications on the future recruitment of Retained Firefighters, who play an essential role in delivering the service in the rural area the Authority serves. The Authority will consider an assessment of the implications at a future meeting.

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2006/Technical Fire Safety

13. As previously reported, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2006 which came into force in October 2006 represented a major change in the enforcement of Fire Safety Matters, introducing a system of self compliance based on a Fire Risk Assessment. The Authority has been assured that where safety issues are identified the Service has the power to act. One Prohibition Notice was served in the third quarter of the year. Five Prohibition Notices served under the Fire Precautions Act are still in effect. These have been regularly monitored to ensure adherence to the conditions of the Notices
14. The Fire Safety Trainer carried out a number of seminars to assist Commerce and Industry with the transition to the new Fire Safety Order at various venues throughout the Service area. Additionally, courses were provided at the Service Training and Development Centre to cover the managing of Fire Risk Assessments.
15. The "Community Fire Risk Management Information System" has now been installed and is in use by all the Fire Safety Districts. Work is continuing to expand the management potential of the system and the more efficient use of resources.

Arson and Fire Investigation

16. The Authority has received reports on a number of incidents. In conjunction with the other Fire and Rescue Services of the West Midlands region, a package called "Keep Your School in Business" has been developed. The information includes fire risk

assessments, arson prevention, business continuity advice and the schools education programme. The information is available in a folder form and via a dedicated website.

Community Fire Safety

Juvenile Fire Setters Prevention Programme

17. Since the recent training programme, the first fifteen Advisors have been seeing young fire setters who have been identified either by the two Counties Youth Offending Teams or self presenting, as part of two person intervention teams. This is under the direction of the Juvenile Fire Setters Coordinator. To date some seventy such interventions have taken place since the Coordinator took up post in January 2006. Early indications are that an extremely low number of reoccurrence has been reported to this department from such interventions.
18. Payment for training and intervention by the advisors has been provided via the Community Safety Single Grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government. This links in with the Government "Respect" agenda to combat anti-social behaviour and remove the blight of arson.

Education Activity

19. Given the ever increasing number of fatal and serious injuries on the roads involving young people in the two Counties a new, exciting, stimulating and thought provoking programme of work aimed at reaching Year 10 pupils (age 14-15) is being introduced into all High Schools. The pack, which involves community based scenarios, includes visual aids, DVDs and challenging questions in many topics, including road traffic collisions.
20. This new programme of work 'builds on' previous fire safety education children have acquired at Year 2, 5 and 8. This focused on deliberate fires, hoax calls and accidental house fires.
21. The pack is to be delivered by the teachers themselves and full training is being offered on all elements of the programme to ensure ease of delivery within the classroom. Once established within all the High Schools the Education Officer will monitor the usage and explore its effectiveness through evaluation.
22. In response to recent road safety school evaluations and the creation of a road safety strategy group the road safety initiative, Dying to Drive will be delivered again in both Counties during 2007.
23. To improve the initiative further, pre and post road safety education in schools is to be incorporated to provide stronger links with the Citizenship curriculum while preparing children with key skills to help guide them away from peer pressure.
24. The interactive Qwizdom facility is being utilised as part of this evaluation programme. To date, early results indicate that retention of knowledge is proving to be excellent.
25. Firefighters across the two Counties have been receiving training on the 'new' Year 5 fire safety resources, to support their teaching in schools, Early results indicate that the delivery of fire safety in schools is of a high quality and the information provided is also in the main being retained by the children. Evaluation assessments will continue.
26. The Education Officer is attending training in child protection in the near future to ensure that best practice is disseminated down to the Firefighters together with child

protection awareness training packages which are being compiled at present.

Equality and Diversity

27. A newly appointed Equality and Diversity Officer started in her new role on 8 January 2007.
28. Progress is continuing on the Generic Equalities Scheme. This key document will incorporate all good practice and legislative implications of equality and diversity on the Authority. A review is currently underway to update specific policies in relation to equality and diversity in line with the new requirements under the Generic Equalities Scheme.
29. Progress is also continuing against the objectives outlined in the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Community Events

30. Fire Station Community Events offer the opportunity for Members and local communities to meet their Firefighters, many of whom are Retained Firefighters who live and work within these same communities. This broader range of community events allow the Service to present both Fire Safety information by demonstrations and other visual displays, and other operational information relating to the service the Service provides and to join up with other partners and engage with the local communities. The events vary from Station to Station and each commits considerable time and effort to making public access fun and informative.
31. Events confirmed to date are as follows. Further dates will be announced on the Service's website www.hwfire.org.uk

Station	Dates	Times
Bewdley	Saturday 16 June 2007	TBA
Redditch	Saturday 2 June 2007	TBA
Bromsgrove	Saturday 8 September 2007	TBA
Evesham	Community Safety Day – Saturday 28 July 2007	TBA
Kidderminster	Sunday 9 June 2007	TBA
Stourport on Severn	Saturday 25 August 2007	TBA
Malvern	Three Counties Show – Friday 15/Saturday 16/Sunday 17 June 2007	TBA

PAUL HAYDEN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
FEBRUARY 2007

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).

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Agenda papers of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 15 February 2007