

**REPORT OF THE HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY TO THE HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

1 THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S SERVICE REPORT

Performance Report

The performance data for quarter 3 2010/11 reflected the exceptionally cold weather experienced in December 2010. The Chief Fire Officer told the Authority that during the period 19 – 31 December the Service responded to 463 incidents compared with 275 and 264 during the same period in 2009 and 2008 respectively. The Service instigated the Severe Weather Protocol on 19 December as attendances at incidents were effected by the dangerous conditions. The Authority agreed to record its thanks to the firefighters for their work on behalf of the community during the spell of severe weather conditions

There was a 3% decrease in the total number of fires in the Quarter compared with Q3 last year (516 this quarter, compared to 532), despite a 28% increase in the number of chimney fires, which was thought to be weather-related and arising from the type of burners, the materials being burnt and the rural nature of the area covered by the Service.

There was a 24% drop in the number of Road Traffic Collisions attended by the Service compared to Q3 09/10, down to 178 incidents from 234.

Major Fire in Hereford City Centre

In the early hours of Thursday 21 October 2010, fire crews from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire attended a serious fire in Hereford City Centre. The fire was particularly difficult and resource intensive to deal with due to it being fully developed on arrival and also the tightly packed and complicated building structures encountered by the initial crews attending.

The fire, although serious, was contained within a relatively small section of the City Centre and was resolved without injury to firefighters or members of the public.

Following the initial firefighting actions and the fire being brought under control, the focus of the incident moved towards returning the City Centre to normality and mitigating the already extensive structural and potentially economic damage.

In this phase of the incident Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service crews worked extensively with partners, including Herefordshire Council Building Control Officers, to ensure public safety whilst parts of buildings were demolished and/or made safe.

The fire is being described in the media as: 'the largest fire in Hereford in a generation' and was resolved in safety by all responding agencies having appropriate plans and training in place.

The Chief Fire Officer, who at the height of the fire was in charge of the incident, believes a safe resolution was brought about because of the professionalism and skills of all concerned, both firefighting staff and partner agencies including the Police, Ambulance, Herefordshire Council and voluntary organisations. Fire and Rescue Service crews finally left the scene on the afternoon of Sunday 24 October, some three and a half days after the Service's initial attendance.

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	<p>The Service had been complimented on the manner in which it had responded to the fire and following this incident there had been an intensive fire safety campaign aimed at other business premises in the area.</p> <p>Christmas Fire Safety Campaign</p> <p>The Service launched its annual Christmas Safety campaign last November at a number of key events in Herefordshire and Worcestershire</p>
2	<p>Awards Ceremonies</p> <p>Firefighters and staff were honoured at an Awards Ceremony held at Hereford Town Hall on Friday 15 October. Lady Susan Darnley, the Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire, joined Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and Councillor Brigadier Peter Jones CBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, to present the awards</p>
3	<p>Herefordshire Volunteer Launch</p> <p>Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service celebrated the launch of its new Community Safety Volunteer Team for Herefordshire on Wednesday 16 February. The volunteers, 11 men and three women, all joined H&WFRS as Community Safety Volunteers in November last year following a targeted recruitment campaign in the Herefordshire area.</p> <p>They have recently completed their volunteer training programme with the Service and join firefighters and members of the Community Safety department in a variety of roles in the organisation. This will include helping with fire station open days, home fire safety referral visits and a range of community safety events.</p> <p>Councillor Brigadier Peter Jones CBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer Yates presented each volunteer with a framed certificate in recognition of the completion of their training. Alex Fitzpatrick, Chair of the Community Development team at Herefordshire Council, and Councillors Polly Andrews and David Taylor also attended.</p> <p>Anyone interested in volunteering with H&WFRS can find out more online at www.hwfire.org.uk.</p>
4	<p>Charges for Special Services</p> <p>When preparing the Service's budget for 2011/12 the Authority considered introducing charges for some of the special functions provided by the Service, including large animal rescues, lift rescues and costs associated with work for the Environment Agency.</p>
	<p>The Authority resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to introduce charges for large animal rescues, • To put in place protocols for recovery of FRA costs when assisting the Environment Agency to be invoiced for onward recovery and • To continue to attend all calls for lift rescues and introduces charges for

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	repeat calls to the same premises.
5	<p>The 2011/12 Integrated Risk Management Action Plan</p> <p>Following 3 months of consultation, the December meeting of the Authority approved the Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2011/12. The Plan approved the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To review the impact of the recent changes in Technical Fire Safety arrangements</i> 2. <i>To review the allocation of our community safety resources to further reduce risk in our communities.</i> 3. <i>To reduce attendances at false alarms caused by AFAs (Automatic Fire Alarms) after a review of our policies and procedures.</i> 4. <i>To review fire cover and response arrangements with a focus on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The requirement for a third appliance at Hereford, Worcester and Redditch;</i> • <i>The current crewing arrangements at Bromsgrove; and</i> • <i>The appropriate number of personnel on each watch at wholtime and day crewed stations.</i> 5. <i>To ensure our Property Strategy is fully aligned to our Risk Management Plan proposals Recommendation No.4 and other aspects of Service Delivery, such as the provision of effective operational training.</i> 6. <i>To identify any potential for improvement in both effectiveness and efficiency of the current operational training strategy</i> 7. <i>To review our approach to environmental issues to ensure that we are maximising the potential partnership working in this area, reducing our energy usage and identifying further opportunities for cost efficiency</i>
6	<p>Appointment of Interim Clerk/ Monitoring Officer</p> <p>The Authority approved the appointment of Mrs Anne Brown as interim Clerk to the Authority until 30 September 2011 or until the completion of the review and finalisation of permanent arrangements, whichever is the earlier.</p>

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7.	Budget and Precept 2011/12 <p>The Authority approved the 2011/2012 budget for the Fire and Rescue Service in the two counties at £31.195m - a budget that requires no increase in council tax. This means that in the 12 months from April, Band D council taxpayers will once again pay £73.64 a year (or £1.42 a week) as their share of the total cost of the Service.</p> <p>Councillor Brigadier Peter Jones CBE, Chairman of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, said: "In this challenging financial climate, the Authority is more committed than ever to providing value for money, and local people can be reassured that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service continues to be a low spending yet high performing Service."</p>
8.	Fire Control Update <p>A formal update on the Fire Control project and the way forward for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service was given at the Fire Authority meeting on Wednesday 16 February. Members were informed that the national Fire Control project, which started in 2004, had been subject to significant difficulties and delays and was finally terminated by the Government on 20 December, 2010, on the grounds that the requirements of the project could not be delivered in an acceptable time frame.</p> <p>This decision left Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) with an urgent requirement for a replacement Fire Control system. An urgent decision was then taken in late December to progress to tender for a new Command and Control system, and Members of the Authority approved the budget allocation to support the urgent procurement of a replacement system at the February meeting.</p> <p>Initial work to progress the provision of resilient control room arrangements identified that significant benefits could be gained by developing local, collaborative arrangements with our neighbouring Service and Local Resilience Forum partner, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (Shropshire FRS). This was based on the shared boundaries between the two Services, the emergency planning and response arrangements already in place and the fact that Shropshire has only recently completed a procurement of a replacement control system for their Service area. The Authority gave its support for the formation of a shared resilient control room infrastructure with Shropshire FRS and authorised H&WFRS's Chief Fire Officer and the Authority Chairman to sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding to record this commitment.</p> <p>Brigadier Jones, the Authority Chairman, said "While it's unfortunate that the national project has not been able to deliver as originally hoped, the Authority has recognised the risks and taken early action to address these. We firmly believe that the planned collaboration with</p>

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	<p>Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service will deliver a state-of-the-art control room facility, which will improve efficiency and effectiveness, and enhance the resilience of Hereford and Worcester's call handling function.</p> <p>"Furthermore we believe we can deliver this in a fraction of the timescale already taken by the national project, at a significantly lower cost while at the same time, maintaining the local knowledge that we recognise as being so vital."</p>
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MARK YATES

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

BRIGADIER PETER JONES, CBE

CHAIRMAN

HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

22 February 2011.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Any person wishing to seek further information on this report should contact: Corporate Support on 01905 368331. 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 and papers of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 17 December 2010 and 16 February 2011.