

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL 18 NOVEMBER 2011

Introduction

The Authority has an annual budget of just over £31 million and governs the work of the Service through a variety of committees and scrutiny bodies. Our long term vision is to make Herefordshire and Worcestershire safer from fire and other hazards and to improve community well-being.

Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) is one of 46 Fire Services in England and is one of the largest rural services containing areas of urban concentration. Our Fire and Rescue Services, including fire safety activities, are provided from 27 fire stations strategically located across the two counties. These services are co-ordinated within three geographical districts which coincide with Local Authority and Police boundaries. The Service has five whole time stations (crewed 24 hours) based in Hereford, Worcester, Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and Redditch. It also operates three day-crewed (crewed during the day and providing an on-call or retained service at night) stations in Malvern, Droitwich and Evesham. The Retained Duty (on-call fire-fighters) personnel are mainly based in Herefordshire, where 12 out of the 19 retained stations are located. We also host one of 20 national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) specialist units in Droitwich, funded separately by Central Government to respond to any major unstable or collapsed structure or major transportation incident as part of a national response.

The Service attends approximately 8,000 emergency incidents each year. The majority of calls for assistance are to fires, road traffic collisions and alerts from automatic alarm systems. The Service deploys a range of different vehicles with varied capabilities to cover the current risk. In our area in particular, there are also calls for rope rescues, grass fires in open areas, and to assist when floods strike. We have highly trained specialist teams to deal with these specific types of emergencies. The Rope Rescue team is based at Malvern Fire Station and is trained to rescue casualties from quarries, rock faces, sewers, silos and cranes. The Service also has three swift water rescue teams, one based at Worcester, one based at Evesham and one at Hereford and has now completed the roll out and familiarisation training of the new Water Rescue Vehicles (WRVs) with Hereford, Worcester and Evesham Fire Stations now being fully operational.

The Fire and Rescue Service, however, along with all other public sector and local government organisations, is currently subject to funding constraints. Over the next four financial years, our grant from government may reduce by up to 13%. When that fact is coupled with other unavoidable pressures in the Service, (inflation and essential investment in fleet and property), we may need to save around 7.2% of our budget, which is approximately £2.5m.

Performance 2010/11

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service remains one of the highest performing Combined Fire Authorities (CFAs) yet receives the second lowest government grant per capita of all CFAs in England. The performance information for Quarter 4, 2010/11 and for the entire year was considered in detail by the Policy and Resources Committee on 8 June. The performance indicators for the year showed some of the best results the Service has ever achieved.

Appointment of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

In July 2011 Richard Lawrence was appointed to the role of Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

The Firefighters Memorial Trust Annual Service of Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremony

The Chief Fire Officer, Chairman and Watch Commander, Steve Bullock, as Standard Bearer for the Service, attended the memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral in London on Sunday 11 September to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the terror attack on the twin towers in New York in 2001 in which 343 fire fighters lost their lives. The service also remembered all firefighters that had lost their lives as a result of their duties since the beginning of World War 2.

Special Reception in the Presence of HRH the Princess Royal

The Chief Fire Officer and Vice Chairman attended a special reception and ceremony on 19 July 2011 at the Honourable Artillery Company in London where the Firefighters Memorial Trust received its Royal Charter from the Princess Royal and the new 'Firefighters Memorial Standard' was blessed.

Financial Results 2010/11

The approved budget for 2010/11 was £31.395m. In the March monitoring report the net underspending expected to be transferred to the organisational Development Reserve was £0.495m. Since the March projection, budget holders have continued to minimise expenditure and the out-turn position shows a significant further underspending, although much of this was one-off savings which can't be replicated in the future.

The Authority's accounts were approved on 28th September 2011. The External Auditor plans to give the Authority an unqualified audit opinion and an unqualified value for money conclusion.

Fire Director and Shadow Fire Minister Visits Service

The Director of the Government's Fire, Resilience and Emergencies Department visited Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on Friday

1 July 2011 to gain an insight into the many initiatives taking place across the two counties. Also during the summer Chris Williamson, MP, The Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government visited Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service to gain an insight into the day to day running of the organisation and how it works to protect its local communities.

Fatality in Ewyas Harold

On Thursday 28 July 2011 the service attended an incident in Abbey Dore near Ewyas Harold. Crews from Ewyas Harold, Peterchurch and Hereford responded effectively, rescued an elderly lady from the property and assisted in her care before her transportation to hospital. Despite the Service's best efforts the lady passed away later that evening.

The victim was known to the Service through previous fire incidents. These incidents triggered extensive fire prevention activities aimed at minimising the risk of a future fire occurring within the victim's premises. The Service, in recognising the victim's challenging physical impairments and living conditions, organised for the provision of a portable fire suppression system for the victim which aimed to improve the chances of survivability should further fires occur.

Despite the fact that the lady did not survive the recent fire event, the Service is satisfied that, in respect of how it catered for the prevention of fire within the victim's home and how it responded to the fire when it occurred, the Service demonstrated its continued commitment to protecting the vulnerable within its communities. The Service will now look at any lessons learnt from this incident and look to incorporate any learning gained into its future activities.

Reporting Injuries

Due to an increase in reported injuries at operational incidents a new Casualty Report Form has been introduced. This form will quickly alert the Community Safety Department that an injury has occurred and enable them to quickly follow up each individual injury. The report will also enable the Service to identify common trends and contributory factors.

Fire Control Bid

Following the cancellation of the centrally driven Regional Control Centre Project, on 5 July 2011, H&WFRS (Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service) received notification that the CLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) were making available £81m for improving the resilience, efficiency and technology in England's control services. As a guide, this will provide up to £1.8m for each Fire and Rescue Authority. In partnership with Shropshire & Wrekin FRA, (Fire & Rescue Authority), officers from H&WFR have submitted a grant application to the DCLG. It is expected that the level of grant funding will be confirmed by 31 January 2012.

Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IMRP) Action Plan 2012/13

Integrated Risk Management has a fundamental impact on reducing the risk amongst communities in Worcestershire and Herefordshire and involves assessing the risks faced, taking preventative action, and ensuring we have the right resources in the right place at the right time. We can achieve this by targeting community safety activities and regulatory enforcement in commercial premises and by ensuring our responses are safe and efficient.

The IRMP process requires us to produce an annual Action Plan setting out how we intend to achieve our vision and to publish the Plan for public consultation. Residents in Herefordshire and Worcestershire have been invited to have their say on five recommendations, following Authority approval of the Draft IRMP 2012/13 for consultation. The consultation period will commence for a 12 week period from 28 September and a final plan, incorporating feedback, will be submitted to the Authority for approval.

Vehicle Fleet

Our vehicle fleet was greatly enhanced with the replacement of six old fire appliances with up-to-date, high specification modern vehicles. These were stationed at Worcester, Tenbury Wells, Bromyard, Ross-on-Wye, Droitwich and Malvern.

Asset Management Strategy

Plans were made in March 2011 for four Strategic Training Facilities (STF's) to be constructed across the Herefordshire and Worcestershire area. These will include hot fire based training scenarios. The STF's will be based in Kidderminster, Evesham, and Kingsland and at a location to be determined in South Herefordshire.

Progress of the Retained Duty System (RDS) Implementation Plan

An in-depth examination of areas including availability of staff and appliances, work-life balance, resilience, recruitment, training, development and management was undertaken. The review highlighted a number of key issues such as how the basis for a Retained Duty System (RDS) is reliant on 'traditional' communities and lifestyles and did not always fit with the modern working and life-styles of our society. Consideration was also given to the demographics of local communities, which have altered significantly in recent years, as well as the ability for people to balance their work and life commitments with the requirements of an RDS Fire Service career. A three year RDS Implementation Plan was produced based upon the evidence provided in the review and in consultation with officers, RDS staff and representative bodies.

Year 1 of the Implementation Plan has been successful and the Service is now experiencing the benefits of the areas delivered. Real time RDS

appliance availability has now improved the service that the authority is providing which now allows the authority to plan and discharge improved training to its RDS staff which in turn improves their safety, competence and operational efficiency.

Annual Awards Ceremony

The Annual Awards Ceremony took place on Friday 4th November 2011 at Hereford Town Hall. Presenting the awards were the Chief Fire Officer, Mike Yates, the Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority – Councillor D Prodger, MBE, and the Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Hereford, Sir John Foley. Six Long Service and Good Conduct Medals, one 30 Year Award, two Outstanding Service Medals and one Volunteer Award were presented. Two Chief Fire Officer Commendations were presented to members of the public for their courageous actions at a river rescue and a rescue from a house fire. Two letters of appreciation were also awarded.

Presentation

The Chief Fire Officer will be attending an event at Herefordshire Council on 6th December 2011 to update Members on matters of interest occurring within the Fire Service.

Brigadier Peter Jones, CBE
Vice-Chairman
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

FURTHER INFORMATION

Any person wishing to seek further information on this report should contact: Corporate Support on 01905 368367. 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 28 September 2011