

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE HEREFORD AND WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL 20 JULY 2012

Election of Chairman

Councillor D Prodger MBE, was elected as Chairman of the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority for 2012/13.

Election of Vice-Chairman

Brigadier P Jones CBE, was elected as Vice-Chairman of Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority for 2012/13.

Appointment of Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)

The Authority ratified the appointment of Mr Nigel Snape as Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer). Mr Snape will commence in his post on 1 August 2012.

Provisional Financial Results 2011/12

The Treasurer presented a report which gave an overview on the provisional financial results for 2011/12.

The Authority had an underspend of approximately £800,000 however, there were three issues that required to be addressed namely:

- Retained Duty System Compensation
- Redundancy Costs
- Transfer to Pension Reserve to cover potential RDS pension issues

Once the above matters have been considered approximately £550,000 would be transferred to general reserves.

The Authority noted the provisional financial results and approved the rephasing of capital budgets from 2011-12 to 2012-13 and approved the use of revenue resources as suggest in the report. Furthermore it was noted that the Audit Committee would consider the Annual Statement of Accounts in detail.

Members' Allowances Scheme

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2033 (the regulations), the Authority considered the level of Members' Allowances.

It was agreed that there would be no increase in Members' Allowances for the financial year 2012/13.

Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

A report was considered which informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 2011/12.

The following was highlighted:

- Incidents had fallen by 3.4% overall. This was a continuing trend but there were some fluctuations within the figures. It was noted that most of the fluctuations related to the weather.
- The total number of fires had increased by 13.5%.
- There had been a significant increase in the number of secondary fires due to weather related incidents.
- There had been a significant decrease in chimney fires.
- Outdoor fires had increased by 52.7%.
- There had been a 10% decrease in vehicle fires.
- Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires had increased by 67.8%.
- Special Service Incidents had decreased by 15.2%.
- Flooding incidents had decreased by 73.5%.
- The number of road traffic collision incidents had remained static.
- The Service had dealt with 119 serious injuries caused as a result of road traffic collisions in 2011-12 compared with 113 serious injuries in 2010/11.
- There had been a 9% reduction in the number of false alarms.
- Malicious false alarms were down by 17.1% and this is one of the lowest figures per head of population recorded in the country.
- A total of 57 health and safety related incidents were reported this quarter of which 5 were or had the potential to be 'serious incidents.'
- There were 3 reported incidents of verbal abuse/obstruction to crews.

Please Note:

Primary Fires – broadly those involving buildings and structures and other property such as vehicles, storage, plant and machinery, fires involving casualties, rescues or escape, fires where significant fire and rescue resources are employed.

Secondary fires – broadly those involving derelict buildings, or vehicles, single buildings under demolition, fires confined to chimneys, other outdoor fires such as those involving grassland, gardens and fences, refuse and refuse containers.

Items of Interest

Exercise Olympus

Members watched a DVD recording of Exercise Olympus which had been held at the Fire Service College on 17 – 18 March 2012. The exercise had simulated an explosion at a university campus and involved a building collapse with a large number of casualties and many people unaccounted for.

The exercise had proved to be an invaluable training event and through multi-agency and Service debriefs had identified a number of key outcomes that can assist us to improve our operational response. Additionally, the opportunity to test the Service's resilience to undertake such a significant exercise whilst maintaining full fire cover across the Service area was extremely useful.

Fire Control Project Update

The Fire Control Project continues to make good progress and preparations are now being made to move the Fire Control function into Service Headquarters during August 2012.

During May and June, new turnout systems that mobilise operational personnel were installed at all stations. New high performing and resilient Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) have also been installed on every fire appliance. The MDT will provide access to vital incident data en-route to and during an incident. This new technology also provides a search facility for any address in the two counties, which is vital for operational crews operating outside their normal areas. In addition, operational crews will be able to access data about water hydrant locations, commercial building floor plans and access routes to a building that is on fire.

Phase 2 of this project will address how we work with our neighbours at Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to deliver a collaborative approach to the delivery of Control Room functions. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed and a Project Board has been established. This Board will meet on a monthly basis to consider progress made. The next key milestone will be the approval of the Programme Brief in September 2012.

In addition to the above, Officers from Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service are also exploring options for improved resilience beyond the West Mercia collaborative arrangement.

IRMP 2011/12 Fire Cover: Proposals and Results of Consultation

A report was considered that informed the Authority of the Fire Cover consultation results and requested approval of the proposals.

As part of the current IRMP 2011/12 Action Plan, Recommendation 4 stated:

"We will review our fire cover and response arrangements" contained within this statement were three elements which were to be reviewed:

1. The current crewing arrangements at Bromsgrove;
2. The requirement for a third appliance at Hereford, Worcester and Redditch; and
3. The appropriate number of personnel on each watch at wholetime and day crewed stations.

The consultation responses did not contain anything that required the Authority to change its plans. Furthermore, the proposals did not change the emergency response provisions to the communities that the Authority served as there would be the same amount of fire fighters on the same fire engines giving the same response times as are currently the case but the proposals meant there would be savings through having less people off duty that on duty and no redundancies were required.

Approval was given for the following recommendations:

- to reduce the number of firefighting staff on each watch at the three existing day crewed fire stations (Malvern, Evesham and Droitwich) from 8 to 7;
- to reduce the number of firefighting staff on each watch at Hereford and Worcester fire stations from 14 to 12.5 (average between the two stations);
- to implement a new crewing pattern (Day Crewing Plus) at Bromsgrove, leading to a reduction in the establishment from 28 to 14; and
- there are no changes to the provision of the third Retained Duty System (RDS) appliance at Hereford, Worcester and Redditch.

Update on Delivery of the 2011/12 IRMP Action Plan

Members considered a report that set out the outcomes and progress against the seven recommendations from the 2011/12 IRMP Action Plan.

Members endorsed the 2011/12 IRMP Action Plan as being complete.

Annual Report from the Standards Committee to the Fire and Rescue Authority

A report was considered that informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Standards Committee since the last Annual General Meeting of the Authority.

The Authority was advised that since the report had been written further guidance had been received from the Government about disclosable personal interests. The Authority would therefore be considering adopting a new code of conduct at a Special Meeting which would be held at the beginning of July 2012.

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 20 June 2012.