

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEREFORD AND WORCESTERT FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Authority Appointments 2012/13**

Councillor Derek Prodger, MBE, from Worcestershire County Council was elected as Chairman of the Authority and Brigadier Peter Jones, CBE from Herefordshire Council was elected as Vice-Chairman. In addition the following Members have been appointed to the following positions:

- Councillor Derek Prodger, MBE – Appointments Committee Chairman
- Brigadier Peter Jones, CBE – Appointments Committee Vice-Chairman
- Councillor Lynne Duffy – Audit Committee Chairman
- Councillor Lucy Hodgson – Audit Committee Vice-Chairman
- Councillor Kit Taylor – Policy and Resources Committee Chairman
- Councillor Gordon Yarranton – Policy and Resources Committee Vice-Chairman
- Councillor Terry Spencer – Standards Committee Chairman
- Councillor Gay Hopkins – Standards Committee Vice-Chairman
- Councillor Liz Eyre – Asset Management Champion
- Councillor Richard Udall – Equality and Diversity Champion
- Councillor Peter Watts – Risk Management Champion
- Councillor Lucy Hodgson, Councillor David Taylor and Councillor Clive Smith – Member Development Champions

**Introduction**

The Authority has an annual budget of £33.8 million and governs the work of the Service through a variety of committees and scrutiny bodies. Our core purpose is to provide our communities with sustainable, high quality firefighting, rescue and preventative services.

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service covers a geographic area of almost 400,000 hectares (over 1,500 square miles). It has some of the most sparsely populated rural areas in the country and around 740,000 people reside in the two counties, predominantly in Worcestershire.

The Service employs over 860 people, most of whom are highly trained firefighters, working at more than 30 locations across the two counties, including 27 Fire Stations, a Service Headquarters in Worcester, three District Headquarters, Workshops and Stores in Malvern and a Training and Development Centre and Urban Search and Rescue facility in Droitwich Spa.

## **Performance 2011/12**

The Service's Fire Control received 14,411 calls in total throughout 2011-12. This represents a 2.6% increase in calls received from 2010-11 in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Of these calls, we attended 7857 incidents in 2011-12, compared with 8136 incidents in 2010-11. This is due to fires being more visible hence more calls regarding single incidents than for special services.

Overall number of fires attended was up 13.5% in 2011-12 compared with 2010-11. The main reason for this was due to a large year on year increase in grassland, woodland and crop fires associated with unseasonably dry weather. The Service is not unique in this regard, with all Fire Services seeing substantial increases in these types of fires. Significant reductions were seen in chimney fires, supported by extensive prevention and education campaigns directed in this area.

## **Fire Control Update**

The new control room is up and running at Service Headquarters and is proving to be a tremendous success. The go live process was completed on 27 September 2012 and has put this Service in the position of having the most up-to-date end-to-end fire control and mobilising system in the country. New Mobile Data Terminals across the fleet will improve the information available to firefighters on fire appliances at incidents with a full mapping system. Overall it will provide a far more efficient, faster and user-friendly command and control system. An Automatic Vehicle Locations System is fitted to all frontline firefighting appliances which enables Control to know their exact locations. This enables the command and control system to automatically select the quickest asset for any particular incident.

## **Organisational Change**

We have continued to review, refocus and restructure our Departments to ensure that they deliver their services effectively and efficiently, with major changes in our human resources, performance management, media and communications and finance and budgetary departments.

## **Review of Members' Allowances**

At its meeting on 20 June 2012 the Authority reviewed its Members' Allowances Scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the regulations). It was resolved that the level of Members' Allowances applicable from 1 April 2010 be retained for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

## **Vehicle Fleet Update**

During 2012-13 we will complete a number of vehicle projects including:

### Incident Support Vehicle

Following a review of the usage of our Incident Support Unit (ISU) currently based at Droitwich, it will be replaced by a new, smaller Incident Support Vehicle (ISV). The ISU is a large specialist appliance which carried additional heavy equipment which may be required to assist at a variety of incidents. This new strategy will also initially upgrade the equipment on two fire appliances, one in each county, to compensate for the reduced capacity of the new ISV. All other support equipment currently carried by the ISU will be carried by the new ISV. This is a cost-effective way of ensuring that overall resilience is enhanced, as well as improving our efficiency and effectiveness at incidents.

### Line Rescue Vehicle

We have a dedicated vehicle for carrying specialist equipment for incidents requiring rope rescue, such as rescues from height or from underground. Due to its highly technical nature, the equipment needs to be kept secure and apart from general firefighting kit. Having a dedicated vehicle will achieve this and it will be quicker to mobilise to incidents with the equipment already on board. A vehicle currently available in our fleet will be adapted for the purpose.

### Rural Fire Appliances

Following an extensive review of our fire appliances in our rural fire stations we expect to have new rural fire appliances operating at two rural fire stations during 2012-13.

### **Combined Police and Fire Stations**

We have worked in partnership with West Mercia Police to provide a shared building in Bromsgrove. Work has commenced with completion provisionally due in winter 2013/14. Working together is not only more effective and efficient for both organisations, but has also helped to reduce delays and costs. The benefits of the joint approach are such that we intend to repeat the model on similar schemes (a joint scheme is already being planned for Redditch) and to also explore further joint work on a number of smaller rural stations during 2012-13.

### **New Fire Stations**

Last year we developed plans to replace fire stations which have reached the end of their serviceable life or are in need of substantial refurbishment. In the context of the difficult financial situation, during 2012-13 we will review how we manage our facilities, ensuring that maintenance work at our premises is targeted to deliver the best value.

### **Strategic Training Facilities (STF's)**

We are progressing the development of our new Strategic Training Facilities in North and South Herefordshire and North and South Worcestershire. These facilities will provide this Service with some of the best training facilities in the UK. In addition to

hot fire training these facilities will have many additional features to assist with training across the Service and will mean that no fire appliance has to travel more than approximately 30 minutes to reach a dedicated training venue.

**Brigadier Peter Jones, CBE**

**Vice-Chairman – Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority**

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Any person wishing to seek further information on this report should contact Corporate Support on 01905 368209/241. 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))