

## 7. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

### Purpose of Report

- To inform Members of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 April to 30 June 2010.

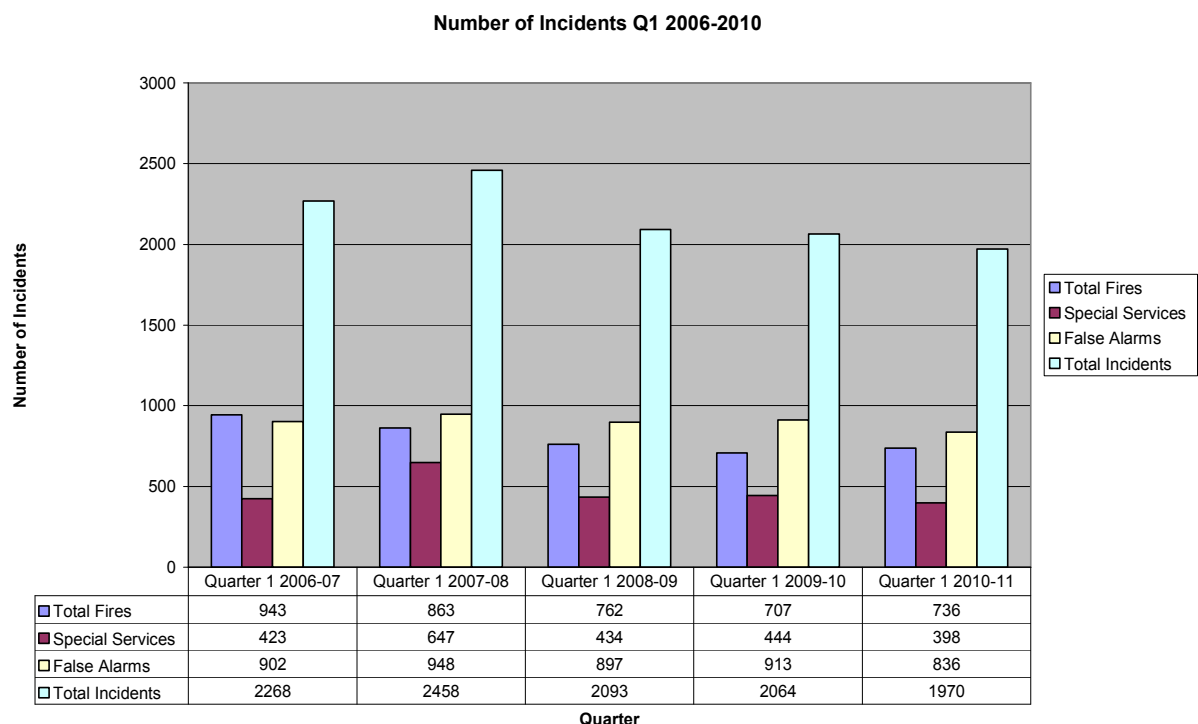
### Recommendations:

- The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.*
- The Authority is asked to consider its position with regard to Warwickshire County Council's final proposals with relation to fire cover along the border area of Worcestershire/Warwickshire.*

## Performance

### Operational Performance Update Quarter 1 2010-11

- Figure 1 below demonstrates overall operational activity during Quarter 1 2010-11 compared with the first quarter in the previous 4 years:



(Figure 1 – Comparative number of incidents Q1 2006-2010)

- The total incident numbers for Quarter 1 2010-11 shows our best quarterly performance over the same period in the last five years. This is due to decreases in the number of special service incidents and false alarms attended. The total number of incidents has decreased from 2064 in Quarter 1 2009-10 to 1970 in Quarter 1 2010-11, (-4.6%).

4. The number of fires has increased from 707 in Quarter 1 2009-10 to 736 in Quarter 1 2010-11, (+4.1%):
  - The increase in total fires is due to an increase in secondary fires which have increased from 359 in Quarter 1 2009-10 to 423 in Quarter 1 2010-11, (+17.8%).
  - The increase in secondary fires is due to an increase in accidental secondary fires rather than deliberate secondary fires. The main increases have been in loose refuse, scrubland and tree scrub fires but uncommonly not in rural locations, but predominantly in urban areas. The hot and dry conditions of Quarter 1 2010-11 may have exacerbated the number of incidents for this Quarter.
5. The number of Special Service incidents has reduced with 398 incidents attended in Quarter 1 2010-11 compared with 444 in Quarter 1 2009-10, (-10.4%):
  - There has been a reduction in the number of RTCs attended with 149 attended in Quarter 1 2010-11 compared with 183 in Quarter 1 2009-10, (-18.6%); and
  - There has been a decrease in flooding incidents with 20 incidents attended in Quarter 1 2010-11 compared with 28 incidents in Quarter 1 2009-10 (-28.6%).
6. The number of False Alarm incidents has decreased with 836 incidents attended in Quarter 1 2010-11 compared with 913 in Quarter 1 2009-10, a decrease of 8.43%. The overall decrease in total false alarms is due to a decrease in automatic false alarms which represent the largest proportion of total false alarms.

### **Items of Interest**

#### **Gary Williams and Dave Taylor**

7. It is with much sadness that the Chief Fire Officer has to report the deaths of CM Gary Williams from Pebworth and WM Dave Taylor from Leominster. Gary Williams died as a result of a road traffic collision on 20 July 2010 and Dave Taylor died on 8 September 2010 as a result of a long illness.
8. The Service has offered and given support to both families; both members of staff were long serving and will be sadly missed.

#### **Warwickshire FRS Improvement Plan/IRMP**

9. On 18 December 2009, the Authority considered the proposals and implications arising from Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service's Improvement Plan. The information made publicly available by Warwickshire in support of their proposals at that time was insufficient to enable a full assessment of their impact on Hereford & Worcester to be made. However, our initial evaluation at the time suggested that the scale of reductions being proposed may leave Warwickshire without sufficient resilience to deal with routine operations without a significant increase in requests for over the border mutual aid from neighbouring Authorities such as ourselves.

10. Our concern was not simply in relation to the reduction in resources proposed along our immediate border area, but that the reductions proposed across Warwickshire would adversely impact their ability to resource day-to-day activity.
11. This Authority therefore resolved that:
  - ***the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive continue to engage with colleagues in Warwickshire to monitor progress in relation to their plans;***
  - ***the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and senior management team draw up contingency plans to ensure that communities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are not adversely affected by Warwickshire's plan; and***
  - ***the Authority reviews its position once finalised proposals are made by Warwickshire.***
12. Members will be aware that Warwickshire County Council recently selected an improvement plan for the future disposition of fire and rescue resources and support in that county; an explanation will be provided at the Authority meeting setting out the detail of the proposals.
13. In summary, the preferred option for improvement, as agreed by Warwickshire County Council on 20 July 2010 or Model B, as it is known, will reduce the number of fire stations from 19 to 16, and reduce the number of pumping appliances from 26 to 22 appliances plus one 'small fires unit' (a targeted response vehicle used for tackling smaller incidents such as refuse bin fires). These proposed changes differ to the changes originally considered by the Authority in December 2009, when Warwickshire County Council proposed a reduction in the number of stations from 19 to 12 and the number of fire appliances from 26 down to 19. However, there is no change to the initial proposal to decommission Studley fire station, which is just across the border from Worcestershire.
14. To assess the impact of these amended changes the Service has now carried out an analysis of fire cover in the affected area and the number (over three years, 2006-9) of incidents in the Studley/Alcester area that attract attendances from both Services. Using this analysis, it is projected that the implementation of the Model B option should have little effect on the capabilities of H&WFRS and therefore the Warwickshire proposals do not cause any concerns in relation to the fire cover in this Service
15. The main area of potential impact is towards the South of Redditch where support currently provided by two retained appliances, at Studley and Alcester fire stations, is to be replaced by one wholetime appliance at Alcester Fire Station. Whilst this may offer less numerical support, the wholetime appliance at Alcester should be available to attend incidents more quickly. In addition, due to the low number of incidents requiring over the border support the impact should be low. Towards the central area of Warwickshire between Redditch and Evesham, the upgrading of Alcester to a wholetime fire station should improve coverage for the generally hard-to-reach rural areas of Worcestershire around Cookhill.
16. The implementation of the Model B option should therefore have little effect on the capabilities of H&WFRS and it is the professional opinion of senior officers at H&WFRS that Warwickshire County Council proposals do not cause concern for

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority. Officers of the Service will continue to monitor fire cover and operational activity in the affected areas to ensure any variation to the predicted outcome of the changes is reported as appropriate.

17. Authority Members are asked to consider their position in accordance with the minute of the Authority meeting held on 18 December 2009.

### **Water Rescue Update**

18. The Service has completed the roll out and familiarisation training of the new Water Rescue Vehicles (WRVs) at Hereford, Worcester and Evesham Fire Stations with each station 'going live' during July and now being fully operational.
19. Each station has an identical WRV consisting of a 4x4 Mercedes Sprinter van which is used to store the extensive range of equipment and PPE and will tow the two new boats; a 3.8m and 4.4m inflatable powered craft. The crew can respond and deploy as a stand alone unit and is crewed by up to five trained operators. Crews from any of the three stations can work with each others' vehicles, boats and equipment thereby offering a greater level of resilience across the Service.
20. The WRVs have been taking part in exercises and demonstrations across the Service so that staff have the opportunity to see the equipment and vehicles now available. On Monday 9 August, Hereford fire station demonstrated their new equipment and rescue skills at the rowing club on the River Wye, Hereford in an exercise attended by local MP Jesse Norman, who also took part in the 'man over board' and tethered swim rescue.

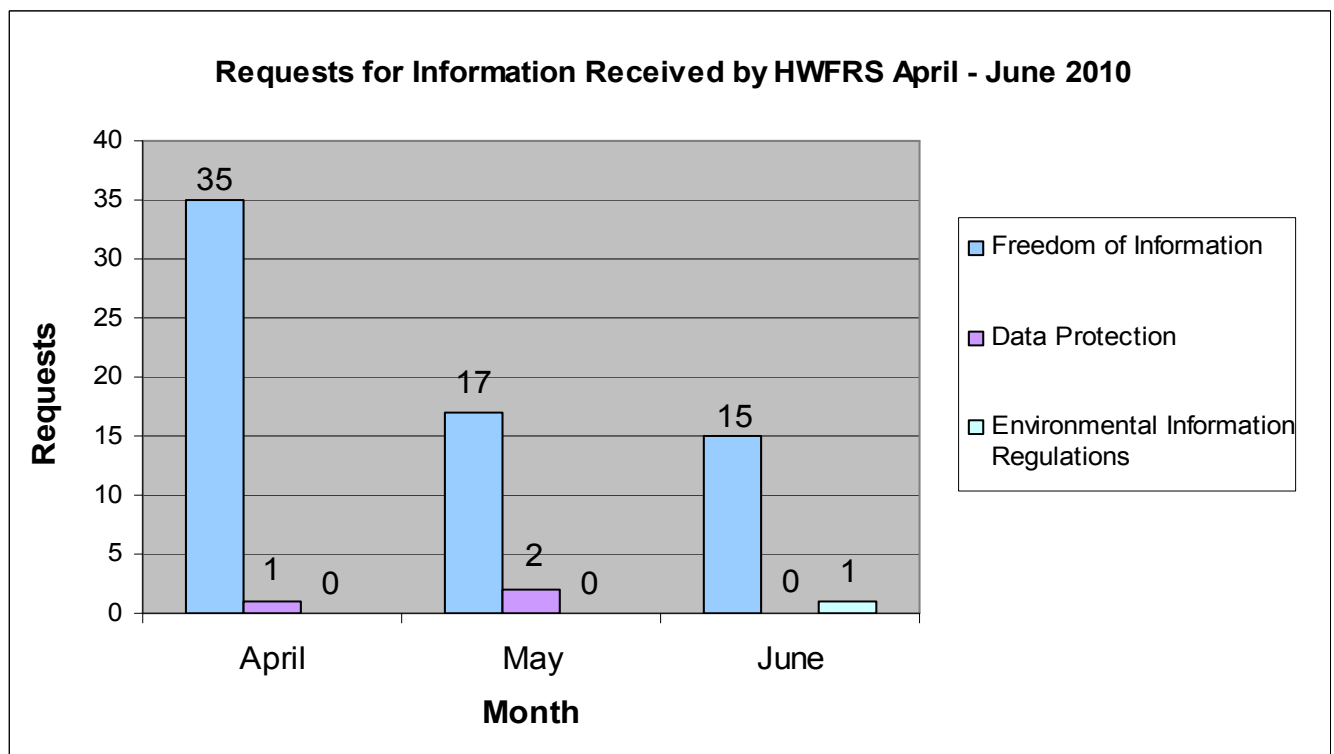
### **New Uniform and Role Names**

21. The Service is currently in the process of rolling out new uniform (workwear) to all relevant staff which, when coupled together with the new firefighting uniform that is expected to arrive in the Service early next Spring, will give firefighting staff the most up-to-date protection and workwear available to UK firefighters.
22. A "go live" date will only be selected once all staff have received their relevant workwear but I anticipate this to be during October 2010.
23. At the same time that the Service goes live with the new uniform, all uniformed roles in the Service will change from the term "manager" to "commander" i.e. Watch Manager to Watch Commander, Station Manager to Station Commander, etc. This change in terminology will be introduced to reflect the highest risk element of a manager's/leader's role, i.e. their need to command operational incidents when people's lives may be at risk. This change has been informally tested amongst a wide range of staff groups and has been widely accepted and agreed. It is in no way reflective of what historically has been perceived as a militaristic approach to the management of the Fire Service but has been designed to ensure that our manager's/leader's nomenclature is reflective of the areas of greater risk to themselves, their crews and the organisation.
24. The CFO and staff (that have been consulted) agree that this is a subtle but important change to reflect that both firefighting and firefighter safety are of the highest priority.

## Information for Members

### 25. Requests for Information Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/ Data Protection Act (DPA)/ Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

Q1	FOI Requests received and completed	DPA Requests received and completed	EIR Requests received and completed	Requests received to date
April 2010	35	1	0	
May 2010	17	2	0	
June 2010	15	0	1	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Requests received January – June 2010</b>			<b>127</b>	



### 26. Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Donations

	Apr-10	May-10	Jun-10
Complaints	6	5	2
Concerns	1	2	1
Compliments	4	2	2
Donations	1	3	1

## **Local Incidents and Initiatives to Note**

### **New fire station for Pebworth**

27. Work started on the new Pebworth fire station, following a sod cutting ceremony at the Stratford Road site on Thursday 10 June. The new fire station will include two appliance bays fitted with rapid response doors, a large retention pond for water collection and a generous hard-standing area for parking. The new station will also have modern training facilities, such as a drill tower, lecture room and drill yard that are significant improvements on the old station. It will also include significantly improved welfare facilities including male and female showers and a kitchen area. The new station is expected to be fully operational early in the New Year.

### **An eventful first Watch**

28. Firefighters were called to a flat fire in Friar Court in Hereford at 9am on Monday 21 June, literally moments after new Hereford Watch Manager Guy Palmer had started his very first watch at the station. Three pumps from Hereford and one from Fownhope attended and specialist equipment including breathing apparatus, 9-metre ladders, a hose reel jet and positive pressure ventilation were used to help rescue a woman and two men from the second floor of the building.

### **Woodland fire at Tedstone Delamere**

29. Firefighters from Bromyard, Worcester and Malvern were called upon to tackle a large woodland fire at Pix Hill in Tedstone Delamere near Bromyard on Thursday 24 June. The fire had been started as part of controlled burning following woodland clearance but it became out of control, with around 20 hectares reported to be alight at one point. It was finally extinguished over 24 hours later.

### **Fire Authority urges residents to have their say**

30. Residents in Herefordshire and Worcestershire were invited to have their say on the way the Fire Service is set to run, following approval of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2011/12 for consultation on Friday 25 June. The IRMP can be downloaded from the Fire Service website or picked up at a local fire station, and residents of the two counties had 12 weeks (until 20 September, 2010) to respond to the seven key recommendations outlined in the document.

### **Dying to Drive campaign**

31. In early July, Peterchurch Fire Station hosted the joint emergency services Dying to Drive event, an initiative aimed at reducing the number of young fatalities on the county's roads. High school students from across Herefordshire watched fire, police and ambulance personnel as they responded to a mock road traffic collision involving a deceased passenger, a trapped driver and walking wounded. The hard-hitting campaign was staged in a bid to show youngsters the devastating effects of excess speed, driving under the influence of drink or drugs or showing off to friends.

## **Community Safety Day a success**

32. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service hosted the third Worcester Community Safety Day at Worcester Racecourse on Saturday 24 July. Several thousand people went along and enjoyed a series of demonstrations by the emergency and rescue services, and the winners of the 'Design a Poster' competition (aimed at highlighting fire safety to youngsters of all ages) were also announced during the event.

## **Car pulled from building in Malvern**

33. Crews from Malvern and Worcester were joined by USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) to help pull a car from an opticians shop along Worcester Road in Malvern Link on Saturday 31 July. The female driver, who was not thought to be seriously injured, had inadvertently driven right into the reception area of the shop. The USAR team also helped secure the building and control the risk of further collapse. The story was covered by the national media.

## **Serious fire at Kidderminster factory**

34. Eight fire appliances plus the EPU (Environmental Protection Unit) from Evesham, the CSU (Command Support Unit) from Malvern and USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) helped extinguish a serious factory fire at an electroplating and metal finishing company in Kidderminster on Monday 23 August. The fire, which involved a number of vats of chemicals, was brought under control within a couple of hours thanks in part to the tactical information plans previously been drawn up between the Fire Service and the company.

## **Fire at a house in Redditch**

35. Three fire crews from Redditch, one from Bromsgrove and one from Droitwich attended a serious house fire in the Southcrest area of Redditch in the early hours of Friday 10 September, with initial calls suggesting that there were children inside. Four firefighters in breathing apparatus went into the front of the property to tackle the blaze and with crews behind the house working to protect their colleagues inside, the fire was quickly surrounded and brought under control. A woman and three children from the house were all safely accounted for although they needed hospital treatment for the effects of smoke inhalation.
36. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service are working alongside police to investigate how the fire started.

## **Visit to Fire Service College**

37. On Wednesday 15 September the CFO accompanied a group of FRA Members to the Fire Service College to receive a guided tour of all available facilities. The Service continues to use this excellent training and development facility as part of H&WFRS staff development, notably regarding operational command, specialist instruction and fire safety. Members had the opportunity to view all practical facilities including those used for Urban Search and Rescue, breathing apparatus, structural firefighting and incident command. College staff also demonstrated some of the training received by H&WFRS officers in relation to hazardous material.

## **Community Safety Volunteer Programme launched in Herefordshire**

38. Following a successful launch of its Community Safety Volunteer Programme in January this year in the South Worcestershire area, H&WFRS is now extending the programme into Herefordshire. A press release was issued to all Herefordshire media at the start of September urging anyone with a few hours a week to spare to consider getting involved, to support existing staff in a variety of safety initiatives, such as promoting safety awareness at local public events, accompanying crew members to carry out home safety checks and acting as victims or casualties during operational training exercises.
39. An advertisement was also placed in the recruitment section of the Hereford Times and full details listed on the H&WFRS website.
40. Members of the Community Safety Team also held a Volunteer Recruitment open event at Hereford Fire Station on Saturday 25 September, with local fire crew members and existing Community Safety Volunteers on hand to share their experiences and answer any questions potential new recruits might have.

### **Contact Officer**

Mark Yates,  
Chief Fire Officer (0845 1224454)  
Email: [myates@hwfire.org.uk](mailto:myates@hwfire.org.uk)