

## 10. Reported Abuse to Staff

### Purpose of report

1. To update Members on the increased reports of abuse to staff.

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### Recommendation

***The CFO recommends that the Policy and Resources Committee note the content of this report.***

### Background

2. At the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 8 June 2011, Members were updated through the Health and Safety Liaison Panel report of an identified increase in the reporting of cases of abuse to Fire Service staff. After the full Fire Authority meeting in June 2011 a press article was printed regarding this issue in the Worcester News.
3. The Service has been recording these incidents since 2005 based upon central national guidance (Fire and Rescue Circular, (5-2005) Fires and Incidents of Special Interest (FOSI)), which introduced the requirement for Fire Services to report "Attacks on Firefighters and Civil Disturbances" to central government. The Service implemented this into its Health and Safety policies with the first reported incident occurring in August 2006.
4. Within the definitions that were supplied in FSC 5-2005 it refers to: verbal abuse and harassment as well as physical abuse, objects thrown and other acts of aggression.

Table 1. An analysis of all events by year

| Year         | Number of reported occurrences | Type of Occurrences   |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 2006         | 3                              | 2 incidents of verbal abuse only (operational and non operational and 1 incident at a fire where a member of the public had to be restrained from trying to re-enter a building on fire |
| 2007         | 6                              | All verbal abuse from members of the public   |
| 2008         | 3                              | 1 verbal abuse incident, 2 incidents of objects thrown at staff or vehicles.  |
| 2009         | 6                              | 5 incidents of verbal abuse. 1 minor incident of physical abuse during a CFS visit  |
| 2010         | 17                             | 15 incidents of verbal abuse. 2 incidents where objects were thrown at an appliance and an incident of minor physical abuse   |
| 2011 to date | 4                              | All verbal abuse from members of the public   |

5. Since 2006 the Service has a total of 40 recorded incidents (above), with nearly all reporting only verbal abuse of a varying degree and nature. The few incidences of physical abuse have been of a minor nature, and not resulted in any serious injury or harm, although distressing for the staff concerned.
6. From 1 April 2011 it no longer became a requirement to report these incidents directly to central government, as the information is captured on the national Incident Recording System (IRS). The Service will continue to record all such events in accordance with the existing Health and Safety policy, as not all recorded events have occurred at operational incidents (eg. Community Safety activities) and would therefore otherwise be unrecorded.

### **Current Situation**

7. There has been an increase in the reporting of these type of incidents in the last 12 month period, with seven of the total 40 incidents occurring in the five month period between November 2010 and March 2011.
8. This issue was raised and discussed at the last Health and Safety Liaison Panel meeting (May 2011) and subsequently by the CFO in the June FRA meeting (2011). It was agreed that this situation would continue to be monitored and reviewed, with appropriate action implemented where necessary.
9. There is currently no national data available (since 2005) through CLG, who have informed the Service that national reporting of this issue has been sporadic and inaccurate, hence the cessation of reporting this year. Anecdotally it is believed that these incidents are low in seriousness and frequency within HWFRS. It can also be seen that they are predominately occurring in the Worcester area (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. An analysis of the locations of all events recorded

| <b>Town or area</b>                           | <b>Number of events reported</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Worcester                                     | <b>12</b>                        |
| Redditch                                      | <b>5</b>                         |
| Hereford                                      | <b>3</b>                         |
| Kidderminster                                 | <b>3</b>                         |
| Upton upon Severn                             | <b>2</b>                         |
| Whitchurch                                    | <b>2</b>                         |
| Bromsgrove                                    | <b>2</b>                         |
| Evesham                                       | <b>2</b>                         |
| Stourport                                     | <b>2</b>                         |
| All other areas (one reported incident alone) | <b>7</b>                         |

## Conclusion/Summary

10. 44 members of staff have been trained in Conflict Resolution with more training planned for later this year. Also a package developed internally by a member of staff with specialist experience (WC Stuart Crebbin) was implemented last year. This will now be re-circulated for further training to support operational staff in identifying, addressing and resolving these types of incident.
11. There currently appears to be no identifiable pattern or trends with these incidents, however the Worcester area represents over a quarter of all reported incidents.
12. It is currently unclear whether this is an increase in actual occurrences happening in real terms or whether this is an increased trend in reporting such incidents by staff due to raised awareness and training.
13. Through the Health and Safety Liaison Panel the Service will continue to monitor these incidents and implement support and training for staff likely to be affected by such events. Service Delivery Commanders will be focussing on those areas most affected and working with front line staff to monitor this issue.

## Financial Considerations

| Consideration   | Yes/No | Reference in Report<br>i.e paragraph no. |
|---|--------|--|
| There are financial issues that require consideration | No     |  |

## Legal Considerations

| Consideration   | Yes/No | Reference in Report<br>i.e. paragraph no. |
|---|--------|---|
| There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration | No     |   |

## Additional Considerations

14. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

| Consideration  | Yes/No | Reference in Report<br>i.e. paragraph no. |
|--|--------|---|
| <b>Resources</b> (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).                        | No     |   |
| <b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact). | No     |   |
| <b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).       | No     |   |
| <b>Consultation with Representative Bodies</b>   | No     |   |

### Supporting Information

None

### Contact Officer

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