

7. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Authority of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 April 2011 to 30 June 2011.

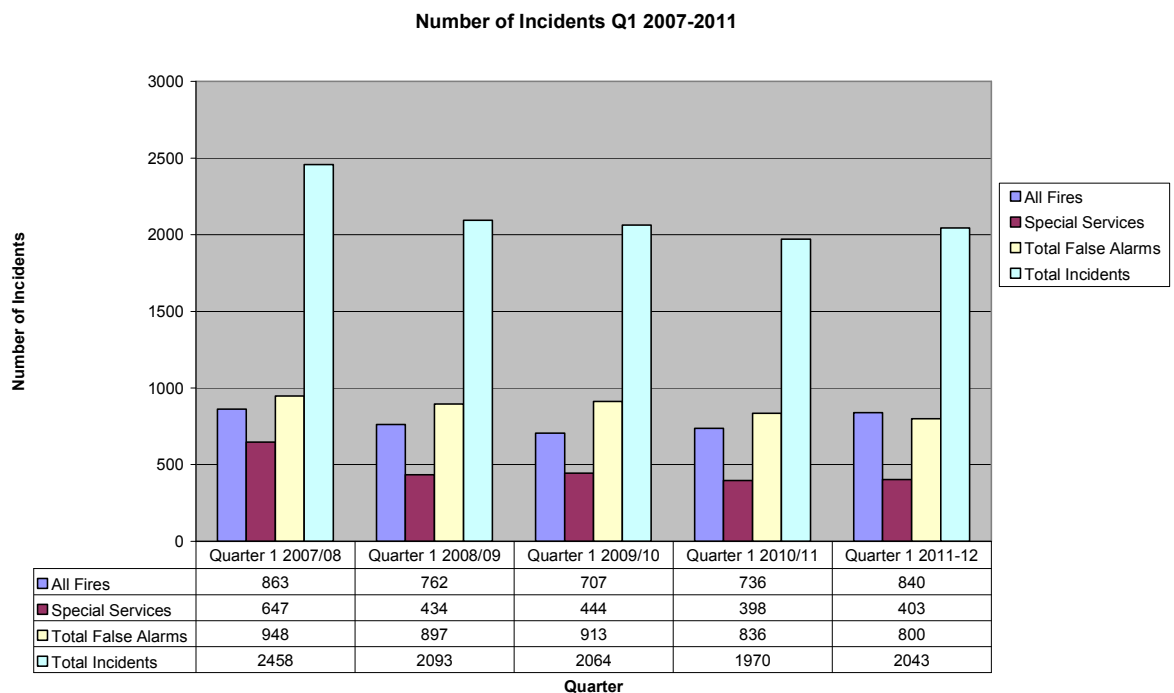
Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Performance

Operational Incidents and Total Number of Fires Attended

2. Figure 1 below demonstrates overall operational activity during Quarter 1 2011-2012 compared with the first quarter in the previous 4 years:



(Figure 1 – Comparative number of incidents Q1 2007/08-2011/12)

3. Total incident numbers for Quarter 1 2011-2012 show an increase on the same quarter last year. 2043 incidents were attended in Quarter 1 2011-2012 compared with 1970 incidents in Quarter 1 2010-2011, (+3.7%).

4. Increases are due to a rise in the total number of fires attended and a slight increase in the number of special services attended. Although the total number of incidents has increased when compared with the same quarter last year, it is still less than the same quarter in the previous three years.
5. The main reason for the overall rise in activity is due to an increase in the number of fires attended when compared with the same quarter last year. The number of fires has increased from 736 in Quarter 1 2010-2011 to 840 in Quarter 1 2011-2012, (+14.1%).

	Quarter 1 2010-11	Quarter 1 2011-12	Percentage change
Primary Fires	277	310	+11.9%
Secondary Fires	423	509	+20.3%
Chimney Fires	36	21	-41.7%
Total Fires	736	840	+14.1%

(Table 1 – Total Fires Q1 10-11 and Q1 11-12)

6. Table 1 above demonstrates that the increase in total fires is mainly due to an increase in secondary fires in Quarter 1 2011-2012 compared with Quarter 1 2010-2011.
7. Table 2 below shows secondary fire increases through Q1 and these are associated with the hot and dry weather conditions experienced both in Quarter 1 2011-12 and Quarter 1 2010-11.

	Apr	May	Jun	Quarterly Total
Secondary Fires Q1 10-11	163	121	139	423
Secondary Fires Q1 11-12	227	168	114	509
Percentage Change	+39.3%	+38.8%	-18.0%	+20.3%

(Table 2 – Secondary Fires per month Q1 10-11 and Q1 11-12)

8. Further analysis indicates that there has been an increase in secondary fires starting in loose refuse, tree scrub and domestic gardens in Quarter 1 2011-12 compared with the same quarter last year.
9. There were 118 loose refuse fires in Quarter 1 2011-12 compared with 77 in the same quarter last year, 89 tree scrub fires compared with 67 in the same quarter last year and 45 domestic garden fires compared with 32 in the same quarter last year.
10. The increases in secondary fires were acknowledged early in the quarter at the Service Delivery monthly meetings and we have been working with our colleagues in the Community Safety Partnerships to map and identify any common trends and ascertain any links with other forms of anti-social behaviour.

11. Deliberate fires accounted for 55.5% of all secondary fires in April 2011 and 52.4% of all secondary fires in May 2011 compared with 52.1% in April 2010 and 51.2% in May 2010.
12. Table 3 below demonstrates that the number of special service incidents has increased slightly in Quarter 1 2011-12 compared with the same quarter last year with 403 incidents attended in Quarter 1 2011-2012 compared with 398 in Quarter 1 2010-2011, (+1.3%).
13. It can be seen from the table below that the increase in special service incidents was due to an increase in RTCs attended when compared to the same quarter last year, with 169 RTC incidents attended compared with 149 in Quarter 1 2010-11 (+13.4%):

	Quarter 1 2010-11	Quarter 1 2011-12	Percentage change
RTC Incidents	149	169	+13.4%
Flooding	20	17	-15.0%
Other Special Services	229	217	-5.2%
All Special Services	398	403	+1.3%

(Table 3 – Special Services Q1 10-11 and Q1 11-12)

14. The number of false alarm incidents has decreased in Quarter 1 2011-2012 with 800 incidents attended in Quarter 1 2011-2012 compared with 836 in Quarter 1 2010-2011 (-4.3%):

	Quarter 1 2010-11	Quarter 1 2011-12	Percentage change
Malicious False Alarms	23	20	-13.0%
False Alarm Good Intent	229	184	-19.7%
Automatic False Alarms	584	596	+2.1%
Total False Alarms	836	800	-4.3%

(Table 4 – False Alarms Q1 10-11 and Q1 11-12)

15. The decrease in the number of false alarms attended when compared with the same quarter last year is due to a reduction in the number of malicious false alarms and false alarm good intent attended.
16. The Service attended 20 malicious false alarms in Quarter 1 2011-12 compared with 23 in the same quarter last year (-13.0%) and attended 184 false alarms good intent in Quarter 1 2011-12 compared with 229 in the same quarter last year (-19.7%).

Health and Safety

Analysis of Reported Incidents April – June 2011

Incidents and Injuries

	Apr	May	Jun	This Quarter Total	Previous Quarter Total
Serious Incidents ¹	2	4	2	8	10
Near Hit/Cause for Concern ²	7	4	6	17	11
Potential Exposure ³	3	1	5	9	5
Total Incidents	20	24	31	75	75
Specialist Investigations ⁴	0	4	0	4	8

Analysis

17. Of the 75 reported Health and Safety incidents this quarter, only 8 were or had the potential to be 'serious incidents'.
18. However, more encouraging is the increase in reported near hits and causes for concern, which during this period represent almost 22%, an increase of almost 10% on the last quarter. This is positive as this presents an opportunity for the organisation to take action to prevent the circumstances deteriorating and resulting in injury or loss.
19. This quarter, 7 of the 9 incidents of potential exposure occurred during operational training and are deemed routine.

Serious Incidents

20. The serious incidents this quarter comprised of the following, no one was seriously injured in any incident:
 - One incident resulted in a firefighter falling through a floor at an operational incident – this was then the subject of a specialist investigation;
 - Two separate incidents where a firefighter incurred a Breathing Apparatus set related failures during a training exercise, no one was injured – both are the subject of a specialist investigation;
 - A potential hazard was identified where there is a delay on the siren on the Aerial Ladder Platform;

¹ Incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in a fatality, serious personal injury or significant loss or damage.

² Incidents that almost resulted in an injury or conditions identified that have the potential to cause injury, loss or a near hit but have not done so up to the time of reporting – e.g. items falling from shelf near to people or unbalanced and overhanging items stored on a shelf.

³ Incidents where persons were potentially exposed to hazardous substances (usually during operational duties) – e.g. exposure to river water during swift water rescue training, exposure to asbestos during fire fighting.

⁴ Of incidents either actually resulting in, or having the potential to result in serious injuries or losses and incidents involving Breathing Apparatus.

- A report of an inability to produce foam whilst in offensive mode during firefighting;
- A potential hazard identified as a result of a lack of seatbelt in the 418 Command Support Unit; and
- A potential hazard was identified involving accelerator pedals that are suspended from the underside of the steering console becoming snagged on flooring – a Health and Safety Flash was produced in response to this issue.

21. The Specialist investigations mobilised this quarter comprise of the following:

- One incident resulted in a firefighter falling through a floor at an operational incident;
- Two separate incidents where a firefighter was deprived of air whilst wearing Breathing Apparatus during a training exercise;
- One incident where a suspected Breathing Apparatus malfunction was not reported or the set impounded. Upon investigation, it was found that there was no fault with the set.

22. Of these Specialist Investigations, one awaits a debrief and two are still under investigation.

Reported Abuse to Staff

23. There were 5 reported incidents of verbal abuse to crews this quarter – one occurred when crews were affecting the rescue of an individual from a river, two occurred when crews were damping down fires, and two when crews were involved in routine driving activities.

Health and Safety Training Planned for 2011-12

- 15 managers are to receive NEBOSH training;
- 30 watch and crew commanders are to receive IOSH Managing Safely;
- 36 personnel to undertake risk assessment training;
- 30 personnel are to undertake training in managing hazardous substances;
- 9 Fleet Technicians are to receive training in abrasive wheels;
- 9 Fleet Technicians are to receive training in noise and vibration management;
- Display Screen Equipment training for all Fire Control staff;
- Display Screen Equipment training for 26 departmental and station staff;
- Refresher training to be arranged for station cooks and for mess managers in food safety;
- Mop up training to be arranged for specialist investigation officers in line with their role; and
- Training for 30 staff in Conflict Resolution.

Significant Planned Activities

- After a positive response to the Manager's Health and Safety Handbook, this has now been shared with regional partners who intend to use it as a model for their own versions;
- Work has begun on a review of the GAP analysis conducted by all Fire Services within the region against the HSEs consolidated report following its inspections of 8 Fire Services, to draw out key themes from which to develop leading indicators;
- Reviews of 15 Service Policies and Instructions have been completed, with another currently being considered with key stakeholders; and
- Two new Policies are also in the process of being written, relating to asbestos management and pressure systems and gas containers.

Items of Interest

Appointment of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

24. I am delighted to announce that following an extensive application and assessment process on Friday 29 July, Richard Lawrence was offered, and accepted, the above substantive post. Richard has been carrying out the duties of the above post on a temporary basis since January and therefore will continue in the role but in the substantive rank of Assistant Chief Fire Officer.
25. May I take this opportunity to congratulate Richard and welcome him to his role on a substantive basis. Richard is a Fire Service Officer of the highest calibre and Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority, myself and members of the Senior Management Board look forward to be able to continue working with him.

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

26. Myself and the Chairman, along with Watch Manager Steve Bullock as Standard Bearer for the Service, attended the memorial service 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 firefighters lost their lives.,
27. The Firefighters Memorial Trust Annual Service of Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremony was held at St Paul's Cathedral at 11.00am remembering all firefighters that have lost their lives as a result of their duties since the beginning of the WWII.

Special Reception in the Presence of HRH The Princess Royal

28. Myself and the Vice-Chairman attended a special reception and ceremony on Tuesday 19 July 2011 at the Honourable Artillery Company in London where the Firefighters Memorial Trust received its Royal Charter and the new 'Firefighters Memorial Standard' was blessed. I was personally presented to Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal.

Fire Control Bid

29. On 5 July 2011, H&WFRS received notification that the CLG 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, officers from H&WFRS are in the process of formulating a grant application for submission to the CLG in September 2011. It is expected that grant funding will be confirmed by 31 January 2012.

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

30. Warwickshire FRS has now confirmed that, as part of their IRMP, they intend to decommission Studley Fire Station in March 2013 following the transition of nearby Alcester Fire Station from RDS to Wholetime by the end of 2012. Nearby Alcester Fire Station will then provide immediate cover for a wider geographical area in lieu of the closure of neighbouring Studley. As has been previously reported to this Authority, the impact of this is not believed to create any significant issues for HWFRS based upon historical evidence in these areas. Discussions with Warwickshire FRS are ongoing and the situation will continue to be closely monitored.

Fire Director Visits Service

31. 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. Neil O' Connor was given information about the Service's volunteer scheme, partnership working and community safety schemes which are already making a difference to people's lives. During the course of his visit, he was also shown a water rescue demonstration by firefighters on the River Severn at Worcester. The crews set up a training demonstration and showed how they would rescue a casualty from the water using their boats and related equipment.

Shadow Fire Minister visits Service

32. 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. He was firstly given a tour of Droitwich Fire Station by Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates and was then shown around the Service's Urban Search and Rescue base in the town. He then met firefighters at the River Severn, along with the Chair of the Authority, in Worcester. The crews set up a training demonstration and showed how they would rescue a casualty from the water using their boats and related equipment.

DEFRA Grant Scheme

33. A formal bid by the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team was submitted to the Department for the Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for their proposed Flood Rescue Grant Scheme in November 2010 to enhance our boat assets. Our bid sought to fulfill the role of rescue, response and flood relief duties as set out in the National Flood Rescue Concept of Operations document released following Sir Michael Pitt's review on the floods of 2007. Whilst considering the requirements of the DEFRA grant scheme we also ensured that our proposal would ultimately enhance our capability to respond during widespread flood inundation.
34. Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service's bid has been successful and the Service has been awarded £50,000 from the scheme which will be utilised to purchase two specialised powered boats and ancillary equipment. The boats that we are intending to purchase will be capable of transporting larger bulkier items of equipment, flood victims, stretcher bound casualties and will be trialed and evaluated by our experienced Swift Water Rescue Technicians. Once purchased they will be stored and maintained within our USAR facilities at Droitwich which will support their deployment locally and nationally. It is planned that our USAR team and USAR on-call personnel will crew these assets as they are both qualified Swift Water Rescue Technicians and Swift Water Boat Operators. As part of the terms of conditions of funding by the grant scheme, HWFRS will be required to make these assets available for the next five years to attend widespread flooding nationally should this be requested by DEFRA.

Fatality in Ewyas Harold

35. On Thursday 28 July 2011 at 1530hrs 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.
36. 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 premise. 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.
37. Despite the Service's best efforts the lady did not survive the recent fire event, however it 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

38. Following the recent increase in reported injuries at operational incidents the Community Safety Department and Performance Improvement Department have jointly developed a Casualty Report Form which is automatically generated from the IRS. This form will quickly alert the Community Safety Department to the fact that an injury has occurred and enable them to quickly follow up each individual injury by contacting the operational personnel and partner organisations involved, in order to ascertain all relevant details. The report, coupled with a structured internal investigation, will then assist the Service in profiling every injury going forward in an effort to identify common trends and contributory factors. All information will then reside within the Community Safety Department's database and will be utilised to help inform future education and intervention activities.

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