

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

10. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Authority of recent key developments and activities.
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Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the report be noted.

Tactical Ventilation

2. The provision of real fire training facilities within the Service has enabled the delivery of training in 'offensive' mechanical tactical ventilation techniques to wholetime firefighters. This training has built upon previous training and experience in the use of petrol driven fans to clear smoke from buildings after a fire has been extinguished. The training, which was delivered at the strategic training facility at Peterchurch, will enable crews to implement controlled ventilation techniques much earlier in an incident and possibly before a fire has been extinguished. This will help to improve conditions within a building, by increasing visibility and reducing temperatures, which in turn will improve firefighter safety as well as assisting those who may be trapped by a fire.
3. Training has also been provided to on-call units based at wholetime stations, to enable the support of tactical ventilation techniques and further phases of training will be delivered to all on-call firefighters from April 2015. This programme will be complemented by the procurement of additional petrol engine driven fans (from existing budgets) so that all front line staff will be equipped with a mechanical tactical ventilation capability upon completion of the training programme.

Water Rescue Incident River Wye

4. The Service recently attended an incident on the River Wye in Herefordshire which is worthy of note, not only because the actions of the crews undoubtedly contributed to saving two lives, but because it is a good example of the type of interagency work that takes place on a daily basis.
5. This incident involved two missing canoeists and was a combined effort led by the Fire and Rescue Service utilising the Service's Firefighters, Water First Responders and Water Rescue Team (boat) specialists. It also involved a boat team from Mid & West Wales FRS, staff from West Mercia Police, West Midlands Search & Rescue (WMSAR) (voluntary) water rescue boat responders, West Midlands Ambulance and their specialist Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) team. The incident involved the combined effort of all these responders and working alongside each other on a river, at night, and in remote and difficult terrain.

6. Whilst operational staff have undergone interagency training this year through a government led program called JESIP (Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Program), it is fair to say that our staff regularly work with many other agencies and deliver a highly skilled level of interagency working of which this incident is an exemplary example - well done to all involved.

Off Road Firefighting and Rescue Provision

7. Bewdley Fire Station hosts an off road firefighting and rescue capability and a similar capability is located at Hereford and Malvern which have in recent years been upgraded to new, lower cost Land Rover 130s. In addition to the Land Rover 130, Malvern has also had a replacement Argocat, which is towed behind the Land Rover on a trailer and used for extreme off road access. The completion of this replacement vehicle programme is now concluding with Bewdley receiving a new Land Rover 130 although a decision has been taken not to replace their Argocat.
8. This replacement programme has seen the cost of all the vehicles significantly reduce with Land Rover 130s offering better value for money with very little change in capability. Additionally the reduction of the Argocat at Bewdley also provides a cost saving not only in the vehicle itself but also significantly reduces the training burden on the retained staff at Bewdley.
9. This replacement programme provides the Service with three Land Rover 130s across both counties and one Argocat based at Malvern. These vehicles, alongside the investment in the latest technology fitted to the vehicles, continues to provide a highly effective off road firefighting and rescue provision through a uniform lower cost fleet and a reduced training burden. These vehicles not only allow firefighters to gain access to and fight fires in rural and remote areas, but also provides vehicular access for rescuing people who become injured or trapped in remote areas where normal vehicles cannot gain access.

UK Fire and Rescue Service wins Big Society award

10. The UK Fire and Rescue Service has won a Big Society award for its ground-breaking work with young people to educate about fire prevention and tackle anti-social behaviour.
11. The award from the Prime Minister recognises a range of initiatives fire and rescue services operate across the country, including the Prince's Trust Team programme, the FireFit programme which encourages participation in sport and cultural activities, and the nationally recognised Fire Cadet (Young Firefighter) scheme, which was started in Cheshire in 1992.
12. The award was presented by Neil O'Connor, CLG Director for Fire, Resilience and Emergencies, to Paul Fuller, President of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), at an event at Essex Fire and Rescue Service HQ on Friday 4 July celebrating the impact of work with children and young people.

13. The Fire Service's education programmes have enabled over 10,000 young people to learn vital safety information and wider life skills. Since 1992, a partnership between The Prince's Trust and the Fire and Rescue Service has re-engaged 2000 unemployed 16-25 year olds, helping them to develop self-esteem and skills for work.
14. Programmes range from primary school visits, teaching children the dangers of fire; to health and wellbeing initiatives, including sports coaching; to interventions aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour by disaffected young people.
15. The Fire Cadet (Young Firefighters) programme, for 12 to 18-year-olds encourages both personal and social development, with the potential to gain nationally-recognised qualifications, take part in residential camps and learn new skills.
16. CFO Paul Fuller, President of the Chief Fire Officers Association, said: "We welcome this award, which recognises the impact that fire and rescue services have made on the lives of children and young people throughout the country. Fire and Rescue Services are committed to their communities – not just to saving lives but to transforming the lives of many young people as well."
17. Phil Garrigan, CFOA Lead Officer on Children and Young People said: "This award recognises the work of so many dedicated fire service colleagues who spend time engaging with young people. Their commitment to putting something back in to the community they serve, is inspiring."

SARA joining the Service at Kidderminster fire station

18. HWFRS has enjoyed a long relationship with a number of specialist Voluntary Water Rescue Organisations as well as all other blue light agencies; this in turn has led to a multi-agency memorandum of understanding across the West Midlands region regarding response to water rescue.
19. In support of the Service's work in this area, Station Commander Bob Sproat (Wyre Forest Cluster) has worked with Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) Wyre Forest over the past 12 months to assist them to promote organisational synergies compatible with H&WFRS's structure. Following recent acts of vandalism at SARA's base in Wyre Forest an opportunity was identified to provide vehicle, equipment and training accommodation for SARA at Kidderminster Fire Station. This work culminated with CFO Mark Yates opening the new facility with SARA Area Commander, Paul Watkins, during the Wyre Forest Open Day held on Saturday 13th September 2014 at Kidderminster Fire Station.
20. This initiative evidences a significant and extremely beneficial partnership arrangement by the Service and is formalised through a "Tenancy at Will" agreement in which SARA has also signed up to adopt the Service's Ethical Framework, Code of Conduct and "Our Strategy" protocols. This activity will undoubtedly lead to increased interoperability and an enhanced capacity to augment the water response arrangements for the improved safety of our crews and communities.

Joint Property Vehicle (JPV)

21. Following Policy and Resources Committee approval to explore the potential of Joint Property Vehicle (JPV), a project has been established to manage a number of workgroups, which include many officers from the Service. The project is governed by a Shadow Shareholder Group (SSG), of which Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates is a member. The Shadow Shareholder Group (SSG) is chaired by Bruce Mann, executive director of the Government Property Unit (GPU) at the Cabinet Office.
22. The ethos of the JPV proposes better use of public sector properties through shared use and the avoidance of duplication of tasks. Significant economies of scale are also predicted through more efficient procurement. This concept is currently being explored by the following public sector partners in the region, Herefordshire Council, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Redditch Borough Council, Warwickshire Police, West Mercia Police, Worcestershire County Council and Worcester City Council. A Full Business Case (FBC) will be brought to partners at the end of 2014 and if approved, could see the creation of a single property unit tasked with overseeing the management of public sector estates in the region. The approach would be the first of its kind anywhere in the UK and would be intended to help protect frontline services while delivering estimated property-related revenue savings between 2015 and 2025.
23. The JPV already has support from a range of Government stakeholders, including GPU and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which provided £150,000 for an initial feasibility study. The JPV partners were also successful in being awarded £400,000 from the Transformational Challenge Fund for 2014-2016 to support the current project design phase.
24. The Full Business Case will be brought before the FRA (anticipated in December) for the Authority to decide upon future membership or not.

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