

## **Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

### **7. 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.***

#### **Medium Term Financial Plan**

2. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the result of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25 November 2015 but we are still awaiting details of the grant settlement from the Department for Communities and Local Government. If there is any additional news in relation to this Authority's grant settlement at the time of this meeting, the Treasurer will update you accordingly.

#### **Police Community Support Officers working as Retained Firefighters**

3. Earlier this year Service officers working with their counterparts in West Mercia Police agreed to develop a joint Police/Fire initiative which would offer Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) the opportunity to become retained (on-call) firefighters in both Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. A joint pilot scheme has since been developed with fourteen initial applicants leading to eight successful PCSO candidates who will start an intensive recruit training course in early 2016; it is hoped that they will be responding to be part of our fire engines crews by April 2016.
4. The candidates have been subject to all the same levels of entry requirements that any other applicant would be required to achieve; however through close working with West Mercia Police (their employer), we have managed to reduce the bureaucracy and speed up the entire process. For example, the candidates have not had to complete an application form as all their personal information has been transferred directly between the two organisations. The PCSOs will now undergo an intensive five week training course, rather than the previous approach of several modules undertaken over a nine month period. Again, this has only been possible, due to the cooperation of West Mercia Police releasing PCSOs from their regular employment for such a lengthy period. The training course will meet the same standards and requirements as any other retained recruits course and will be the first recruits course to be run jointly between Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, something we hope to expand on for future courses.

5. The initial pilot has been developed jointly with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, and the PCSOs have only been sought from Herefordshire and Shropshire at this stage. However, following evaluation of the pilot we hope to extend it into Worcestershire in the near future. Candidates on the pilot scheme are all volunteers and have been drawn from Hereford City, Leominster and parts of Shropshire, but it is hoped that this will again extend to other areas in the future.
6. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service PCSOs will be employed by the Service on a normal retained firefighters contract and will be released for retained duties and training, as and when required, when they are on duty for West Mercia Police. Should the scheme be successful it is hoped that it will lead to further opportunities to jointly develop the community based PCSO and retained firefighter role in the future. It is believed that whilst other fire and rescue services are exploring this area of work, we are the first Service in the UK to introduce a scheme of this kind.

### **Official Opening of Worcester Fire Station**

7. The new Worcester Fire Station was officially opened on Friday 20 November 2015 by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester.
8. After arriving by helicopter in a nearby field, His Royal Highness arrived at the station and was greeted by the Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Lt Col Patrick Holcroft LVO, OBE, who then presented the CFO and the Chairman.
9. The Duke began his visit with a tour of the new facilities, where he met firefighters who talked about their roles and the capabilities of the station. He then went on to view the extensive range of equipment used at the station as well as the new training facilities. The training rig was brought to life as firefighters filled the rig with smoke and carried out an exciting rescue demonstration for the Duke.
10. The demonstrations continued with His Royal Highness seizing the opportunity to ride on the aerial ladder platform.
11. During his visit, the Duke met members of staff from the Community Risk Team, volunteers from the Red Cross and West Midlands Search and Rescue, several members of the YFA and Alex Fuller from Place Partnership Ltd, who explained the build process.
12. The visit concluded with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion.

### **Herefordshire Medals and Awards Ceremony**

13. On Friday 20 November 2015, firefighters from across the county and a member of the service volunteer programme received awards at the annual Herefordshire Medals and Awards Ceremony. The event, which was held at the Town Hall in Hereford, was to honour outstanding service and commitment to the Fire Service.

14. During the ceremony, accolades were presented by the Lord Lieutenant - Lady Darnley, the High Sheriff - Mr Edward Harley Esq, Chairman of the Fire Authority - Mr Derek Prodger MBE and Chief Fire Officer Mark Yates.

### **Project Arrow**

15. Project Arrow continues to make progress and examinations of areas where Hereford & Worcester and Warwickshire Fire Authorities may collaborate to the benefit of both organisations. The Project Arrow Board met on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and following an extensive discussion it was agreed:
  1. To review arrangement for fire controls.
  2. To review operational response arrangements along Worcestershire and Warwickshire borders.
  3. To identify and evaluate the opportunities to harmonise operational support services across the 2 services.
16. It is anticipated that once this work has been completed a report on the proposed outcomes will be brought to the Authority for discussion and any subsequent approvals.

### **White Ribbon Campaign**

17. The White Ribbon Campaign aims to end sexual and domestic violence against women and highlights how widespread violence against women and girls is across the UK.
18. At the launch of the White Ribbon Campaign at the University of Worcester at the end of November, firefighters from White Watch at Worcester Fire Station delivered Christmas presents that HWFRS staff had collected to give to children in refuges, who may be fleeing from situations involving domestic violence.
19. As part of the campaign, the University has organised a high-heel walk (for men!) through Worcester City Centre, where a team from Worcester Fire Station have already signed up.

### **Service Exercise Odin**

20. On Sunday 11 October firefighters, ambulance crews and police officers gathered at the Fire Service College in Gloucestershire for Exercise Odin; a large-scale, multi-agency exercise.
21. Bodies lay strewn across the floor and the injured ran frantically from burning buildings as this year's exercise commenced.
22. The scenario comprised of a firearms incident which led to simultaneous fires involving two large buildings: a hotel complex and a large industrial unit.

23. Approximately 200 staff from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, West Midlands Fire Service, West Mercia Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service took part in the exercise. Police were tasked with securing the scene whilst fire crews later followed to tackle the fires and carry out rescues, as ambulance staff attended to the many casualties.
24. Designed by the three blue light services, the exercise aimed to test and evaluate the response of the emergency services and ultimately improve preparedness for a major incident in one of our city centres.
25. The Fire Service College offers some of the best training facilities in the UK. To train in highly realistic situations ensures that crews are well equipped and prepared to cope with whatever situations they may face.

### **FBU Pension Dispute**

26. The FBU's dispute with the Government over the changes that were implemented in the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015, is continuing. The FBU have issued a series of claims in the Employment Tribunals on behalf of their members against DCLG and all fire & rescue authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland alleging that the pension regulations are in breach of the Equalities Act. In particular, it is alleged that the transitional protection arrangements in the regulations amount to direct discrimination on the grounds of age and indirect discrimination on the grounds of gender and race. The response to the claims is being co-ordinated by the LGA who have appointed solicitors to act on behalf of the fire and rescue authorities.
27. We have now had a letter from the FBU indicating that they do not expect the legal proceedings to be concluded until early 2017 and confirming that no further strike action will be called in relation to the existing trade dispute on pensions before June 2017.

### **Performance Snapshot for staff**

28. Performance Snapshot has been designed for staff to give a high level overview of some of the Service's key performance indicators, predominantly indicators that reflect the activities of our front-line staff. It is produced quarterly and shows the fantastic achievements our staff have accomplished during the year. An example is attached at Appendix 1.

### **Contact Officer**

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