

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.
2. To propose that in future Members are provided with more timely and appropriate Service information and that the details provided in this report are instead provided via the Members' Bulletin and enhanced notification of any significant operational matters.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that:

- i) The report be noted; and*
- ii) In order to ensure that Members receive more timely and appropriate service information in future, the details normally contained in this report are provided instead via the Members' Bulletin and enhanced notification of any significant operational matters.*

Items of Interest

Public Access Defibrillators

3. Early access to immediate care including the use of a defibrillator is recognised as a key component in saving someone's life in the event of heart failure and the early intervention of a trained operator can often mean the difference between life and death. The Service currently has defibrillators at all its locations for our staff to access and use as required. However, local Commanders in North Herefordshire have now pioneered a new initiative jointly with the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) and local Parish Councils to provide public access to defibrillators on the exterior of some of our fire stations and other local landmarks.
4. WMAS will train volunteers within the community who will be able to access and use these defibrillators in the event of a life threatening heart condition or accident in their community, prior to the arrival of an ambulance. The equipment will be maintained by WMAS and regularly checked and monitored by Fire and Rescue Service staff within these communities. Currently this initiative is progressing well in Kingsland (to be located at a local garage central to the village) and at Eardisley fire station. Other parish councils in Kington and Leominster are currently evaluating this initiative for their communities and it is hoped that if successful this model may be extended to other parts of both counties.

Police and Crime Commissioner's Grant

5. The Community Safety Department is launching a pilot scheme called Ignite at the Brookfield School in Hereford for four days from 19 to 22 October 2013 which is targeted towards involving 8 to 10 youths aged 12 to 16 years. The 4 day pilot scheme will develop skills, knowledge and understanding in citizenship as well as addressing key learning elements such as the understanding of how to reduce and prevent fires, fire injuries and the impact of arson and hoax calls. This pilot scheme has been part funded by a Police and Crime Commissioners grant of £4,250.
6. The establishment of this scheme will enable the Service to draw on members from disadvantaged areas of the community where engagement is difficult. The aim of the scheme is to complete one module of the Asdan Course giving the individuals the opportunity of achieving one credit through the provision of practical and theoretical aspects.

Current Position

7. Prior to the establishment of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority in 1998, Fire Service related matters were dealt with by Hereford and Worcester Council's Fire and Public Protection Committee. The Fire and Public Protection Committee received quarterly reports from the Chief Fire Officer, the County Trading Standards and Scientific Services Officer and the County Emergency Planning Officer. These quarterly reports apprised Members of the performance of these services in addition to any other items of interest or incidents of note.
8. Following the reorganisation of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Councils and the establishment of the Combined Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officer continued to provide a service report to each full Authority meeting. The Service Report has provided an opportunity for Members to be updated on performance, items of interest or incidents of note but over recent years we have created more timely mechanisms to provide this information. In addition, our governance processes and Committee system have developed significantly since the inception of the Fire Authority, providing Members with much more detailed information on areas such as performance and providing further opportunities for Members to hold Officers to account.
9. All Members have the right to access such information as is necessary for them to carry out their role and are able to request items for consideration at meetings if they so wish.
10. We currently find ourselves in the position of duplicating information, time and effort to provide the Authority with its Service Report. As resources get tighter the time and effort would be better used to further develop our information sharing mechanism for Members to ensure timely and relevant information is provided.

Future Information to Members

11. It is important that the Service continues to provide relevant information to Authority Members to support them in carrying out their roles effectively. The Service Report item has, for some years provided Authority Members with information in terms of service performance.
12. Changes to the Committee system now mean that the Policy & Resources Committee has a specific role in monitoring the performance of the Service against key performance indicators and holding Officers to account. Therefore, the performance information is no longer provided in the Service Report as it is published in the public domain as part of the Committee papers on a quarterly basis. All Members are provided with email notification when Committee papers are published and receive a web-link to view papers on line.

Operational Incidents

13. Authority Group Leaders are provided with information on a daily basis via email regarding incidents that have occurred in relation to fires, road traffic collisions and other significant operational incidents. This Daily Briefing provides Group Leaders with a regular overview of incidents.
14. In addition, the Chief Fire Officer and/or Deputy Chief Fire Officer will arrange for a verbal briefing for the Chairman of the Authority with regards to significant incidents. It is not possible to be exact as to what constitutes a significant incident but may include:
 - a) A Regional or National Emergency requiring Silver or Gold Command;
 - b) An incident involving 8 or more pumps at any one time (potentially less if incident is significant for other reasons);
 - c) Fire fatality; and
 - d) Any other incident that may be considered to be of interest.
15. Following the necessary briefings, all Members will usually receive communication by email with regards to significant operational incidents to ensure information is shared.

Key Developments and Activities

16. Information on key developments, such as the recent strike ballot is provided to all Members by email as issues arise, providing a timely update and an opportunity for Members to respond should they have any questions or further comment. The Monthly Members' E-Bulletin also provides regular information on key activities and updates on significant incidents and events.
17. In addition, Member workshops and development events are held to keep Members updated and provide an opportunity to question Officers on particular matters.

Conclusion

18. Over recent years, mechanisms have been developed to help to provide Members with more information and in a more timely manner. Due to these developments the Service Report has become a duplication of information already provided to Members and has tied up resources that could be used to further develop information sharing for Members. It is therefore recommended that details provided in this report are provided instead via the Members' Bulletin and enhanced notification of any significant operational matters.

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