

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

15. 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.

Annual Young Firefighters Association Passing Out Parade 2014

2. A group of nineteen teenage boys and girls celebrated the completion of a 13-week Young Firefighters Association (YFA) training course with practical firefighting demonstrations and a parade ceremony at Droitwich Fire Station on Saturday 10 May 2014.
3. The group, which included eight Young Firefighters (YFFs) from the Droitwich branch of the YFA and eleven from the Redditch branch, performed in front of a crowd of 150 local dignitaries, including Councillors Anne Hingley, Lynne Duffy, and Pam Davey, the Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officer and of course proud family members. The audience was treated to a demonstration of the newly acquired skills of the Young Firefighters being put into practice during the various fire service drills, which were undertaken with great enthusiasm and discipline by all. These included hose running drills, ladder pitching and climbing, tackling a simulated car fire and culminated in the grand finale - a house fire rescue demonstration. The pass out parade enabled the newly qualified YFFs to proudly wear gold fire kit for the first time, having successfully completed their basic training.
4. The ceremony concluded with Councillor Anne Hingley (Chair of the YFA Executive Committee) and the Chief Fire Officer inspecting the parading Young Firefighters. Each Young Firefighter was presented with a Certificate of Achievement and awards were also presented to the Most Improved and Highest Achiever from each branch of the YFA.
5. Congratulations to all the Young Firefighters who worked hard to pass their training course and who will now progress to learn enhanced skills. Thanks and congratulations also to the YFA Instructors, who give their own time to train and support the young people throughout the year.

Responding to Industrial Action

6. In July and November 2013, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) balloted for industrial action in a dispute with the Government over pensions. There were two ballots held. The first ballot involved operational staff not including Fire Control and was for strike action. The second ballot was for Action Short of Strike (ASOS) and included all operational staff including Fire Control staff. Both ballots were successful.
7. To date there have been twelve periods of strike action, for varying periods of time up to twelve hours, and two periods of ASOS to date. Although the majority of wholetime firefighters took strike action, the majority of officers and retained firefighters were working as normal. A maximum of 51 wholetime firefighters and 48 retained firefighters were on strike during any one strike period.
8. The Service's contingency arrangements for industrial action are overseen by the DCFO through the Industrial Action Management Group (IAMG). Contingency arrangements have been successfully implemented and continue to provide a robust plan during all periods of strike action. Fire appliances are crewed through a mixture of firefighters who are non-union members and those who have decided to work normally. In addition, the majority of standalone retained stations have continued to work normally.
9. Detailed mapping has taken place and a dynamic crewing plan devised providing cover across the Two Counties. This involved using up to six alternative locations, including Territorial Army Centres and West Mercia Police Headquarters. Alternative locations were used to avoid staff working normally and volunteers crossing picket lines. A primary crewed appliance was based at each alternative location providing a minimum of three primary crewed appliances, crewed by a mixture of volunteers, day staff and those working normally (in addition to retained appliances available). The highest number of appliances available during a period of strike action was 35 out of a total of 43, with the average number of appliances available being 26.
10. The financial cost of providing fire cover during strike action is approximately £41,000 to date. This includes the cost of one-off preparatory costs and the cost of paying volunteers less pay deductions for striking employees plus the cost of the alternative locations providing catering and radio campaigns. In addition, there are also the costs of those staff attending IAMG and engaged in pre-planning for each period of strike action, which has accumulated approximately £80,000 of opportunity costs.

Regional Competition Win

11. On 26 April 2014 the current H&WFRS Road Traffic Collision Extrication Team, comprising personnel from Ross on Wye and Hereford, attended the United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO) regional competition in Hampshire, to further their preparations for this year's Service competition and, if successful, the National UKRO competition in Essex in August.

12. The regional event at Hampshire HQ this year included 17 teams from across the country including the current national and world champions, as well as international teams from Luxembourg and Germany. The team competed in a 20 minute scenario which involved one casualty. The team felt that they had performed well but none of them expected to achieve the results that they did - 1st in all three relevant categories of Incident Command, Medical and Technical skills. This placed the team as overall winners, a proud moment for them.
13. However, this wasn't the team's only performance on the day – whilst travelling to the event through Gloucestershire the team came across an overturned vehicle in the road with a female casualty inside. On discovering the incident, and whilst awaiting the arrival of local responders, the team utilised the service vehicles to protect the scene fending off to make the area safe and utilised the basic 'competition' kit that they had with them to undertake stabilisation, glass management and access the casualty to stabilise and assess her. On the arrival of all three local emergency services the team dutifully handed over, made up their equipment and continued on their way to the competition!
14. Ross and Hereford will now go on to compete in this year's Service competition to be held in June.

Sporting and Fitness Achievements

15. As Members will be aware the Service has a multitude of sports men and women who compete within fire service circles and also on the wider national scene. Recently a number of Service staff have achieved success in their particular field but the ones highlighted below can be considered to be of elite standard and to have excelled.
16. Crew Commander Stephen King (Hereford) has won the recent Quadrathlon World Championships held in the UK for the first time and is therefore a "World Champion". The quadrathlon is an endurance event encompassing swimming, kayaking, cycling and running. Stephen has been competing in this event for a number of years and has now developed a very high reputation across the world of quadrathlon.
17. Crew Commander Paul Bailey (Kidderminster) has been selected to represent the Great Britain Triathlon team in his relevant veteran age group. Paul is another elite endurance athlete and is now to wear the colours of Great Britain for the first time.
18. Firefighter Phil Blacker (Kidderminster) has retained his Fire Service Sports and Athletics Association Mountain Bike National Series Event title whilst competing in Cannock Chase recently. This Service also took second place with Watch Commander Keith Peters (Worcester) coming a close second to Phil in this veteran category.
19. Lastly I can report that Firefighter Dave Fenton (Kidderminster) recently complete the Lanzarote Ironman Triathlon in a time of 12 hours 21 minutes and 37 seconds.

20. The above staff are amongst the elite athletes of the Service but many other staff compete successfully in sporting events on a weekly basis demonstrating the fitness and well-being attitudes and initiatives across the Service.

Property Update

New Bromsgrove Fire Station

21. In April 2014, Firefighters from Bromsgrove Fire Station together with the Police moved into their new purpose built station on Slideslow Drive, Bromsgrove.
22. The station is the first project delivered under the Worcestershire Capital Asset Pathfinder initiative, which looks at how a partnership approach to public services (for example combining police and fire and rescue services in one location) can lead to better local services, increased value for money and efficiencies through shared services. The project has been funded by the Police, with the Fire Service committed to a 25 year tenancy agreement

Refurbished Malvern Fire Station

23. Work is nearing completion on the major refurbishment of the station, which will have eliminated all the issues arising from the previous design and construction.
24. Fire crews are scheduled to return to responding from the station in early July.

New Worcester Fire Station

25. On Wednesday 7 May 2014 the Chairman and Councillor Udall, along with the Chief Fire Officer and Jonathan Green, development surveyor of St Modwen, attended the Sod Cutting ceremony to enable work to begin on Worcester's new fire station at its Great Western Business Park in Worcester.
26. The 20,000 sq. ft. bespoke facility will provide modern, low carbon accommodation utilising micro combined heat and power (CHP) and photovoltaic power generation. It will boast high quality training facilities as well as space for the Young Firefighters, to encourage the next generation of firefighters.
27. Construction is due to complete in January 2015, enabling the Fire Service to relocate from its existing base at Copenhagen Street in the city.

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