



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (WOKING)

LOCAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON SURREY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE'S ACTIVITIES IN WOKING 23rd June 2008

KEY ISSUE

This report outlines the major strands of activity being undertaken within Woking by the Fire Service team based at Woking Fire Station.

SUMMARY

The report contains information on the various activities undertaken by the Borough Team to reduce the risk from fire and road traffic collision injuries to the residents of Woking, including direct contact public education programs and campaigns.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Woking) is asked to agree that:

- (i) **Although this report is for information only, we recommend that the Committee recognises the achievements of the Fire and Rescue teams of the Woking Borough and support their commitment to embrace new initiatives, to reduce risk and make Woking safer.**

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Woking continues to be one of the safest Boroughs in the County. The figures below show areas of Fire Service activity and relate to the reporting year 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008. The comparisons are based on Service statistics compared with the previous years total.

- 1.1 The Service attended 314 calls to all fires. This represents a reduction of approximately 17%.
- 1.2 Fires in non domestic premises decreased from 26 to 21. This represents a decrease of 19%.
- 1.3 Malicious false alarms attended decreased from 42 to 34. This represents a reduction of 19%.
- 1.4 False alarms from Automatic Fire Detection systems reduced to 242 from 322. This represents a reduction of approximately 25% which reflects the position across the Service. Since the introduction of the AFD policy the Service has seen a significant reduction in the number of AFDs (approximately 40% reduction across the Service).
- 1.5 The number of accidental fires in dwellings increased from 49 to 60. This represents an increase of 23%. The Service is currently undertaking a data quality check on the number of accidental dwelling fires. This figure is only a provisional end of year figure.
- 1.6 Deliberate fires in vehicles were reduced from 29 to 19 incidents. This represents a decrease of 34%.
- 1.7 Deliberate fires have increased from 91 to 95. This represents an increase of 4%.

To summarise, the overall number of calls to fires attended has reduced along with AFDs, malicious false alarms and deliberate vehicle fires. There has been an increase in the number of accidental dwelling fires and the number of deliberate fires (excluding vehicles).

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 The Service's award-winning Safe Drive Stay Alive event continues to be an unqualified success. Aimed at young drivers and those who are about to begin learning to drive, the event is a staged production held at Dorking Halls and has so far reached some 28,000 school pupils, college students and young drivers in the county. Using real-life victims of RTCs, the production carried a high satisfaction level - almost 100% of all attendees say they will be a safer driver as the result of attending the event. The Service is now seeking to build on this success, expanding the SDSA format to bring variants to each individual borough, as well as re-

recording and updating the production material used at the event. This is subject to a separate funding request to the committee, detailed in the appropriate Allocation request form.

In the last year 41 people were killed or seriously injured in RTC incidents in the Borough of Woking, and the expansion of Safe Drive will be aimed at reducing this local figure. RTC levels are also detailed in the Funding Request Form.

- 2.2 To complement this we will carry out 4 LIFECUT Days (Young Driver Education) with vulnerable youth groups, aimed at groups not currently targeted by Safe Drive Stay Alive. This initiative was pioneered at Woking Fire Station and gives young people, who are most likely to display dangerous driving habits, hands on experience of the road traffic collision rescue techniques used by the fire service. It is aimed to show them the consequences of poor driving. Talks are now in progress through Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings to use this initiative in partnership with the police to offer to groups as a forum to investigate alternatives to perceived anti social behaviour.
- 2.3 Where appropriate at public events provide practical demonstrations and educational packages to other groups in the community on the impacts of Road Traffic Collisions, in conjunction with our partners and targeted through the Joint Action Group.
- 2.4 Working with Sheerwater Youth Centre a Graffiti Board was created highlighting the dangers of distractions during driving. It is now displayed at the rear entrance of Woking Fire station this initiative continues to develop and grow with assistance from the local youth development workers.

3 Schools' education programme

- 3.1 This is an ongoing programme of fire safety education for schoolchildren with classroom-based input in years 2, 5, and 8. In year 6 additional input comes in the form of the Junior Citizens scheme which is a two-week, multi-agency event.

4 Firewise scheme

- 4.1 This scheme is aimed at young people who have displayed an unhealthy interest in fire which has led, or could lead, to deliberate fire setting. It has been running for many years with great success. In the year to end of March 2008 the Borough of Woking had 3 referrals from schools and parents, this is a fall on the 2007 figure. We continue to adapt and improve the scheme to ensure we engage with schools parents and relevant partners, to ensure we are targeting and focused on the most needy and vulnerable of the borough.

5 Firefighter for a day and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

- 5.1 This initiative consists of a day structured around raising the awareness of risks and implications of fire. Practical scenarios are included allowing the students to have hands on experience of firefighting skills. To the year end of March 2008 we conducted 9 sessions. Over the next year we intend to improve on this figure and adapt and move forward with lessons learnt from the previous years schemes.

6 Wildfire

- 6.1 The Service continues to work in close partnership with land managers throughout the county, with the objective of promoting prevention and intervention assistance in dealing with wildfires.
- 6.2 In addition to the schools program, a presentation has now been developed solely aimed at reducing wildfires. The intention is for operational crews to deliver the presentation to school assemblies from year 8 pupils onwards.
- 6.3 Work is nearly complete in compiling risk information on the area's vulnerable to Wildfire incidents. Comprehensive fire plans have been created and made available to operational crews via the mobile data platform carried on all front line appliances.
- 6.4 The Service is currently reviewing the provision of off-road vehicles with the aim to improve the provision of fire fighting equipment for dealing with wildfires. 4 purpose built off road vehicles (Unimog) have been purchased by the service to enhance our wildfire capability, in conjunction with the services wildfire strategy, one Unimog will be based at Woking, they aim to be in service in June 08 onwards.

7 Domestic Fires

- 7.1 Borough personnel continue to work alongside existing partners in generating Home Fire Risk Checks (HFRC's) and fitting smoke alarms where required. In addition, the groundbreaking partnership formed with Help the Aged who have established an office at Woking Fire Station continue to evolve and develop. Following training of volunteers by Woking Firefighters Age Concern organise volunteers to carry out HFRC's amongst the elderly. The Woking Fire crews carried out 460 Home Fire Risk Checks in the Borough during the year and fitted in excess of 400 smoke alarms.
- 7.2 A new initiative to carry out HFRC's using alternative languages has been pioneered by a firefighter from Woking. These are now being successfully offered and carried out among the local community. To date over 100 HFRC's has been carried out in the borough to parts of the community to which English is a second language.

8 Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA's)

- 8.1 New initiatives recently introduced by the Service are aimed at reducing the number of unwanted fire alarm signals. These measures include top offenders being issued with letters reinforcing recent changes to legislation and their responsibilities.
- 8.2 As of January 1, 2008, the Service introduced a Call Challenge system when dealing with AFAs at commercial premises, to gather additional information to ensure the appropriate response is sent. The service had traditionally provided an emergency response (generally one appliance) to all fire alarms from all businesses in the county. However, for every 200 responses the service sends out, only one results in any fire being put out by our staff – the vast majority are false alarms. Furthermore there are occasions when this automatic response - one appliance from the nearest location – is not adequate and there is subsequently a delay while additional appliances are mobilised for genuine fires. These statistics left us in no doubt that the previous procedure is detrimental to both the businesses we work with and to life-critical incidents elsewhere in the county. The changes are aimed at providing a more appropriate response to business alarms, while minimising the risk associated with attending non-emergency alarms which prevent fire crews from attending other incidents. This has led to reduction of 40% in the number of false alarms attended at commercial premises.
- 8.3 Red Watch at Woking Fire Station have been given the task of developing a strategy for the effective reduction of malicious AFA's and calls and also to coordinate the station on effective reduction initiatives. Over the past year effective inroads have been made into enforcement and education initiatives around AFA's.

9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The Service will consult with Members, Partners and key stakeholders to ensure the community safety initiatives in Woking continue to target priority areas and contribute to our aim of making Surrey safer. Additionally, there may be issues not covered within this report that Members may wish to discuss further. Further information may be attained from the Woking Borough Manager Chris Webb on 01483 772539

10 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Service is now seeking to build on this success, expanding the SDSA format to bring variants to each individual borough, as well as re-recording and updating the production material used at the event. This is subject to a separate funding request to the committee, detailed in the appropriate Allocation request form.
- 10.2 All other initiatives are carried out within existing budgets of Surrey Fire and Rescue with no additional funding being sought at this time.

11 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 All initiatives are evaluated against Surrey Fire and Rescue Services Equality and Diversity Strategy. Consultation has taken place with Age Concern, the Police, local youth and community groups.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 All activities and recommendations in this report improve community safety, and are discussed at the Joint action Group and local safety committee.

13 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The report contains information on the various activities undertaken by the Borough Team to reduce the risk from fire and road traffic collision injuries to the residents of Woking, including direct contact, public education programs and campaigns.

14 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 The recommendations best deliver the Borough Plan as part of Surrey Fire and Rescues' Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to reduce the risk from fire and road traffic collision injuries to the residents in the Borough of Woking

15 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 15.1 Performance measured against the Woking Borough Plan will be made available on the services website.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	IRMP, Woking Borough Plan, SFRS Website.

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