



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (WOKING)

REPORT ON SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE'S ACTIVITIES IN WOKING

8 JULY 2009

KEY ISSUE

This report details the community safety work Woking Fire Station has delivered over the last 12 months to ensure we achieve the Service's vision of being 'a modern, efficient, fire and rescue service that continuously improves the safety of the community'.

We recognise that we cannot achieve this vision working alone and so this plan details how we have worked with our partners to deliver the necessary education, prevention and protection activities.

SUMMARY

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service recognises that in order to achieve our strategic aims and objectives, we must have a risk managed and diverse approach, tailored to local needs, that is affordable and provides value for money. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service therefore works out of three geographical 'areas' that are aligned with both the local authority and Police boundaries, each with an area manager and management team based at a community fire station within the area boundary.

The Woking Borough Plan supports both the principal aim of the Service of achieving safer communities and the Service's '2020 Vision' which between now and 2020 will:

- Deliver an improved and more equitable level of service to a greater number of people who live, work or visit Surrey
- Maintain, and where possible improve, community safety through targeted prevention and protection work
- Improve the Service's operational response capability and resilience to deal with all types of emergency incident, particularly large-scale, complex or long-duration incidents
- Improve the safety, training and flexibility for the people who work for the Service on behalf of Surrey

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information only

- (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 a safer community.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. 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 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.
- 1.2. The Service attended 285 calls to all fires. This represents a reduction of approximately 12%.
- 1.3. Fires in non domestic premises have continued to decrease over the past 12 months by 12%.
- 1.4. Malicious false alarms attended decreased by 11% assisted by informing and educating businesses throughout the borough.
- 1.5. False alarms from Automatic Fire Detection systems reduced by an additional 20% 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).
- 1.6. The number of accidental fires in dwellings decreased by 23% which indicates that targeting Borough hotspots and problem areas has resulted in a significant fall compared to last year's results.
- 1.7. Deliberate fires in vehicles were reduced by 34%.
- 1.8. Deliberate fires have decreased over the past year by 4%.
- 1.9. To summarise, the overall number of calls to fires attended has reduced along with AFDs, malicious false alarms and deliberate vehicle fires. Woking continues to identify and target problem locations or incident types in conjunction with our community partners, which has yielded significant reductions over the past year.

2 ANALYSIS

Safe Drive, Stay Alive

- 2.1 'Safe Drive, Stay Alive' is a stage show aimed at raising awareness of the risks and dangers associated with driving among vulnerable groups of young people aged 15-25.
- 2.2 The show is based around a video reconstruction of a Road Traffic Collision (RTC). The video traces the events leading up to the collision and then follows the actions of the emergency services dealing with the incident.
- 2.3 At appropriate moments the video is halted whilst serving professionals from the Police, Ambulance Service, Fire and Rescue

Service, and A & E speak of their own experiences at the scene and after the collision. Perhaps the most poignant testimonies come from the parent of a young person who lost his life in a collision and also from a person disabled by the actions of a young driver.

- 2.4 Woking Fire Station actively participates in this event and has a structured campaign to ensure all mainstream schools attend the presentation.
- 2.5 Initiated in Surrey in March 2006, and repeated in November 2006, 2007 and 2008, over 37,000 people have now seen a performance of 'Safe Drive, Stay Alive', including over 11,500 in 2008.
- 2.6 To complement this we carried out 12 LIFECUT Days (Young Driver Education) with vulnerable youth groups, aimed at groups not currently targeted by Safe Drive Stay Alive.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 Where appropriate at public events provide practical demonstrations and educational packages to other groups in the community on the impacts of RTCs, in conjunction with our partners and targeted through the Joint Action Group.

Community Fire Station Visits

- 2.10 We aim to make our stations as accessible to the community as possible. A part of the work carried out by our operational crews will be to facilitate visits to the station by both adult and youth groups to teach them about the hazards of fire and show them the full extent of the job of a modern day firefighter. Some examples of the type of education provided by our firefighters include:
- 2.11 Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme - The Service Delivery Education Team produced a set of resources for station personnel to deliver the Service section of the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award course. Delivery resources have been produced in hard copy versions and electronically on the Intranet. Each of the 10 sessions include classroom based input and a practical session. The course was piloted at Woking fire station in 2005 and courses are now being delivered in most of the Surrey boroughs/districts.

- 2.12 Badge Schemes – Scouts/Guides - The Service Delivery Education Team has developed a new set of resources for Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownie groups. The Scouts package was piloted at Reigate and Chertsey fire stations and is now available to all stations to delivery to local Scouts and Guides groups. Last year we carried out a 13 week program with local groups which proved a great success.
- 2.13 Station Open Days – Each station or borough aims to hold an annual ‘Open Day’ in liaison with partners. A range of educational activities are provided along with attractions and displays of the type of operational work that we undertake. Last year the open day was focused around road safety.

Joint Training Initiatives with Partners

- 2.14 We will train jointly with our partners where appropriate to ensure that we have a coordinated and professional response to a wide range of incidents. Joint training will increase our crews’ competencies and enhance the skills of the teams responding to emergencies.

Business Arson Reduction

- 2.15 Arson is the single most common cause of fire in business premises and the majority of arson attacks are due to opportunist vandalism.
- 2.16 The owner or employer in every workplace has a legal responsibility under the Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) Order 2005 for carrying out a fire risk assessment. This includes identifying the risk of arson and acting to reduce it as highlighted within this assessment.
- 2.17 Our crews will carry out a variety of risk reduction activities to ensure that businesses are not affected by arson attacks. These activities include the removal of refuse in partnership with the local authorities, contacting businesses and offering advice and making businesses extra alert during peak times such as the busy Christmas period.

Derelict Property

- 2.18 Derelict or unoccupied buildings cause the Fire Service and the community a number of problems. They can become a centre of anti-social behaviour that can expand out into other parts of the community.
- 2.19 This may lead to an increase in arson with the result that the derelict or unoccupied building becomes involved in a deliberate fire.
- 2.20 Secondly the safety of our fire crews is put at risk when attending fires in these buildings.

- 2.21 Working closely with the Local Authority and private landlords, operational personnel will ensure that not only those buildings that are derelict, but also those that are in danger of becoming derelict or abandoned, are identified and boarded up.
- 2.22 Over the past few months we have had issues with the following properties,
- 51-55 Maybury Road, Woking
 - Janoway Hill, Woking
- 2.23 Without concerted joint action with our partners, we would have had the on going issue of arson events, and the potential of accidents and injuries to the public and our firefighters.

Schools Arson Reduction

- 2.24 School buildings are at high risk, of being attacked by arsonists. The 'School Fire Watch' scheme encourages arson champions in schools who are identified by a prefect style Fire Watch badge.
- 2.25 Following training by local firefighters, these pupils volunteer to take on the role and are charged with completing a monthly checklist to uncover potential arson hotspots on the school premises. The inspection covers areas such as waste management, perimeter fencing security, notification of incidents of graffiti or vandalism and general signs of arson.
- 2.26 The checklist is then presented to the Head of School or other responsible person, to the School governors and to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, for action as required.

Firefighter for a day and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

- 2.27 This initiative consists of a day structured around raising the awareness of risks and implications of fire.
- 2.28 Practical scenarios are included allowing the students to have hands on experience of firefighting skills.
- 2.29 To the year end of March 2009 we conducted 12 sessions. Over the next year we intend to improve on this figure and adapt and move forward with lessons learnt from the previous year's schemes.
- 2.30 We also intend to target not just the young people in danger of committing anti social behaviour, but ensuring we engage with a broad cross section of the local community to ensure a fair and ethical approach.

Wildfire

- 2.31 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.
- 2.32 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 on the run up to the school summer holidays .
- 2.33 Work is now 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 which will greatly assist use to minimise the damage and disruption caused by this type of incident across the Borough.
- 2.34 The Service is 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 from July 09 onwards.

During Performance Inspections

- 2.35 Joint inspections enable the Fire Service to engage with Partner agencies to deliver safer communities by maximising the use of resources to deliver a focused risk based inspection programme. By sharing information enforcing authorities deliver value for money and a cohesive inspection regime to ensure that replication of inspections are minimised and safety objectives are achieved that are proportionate to the risks within the business.
- 2.36 Joint inspections allow the enforcing authorities to see first hand how the business is operating against any licences that may be in force and to take a joint approach to any subsequent action that may be required.
- 2.37 Equally the inspections provide reassurance to both businesses and members of the public that safety comes first.

Operational Information Gathering

- 2.38 The wide range of building types, their occupants and the process risks within premises can all impact on how the Fire Service manages incidents.
- 2.39 Premises determined as high risk will be surveyed to capture key information to better inform the Incident Commander and where appropriate, to pre-plan for incidents.
- 2.40 By working in partnership with the various business sectors the Fire Service will be able to offer advice on fire safety matters and work with businesses in order to limit the risk and effect of an incident. The information captured will be displayed in the fire engine cab via a tough book laptop.
- 2.41 Information displayed will include process risks, premises hazards and Computer Aided Design (CAD) plans, all of which will enable the first attendance to pre-plan en-route and to undertake an effective initial deployment.
- 2.42 In 2008 the Service extended its data gathering process to include high-rise buildings and extensive data gathering has been completed across the commons in Surrey to support the Wildfire strategy.

Partnership Referral Schemes

- 2.43 Surrey Fire and Rescue Service will work in partnership whenever possible to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of the people of Surrey.
- 2.44 We will enter into referral partnerships whereby all suitably trained personnel can identify, through listening to a member of the public or through what they observe that a referral to a partner agency may be required.

Positive Action Days

- 2.45 Positive Action Days are run to allow people who are under-represented or who have been disadvantaged in their access to the Fire Service in the past allowing everyone to equal opportunity on a level playing field.
- 2.46 The Positive Action Days can open up opportunities to a wider diversity of people and bring about real and lasting change to the Service's employment profile. It is only with these changes that the Service will be able to provide a fair and equitable level of service to the whole community.

- 2.47 Positive Action Days are run a reasonable time before a recruitment campaign and stations holding these days will work with the Service to ensure that they are planned in appropriately. Woking fire station intends to run a campaign in September 09.

Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA's)

- 2.48 New initiatives 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.
- 2.49 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.
- 2.50 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.
- 2.51 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.
- 2.52 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.
- 2.53 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.
- 2.54 This has led to reduction of 40% in the number of false alarms attended at commercial premises.
- 2.55 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.

3 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

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.

All other initiatives are carried out within existing budgets of Surrey Fire and Rescue with no additional funding being sought at this time.

4 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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. Also all activities are required to meet the services equality impact assessment criteria.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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 a safer community.

6 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations best deliver the Woking 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

7 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The fire service sends out questionnaires to selected members of the local community who are asked to take part in focus groups or citizens panels. These are groups of around 8-12 people that discuss a particular service issue for between 1-2 hours with the help of a skilled facilitator.

This can be a general discussion about our policies/procedures but can also be used when an in depth discussion or feedback is required on a specific issue or proposal. The Service will be looking for around 15/20 people in each borough.

It is envisaged that there would be 3 borough meetings each year but with additional meetings in specific boroughs when required. Not everyone would be expected to attend each one – the aim is to have a database of people, some of whom would be available, to participate when needed.

This is to ensure that the service and borough teams are focusing and listening to the needs and issues of the local community, and where necessary adjusting or tailoring our activities to meet these emerging requirements.

LEAD OFFICER: Alan Clark, West Area Manager
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01737 242444
E-MAIL: Alan.Clarke@surreycc.gov.uk
CONTACT OFFICER: Chris Webb, Borough Manager
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01737 242444
E-MAIL: Chris.webb@surreycc.gov.uk
BACKGROUND PAPERS: Surrey Fire & Rescue IRMP, Woking Borough Plan, SFRS website

Version No. 2 Date: 19.06.09 Time:13:19 Initials:AC No of annexes: 0