



## **Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority**

### **2016/17 Annual Report to Worcestershire County Council**

#### **Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

1. Councillor R J Phillips, from Herefordshire Council, was elected as Chairman of the Authority and Councillor P Tuthill, from Worcestershire County Council, was elected as Vice-Chairman.

#### **Launch of our new vision: Saving More Lives**

2. Saving More Lives is our overarching vision for the future direction of our Service. It guides everything we want to achieve as a vital and trusted organisation working for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Ultimately, Saving More Lives is about improving the lives of everyone in the community, building on our success and securing our future as a Service that makes even more of a difference every day.

#### **Preventing harm and promoting wellbeing**

3. Each quarter we report to the Fire Authority on incidents throughout the year to highlight trends and patterns of risk. This helps to identify any particular trends that might need priority attention. For example, increasing our work with commercial property owners to tackle a rise in false alarm calls, and planning seasonal safety campaigns, such as the dangers of causing fires in the open and swimming in open water during the summer months. At a more strategic level, the Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 (CRMP) explained how we use incident data, research and risk modelling to help us prioritise our activities and balance our resources, and the strategic risk data in the plan will be reviewed and updated in 2017-18.
4. Many of our prevention and protection activities are well known throughout our communities, from carrying out Home Fire Safety Checks and fitting smoke alarms to providing advice on fire safety precautions to local employers, and helping people to be prepared in the event of emergencies such as flooding.
5. Working with key partners such as West Mercia Police helps to identify mutually beneficial community safety initiatives and reinforces the impact of our safety work in the community. During the 2016/17 year, Community Risk officers have worked alongside partners in the Wyre Forest Police Harm Hub, and, in Hereford, the Community Risk and District Command Teams relocated to the city's Police Station.
6. Being visible and accessible is also an important part of supporting our communities. A good example during the year was the launch of a Positive Role Model Initiative in partnership with Bromsgrove & Redditch Borough Council's Connecting Families team and the University of Worcester to pilot a mentoring project for vulnerable young people in Redditch. In addition, the Positive Role Model scheme is becoming known amongst schools in the local

area, which are recognising the potential for the Service to provide additional support in helping to avert the need to exclude pupils at risk.

7. As part of the Service's suite of community safety initiatives the Dying 2 Drive events were run at Worcester Fire Station from 25th – 29th September 2017 and at Bromsgrove Fire Station from 2nd – 6th October 2017. The multi-agency road safety scheme aimed at reducing death and serious injury amongst young road users is a free multi-agency road safety scheme aimed at reducing death and serious injury amongst young road users across the two counties.
8. The events commenced with a hard hitting road traffic collision reconstruction, involving all of the emergency services and live casualties. The reconstructions were closely followed by interactive workshops where the consequences of bad decisions were explored. The attendance of some Worcestershire schools at these events has been supported by some County Councillors who have donated divisional funds to help with school transport to the events.
9. In March 2016, the Authority gave approval for the funding of a twelve month project to target unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the residential accommodation above commercial premises to expose potential fire safety issues which could put tenants at risk.
10. The project initially focussed on St Johns (Worcester), Evesham, Droitwich and Kington (Herefordshire). Business Fire Safety Checks (BFSCs) carried out at premises in these areas revealed that the main fire safety risk concerned the means of escape from residential accommodation into business areas. Other concerns included inadequate fire detection and warning systems, and excessive fire loading (for example the storage of retail stock in escape routes).
11. In the first 6 months of the project, 32% of BFSCs resulted in enforcement and 112 residents were living in safer conditions where the risk of harm or injury from fire has been considerably reduced.

### **Reviewing our response model**

12. We keep this under constant review to make sure our response services maintain a careful balance against changing risks and needs in our communities and against reducing levels of available funding. In 2016-17 we attended 6,749 incidents in 2016-17. This was 290 incidents more than last year, an increase of 4.5 per cent. Although we expect fluctuations in the numbers up and down from year to year, we continue to analyse the underlying causes, with the aim of improving the performance of our response services and targeted prevention activities. Despite the increase, the long-term trend continues to be downward, and this year's total is 30 per cent lower than the 9,719 incidents recorded in 2006-07.
13. In October 2016, the Fire Authority approved the development of a new Emergency Services Hub for the Wyre Forest area following extensive public consultation. The Hub will replace the three current fire stations at Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport and will be a shared home for the local Police

Harm Hub team and other supporting emergency services. The land has been acquired and design work is underway.

14. Also in October 2016, work commenced on building the new Operations and Communication Centre (OCC) at the West Mercia Police headquarters site at Hindlip, Worcester. The OCC is a joint project by West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police to redesign and redevelop their control rooms and communications systems for managing emergency calls. The Fire and Rescue Service's Fire Control function is included in the design of the purpose-built facility, which will have all the benefits of closer working, including providing better support during peak periods or critical incidents. The OCC building works should be complete by 2018 and Fire Control is due to relocate there when practical.
15. Planning work is also continuing on the major project to co-locate Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters functions to the Police HQ at Hindlip, including working out the technical logistics involved in such a major move and the need to reduce disruption to Service operations as much as possible.
16. A new highly cost-effective fire station and strategic training facility in Evesham was officially opened in December 2016, releasing the old fire station site for retail redevelopment by Wychavon District Council.

### **New Equality & Diversity Objectives Published**

17. In March 2017, the Authority approved the following Equality and Diversity Objectives for 2017/2020:

#### **Leadership and Corporate Commitment**

- We will encourage a culture that supports equal treatment, opportunity, inclusion and transparency at all levels of the Authority.

#### **Service Delivery and Community Risk**

- We will make sure that our prevention, protection and response activities target the most vulnerable people and the greatest risks.

#### **People and Culture**

- To have a diverse workforce that represents our community.

### **Fire Reform and the Policing and Crime Act 2017**

18. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has explored joint working for many years, and is already involved in major transformational collaboration projects with West Mercia Police as well as neighbouring fire and rescue services. Further opportunities with other services, including the ambulance service and local authorities, are also being explored, and collaboration forms an overarching theme of our new Saving More Lives vision.

19. At the beginning of 2017 the Policing and Crime Act was published and gives further powers to the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on additional responsibilities for fire and rescue. In relation to this, the PCC for West Mercia has already been co-opted as a non-voting member of the Fire Authority.
20. The PCC published an Initial Business Case regarding his proposals for the future governance of the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, to which the Fire Authority opposed in September 2017. The PCC has now submitted a full business case to the Home Office for consideration, which will be independently reviewed. The Fire Authority is disappointed that the PCC is continuing with his proposals for fire governance in West Mercia against the wishes of the four principal local authorities, the two fire authorities and the Police and Crime Panel. We had hoped he would have worked with us on a more locally agreed process and timetable of collaboration in the interest of public safety and efficiency of public funds.

**Cllr R Phillips, Chairman and Cllr P Tuthill, Vice-Chairman  
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority**

**FURTHER INFORMATION** is available in the Fire Authority Annual Report 2017/18 on the Service's website at [www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/our-publications/](http://www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/our-publications/)