

Agenda

Councillors

Herefordshire:

Mrs E M Bew, Mr G W Davis (Chairman), Mr K G Grumbley, Brigadier P Jones, Mr R Preece, Mr D C Taylor.

Worcestershire:

Mr T J Bean (Vice-Chairman), Mr M H Clarke, Mr S J Clee, Mrs M L Drinkwater, Mrs D E Dudley, Mr R J Farmer, Mr A Fry, Mrs D Hamilton-Jones, Mr A I Hardman, Mr J Holden, Mr P T Mills, Mr P A Mould, Mr M M G Oborski, Mrs B Passingham, Mr D W Prodger, Mr C T Smith, Mr R M Udall, Mr J R Webb, Mr G C Yarranton.

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interests (if any)

To invite any Councillor to declare any interest in any of the items on this Agenda.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on Thursday 15 December 2005 (copy attached – pink pages).

4. Questions from Members of the Public

To receive questions previously submitted by members of the public more than five clear working days before the meeting of the Authority.

5. Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan - Response To Consultation (p.1-2 & enclosures)

To inform Members of the comments and replies received from stakeholders during the consultation on the Authority's Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan and to seek approval for the Plans.

6. Budget and Precept for 2006/07 (p.13- 27)

To determine Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2006/07 and the consequential Council Tax Precept.

7. Service Restructure (p.28-30)

To outline proposals for Service restructure and to seek the Authority's approval for their introduction.

8. Service Report (p.31-47)

To inform Members of Service activities in the last quarter together with operational and statistical details for the period 1 October 2005 to 31 December 2005.

9. Members' Visits Programme (p.48-51)

To consider a Visits Programme to Stations and Departments.

10. Member's Training Programme 2006/07 (p.52-53)

To update Members on the Training Programme for 2006/07 developed to improve the support available to Members in undertaking their duties.

11. Fire Station Community Events (p.54)

To inform Members of Fire Station Community Events for the year ahead.

12. Revised Committee Structure (P.55-56)

To consider revisions to the Authority's Committee Structure.

(A glossary of abbreviations and terms used in these agenda papers is to be found at the end of this document.)

Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority
Thursday 15 December, 2005 Headquarters, 2 Kings Court, Charles
Hastings Way, Worcester (11.00 am)

Minutes

Present

Herefordshire:

Mr GW Davis (Chairman), Mr KG Grumbley, Brigadier P Jones, Mr R. Preece, Mr DC Taylor.

Worcestershire: Mr TJ Bean, Mr MH Clarke, Mr SJ Clee, Mrs DE Dudley, Mr A Fry, Mr A I Hardman, Mr J Holden, Mr PT Mills, Mr P A Mould, Ms DL Nixon, Mr MMG Oborski, Mrs B Passingham, Mr CT Smith, Mr RM Udall, Mr JR Webb, Mr GC Yarranton.

Available Papers:

- A. The agenda paper and appendices referred to (previously circulated).
- B. The minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 23 September, 2005 (previously circulated).

(A copy of the agenda papers will be attached to the signed minutes).

484. (Agenda item 1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mrs EM Bew, Mrs ML Drinkwater and Mr DW Prodger.

485. (Agenda item 2) Declarations of Interest

Mr PA Mould advised the Authority that if the Firefighters Pension Scheme was discussed in such detail that it affected his personal position, he would declare a personal and a prejudicial interest. (That proving not to be the case, there was no need for Mr Mould to leave the room during the meeting.)

486. (Agenda item 3) Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September, 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

487. (Agenda Item 4) Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions from members of the Public.

488. (Agenda Item 5) Service Report

The Authority was informed of Service activities in the last quarter together with operational and statistical details for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 September 2005.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that he had redesigned the Chief Fire Officer's report to provide a clearer message to the public about Service activity and in particular performance.

He then commented briefly on each section of the report. He noted in particular that the number of false fire alarms was a cause for concern and reported that he had asked for this to be investigated more closely.

In relation to the business conducted by the Authority's Committees, Members noted the appointment of Mrs Lucy Phillips as Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and that Mr RM Udall had had to stand down as Chairman of the Best Value, Policy and Performance Committee having resumed the leadership of the Labour Group.

RESOLVED: That Mr A Fry be appointed Chairman of the Best Value, Policy and Performance Committee.

489. (Agenda item 6) Financial Prospects 2006/07 and 2007/08

The Authority was provided with an update on the grant settlement and consequences for the Revenue Budget and Precept for 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The report noted that there had been significant changes to the grant methodology and to the financial arrangements for the firefighters pension scheme. It set out the grant settlement, which was on a two-year basis before moving to a three-year basis from 2007/08. The settlement meant that the Authority received the lowest government grant per citizen of any Authority and received only 75% of the average for Fire and Rescue Authorities as a whole.

It was noted that the projected budget requirement for 2006/07 and 2007/08 would mean a year on year increase of 4.9% each year on a Band D council Tax rate. The Government had said in relation to the use of its powers to cap budgets that it would expect to see average council tax rises in each of these two financial years of less than 5%. It was reported that the present budget projections and cautious assumptions on tax base meant that the Authority would be well within this target and still able to move forward on its approved strategy.

The Treasurer commented that the certainty now provided on the funding of the firefighters pension scheme was welcome. However, the low level of Government grant allocated to the Authority placed great pressure on the Service in seeking to improve and meet increasingly stringent safety requirements and the demands of external inspections. Further information was still awaited before the final budget position was clear and ready for presentation to the Authority in February.

Members suggested that the Authority's MPs should be made aware of the level of funding the Authority received and invited to support the Authority's case for more resources. It was also proposed that a Government Minister should be invited to visit the Authority.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Group Leaders jointly write to local MPs advising them of the financial pressures on the Authority as the recipient of the lowest grant per citizen of any Fire and Rescue Authority and inviting them to a briefing with a view to enlisting their support in highlighting the Authority's concerns to the ODPM; and**
- (b) that a Minister from the ODPM with Fire and Rescue responsibilities should be invited to visit the Authority.**

490. (Agenda item 7) Protocol on the Use of Resources

The Authority considered the adoption of a protocol to govern the use of resources by Members.

The report stated that the Standards Committee had recommended the adoption of such a protocol as one means of ensuring compliance with dimension 5 (a) of the Authority's Code of Corporate Governance. A draft protocol as recommended by the Standards Committee was appended to the report.

It was noted that the Authority had not at the moment got sufficient guidance in place to cover certain detailed ICT issues and that the Standards Committee had requested a further report on this aspect.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Protocol on the use of resources by Members as appended be adopted; and**
- (b) that it be noted that a further report was to be made to the Committee on detailed provisions to govern the use of ICT resources.**

491. (Agenda item 8) Application for Performance Improvement Programme

The Authority received an update on a successful application to participate in the "Real Improvement, Real Time" Performance Improvement Programme.

The report noted that the Programme, sponsored by the ODPM and the Local Government Association and delivered by PriceWaterhouse Coopers and SOLACE Enterprises was designed to build an organisation's capacity. The Authority was one of six Authorities selected to participate in the Fire and Rescue Authority pilot. It was considered that the programme would assist the Authority in delivering a step change in performance improvement across the organisation, addressing key priorities identified through the self-assessment process and recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment report and would support the Authority in delivering excellence in the future.

It was noted that the programme would require a team of five people to participate in it and it was suggested that this might include a Member of the Authority with responsibility for performance improvement.

RESOLVED: that Member participation in the Programme be determined by Group Leaders following consultation with Members of the Best Value, Policy and Performance Committee.

492. (Agenda item 9) Fire Control Project Risk Update

Further to Minute number 477 the Authority received an update on the FiRe Control Project risks and action taken to date to address these risks.

The report noted that National and Regional Guidance was still awaited on many aspects of the Regional FiRe Control project meaning that it was not yet possible to fully quantify the associated risks and create specific action plans to mitigate their effects. However, the Service had begun a process of risk identification and assessment. The report addressed two specific areas of risk: the future of the organisation's Information Communication Technology Systems and existing and future resilience levels within the Fire Control Room, and set out the action being taken in response.

It was noted that the implementation of the project presented significant management challenges and further reports would be made to the Authority as the project progressed.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- That there was a lack of public confidence in the establishment of Regional Fire Control Centres and this needed to be addressed. The problems which had occurred when the West Mercia Police Control system was established at Hindlip had set a poor precedent. It would be important to ensure that during the transition to the new system the present facilities were retained as a fall-back option.
- The Chief Fire Officer commented that he did not have sufficient evidence at this stage to be able to advise categorically that all necessary measures were in place at a Regional and National level to address risks associated with the project. Accordingly, he was not able to give the unqualified reassurance to the Authority that he would like. However, he stressed that the project was still at a relatively early stage and that a great deal of activity was now underway at a regional and national level.

Members suggested following discussion that a local briefing for Members of the Authority, supplemented by a briefing organised by the Regional Management Board, whose role it would ultimately be to provide public reassurance, for the members of all constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities, would be the best way to proceed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a briefing on the project for Members be arranged, with a focus on the local perspective; and**
- (b) that the West Midlands Regional Management Board be requested to arrange a regional briefing for Members of all its constituent bodies.**

493. (Agenda item 10) Regional Management Board

The Authority was invited to note the proceedings of the Regional Management Board.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Regional Management Board held on Friday, 28 October 2005 had been circulated separately to Members of the Authority.

RESOLVED: that the proceedings of the RMB as set out in the Minutes of its meeting on 28 October 2005 be noted.

494. (Agenda item 11) Appointment of Additional independent Members to the Standards Committee

RESOLVED: that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee, or a particular office-holder, former office-holder, or applicant to become an office-holder under the Authority.

The following is a complete Minute of the proceedings during which the public and press were excluded.

Further to Minute number 462 the Authority considered the appointment of additional Independent Members to serve on the Authority's Standards Committee.

The Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee Dr M Mylechreest, himself an Independent Member of the Committee, reminded the Authority of the reasoning behind the Authority's decision in June 2005 to recruit additional Members, given the expectation that Committees would be required to have a majority of Independent Members, and outlined the selection process which had been followed, as set out in the report. He added that whilst, on the Committee's recommendation, the Authority had previously approved the appointment of up to two additional Independent Members the Committee was now recommending that three named appointments as described in the report be made.

In relation to the term of office of the new Independent Members it was proposed that a general principle should be adopted that the term of office for Independent Members would be for three years with the opportunity to serve further terms at the Authority's discretion.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the only remuneration Independent Members currently received was travel and subsistence allowances and the appointment of a third additional Independent Member would therefore have minimal financial implications.

It was noted that Group Leaders were to consider nominating a named deputy for each of the two Councillors serving on the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Standards Committee's recommendation that Mr Colin Emeny, Mr Richard Gething and Mr David Stevens be appointed as Independent Members of the Committee be approved; and**
- (b) that the term of office of the appointment of any Independent Member be for three years with effect from the date of appointment, with the opportunity to serve further terms at the Authority's discretion.**

The meeting ended at 12.00 noon.

Chairman.....

(URGENT ITEM) APPOINTMENT OF CLERK/MONITORING OFFICER

Purpose of Report

1. To confirm the appointment of Clerk/Monitoring Officer to the Authority.
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Background

2. In June 2005 the Authority confirmed the appointment of Ms M.E. Rosenthal, County Secretary and Solicitor and Monitoring Officer for Herefordshire Council, as Clerk/Monitoring Officer to the Authority.
3. Ms Rosenthal subsequently secured a promotion with another authority leaving a vacancy in the office of Clerk/Monitoring Officer to the Authority.
4. Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Authority is required to make an appointment to the statutory position of Monitoring Officer. The legislation provides that the duties of the Monitoring Officer, “ shall be performed by him personally or, when he is unable to act owing to absence or illness, personally by such member of staff as he has for the time being nominated as his deputy”.
5. The appointment of Ms Rosenthal’s successor at Herefordshire Council has now been confirmed but the transitional period has proved slightly longer than expected. To ensure that the Authority has someone empowered to fulfil the Clerk/Monitoring Officer role the Authority is therefore asked to confirm the reinstatement of Mr N.M. Pringle as Clerk/Monitoring Officer for this transitional period.
6. A further report will be brought to the Authority’s annual meeting to regularise the position.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive recommends

- (a) **that the Authority confirm the reinstatement of Mr NM Pringle Herefordshire Council’s Chief Executive as Clerk/Monitoring Officer with immediate effect; and**
- (b) **that a further report be brought to the Authority’s annual meeting to regularise the position.**

Background Papers

None

5. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2006-2009 AND THIRD ANNUAL ACTION PLAN - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the comments and replies received from stakeholders during the consultation on the Authority's Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan and to seek approval for the amended Plans. (The detailed Plan will be sent separately to Members of the Authority and is available to the public upon request.)

Background

2. The Fire and Rescue National Framework states that all Fire and Rescue Services must produce an IRMP. The framework also states that Fire and Rescue Authorities should produce annual action plans on which they have fully consulted with their local communities, allowing twelve weeks for consultation.
3. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 clause 21(7) states that Fire and Rescue Services must have regard to the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework in carrying out their function.

Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan and Response to Consultation (see Separate Enclosures)

4. Members will be aware of the draft third Annual IRMP Action Plan which was previously circulated to all Members and approved at the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 23 September 2005. The Plan was developed under the leadership of the Fire and Rescue Authority IRMP Steering Group.
5. The Plan has been subject to a twelve week consultation process in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Code of Practice on Consultation, ending on 16 December 2005.
6. The consultation process involved publishing the Plan on the Service website, distributing the plan to a large number of stakeholders including representative bodies, all workplaces, libraries, County and District Councils, Members of Parliament, etc. A letter was sent to 83 organisations in the Fire and Rescue Service area informing them that the plan was on the website and inviting them to respond to consultation. Spotlight meetings were attended in the North of the County and all staff were informed about the consultation process via the internal Bulletin. Principal Officers visited Stations throughout the Service area to discuss the proposals and to encourage staff to respond to consultation.
7. Opinion Research Services (ORS) organised three public focus group meetings in Malvern, Worcester and Redditch to discuss the plan with members of the public and

distributed 6000 questionnaires to households and businesses in the Service area of which 685 were completed and returned.

8. Forty-seven responses were received from a range of individuals and organisations, as shown below:

Type of Organisation	Number of Responses
Fire and Rescue Service Employees	34
Employee Representative	3
County/District Councils	7
Members of the Public	0
Other Stakeholders	3

9. The IRMP has been amended, as appropriate, to reflect the comments raised. This includes the following:
- Piloting new work patterns at Redditch Fire Station with flexibility to extend the trial to other stations.
 - Putting on hold the introduction of day staffed appliances at Redditch and Kidderminster;
 - Putting on hold the disestablishment of the third appliance and four retained duty posts at Redditch pending the outcome of the trial.
 - Revised establishment levels to support Legislative Fire Safety.
 - To ensure operational resilience, draft proposals have been reviewed to add an additional 4 officers to the minimum incident command rota, giving a new proposed establishment for Flexible Duty Officers of 32.
10. The financial impacts of the amended IRMP are incorporated in the budget proposals included in the Budget & Precept Report elsewhere on this Agenda.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the Fire and Rescue Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan be approved.

Background Papers

Fire Service Circular 7/2003

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

2005/06 Fire and Rescue National Framework

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2006-2009 and Third Annual Action Plan

Cabinet Office's Code of Practice on Consultation

6. BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2006/07

Purpose of report

1. To determine Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2006/07 and the consequential Council Tax Precept.
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Background

2. The Audit and Budget Committee has considered progress on the 2006/07 budget at its meetings in October, November and January, and an update was provided to the FRA at its December meeting.
3. As Members are aware, a year on year comparison between 2005/06 and 2006/07 is complicated by the changes to the financial arrangements in respect of Firefighter Pensions. In order to simplify this report, comparison is made with the 2005/06 Actual Budget Requirement as adjusted for the impact of this change at £25.859m (see table below), and the 2005/06 Notional Grant and Budget Requirement (at £25.709m) as provided by the ODPM.

Revenue Budget Requirement 2006/07

4. To meet the requirements of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), a core budget requirement of £27.159m has been identified. When adjusted for the part release of the provision to repay Transitional Grant (received in 2004/05) and a planned transfer to balances, this leads to a Net Budget Requirement of £27.061m.
5. This represents a 4.6% increase on the adjusted 2005/06 budget requirement and a 5.3% increase on the ODPM notional figure.
6. Since the last meeting of the Audit & Budget Committee, ODPM have notified the FRA of 2 further grants payable in 2006/07. In order to qualify for these grants the FRA will need to incur additional expenditure, matched to the grant. The effect of this has been added to the budget requirement.
7. The reasons for this variation are shown in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 and are summarised in the table overleaf:

	£m	%
2005/06 Budget Requirement	27.289	
Pension Changes	(1.430)	
	25.859	
05/06 Transitional Grant Provision	(0.327)	-1.3%
05/06 Strengthening of Balances	(0.152)	-0.6%
Inflation and Pay Awards	0.709	2.7%
Capital Programme (including IRMP)	0.515	2.0%
RDS Pensions	0.135	0.5%
Fire Control Contingency	0.100	0.4%
Other (Net of Efficiencies)	0.235	0.7%
One off Investments	0.085	0.3%
06/07 Strengthening of Balances	0.065	0.3%
06/07 Release of Transitional Grant	(0.163)	-0.6%
2006/07 Draft Budget Requirement	27.061	4.6%

8. Appendix 4 shows how this budget would be allocated to the agreed budget heads, which have been adjusted to reflect the revised Senior Management Structure.

Capital Programme

9. Appendix 5 shows a proposed capital programme to the end of 2010/11. Proposed schemes are based on the priorities of the Authority and include:
- Provision to replace the vehicle fleet as appropriate;
 - Building Works per the Draft IRMP; and
 - Schemes already approved
10. Provision has been made within the budget for the completion of station improvements and re-locations as provided in principle under the IRMP. The provision is based on an initial view of costs and time-scales and is intended to provide the FRA with the financial capacity to move ahead with its IRMP ambitions.
11. However, due to the nature of these schemes it is expected that a business case for each proposal will be taken to Audit & Budget Committee on a case by case basis before any expenditure is incurred.
12. Likewise the vehicle replacement element of the budget includes both the routine replacement of life-expired pumps and the replacement of the more costly specialist equipment. In the latter case (e.g. the third Aerial appliance) it is also anticipated that a business case would be made to Audit & Budget Committee prior to any commitment of resources.
13. The revenue consequences of the schemes, including financing costs, are included in the revenue budget projections in Appendices 1, 2 and 4.

Efficiency Gains

14. The Fire and Rescue Authority submitted its first Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) in November. Members will be aware that in addition to the information required a projection of Efficiencies to 2007/08 was also provided.
15. These efficiencies form a key part of the budget planning for the next two years and are key to funding the re-investments proposed under the draft IRMP.
16. Appendix 6 (in summarised AES format) shows that the Authority will be achieving cashable efficiency gains of 8.6%, well in excess of the national target of 5.0%.
17. Elsewhere on this Agenda, Members are advised of a proposed Service restructuring. This will have an impact on the details of the AES, and will be formally included in the annual revision to the document. It is anticipated that this will not impact on the overall level of efficiencies recorded.

Business Consultation

18. In accordance with established practice, statutory consultation with business rate-payers has been initiated by correspondence, with representatives of business rate-payers. (The Chamber of Commerce, the local branches of the Confederation of Small businesses and the National Farmers Union). To date no responses have been received.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

19. Members will be aware that the ODPM has this year moved towards a three year grant settlement, although for this first year only two years are provided
20. The Prudential Code already requires a minimum of three years' future projections to be made, and this Authority has been doing this since the Code was introduced in April 2004. In addition, as a result of comments made during the CPA process, the projection has been extended to five years.
21. Appendix 7 shows details of the projected budget requirements for future years. It should be noted that the provision for pay awards is now at 2.5% for the whole four year period.
22. Beyond 2007/08 the forecasts become more speculative:
 - Grant intentions are not known;
 - Government policy on Council Tax rises is not known;
 - The consequences of the Lyons Report will be known;
 - Regional Fire Control (and Firelink) will bring new cost pressures (see above);
 - Inflation trends are unknown; and
 - There is a need to ensure balances continue to be maintained at an appropriate level.

Budget Risks

23. The 2006/07 budget makes provision for escalating gas and electricity prices; however this will only meet foreseeable costs. There is a risk that if prices rise further in 2006/07 the budget may be inadequate. For information the proposed 2006/07 budget for gas and electricity is £0.150m.
24. Additionally, although the budget and MTFs proposals take account of all known issues, there are three areas of significant uncertainty that may give rise to unbudgeted expenditure, and demonstrate the need to maintain robust balances, as referred to below.
25. Pay Inflation: Beyond 2006/07 (for which agreements are in place) the assumptions on pay awards are close to the Chancellors 2% guidance figure for public sector pay review bodies. However, there is a considerable risk that future national settlements may exceed this figure. As an example, the Teachers Pay Review Body, in receipt of the same advice, proposed a 2.5% award which has been accepted by DfES. It should be noted that the July 2006 award to uniformed staff is the last under the current agreement and a new one will be negotiated. Members will be aware of the impact of the last agreement.
26. Pensions: Although pensions' financial arrangements have been changed there are still elements of the scheme chargeable to the revenue account. Whilst the new arrangements substantially reduce the size of volatility in pensions costs, the remaining potential volatility is a significantly bigger proportion of remaining costs. These risks relate to ill health charges, and pensions for Retained Duty System staff.
27. Regional Fire Control and Fire-link: The ODPM is expecting both to become operational and chargeable to Fire and Rescue Authorities in 2008/09. Although there is no real information available on likely costs, ODPM assumptions on the current costs of these services (and hence the likely change in costs) are significantly different from reality. It is possible that there will be considerable cost pressures from these sources.
28. Energy price volatility may have an impact on future capital building projects in respect of the effect on steel, concrete and brick prices.

2006/07 Grant Position

29. The final grant settlement announcement was made on 31 January 2006, and confirmed the grants to be paid. The figures are marginally worse than the provisional ones. Although the basic grant figure increases, this is more than offset by changes to damping. Overall the final settlement is £0.006m lower for 2006/07 and £0.029m lower for 2007/08.
30. For 2006/07 £0.442m is lost to damping, equal to 4.2% of the full entitlement or £1.61 at Band D, equal to a 2.7% increase on 2005/06.
Details of the final grant position are set out below:

	Notional 2005/06 £m	Change	Final 2006/07 £m	Change	Provisional 2007/08 £m
Formula Grant	9.683		10.484		10.775
Damping Effect *	n/a*		(0.442)		(0.420)
Grant Payable	9.683	0.359	10.042	0.313	10.355
		3.7%		3.1%	

31. Although 3.7% is marginally above the average for precepting shire Fire & Rescue Authorities settlement will lock Hereford & Worcester into the poorest funding stream for such Authorities. Hereford & Worcester now receives the lowest government grant per citizen of any Fire and Rescue Authority, and receives only 75% of the average for precepting shire Fire & Rescue Authorities.

Precept Implications and Options

32. The Billing Authorities have now provided the final tax-base and collection fund surplus/deficit figures. Within the net surplus figure is an abnormally large surplus £0.066m, declared by Bromsgrove. It would be imprudent to fund the base budget from this one-off windfall and the proposed budget shows an equivalent sum being used to strengthen balances.
33. The impact of this is to give a Band D Tax of £61.95 representing a 4.9% increase on 2005/06. The precept calculation arising from this position is shown in Appendix 8.
34. Comparative data is currently only available for 10 of the 24 Combined Fire Authorities which indicates an average forecast increase of 4.6%. These figures are estimates, not final proposals and it is not clear how cautious other Fire and Rescue Authorities have been regarding growth in the tax-base. Members will be provided with the latest available data at the meeting.
35. The government's statements on capping make it clear that council tax should not rise by more than 5%.

Progress on 2005/06 and impact on Revenue Balances

36. The 2005/06 budget allowed for balances at 31 March 2006 to stand at £0.803m, representing 3.0% of the planned 2005/06 Core Budget.
37. The latest projection for 2005/06 out-turn is for a small underspending of around £0.060m. However, as this position is potentially variable due to the un-predictability of RDS pay, a cautious approach has been adopted to assume that year end balances position would be as the budget.
38. With the planned transfers to balances in 2006/07, balances at 31 March 2007 will stand at £0.868m and will represent 3.2% of the projected 2006/07 Core Budget.

39. Subject to the limitations of the forecast beyond 2007/08, referred to above, the Medium Term Financial Strategy detailed at Appendix 5 provides for the build-up of balance to a level marginally above 4% by the end of the five year period. The position is illustrated in the table below.

	2005/06 £000	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
Brought forward	651	803	868	978	1,078	1,178
In year build up	152	65	110	100	100	150
Carried forward	803	868	978	1,078	1,178	1,328
as % of Core Budget	3.0%	3.2%	3.5%	3.7%	3.9%	4.2%

Prudential Code Indicators

40. Since 1 April 2004, the Local Authority capital finance system has been one of self-regulation based on a Prudential Code drawn up by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).
41. The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of Local Authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable or, in exceptional cases, to demonstrate that there is a danger of not ensuring this, so that the Local Authority concerned can take timely remedial action.
42. A further key objective is to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in a manner that supports prudence, affordability and sustainability. The Prudential Code also has the objectives of being consistent with and supporting local strategic planning, local asset management planning and proper option appraisal.
43. To demonstrate that Authorities have fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out indicators that must be used and the factors that must be taken into account. The Code does not include suggested indicative limits or ratios. These are for a Local Authority to set itself, subject only to any controls under section 4 of the Local Government Act 2003 (Government reserve powers).
44. The prudential indicators required by the Code are designed to support and record local decision making. They are not designed to be comparative performance indicators and use of them in this way would be likely to be misleading and counter productive. In particular, Local Authorities had widely differing debt positions at the start of the Prudential system and the differences are likely to increase over time as a result of the exercise of local choices. The system is specifically designed to support such local decision making in a manner that is publicly accountable.

45. In setting or revising their prudential indicators, the Fire and Rescue Authority is required to have regard to the following matters:
- Affordability, e.g. implications for Council Tax;
 - Prudence and sustainability, e.g. implications for external borrowing;
 - Value for money, e.g. options appraisal;
 - Stewardship of assets, e.g. asset management planning;
 - Service Objectives, e.g. strategic planning for the Authority; and
 - Practicality e.g. achievability of the forward plan.
46. The Treasurer has prepared the prudential indicators having considered the matters above and these are set out at Appendix 10.

Budget Calculations: Personal Assurance Statement by Treasurer

47. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Treasurer to report to the Authority when it is setting the budget and precept (council tax). The Authority is required to take this report into account when making its budget and precept (council tax) decision. The report of the Treasurer must deal with the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides.
48. The Treasurer states that to the best of his knowledge and belief these budget calculations are robust and have full regard to:
- The Fire and Rescue Authority budget policy;
 - The need to protect the Fire and Rescue Authority's financial standing and to manage risk;
 - This year's financial performance;
 - The financial policies of the Government;
 - The Fire and Rescue Authority's medium term financial planning framework;
 - Capital programme obligations;
 - Treasury Management best practice;
 - The strengths of the Fire and Rescue Authority's financial control procedures including audit consideration;
 - The extent of the Fire and Rescue Authority's balances and reserves; and
 - The prevailing economic climate and future prospects.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to:

- **Approve the Revenue Budget, Net Budget Requirement and consequential precept as set out in Appendix 8,**
- **Approve the Capital Budget and Programme as set out at Appendix 5.**
- **Approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Appendix 7 and 9**
- **Approve the Statement of Prudential Code Indicators as set out at Appendix 10.**

Background papers

Report : 2006/07 Budget Progress – FRA Audit and Budget Committee 20-Jan-2006

Report : Financial Prospects 2006/07 and 2007/08 – Fire and Rescue Authority 15-Dec-2005

Report : 2006/07 Budget Preparation – FRA Audit and Budget Committee 25-Nov-2005

Report : 2006/07 Budget Preparation – FRA Audit and Budget Committee 13-Oct-2005

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget 2006/07 : Revenue Budget 2006/07

	2006/07 Budget £000
2005/06 Net Budget Requirement	27,289.0
less : Impact of changes to Financial Arrangement for Pensions	(1,430.3)
Adjusted 2005/06 Net Budget Requirement	25,858.7
less : provision for repayment of Trans Grant	(327.0)
planned transfer to balances	(152.0)
Adjusted 2005/06 Core Budget	25,379.7
Inflation & National Pay Awards	
PYE Jul 2005 Uniformed	124.4
PYE Jul 2006 Uniformed	386.1
FYE Apr 2006 Non-Uniformed	78.4
General Inflation	120.0
Excess Inflation - Fuel & Energy Charges	37.8
	746.7
Capital Programme	
HQ Project	144.6
Workshop Project	54.6
Vehicle Replacement	102.7
IRMP Projects Capital Financing Provision	48.7
Other Schemes	14.0
HQ Leasehold Premium	350.0
HQ - Estimated Efficiency Savings	(100.0)
HQ - Short Term Costs	(100.0)
	514.6
Urban Search & Rescue	
Staff Costs	650.0
Other Costs	80.0
ODPM Grant	(730.0)
	0.0
Identified Efficiencies	
Extinguisher Maintenance	(16.6)
Legionella Arrangements	(27.8)
Senior Management Review	(55.6)
	(100.0)
Other Variations	
IT Licences 05/06 one-off effect	20.0
FYE 05/06 Developments (Training post)	17.9
OS Mapping - Licences	38.0
Additional Internal Audit	5.0
Further loss of Scantonic Fee Income	10.0
Loss of Fire Cert Income (RRO)	1.5
ORS Survey	10.0
Fire Control Resilience	60.0
HQ Relocation - Travel Payments	24.0
HQ Catering Staff	44.0
Firelink/FireControl Contingency	100.0
Insurance Premiums (excl USAR)	11.0
RDS Pensions Take Up (1/3)	135.0
Recruit Training	20.0
Appliance Maintenance	10.0
Miscellaneous Net Other	26.2
	532.6
Late notified grants	
Fire Prevention Grant	(37.5)
Additional Fire Safety expenditure	37.5
New Dimensions - IRU Training Grant	(70.0)
Additional Training Activity	70.0
	0.0
One off Investments	
Staff Advertising	10.0
Station Furniture/Equipment	15.0
Communications Strategy	20.0
Local Risk Management	40.0
	85.0
CORE BUDGET REQUIREMENT	27,158.6
Less : Release of Transitional Grant Reserve	(163.0)
Plus : Planned transfer to/(from) balances	65.0
NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR YEAR	27,060.6

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority **Budget 2006/07 : Explanation of Other Variations**

A brief explanation of the items in Appendix 1 under the following headings

Identified Efficiencies

Extinguisher Maintenance

The FRA previously provided a Fire Extinguisher Maintenance service to some Worcestershire County Council properties. Although the cost of this service was above comparable market rates, the FRA still made a loss on the activity. With the co-operation of the customer the FRA has ceased to provide this service.

Legionella Arrangements

The FRA has transferred the monitoring of water condition from an expensive external provider to in-house staff. This has generated a cost saving and has opened the way for the FRA to provide this service to some WCC properties.

Senior Management Review

Members will be aware of the initial review of senior management support carried out by the new CFO.

Other Variations

IT Licences

The ICT department was able to negotiate favourable one off terms for 2005/06, which have now expired.

FYE 05/06 Developments

The approved 05/06 budget provided for the recruitment of an External Fire Precautions trainer part way through the year

OS - Mapping

Although this was included as a new cost in the 2005/06 budget, actual costs are twice what OS had indicated.

Additional Internal Audit

The Audit & Budget Committee agreed to strengthen the internal audit input to closer match best practice benchmarks.

Further Loss of Scantronic Income

Continuing a trend of market consolidation and uncertainty around the impact of RCC on local alarm monitoring.

Loss of Fire Cert Income

Confirmation of Regulatory Reform means that this activity ceases.

ORS Survey

As part of the FRA commitment to stake -holder, it has a 3 year programme of surveys. Budget is not provided in the years the survey does not take place.

Fire Control Resilience

Comprises two elements. An increase in establishment of 2 posts to provided some resilience in the existing service and, additional costs of extending the contract for maintaining the existing Mobilising System.

HQ Relocation - Travel Payments

Payments under NJC conditions of service for re-located staff.

HQ Catering

Provision of staffing to provide a catering facility for FRA etc meetings, and staff located apart from any alternative catering arrangements.

Firelink/FireControl Contingency

To provide for potential but currently un-quantifiable costs

Insurance Premiums

Projected costs reflecting market conditions

RDS Pensions

Appendix 2

The new Fire-fighters Pension Scheme allows RDS staff to join from April 2006. The new arrangements involve a notional employers charge to the FRA. The details of the scheme in so far as they might effect RDS staff are form from clear co take up is difficult to predict and has been estimated at 1/3 of the existing staff. Informal surveys of other FRAs suggest a range of provision form nothing up to 1/2.

Recruit Training

To ensure sufficient resource to provide sufficient trained staff to take up vacancies so that response capability is not impaired.

Appliance Maintenance

Although the FRA has invested in 8 new appliances in 2005/06, they were originally identified as a 2004/05 need, and as a consequence the rest of the fleet continues to age, resulting in higher maintenance costs.

Miscellaneous Net Other

Mainly costs associated with providing resilient back-up for critical IT systems.

One-Off Investments

Staff Advertising

To provide for one-off costs associated with recruiting to the proposed new structure.

Station Furniture/Equipment

To replace life-expired furniture at number of stations.

Communications Strategy

To ensure that the FRA meets its aspirations arising out of CPA.

Local Risk Management

To provide improved information at station level to contribute to the local management of risk which is key part of the IRMP.

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget 2006/07 : Personnel Budget

	Wholetime Firefighters	Retained Firefighters	Control Room Staff FTE	Non- Uniformed Support FTE	TOTAL
Included in Budget 2005/06	332.0	369.0	21.0	110.5	832.5
Plus : FYE Approved Fire Safety Trainer				0.5	0.5
2005/06 Base Budget	332.0	369.0	21.0	111.0	833.0
Senior Management Review	(2.0)			2.0	0.0
Catering				2.0	2.0
Fire Control Resilience			2.0		2.0
Included in Budget 2006/07	330.0	369.0	23.0	115.0	837.0

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget 2006/07 : Revenue Budget 2006/07

	2005/06 APPROVED BUDGET * £000	Senior Management Restructure £000	2005/06 AMENDED BUDGET £000	2006-07 PROPOSED BUDGET £000
Wholetime Uniformed Staff	11,236		11,236	11,541
USAR Team	0		0	650
RDS Uniformed Staff	2,533		2,533	2,674
Control Room Staff	664		664	728
Support - Non-Uniformed Staff	2,639		2,639	2,944
WT Pensions	3,824		3,824	2,369
RDS Pensions	0		0	135
TOTAL : SALARY RELATED COSTS	20,896	0	20,896	21,041
Fire Safety	217	(217)	0	0
Extinguisher Maintenance	(20)	20	0	0
Other Service Delivery	70	(70)	0	0
Performance Management	0	37	37	49
Corporate Communications	0	33	33	53
TOTAL : Deputy Chief Fire Officer	267	(197)	70	102
Fire Safety	0	184	184	230
Extinguisher Maintenance	0	(20)	(20)	0
Other Service Delivery	0	70	70	112
TOTAL : ACO (Community Safety)	0	234	234	342
HR - Personnel & Medical	291		291	226
HR - Health & Safety	5		5	5
HR - Equal Opps	15		15	15
HR - Training	452		452	484
TOTAL : ACO (Human Resources)	763	0	763	730
Equipment Support	846	(846)	0	0
Performance Management	37	(37)	0	0
Water Support	57	(57)	0	0
Fleet Maintenance	417	(417)	0	10
TOTAL : ACO (Operational Support)	1,357	(1,357)	0	10
Equipment Support	0	846	846	868
Water Support	0	57	57	59
Fleet Maintenance	0	417	417	438
FRA Costs	232		232	238
Insurance Premiums	267		267	304
ICT	632		632	717
Admin Services	250		250	279
Events	17		17	17
Property Services	1,023		1,023	867
TOTAL : DoCS / ACO (Corporate Services)	2,421	1,320	3,741	3,787
Finance SLAs and Audit Fees	107		107	114
Travel & Subsistence - FRS Wide	62		62	60
Capital Financing	1,245		1,245	1,607
Other Employee Expenses - FRS Wide	39		39	40
Other Corporate Costs	3		3	64
HQ Site Lease Premium	(350)		(350)	0
Firelink Contingency	0		0	100
TOTAL : Director of Finance	1,106	0	1,106	1,985
ODPM - USAR Grant	0		0	(730)
ODPM - Fire Prevention Grant	0		0	(38)
ODPM - New Dimensions Training Grant	0		0	(70)
				0
Grants & Contributions	0	0	0	(838)
CORE BUDGET	26,810	0	26,810	27,159
Provision to repay Trans Grant	327		327	0
Release of Trans Grant Reserve	0		0	(163)
Planned Transfer to Balances	152		152	65
TOTAL : Other	479	0	479	(98)
NET BUDGET REQUIRMENT	27,289	0	27,289	27,061

* 2005/06 Budget after re-alignment of responsibilities at 01-04-2005

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget 2006/07 : Capital Programme

	BUDGET	PROGRAMME				TOTAL £000
	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000	
Vehicle Leasing						
Replacing expiring leases - Vans	69	138		85	30	322
Replacing expiring leases - Cars	210	199	82	322	210	1,023
	279	337	82	407	240	1,345

	BUDGET	PROGRAMME				TOTAL £000
	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000	
Vehicle Programme						
Routine Replacements	880	800		800	800	3,280
Specialist Replacements	375	440				815
	1,255	1,240	0	800	800	4,095
Workshop	800	1,500				2,300
IRMP - Station Improvement Provision	2,050	3,400	2,050	2,050	2,050	11,600
Property Projects (including DDA)	370	300	300	300	300	1,570
ICT Projects	235	300	300	300	300	1,435
Other Schemes						
IRMP - Water Rescue Equipment	110					110
IRMP - PPA Equipment	50					50
Annual Total	4,870	6,740	2,650	3,450	3,450	6,810

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT :

Summary

Category	CASHABLE EFFICIENCIES					NON-CASHABLE EFFICIENCIES				
	2004/05 Efficiency Gain £000	2005/06 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	2006/07 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	2007/08 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	Cumulative Efficiency Gain £000	2004/05 Efficiency Gain £000	2005/06 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	2006/07 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	2007/08 Additional Efficiency Gain £000	Cumulative Efficiency Gain £000
Crewing Arrangements										
Aerial Appliances	133.5	426.2	263.6	28.9	852.2					-
Annual Leave Arrangements			320.6	124.9	445.5					-
Shift Systems										
Day-Crew Duty Patterns		6.5	-		6.5					-
Fire Safety Staff Review (FDS)			24.3	76.9	101.2			10.0	30.0	40.0
Middle Management Staff Review (FDS)			145.9	56.8	202.7					-
Better Procurement										
PPE - Fixed price Total Care Contract		6.2	6.9	7.0	20.1					-
Hydraulic Equipment - Fixed price Total Care Contract		2.9	3.2	3.3	9.4					-
Gas tight Suits - Fixed price Total Care Contract		0.5	0.4	0.6	1.5					-
Regional Collaboration					-					-
Corporate Services										
HQ Re-location		36.8	63.2	-	100.0		1.8	1.8		3.6
Other										
AFA Attendance	30.0	30.0			60.0					-
Civilianisation of Community Safety Posts	92.1	4.2	45.3	5.0	146.6					-
In-house BA Training Facility		0.6	10.9		11.5		0.9	0.9		1.8
Extinguisher Maintenance Arrangements		8.3	8.3		16.6					-
Legionella Arrangements		13.9	13.9		27.8					-
Senior Management Structure Review		50.0	30.0		80.0					-
Use of Prudential Code Freedoms				75.0	75.0					-
TOTAL	255.6 1.0%	586.1 2.3% 3.4%	936.5 3.7% 6.1%	378.4 1.5% 5.3%	2,156.6 8.6%	- 0.0%	2.7 0.0%	12.7 0.1% 0.1%	30.0 0.1% 0.2%	45.4 0.2%

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

Medium Term Financial Forecasts

		2007/08 Forecast £000	2008/09 Forecast £000	2009/10 Forecast £000	2010/11 Forecast £000
Previous year Core Budget		27,159	28,177	29,147	30,313
Inflation & Pay Awards					
Uniformed Staff (including Pensions Effect)	2.50%	407	329	365	375
Support Staff	2.50%	52	75	78	80
Pay Award Contingency			80	100	100
Other	2.00%	102	104	106	108
		561	588	649	663
Capital Programme					
Workshop Project		110	(23)	(7)	(6)
Vehicle Replacement		110	26	(21)	5
IRMP Projects		121	148	71	110
Other		18	(19)	24	22
		359	132	67	131
Other Variations					
2006/07 One-off expenditure		(85)			
Pensions - Ill Health Charges build up		193	200		
ORS Survey Costs - Cyclical		(10)			10
Regional Fire Control & Firelink Charges *			50	450	
Invest to Save Provision					375
		98	250	450	385
CORE BUDGET		28,177	29,147	30,313	31,492
Release of Trans Grant Reserve		(164)			
Planned Transfer to Balances		110	100	100	150
BUDGET REQUIREMENT FOR YEAR		28,123	29,247	30,413	31,642

* In the absence of any useful information on likely costs an estimated provision has been made.

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Budget 2006-07 : Precept Calculation

Tax-base : Band D Equivalent		
Bromsgrove		35,593.67
Herefordshire		68,253.97
Malvern Hills		29,514.50
Redditch		26,685.92
Worcester		31,963.00
Wychavon		46,671.47
Wyre Forest		34,310.00
		272,992.53
		£
Core Budget		27,159,000
Release of Earmarked reserve for repaying Trans Grant		(163,000)
Planned Transfer to Balances		65,000
Net Budget Requirement		27,061,000
Share of National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates)		8,417,522
Revenue Support Grant		1,624,881
Total Financing Grants		10,042,403
Gross Precept Requirement		17,018,597
Collection Fund Surpluses		(107,454)
Net Precept Requirement		16,911,143
Tax-base - Band D Equivalent		272,992.53
Precept - Band D Equivalent		£ 61.9473
		£ 61.95
		4.91%
Total Precept on Billing Authorities		£
Bromsgrove		2,204,930.87
Herefordshire		4,228,147.47
Malvern Hills		1,828,342.86
Redditch		1,653,120.03
Worcester		1,980,020.76
Wychavon		2,891,170.40
Wyre Forest		2,125,411.01
		16,911,143.40

0.00

Equivalent to Tax at Band	Ratio to Band D	£
A	6/9	£ 41.30
B	7/9	£ 48.18
C	8/9	£ 55.06
D	9/9	£ 61.95
E	11/9	£ 75.71
F	13/9	£ 89.48
G	15/9	£ 103.25
H	18/9	£ 123.89

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Medium Term Financial Forecasts : Precept Impact

	2007/08 Forecast £000	2008/09 Forecast £000	2009/10 Forecast £000	2010/11 Forecast £000
Forecast Budget Requirement	28,123	29,247	30,413	31,642
Provisional Grant	10,384			
Grant Projections (2% increase pa)		10,592	10,804	11,020
Projected Gross Precept Requirement	17,739	18,655	19,609	20,622
Tax-base Estimates (0.25% increase pa)	272,992	273,674	274,358	275,044
Forecast Band D Equivalent	£ 64.98	£ 68.17	£ 71.47	£ 74.98
Prior Year Band D	£ 61.95	£ 64.98	£ 68.17	£ 71.47
Year on Year Change	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%

Statement of Prudential Indicators

Introduction

The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Prudential Code) has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to provide a code of practice to underpin the new system of capital finance embodied in Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. Since 1 April 2004, Local Authorities are no longer subject to government controlled borrowing approvals and are free to determine their own level of capital investment controlled by self-regulation.

The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Prudential Code supports a system of self-regulation that is achieved by the setting and monitoring of a suite of Prudential Indicators that directly relate to each other. The indicators establish parameters within which the FRA should operate to ensure the objectives of the Prudential Code are met.

Prudential Indicators

The Prudential Indicators for which the Fire and Rescue Authority is required to set limits are as follows:

1. Net Borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement

This Prudential Indicator provides an overarching requirement that all the indicators operate within and is described in the Prudential Code as follows:

“In order to ensure that over the medium term net borrowing will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that net external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years”.

The Treasurer reports that the Fire and Rescue Authority had no difficulty meeting this requirement for 2002/03, 2004/05 or 2005/06, nor are any difficulties envisaged for the current or future years. This view takes into account all plans and commitments included in the 2007/08 Budget.

2 Capital Expenditure

The actual amount of capital expenditure that was incurred during 2005/06, and the estimates of capital expenditure to be incurred for the current and future years that are proposed in the 2007/08 Budget are as follows:

	2003/04 Actual £000	2004/05 Estimate £000	2005/06 Estimate £000	2006/07 Estimate £000	2007/08 Estimate £000	2008/09 Estimate £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000
Capital Expenditure	466	745	8,896	4,870	6,740	2,650	3,450	3,450
Operationally Leased Assets	995	40	427	279	337	82	407	240
	1,461	785	9,323	6,649	5,577	2,732	3,857	3,690

The Leased Asset figure from 2006/07 onwards refers to the replacement of expiring leases.

2. Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

Financing Costs include the amount of interest payable in respect of borrowing or other long term liabilities and the amount the Fire and Rescue Authority is required to set aside to repay debt, less interest and investments income.

The actual Net Revenue Stream is the 'amount to be met from government grants and local taxation' taken from the annual Statement of Accounts, and the estimated figure is the Fire and Rescue Authority's budget net of any transfers to or from the balances.

The prediction of the Net Revenue Stream in this Prudential Indicator for future years assumes increases in the Fire and Rescue Authority's funding from government and the local taxpayer consistent with expectations in the Medium Term Financial Plan. This is indicative only and in no way meant to influence the actual future years funding or in particular the funding from Precepts.

The indicator only requires that the costs associated with capital expenditure are measured in this way. However the Fire and Rescue Authority has used, and may continue to use Operational Leasing as a cost effective method of acquiring vehicles. In the spirit of the Prudential Code these costs are included for comparative purposes.

The rise in this ratio is partially due to the fact that capital expenditure prior to the formation of the FRA is not charged to the Fire and Rescue Authority. In other

words, the Fire and Rescue Authority inherited all its assets without any cost. Thus, as investment is made in vehicles, for example the increased costs are in the Fire and Rescue Authority accounts but the savings are elsewhere.

The estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream are as follows:

	2003/04 Actual £000	2004/05 Actual £000	2005/06 Estimate £000	2006/07 Estimate £000	2007/08 Estimate £000	2008/09 Estimate £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000
Financing Costs	604	508	1,173	1,606	1,965	2,097	2,164	2,295
Net Revenue Stream	22,090	25,798	27,289	27,061	28,128	29,252	30,418	31,647
Ratio	2.73%	1.97%	4.30%	5.94%	6.99%	7.17%	7.11%	7.25%

3. Capital Financing Requirement

The capital financing requirement is a measure of the extent to which the Fire and Rescue Authority needs to borrow to support capital expenditure. It does not necessarily relate to the actual amount of borrowing at any one point in time. The Fire and Rescue Authority arranges its treasury management activity via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) which has an integrated treasury management strategy where there is no distinction between revenue and capital cash flows, and the day to day position of external borrowing and investments can change constantly.

The capital financing requirement concerns only those transactions arising from capital spending, whereas the amount of external borrowing is a consequence of all revenue and capital cash transactions combined together following recommended treasury management practice.

The estimates of the end of year capital financing requirement are as follows:

	2003/04 Actual £000	2004/05 Actual £000	2005/06 Estimate £000	2006/07 Estimate £000	2007/08 Estimate £000	2008/09 Estimate £000	2009/10 Estimate £000	2010/11 Estimate £000
Capital Financing Requirement at 31st March	2,384	2,360	9,983	15,829	19,361	21,177	23,715	26,144

4. Authorised Limit

The Authorised Limit represents an upper limit of borrowing that could be afforded in the short term but may not be sustainable. This limit includes a risk assessment of exceptional events taking into account the demands of revenue and capital cash flows. The Authorised Limit gauges events that may occur over and above those transactions which have been included in the Operational Boundary.

These limits are higher than set in previous years to reflect the decisions taken by the Fire and Rescue Authority to switch from leasing to more cost effective borrowing for the acquisition of operational vehicles.

The Fire and Rescue Authority should note that the Authorised Limit represents the limit specified in section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (Duty to determine affordable borrowing limit).

The following Authorised Limits for external debt, excluding temporary investments are recommended:

Authorized Limit	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
External Borrowing	20,000	24,000	26,000	29,000	31,000

5. Operational Boundary

The Operational Boundary represents an estimate of the most likely, prudent, but not worst case scenario and provides a parameter against which day to day treasury management activity can be monitored.

The Treasurer reports that procedures are in place to monitor the Operational Boundary on a daily basis, via the SLA with WCC and that sufficient authorisation is in place to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that, in line with the Treasury Management Strategy, the cash flows of the Fire and Rescue Authority are managed prudently.

Occasionally, the Operational Boundary may be exceeded (but still not breach the Authorised Limit) following variations in cash flow. Such an occurrence would follow controlled treasury management action and may not have a significant impact on the prudential indicators when viewed all together.

Both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary include an element relating to debt restructuring where, for the short term only, external borrowing may be made in advance of the repayment of loans. In this circumstance External Borrowing is increased temporarily until the replaced loans are repaid. The converse can also apply where loans are repaid in advance of borrowings.

The following limits (shown overleaf) for each year's Operational Boundary, excluding temporary investments are recommended:

Operational Boundary	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
External Borrowing	18,000	22,000	24,000	26,000	29,000

6. Actual External Debt

The Fire and Rescue Authority's actual external debt as at 31 March 2005 was £4.7 million; comprising £4.7 million External Borrowing and £0 (zero) Other Long Term Liabilities. This included £2.0m borrowed early (to take advantage of favourable interest rates) to significant capital expenditure committed for April 2005.

7. The Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions on the Council Tax

This indicator identifies specifically the additional cost to the taxpayer of the **new** capital investment proposed in the 2006-07 – 2010-11 Capital Programme.

The incremental impact identifies transactions that will occur **over and above** what has already been provided for in the 2005/06 revenue budget and assumes the funding available in 2005/06 will be carried forward in the future year's base budgets.

The incremental impact has been calculated using forward estimates of funding consistent with expectations in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The impact on the revenue budget, and therefore the Council Tax, is felt by a combination of the following: debt costs of the new borrowing, the amount set aside from revenue to repay the principal element of external borrowing (Minimum Revenue Provision) and the revenue impact of a capital project

It should be noted that borrowing itself does not fund capital expenditure since the loans have to be repaid eventually. The actual funding comes from the Minimum Revenue Provision which is statutorily charged to revenue each year.

The estimate of the incremental impact of the capital investment detailed in the 2005/06 Budget on the Council Tax is as follows:

	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
Incremental Impact on Band D Council Tax	£ 0.03	£ 0.22	£ 0.28	£ 0.14	£ 0.28

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR TREASURY MANAGEMENT

8. Treasury Management Code of Practice

The Fire and Rescue Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA): Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

9. Fixed Interest Rate Exposures

It is recommended that the Fire and Rescue Authority sets an upper limit on its fixed interest rate exposures as follows.

Upper limits for net principal sums outstanding at fixed rates

Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
Upper Limit	20,000	24,000	26,000	29,000	31,000

This represents the position that all of the Fire and Rescue Authority's authorised external borrowing may be at a fixed rate at any one time.

10. Variable Interest Rate Exposures

It is recommended that the Fire and Rescue Authority sets an upper limit on its variable interest rate exposures as follows.

Upper limits for net principal sums outstanding at variable rates

Variable Interest Rate Exposure	2006/07 £000	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000
Upper Limit	5,000	6,000	6,000	7,000	8,000

This is the maximum external borrowing judged prudent by the Treasurer that the Fire and Rescue Authority should expose to variable rates.

11. Maturity Structure of Borrowing

It is recommended that the upper and lower limits for the maturity structure of borrowings are as follows:

Amount of projected borrowing that is fixed rate maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate.

Period of Maturity	Upper Limit %	Lower Limit %
Under 12 months	25	0
12 months and within 24 months	25	0
24 months and within 5 years	50	0
5 years and within 10 years	75	0
10 years and above	95	25

12. Investments for longer than 364 days

It is recommended that the upper limits of total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days are £5 million for each year.

7. SERVICE RESTRUCTURE

Purpose of Report

1. To outline proposals for Service restructure and to seek the Authority's approval for their introduction.
-

Background

2. Over the last year, a number of issues highlighting the need for change in the Service structure to reflect the modernisation agenda have been identified through Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), including feedback from staff and Members during our self assessment, and Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP). For operational staff the Service is also obliged to implement the national pay agreement on "rank to role".
3. The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive has delegated Authority as Head of Paid Service to make amendments to Service structure in order to address these and any other day to day issues as they arise. However, under the current scheme of delegation 'major' restructures are subject to Fire and Rescue Authority approval. It is the Chief Fire Officer's opinion that when taken together, the range of changes now required to deliver the Service's IRMP and CPA improvement plan represent a 'major' restructure. He therefore seeks Fire and Rescue Authority approval to undertake a Service restructure, including all of the practical change processes necessary to deliver it.

Commentary

4. Both CPA and IRMP have identified a range of issues affecting the current structure. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Improved efficiency to support increasing demands of modernisation on the Service
 - Increased support directly available to our local communities, including rural areas and our staff working on the Retained Duty System
 - Improved specialist community safety and partnership working particularly in Herefordshire
 - Introduction of a new fire safety structure to support legislative changes
 - Strengthened planning and performance management arrangements
 - Strengthened communications, both internal and external.
5. A range of other Service issues have been identified and these will also be addressed through restructure. They include:
 - Moving from an operational structure built around ranks, to one based on the roles identified within the new national pay agreement
 - Greater investment in local delivery of service and management or risk
 - Closer alignment of service delivery structures with external District boundaries and Police command units.

Restructure Proposals

6. Our overall intention is to increase the support available to our communities at a local level, concentrating more operational staff on frontline prevention, protection and intervention work, working with a greater emphasis on the local management of risk.
7. Specialist support will be provided through a more diverse mix of operational and non-operational staff, maximising use of specialist skills and experience. We will also create an integrated policy, planning and performance review function, ensuring that we can address the many new challenges we face and deliver our ambitious agenda on time and on budget.
8. To achieve this, we will reduce the number of Senior Operational Managers conditioned to the 'flexible duty system', utilising savings to invest in operational staff at a more junior level and in specialist non-operational staff. This will both enable us to create additional specialist support capacity within existing budgets, and reduce the times operational staff are removed from front-line work to complete special projects.
9. The proposals will deliver greater local management and support for Station staff and local communities by giving 'ownership' of defined areas to dedicated Station Managers. This will be achieved by dividing existing District boundaries into smaller areas that will replicate, where possible, current district and Police boundaries. This move will provide a greater focus on local issues for both local communities and station-based personnel alike.
10. In line with our IRMP, we will introduce six additional operational personnel to provide support for staff working on the Retained Duty System. These staff will also work closely with Station Managers to build links with the community and provide the capacity to ensure that local issues are addressed locally wherever possible.
11. A new risk based regulatory fire safety programme will be managed at a District level through a mixture of District based fire safety specialists and staff working within the new Station clusters. This structure will maximise efficiency through the use of specialist day duty staff in line with our IRMP, and multi-skilled operational staff working within clusters.
12. Operational staff are affected by National changes to pay and conditions, including a move from a rank based system to one based on National role maps. Transition of posts to the new structure will address both the restructure and the move from rank to role within a single process.
13. It is proposed that the change process will see an evolution from the existing structure to the new one over a period of up to eighteen months. This will ensure that robust review processes can be put in place to measure the success of the change process as it is implemented. It will also enable change to be achieved without individual staff redundancies or reductions in pay. To ensure that we can achieve the restructure within existing budgets, new specialist posts will be recruited on a planned basis as and when required efficiencies have been realised. Priorities for recruitment will be identified within the change management plan on an organisational risk basis.

Implementing Change

14. If approved in principle, the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive will commence a full consultation process. Successful implementation will also require clear communication with our staff, and it is intended that as part of the consultation process, a detailed change management plan is produced.

Summary of Changes

- We will decrease the number of dedicated flexible duty officers by eleven
- Efficiency savings will be reinvested to increase the support available to our communities at a local level through investment in additional operational staff as set out in our IRMP, delivering increased frontline prevention, protection and intervention support, and working with a greater emphasis on the local management of risk
- Our CPA assessment complimented the Fire and Rescue Authority on its use of specialists to support Service effectiveness. We plan to extend the benefits of this approach through investing in additional specialist posts to address issues raised through CPA and to increase capacity to the front-line as operational staff will no longer be removed from service delivery activities to complete special projects
- All of these improvements in service delivery and support capacity will be achieved within the existing staff budget of £16.2m.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that:

- (a) the outline proposals for restructure as set out in the report be approved;**
- (b) the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive develop detailed change plans following consultation with Group Leaders;**
- (c) the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive be authorised to deliver the changes outlined in line with the plan; and**
- (d) progress on delivery of these proposals is regularly reported to the Authority.**

Background Papers

1. Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Audit Commission
2. Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan HWFRS
3. IRMP 2006/7 HWFRS

8. SERVICE REPORT

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of Service activities in the last quarter together with operational and statistical details for the period 1 October 2005 to 31 December 2005.

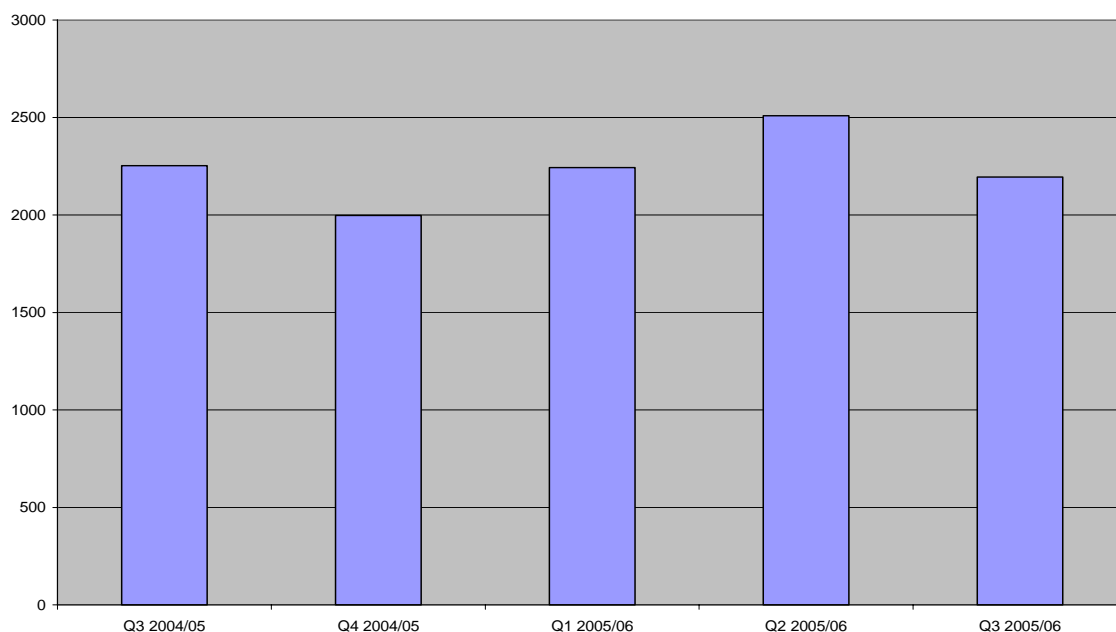
Performance

Operational Statistics

2. Members are requested to note the levels of operational activity experienced by the Service for the period 1 October 2005 to 31 December 2005.
3. In comparison with the same quarter last year, there is a welcome reduction in fires attended contributing to an overall reduction in the total number of incidents.
4. This reduction in the number of total incidents has also bucked the rising trend for the previous three quarters reported to the last FRA meeting. The service will continue to monitor the number of incidents throughout the year.
5. As well as the summary tabulation below, a graphic has been included that demonstrates the profile of call statistics over the last five quarters.
6. The Service will continue to operate its preventative strategies and will report on their impact over the year.

Summary

Quarter	All Fires	Special Service Incidents	All Fire Alarms	Total Incidents
Q3 2004/05	755	476	1022	2253
Q4 2004/05	721	385	891	1997
Q1 2005/06	827	462	954	2243
Q2 2005/06	922	477	1110	2509
Q3 2005/06	669	475	1051	2195



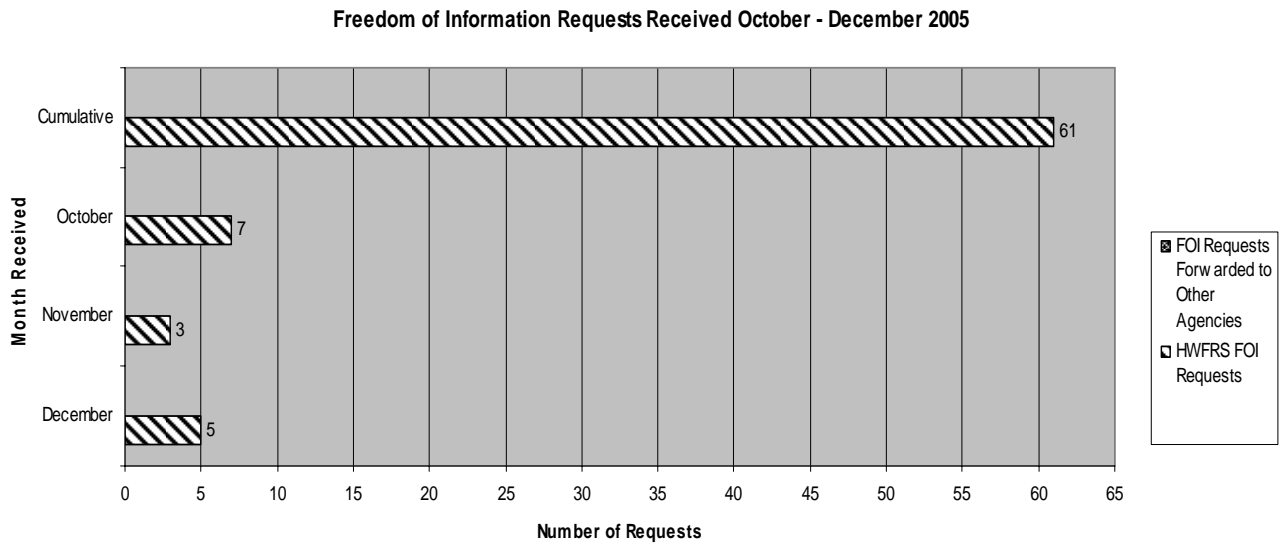
Number of Home Fire Safety Checks from 1 October 2005 – 31 December 2005

Number of visits	Recorded Hours on HFSCs	Smoke alarms fitted	Replacement batteries fitted to existing smoke alarms
507	1550	691	133

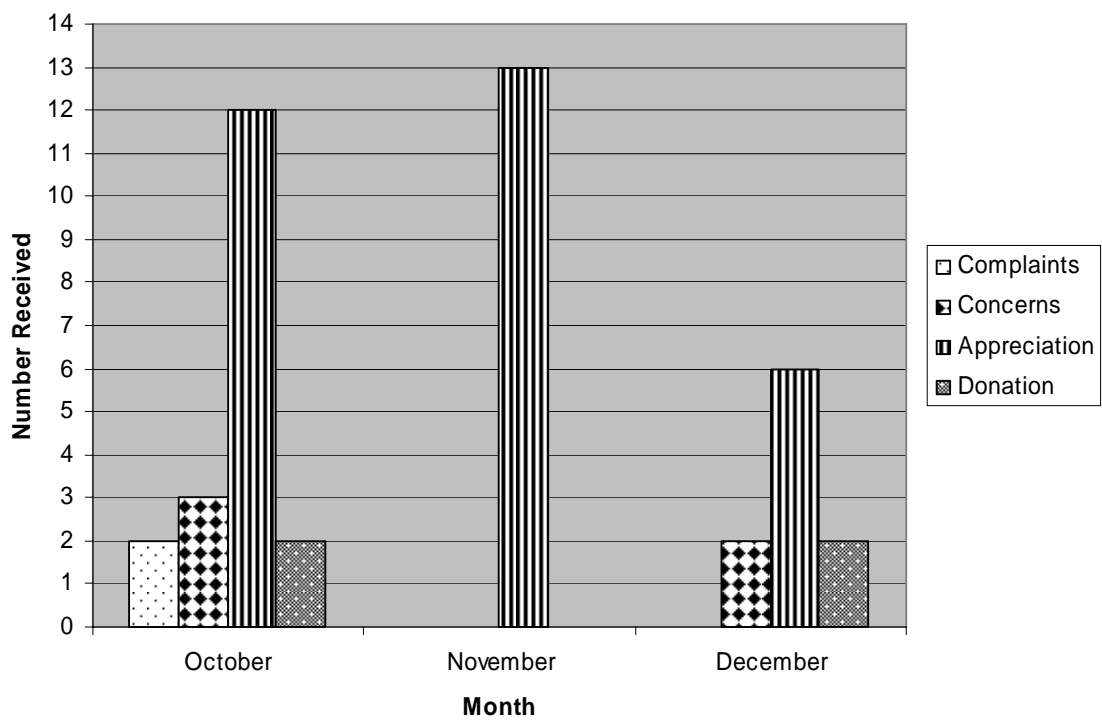
School Visits from 1 October 2005 – 31 December 2005

	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	TOTALS
Watches	23	34	1	58
Audience	686	1027	10	1723
Education Assistants	17	13	9	39
Audience	798	563	775	2136

Freedom of Information Requests



Letters of Appreciation/Donation/Complaints/Concerns



7. I will arrange for all letters to be made available for Members' perusal at the meeting.

Health and Safety

Accidents and Injuries

8. The accident rate for the third quarter shows a slight increase as compared with the preceding year's third quarter (25 compared to 23); however the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents has reduced significantly from six down to two during the same period last year.
9. There has been a 32% increase in accidents compared to the quarter immediately preceding this (25 compared to 19), but a marked decrease in the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents - from 4 down to 2 - on the previous quarter. This represents a considerable reduction in the ratio of RIDDOR reportable accidents compared to total accidents reported - during the same quarter last year the rate stood at 26%, whereas this year the figure stands at 8%.
10. Analysis of the causal factors for this quarter's accidents has shown that a high number were attributable to injurious contact. The remaining injuries were predominantly the result of exertion or slips, trips and falls. A number of these types of incidents can be attributed to general complacency and a failure to undertake a thorough visual inspection of the environment before proceeding - these simple measures can have a dramatic effect on the reduction of accidents.

	Accidents	RIDDOR	% Rate on Establishment
October - December 2004	23	6	2.7
January - March 2005	13	2	1.65
April - June 2005	17	3	2.1
July - September 2005	19	4	2.4
October - December 2005	25	2	3.1

Items of Interest

Operational Incidents

Toddler rescued from "buggy"

11. Firefighters were called to an incident on 31 January 2006 where a four year old had accidentally trapped his right foot in the front wheel of a pushchair. His grandmother was unable to free him and made a 999 call for assistance. Fire crews arrived on the scene within five minutes where they swiftly calmed the toddler down. The Worcester Retained crew used appropriate equipment to remove the wheel and release the toddler's foot safely. The whole incident was happily concluded by the four year old sitting in the cab of the fire engine as a treat for being a brave little boy.

House Fires

12. On Wednesday 2 November 2005 at 22:00hrs, fire crews from Redditch, Bromsgrove and Studley were called to an incident involving a house fire in Watery Lane, Redditch. Four appliances attended the scene where one of the bedrooms was on fire.

On arrival the family were standing safe outside thanks to the quick thinking son who closed the bedroom windows and doors and evacuated the house.

13. On Wednesday 23 November 2005 at approximately 11:00hrs, fire crews from Ross-on-Wye, Whitchurch and Ledbury were called to an incident in Wye Street, Ross-on-Wye involving fire at a riverside house. The fire was contained in a one room converted attic. The owners of the house were not at home at the time of the fire.

High Rise Flat Fire

14. On Wednesday 23 November 2005 at approximately 14:25hrs, fire crews from Worcester and Malvern attended an incident at Henwick House in St Johns, Worcester where there was a fire in a tenth floor flat. Firefighters entered the flat using breathing apparatus where an elderly man was found and taken to hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and a head injury. Neighbouring elderly residents were taken to another floor as a precaution and the Firefighters were able to put the fire out quickly.

Committee Updates

15. **The Audit and Budget Committee** met on 20 January, 2006 and considered the following matters: Budget Preparation 2006/07; an anti-money laundering policy and the Auditor's report on the 2005/06 Best Value Performance Plan.
16. **The Standards Committee** met on 6 January, 2006 and considered a proposed ethical audit of the Authority, Member training, a forthcoming meeting of the Independent Members Forum and the publication of, "Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future. The Committee particularly wished to bring to the Authority's attention its decision to undertake an ethical audit of the Authority. The Committee considers that this will assist the Authority in demonstrating that it has robust ethical governance arrangements in place as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Process.

Unwanted Fire Signals - False Alarms

17. In an attempt to stem the ever increasing number of false alarms from automatic fire detection equipment that is impacting on every Fire and Rescue Service, this Service has adopted an approach advocated by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). The scheme requires those premises returning false alarms to register with the Service to enable closer monitoring and the allocation of an appropriate attendance level to the premise.
18. The Service has extended the CFOA approach in two significant ways; any premises returning regular false alarms may be required to register with the Service, rather than just those that are remotely monitored. Support, guidance and advice is given to owners/occupiers when they register to ensure a co-operative joint approach to false alarm reduction.

19. Initially targeting premises that regularly return false alarms, it is yet to be seen whether there is a significant reduction in numbers. However, notable reductions have been achieved at individual premises.
20. The above detailed approach will continue, aligned with publicity and education, giving the advantages to all in false alarm reduction.

Operational Assurance

21. Operational Assurance is a post Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) initiative aimed at assuring the community of the standard of operational performance and provision provided by the Fire and Rescue Service. The HMFSI produced a guidance document and an interim toolkit linked to a quality standards approach based upon peer or self-assessment and part of the ongoing CPA process.
22. The West Midlands Regional Management Board has initiated a project to develop a regional operational assurance process that is due to be delivered during 2006 and it would be prudent for the Service to establish permanent systems in line with this initiative and perhaps contribute to its development. However, there are short-term, potentially high risk issues that may need to be addressed before the regional project is implemented. Therefore, a local project has been commissioned to identify areas of immediate risk and under-performance and implement corrective action. The project will also develop a quality assurance process that matches the national and regional development.

Arson Conviction

23. Following a £40,000 fire at a carpet shop, Fire Investigation Officers assisted the Police in determining the cause of the fire. The subsequent investigation resulted in the owner of the business and an employee receiving four year and six month jail sentences for arson, respectively.
24. While attending a series of vehicle fires within a small geographical area of Worcester, fire crews became aware of an individual being in attendance at the incidents. Information was passed to the Police which resulted in the perpetrator being convicted of six counts of arson.

New Dimensions

25. Training on the Incident Response Units at Droitwich and Hereford continues with a major training event programmed in the early Spring. The new High Volume Pump units at Kidderminster have been well received and will be declared operational during January when initial driver and operator training is concluded. As plans to reduce ODPM financial support for the Regional Planning staff, the Authority's Regional Planning Assistant, Rob Ball returns to operational duties this month.
26. Additional work has commenced within the Operational Assurance project to ensure suitable resilience within the Authority's resourcing of Incident Command. This

includes a review of Officers' Rotas as well as training and support for both Silver and Gold operators.

27. The Authority has appointed a Station Manager for the new Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team and advertisements have been placed to recruit managers, Firefighters and a dog handler to the team. Discussions regarding locations are ongoing and options appraisals continue.

Regional Control Centre Project

28. Previous reports to the Authority have committed to keep the Members regularly updated on progress in developing the West Midlands Regional Control Project. Work has continued both at a Regional and a local level with the following key issues to be noted at this time:

- The ODPM has announced that it intends to provide £53,000 for each Fire and Rescue Authority to support co-ordinating change activities for 2006/07. This figure will rise to £56,000 for the year 2007/08 and further funding for specific work may be available through the New Burdens process.
- Draft Articles of Association for the Regional Entity are due to be released by the end of January. These will require a full response from Fire and Rescue Authorities and further information on these will be made available to Members for their consideration as soon as possible following their release.

FireLink

29. It is now anticipated that the Firelink contract will be signed by the end of February with installation of the system's infrastructure likely to commence in October 2006. Details regarding future costing and billing arrangements are still unclear at this time. Additional operational continuity maintenance, funded by the ODPM is due to be undertaken shortly to improve the resilience of existing systems.

Hot Fire Facility at Kidderminster

30. The new Hot Fire Training facility at Kidderminster was commissioned in December 2005 and has meant that the contract with the West Midlands Fire Service to utilise their 'real fire' training facilities for Breathing Apparatus refresher courses has now been terminated. The new facility allows the development of an assessable BA course providing a fair and consistent assessment process improving Firefighters BA competence and safety at incidents. It also provides greater flexibility to deliver training at different times to meet the availability needs of Firefighters particularly those who work the Retained Duty System and is a significant improvement in the Service's training capabilities.

Community Fire Safety

31. The Department have extended the education programme to include those in higher education. It is essential that we reach this target audience as they begin to live

independently. In a joint initiative with operational crews, the department offered smoke alarm advice and the opportunity for Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) to students during their Freshers week at both Bromsgrove and Redditch Colleges of Higher Education. This was as part of their introduction to their new accommodation and combines with our requirements to drive down the number of False Alarm Calls from institutes of higher education.

Power Cuts

32. Evaluation of statistical data has highlighted the increased risks from fire both during and immediately after a power cut affecting domestic properties. This risk increases during the winter months when the basic needs of heat and light are not provided by the summer sunshine.
33. With this in mind, additional safety information has been put onto the Services website which will also be made available in printed format for distribution from local Fire Stations when crews are aware of a potential problem regarding this matter.

Legislative Fire Safety

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

34. Preparation for the introduction of the above order continues with the first of a series of training sessions being held during October for Inspecting Officers. Further training planned for the lead up to the introduction of the legislation, which was scheduled for 1 April 2006, has now been deferred until the Autumn.
35. The new legislation offers an opportunity for the Service to develop and expand links with the business community as demonstrated by the involvement of Officers in a seminar at Worcester Rugby Club held by Clarke Roxburgh Insurance for its agents, this will be repeated during the New Year for their business clients.

Arson Prevention

Local Public Service Agreement – Second Generation (LPSA2)

36. This project now forms part of the Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire, resulting in negotiations on target stretch now being carried out with the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) and no longer the ODPM. Due to these changes the starting of this project has been delayed until April 2006.

Information for Members

Education Activity

37. Following the successful completion of our first year delivery to all year 8 pupils across Herefordshire and Worcestershire involving the consequences of malicious calls and deliberate firesetting, the department is busy piloting the use of our interactive, computerised system, 'Qwizdom', in schools. Children answer questions using a key pad allowing the Education Assistant to quickly evaluate their response and use such observations to adapt and determine future delivery as necessary for a

particular school. Qwizdom will soon be used as a key education tool during all year 8 delivery across the two counties. It is anticipated that this method of delivery will be extended to the Watches as an additional delivery tool for the year 5 classes also.

38. In addition to teaching key fire safety messages to Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 the department are developing delivery methods for including both road and water safety into our education spectrum. It is envisaged that a full 'safety' programme will be in place by the end of this academic year. Following a most successful meeting with The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS) it is intended that HWFRS will work in partnership with the RLSS to aid the development and delivery of water safety education into all of our schools.
39. Research into Special Educational Needs and delivery into Educational establishments is moving forward rapidly. Strong links with N. E. Worcestershire College have enabled observation of and delivery of key fire safety messages to students with an array of special needs, ie. autism, downs syndrome, deafness etc. Members of the team are attending a course relating to the Autistic spectrum in January and in order to complement our special needs work, Deaf Awareness courses have already been attended. Delivering key fire safety messages to children with special needs is a diverse and complex issue involving huge amounts of research and resource. Partnership links have been established with Chadsgrove special school (children with physical disabilities) in Bromsgrove and a joint working venture is underway in this area. Liaising with other Fire and Rescue Services is also on the forthcoming special needs agenda. Community links with students with special needs were further enriched when Redditch Fire Station accommodated 70 students from Redditch College for their annual Christmas party.
40. Numerous requests for work experience with HWFRS are in the pipeline with the aim to accommodate them during the Spring and Summer terms. Crucial Crew was again most successful at Bosbury in September when pupils from numerous Herefordshire Schools attended practical water safety sessions to include throwing a life buoy to someone in distress. In relation to future Crucial Crew events where numerous children learn about fire hazards in the home and escape from a smoke filled room, a visit to Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service took place in December to assess the use of their new inflatable room. This offers a more modern and up to date facility to enhance our profile further at such future events.
41. Following the initial pilot of our new road safety initiative 'Dying to Drive' at Bishop Perowne High School in Worcester in July 2005, organisation for a future event in Herefordshire to accommodate all year 10 pupils from Herefordshire schools is on schedule. Liaison continues with the Youth Offending Team, Police and Herefordshire Council and it is planned to run this exciting initiative in July 2006.
42. As a lead organisation in the Public Social Health Education curriculum for schools across the two counties, the department liaise closely with the LEA advisory team and in particular with Worcestershire Healthy Schools Programme. The department have been invited to host a high profile event offering a Professional Development Opportunity for PSHE Coordinators, Healthy Schools Coordinators and Teachers of Health and Social Care, to take place at the Training and Development Centre,

Droitwich on 27 January 2006. The day will give teachers the opportunity to discuss key issues with input from a range of local contributors in the areas of alcohol and tobacco and will promote the work of this department to key specialists within the education community.

Licensing Act 2003

43. Inspecting Officers in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire took part in the Police-lead "Operation Christmas Presence" campaign which targeted alcohol related issues. Premises inspected consisted mainly of nightclubs and the larger public houses, and with the exception of a few it was found that generally the premises were satisfactory as regards the safety of the public from fire

Fire Safety Promotional Activity

44. The first in a series of promotional coasters has been produced. These will be distributed at key business seminars to remind attendees from the business community about the professional level of support provided by the Service.
45. These coasters will profile Legislative Fire Safety Departments, the Training and Development Centre and also remind business about the enhanced skills and good working practice that employing Retained Firefighters can bring.

Diwali/Eid

46. The NCFSC produced adverts targeted at UK based S.E. Asian print and broadcast media. Posters were distributed in key locations to help raise fire safety awareness amongst the ethnic S.E. Asian populations who celebrate Diwali. The Services Marketing Officer organised a partnership project with West Midlands Fire Service to further promote Fire Safety Awareness using Radio XL, one of the largest Asian radio stations in the UK. A Fire Service Manager together with an Outreach Worker conducted a one hour live chat and phone-in show. During the broadcast our Services were able to promote the work we do to make staff aware of issues surrounding equality and diversity. This will help to build long-term trust and enhance the profile of the Fire Service when reaching out to some of our 'at risk' communities.
47. NCFSC Posters were distributed in key locations to help raise fire safety awareness amongst the Muslim populations who celebrate Eid. The Service's Marketing Officer was approached by the NCFSC to conduct a live radio interview for broadcast to the Muslim population across central England on behalf of the Regional Fire Services. Key safety messages were promoted in a format suited to the target audience.

National Mela (18-20 November 2005)

48. As part of Fire Services of the Midlands, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service supported the above event aimed at individuals with a background or interest in S.E Asian culture.
49. Our joint presence proved a bigger success than last year. There were a total of 124 recruitment enquires (up from 81 in 2004) and 1,200 carrier bags of fire safety information - in addition to 1,500 fire safety wrist bands handed out.

50. The aim of our presence was to promote our safety agenda and highlight the potential career opportunities the Service has to offer. Fifty-five individuals expressed a direct interest in working for Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service – this matter is being dealt with by our HR department.

Road Safety

51. Working in Partnership with Worcestershire County Councils' Road Safety Team, an advert has been placed in the Worcester County Council Road Safety Guide to highlight the increasing number of serious vehicle-related collisions the Fire Service attends, and reminds readers about the main causes of these collisions. Both national and local statistics highlight that driver's lack of attention is the most significant factor in the majority of KSI (Killed or Seriously Injured) road related incidents. The Service also formed a partnership with Ambulance and Police Services to promote the issues surrounding road safety at this time of year.

Health and Safety

Stress

52. A number of training events have taken place, including Managing Stress in the Workplace for all Middle and Senior Managers, training for the Stress Review Group and specific Focus Groups for Fire Control. The final phase of the Fire Control Focus Group process has been completed and further actions identified. A risk assessment based on the outcomes of the focus group, will now assist in the determination of priorities/interventions.

Disabled Firefighter Return to Work Programme

53. The Unit has completed further assessments of a Firefighter who lost his lower left leg beneath the knee in a non-work related accident. This involved a range of role related assessments to measure the impact of a prosthetic limb and the ability of the Firefighter to function in an operational firefighting capacity.
54. The International Training Centre at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was used to undertake a number of assessments involving wearing breathing apparatus whilst completing a variety of tasks in a hot fire facility. The visit was extremely beneficial in identifying issues for future consideration, should the individual return to work in an operational capacity. Further assessment work will take place during January to March 2006.

Risk Assessments – Update

55. The Unit continues its involvement with the Service's Water Rescue Strategy, and has also liaised with Fleet, the Property Department and the Equipment Support Group over the development of risk assessments. Also the Unit has engaged additional external services to assist in the assessment/production of general risk assessments for a number of key department's activities. It is envisaged that this work will be completed by the end of February 2006.

West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB)

Project P1.1 Management of Health and Safety

56. The Service, which continues to lead on the Regional Health and Safety Collaboration Group (RHSCG) has made links with the Motion Analysis Research and Rehabilitation Centre (MARRC) at the University of Worcester which has facilities for objective three-dimensional motion capture, analysis and rehabilitation. The RHSCG has had preliminary discussions with MARRC regarding the development of a Regional Manual Handling Course.

Training and Development Centre

57. During the past quarter instructors supported two Wholetime recruit courses which have been completed as part of regional collaboration with Staffordshire and the West Midlands Fire Services as well as the completion of a second modular retained course run at Droitwich.
58. A redesigned EFAD course covering the skills for driving to emergencies such as road craft, vehicle positioning as well as the legal responsibilities is now being delivered. The course incorporates driving under 'blue light conditions' giving candidates a more realistic experience of other road user's reactions and provides new drivers with this experience before driving to incidents for real.
59. Considerable driver familiarisation training has also been necessary due to the introduction of new vehicles such as the High Volume Pumping vehicle at Kidderminster and the resultant relocation of the Service's Water Carriers where drivers at the relocated Stations have needed training to enable them to drive these specialised vehicles. Similarly a role out programme of new front-line Scania appliances have also begun, which has also meant the need for driver familiarisation training.
60. The Training and Development Centre staff have designed a number of new courses which include a tactical ventilation course; and methods of instruction course; and an updated global induction course designed for new employees.
61. A partnership with Worcester College of Technology has been agreed to provide personnel with the Government's skills for life training initiative aimed at improving the nation's literacy and numeric ability. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service took part in a pilot to evaluate the programme using new recruits. The College has the capacity to provide development opportunities to students who require assistance with these subjects.
62. In addition to the continued delivery of the Watch Management Programme to personnel from three Brigades within the region, an 'Emerging leader's programme' has commenced for Firefighters who show potential to be Crew Managers. This covers incident management and people management topics.

63. The Commercial Department continues to provide essential training in fire safety to businesses with the Basic Firefighting, The Fire Warden's courses and the Management Fire Risk Assessment course all of which contribute to meeting the goals of the Service's IRMP.

Summary of Courses: 01.10.05 – 31.12.05

Operational Courses	63	903	Training Days
Commercial Courses	17	231	Students Trained
Meetings and Seminars	33	347	Attendees

Equality and Diversity

Strategy

64. Steady progress has been made in aligning the strategy with objectives from the Race Equality Scheme review. Progress has also continued in developing access and services for disabled people and preparing for the 'positive duty' under the DDA.
65. The Global induction process has been finalised, and this is being aligned to approaches adopted by the Training and Development Centre. A comprehensive employee handbook is being developed in line with good practice. Progress is also continuing against individual objectives, with a full review due in this quarter.

FAWAG

66. The Group will begin to consider the broader implications of changes brought about by the regional work and the review of objectives for the Equality and Diversity Strategy. Next year's targets and priorities will also be established in the planning process.

The Regional Project

67. The regional project is now drawing to a close, with an end date of April 2006 for this initial stage. Four areas of work have been considered:
- i. Regional approaches to the Equality Standard for Local Government, and current positions of individual Services
 - ii. Individual approaches to the Equality and Diversity training – designed to establish good practice in the region
 - iii. Current Equality and Diversity Policy portfolios and how effectively they meet organisational and legislative requirements
 - iv. The Race Equality Scheme - current positions of each individual service, and its subsequent relationship with legislative duties and good practice
68. This will ultimately result in a regional Equality and Diversity Strategy designed to unify approaches and establish good practice norms.

Background Papers

None

Incident Statistics – Comparative Data 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005

		Quarter 2 2005/06			Quarter 3 2005/06		
District	Station	Total Fires	Total Special Service (SS) Incidents	Total False Alarms	Total Fires	Total Special Service (SS) Incidents	Total False Alarms
South	21 Worcester	143	72	213	89	61	221
	26 Droitwich	39	30	76	40	34	53
	28 Evesham	40	23	61	28	26	39
	29 Pebworth	4	0	5	8	0	2
	30 Broadway	7	3	16	4	4	10
	31 Pershore	21	10	19	16	16	25
	32 Upton	11	24	17	4	16	11
	41 Malvern	42	22	67	28	24	44
	53 Tenbury Wells	9	4	8	9	6	1
	District Total	316	188	482	226	245	406
North	22 Stourport	80	13	30	28	15	39
	23 Bewdley	16	9	8	8	9	9
	24 Kidderminster	82	43	118	50	38	145
	25 Bromsgrove	82	36	99	57	43	89
	27 Redditch	171	64	158	127	61	163
	District Total	431	165	413	270	210	445
West	42 Ledbury	16	11	25	23	11	30
	43 Fownhope	4	2	15	4	4	9
	44 Ross on Wye	15	13	10	22	23	11
	45 Whitchurch	1	8	4	8	18	2
	46 Hereford	91	55	102	71	45	103
	47 Ewyas Harold	1	1	3	2	2	0
	48 Eardisley	3	4	4	3	1	2
	49 Kington	0	2	2	5	5	0
	50 Leintwardine	2	3	1	4	4	0
	51 Kingsland	4	3	6	5	0	8
	52 Leominster	20	9	28	18	7	20
	54 Bromyard	13	9	10	7	13	14
	55 Peterchurch	5	4	5	2	0	1
	District Total	175	124	215	173	122	200
	GRAND TOTAL	922	477	1110	669	475	1051

Fire Statistics 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005

District	Station	Primary Fires (FDR1)	Secondary Fires (FDR3)	Chimney Fires	Total Fires	Rescues at Fires	Casualties at Fires	Fatalities at Fires
South	21 Worcester	49	38	2	89	0	2	1
	26 Droitwich	20	17	3	40	4	4	0
	28 Evesham	16	8	4	28	0	0	0
	29 Pebworth	5	3	0	8	0	0	0
	30 Broadway	1	2	1	4	0	0	0
	31 Pershore	10	4	2	16	0	0	0
	32 Upton	2	0	2	4	0	0	0
	41 Malvern	12	14	2	28	0	0	0
	53 Tenbury	7	1	1	9	0	1	0
District Total	122	87	17	226	4	7	1	
North	22 Stourport	11	14	3	28	0	0	0
	23 Bewdley	6	2	0	8	0	0	0
	24 Kidderminster	28	21	1	50	0	0	0
	25 Bromsgrove	41	16	0	57	0	1	0
	27 Redditch	54	70	3	127	1	0	0
District Total	140	123	7	270	1	1	0	
West	42 Ledbury	8	11	4	23	0	0	0
	43 Fownhope	1	0	3	4	0	0	0
	44 Ross on Wye	14	5	3	22	0	3	0
	45 Whitchurch	5	1	2	8	0	0	0
	46 Hereford	34	31	6	71	1	3	0
	47 Ewyas Harold	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
	48 Eardisley	2	1	0	3	0	0	0
	49 Kington	2	0	3	5	0	0	0
	50 Leintwardine	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
	51 Kingsland	1	0	3	5	0	0	0
	52 Leominster	12	3	3	18	0	0	0
	54 Bromyard	4	1	2	7	0	0	0
	55 Peterchurch	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
District Total	185	53	35	173	1	6	0	
GRAND TOTAL	347	263	59	669	6	14	1	

Special Service Incidents 1 Oct 2005 to 30 Dec 2005

District	Station	Emergency Special Services	Non-emergency Special Services	Total Special Service (SS) Incidents	Rescues at SS Incidents	Casualties at SS Incidents	Fatalities at SS Incidents
South	21 Worcester	61	0	61	4	10	2
	26 Droitwich	34	0	34	1	3	0
	28 Evesham	26	0	26	3	7	0
	29 Pebworth	0	0	0	0	0	0
	30 Broadway	4	0	4	0	0	0
	31 Pershore	16	0	16	2	7	0
	32 Upton	16	0	16	0	7	0
	41 Malvern	24	0	24	7	5	0
	53 Tenbury	6	0	6	2	2	0
District Total	245	0	245	19	41	2	
North	22 Stourport	15	0	15	4	11	0
	23 Bewdley	9	0	9	0	2	0
	24 Kidderminster	38	0	38	3	3	1
	25 Bromsgrove	43	0	43	4	5	0
	27 Redditch	61	0	61	1	4	0
District Total	210	0	210	12	25	1	
West	42 Ledbury	11	0	11	0	4	0
	43 Fownhope	4	0	4	0	0	0
	44 Ross on Wye	23	0	23	1	6	0
	45 Whitchurch	8	0	18	0	7	0
	46 Hereford	44	1	45	6	12	0
	47 Ewyas Harold	2	0	2	0	4	0
	48 Eardisley	1	0	1	0	0	0
	49 Kington	5	0	5	0	3	0
	50 Leintwardine	3	0	4	0	0	0
	51 Kingsland	0	0	0	0	0	0
	52 Leominster	7	0	7	0	11	0
	54 Bromyard	13	0	13	0	9	1
55 Peterchurch	0	0	0	0	0	0	
District Total	121	1	122	7	56	1	
GRAND TOTAL	474	1	475	38	122	4	

False Alarms and Fire Safety Statistics 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005

District	Station	False Alarm Malicious	False Alarm Good Intent	False Alarm Apparatus	Total False Alarms
South	21 Worcester	12	48	161	221
	26 Droitwich	1	11	41	53
	28 Evesham	2	6	31	39
	29 Pebworth	0	0	2	2
	30 Broadway	1	2	7	10
	31 Pershore	1	10	14	25
	32 Upton	0	5	6	11
	41 Malvern	2	9	33	44
	53 Tenbury	0	0	1	1
District Total		19	91	296	406
North	22 Stourport	3	10	26	39
	23 Bewdley	0	2	7	9
	24 Kidderminster	13	16	116	145
	25 Bromsgrove	5	16	68	89
	27 Redditch	10	39	114	163
District Total		31	83	331	445
West	42 Ledbury	1	2	27	30
	43 Fownhope	0	1	8	9
	44 Ross on Wye	0	3	8	11
	45 Whitchurch	0	2	0	2
	46 Hereford	6	22	75	103
	47 Ewyas Harold	0	0	0	0
	48 Eardisley	0	0	2	2
	49 Kington	0	0	0	0
	50 Leintwardine	0	0	0	0
	51 Kingsland	1	0	7	8
	52 Leominster	3	6	11	20
	54 Bromyard	0	6	8	14
	55 Peterchurch	0	0	1	1
District Total		11	42	147	200
GRAND TOTAL		61	216	774	1051

Fire Safety Inspections 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005	
Full inspections	10
Re-inspections	303
Plan inspections	23
Follow-up inspections	117
Specific inspections	536
Building Regulations Plans/Consultations	289

9. MEMBERS' VISITS PROGRAMME

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a Visits Programme to Stations and Departments.
-

Background

2. In 2004 following discussion with the four Group Leaders, a new format for Members' Visits to Stations and Departments was proposed. It was suggested that Members form small groups, two or three in number, with each group visiting three Stations over a ten-month period. It was suggested that short reports should be produced by the teams following each visit and forwarded to the Chief Fire Officer who would then produce a compilation report. Whilst the appointment to the groups was to be a matter for the Group Leaders to determine it was felt that the Groups should if possible be cross-party. Funding issues at that time meant that it was not proposed to pursue the matter until April 2005. Subsequently in view of elections in 2005 the matter was further deferred. It is now planned to commence visits in April 2006.
3. Attached as Appendix 1 is a proposed programme detailing Stations and Departments to be visited and the proposed division of Members into small groups to conduct the visits. Appendix 2 attached details the proposed dates and times it is proposed that the locations are to be visited.
4. A copy of the form which it is proposed should be completed following each visit is attached at Appendix 3.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that arrangements for a programme of Members' visits be endorsed, subject to any further points of detail being finalised after consultation with Group Leaders.

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1

PROPOSED GROUPS FOR MEMBERS' STATION/DEPARTMENTAL VISITS

Councillor	Party	Group for Visits
T Bean	Liberal Democrat	1
A Hardman	Conservative	1
R Udall	Labour	1
M Bew	Liberal Democrat	2
G Davis	Independent	2
K Grumbley	Conservative	2
C Smith	Liberal Democrat	3
S Clee	Conservative	3
R Farmer	Conservative	3
A Fry	Labour	4
M Oborski	Independent	4
D Prodger	Conservative	4
R Preece	Labour	5
D Taylor	Independent	5
J Webb	Liberal Democrat	5
G Yarranton	Conservative	5
P Mould	Labour	6
M Clarke	Conservative	6
D Hamilton-Jones	Conservative	6
M Drinkwater	Conservative	7
P Mills	Labour	7
J Holden	Conservative	7
P Jones	Conservative	8
B Passingham	Labour	8
D Dudley	Labour	8

PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF VISITS – FRA MEMBERS

Station/Department	Group to Visit	Date	Time
Worcester	1	06 April 2006	10.00am
Stourport	8	04 October 2006	7.00pm
Bewdley	8	04 April 2006	7.00pm
Kidderminster/North District	3	25 April 2006	10.00am
Bromsgrove	6	10 April 2006	10.00am
Redditch	4	24 April 2006	10.00am
Droitwich/Training Centre	3	14 August 2006	10.00am
Evesham	4	21 August 2006	10.00am
Pebworth	1	08 August 2006	7.00pm
Broadway	8	07 August 2006	7.00pm
Pershore	1	02 October 2006	7.00pm
Upton-upon-Severn	6	21 August 2006	7.00pm
Malvern/South District	7	06 April 2006	10.00am
Ledbury	7	09 October 2006	7.30pm
Fownhope	6	03 October 2006	7.15pm
Ross-on-Wye	5	11 April 2006	7.30pm
Whitchurch	5	24 August 2006	7.30pm
Hereford/West District	2	24 April 2006	10.00am
Ewyas Harold	4	16 October 2006	7.00pm
Eardisley	3	05 October 2006	7.00pm
Kington	7	17 August 2006	7.00pm
Leintwardine	2	27 June 2006	7.30pm
Kingsland	3	06 December 2006	7.00pm
Leominster	2	09 August 2006	7.00pm
Tenbury Wells	5	02 October 2006	7.00pm
Peterchurch	2	10 October 2006	7.00pm
Bromyard	2	07 December 2006	7.00pm
Headquarters	All	28 September 2006	09.30am
ESG/Workshops/Supplies	1	05 December 2006	10.00am
Fire Service College	All	November - TBA	TBA

Refreshments will be available at the above dates



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

EVALUATION OF MEMBER'S VISITS

Name of Member in attendance	Date of visit	Location visited
<p>1. Did you find the visit to the Station/Department useful?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2. Was the Station/Department you visited appropriate to your geographical area?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3. Would you recommend that this is carried out on a yearly basis?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>4. Any other comments</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		

When form is completed please return to:
Wendy Drohan
Administrative Support Department
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
2 Kings Court
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester, WR5 1JR

11. MEMBERS' TRAINING PROGRAMME 2006/07

Purpose of report

1. To update Members on the Training Programme for 2006/07 developed to improve the support available to Members in undertaking their duties.
-

Background

2. In line with continuous development for Members of the Authority, a pro-active training programme has been developed for 2006-07. The programme aims to improve support and information available to Members.
3. A copy of the updated Programme is appended. Further detailed invitations and instructions will follow shortly.

Background papers

None

Member's Training Programme 2006/2007

Lead Officer	Subject	Delegates	Date	Time	Venue	Invitations Sent Out	No. of Members Attending
DOC Clerk DOC	Code of Conduct Standards/Ethics Freedom of Information Act /Data Protection		23 February 2006	10.00am to 12.30pm (Refreshments at 11.00am)	Service Headquarters		
	Joint Training event with Worcs CC	Standards Committee members only	TBA before Easter		County Hall		
DCFO	IRMP	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DO Performance	Performance Plan	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DoF DOC	Financial Management Risk Management	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
ACO HR	Industrial Relations Disability Equality and Diversity	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DoF	Budget Seminar	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DCFO	Fire Control/Fire Link	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DCFO	CPA Workshops	All Members	TBC		Service Headquarters		
DOC	Corporate Risk Business Continuity Workshop	Group Leaders	TBC		Service Headquarters		
Learning Open Days (Regional Workshops)							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Development 	Chair Vice-chair	TBC				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People Management Equality and Diversity 	All Members	TBC				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing an understanding of Regional Management Boards 	All Members	TBC				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role Maps for Elected Members 	Group Leaders	TBC				

11. FIRE STATION COMMUNITY EVENTS

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of Fire Station Community Events for the year ahead.
-

Background

2. Fire Station Community Events offer the opportunity for Members and local communities to meet their Firefighters, many of whom are Retained Firefighters who live and work within these same communities.
3. This broader range of community events allow the Service to present both Fire Safety information by demonstrations and other visual displays, and other operational information relating to the service the Service provides and to join up with other partners and engage with the local communities.
4. The events vary from Station to Station and each commits considerable time and effort to making public access fun and informative.
5. Details of planned events will be circulated at the meeting.

Background Papers

None

12. REVISED COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Purpose of Report

1. To consider revisions to the Authority's Committee Structure.
-
2. The Authority established the Audit and Budget Committee with its current terms of reference in September 2004.
 3. Following the Authority's 'Good' rating under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process the Service and Authority have been striving to achieve 'Excellent' in the next CPA round. As part of this process a study has been made of the CPA process recently used for Local Authorities.
 4. It is clear that in order to become 'Excellent', an Authority must be highly rated under the 'Use of Resources' category.
 5. One of the specific issues is that an Authority must follow best practice in the role of its Audit Committee.
 6. In reality, this means that the Audit function must be separated from any other function and in particular from any involvement in approving budgets or accounts.
 7. To ensure that the Authority has the opportunity to achieve 'Excellent' CPA status, it is suggested that the audit functions of the current Audit and Budget Committee should be allocated to a separate Committee..
 8. It is recommended that the Budget Committee retain the current terms of reference for the Audit and Budget Committee (except for those provisions transferred to the new Committee) so that its terms of reference are:
 - To review the financial prospects and make recommendations to the Fire & Rescue Authority
 - To have oversight of financial matters raised in external and internal audit arrangements.
 9. It is further recommended that a new Audit Committee is established with Terms of Reference:-
 - To agree the external audit plans
 - To receive reports from the External Auditors
 - To monitor and report on the performance of internal audit.
 - To approve the Statement on Internal Control
 - To approve the Statutory Accounts.

10. In order to comply with best practice, it is suggested that membership of the Audit Committee should exclude:-
 - (a) the Chairman of the Authority
 - (b) the Vice-Chairman of the Authority
 - (c) the Chairman of the Authority's predecessor as Chairman
 - (d) the Chairman of the Budget Committee.
11. It is not otherwise considered necessary to prohibit any overlap of membership between the Audit Committee and the Budget Committee.
12. To progress matters it is proposed that the Clerk should determine with the Group Leaders the size and composition of the Audit Committee and agree whether any corresponding changes need to be made to the size and composition of the Budget Committee. The Authority is, however, invited to appoint the Chairmen of the Audit Committee and the Budget Committee.
13. It is not anticipated that this arrangement will add materially to the FRA's costs. Additional travel allowances may be incurred and an additional Special Responsibility Allowance may be payable depending on who is appointed as Chairmen of the respective Committees. This expenditure can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer, Clerk and Treasurer recommend that

- (a) the Authority establish an Audit Committee with Terms of Reference as at paragraph 9 of the report;**
- (b) a Budget Committee be established with Terms of Reference as at paragraph 8 of the report;**
- (c) the Clerk be authorised following consultation with Group Leaders to take any necessary action to give effect to proportionality requirements, determine the number of seats on the Audit Committee and any corresponding changes to the Budget Committee, and make appointments to those Committees in accordance with the wishes of the Group leaders; and**
- (d) the Authority considers the appointment of the Chairmen of the Audit Committee and of the Budget Committee.**

Background Papers

None