

MEETING: 20 DECEMBER 2010

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF PREVENTION AND EDUCATION (P&E) PROVISION

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY AND FINANCE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the findings of the review of the Prevention and Education function within the service, undertaken as part of the Integrated Risk Management (IRMP) Annual Action Plan for 2009/2010, and to seek approval to the associated recommendations resulting from the review.

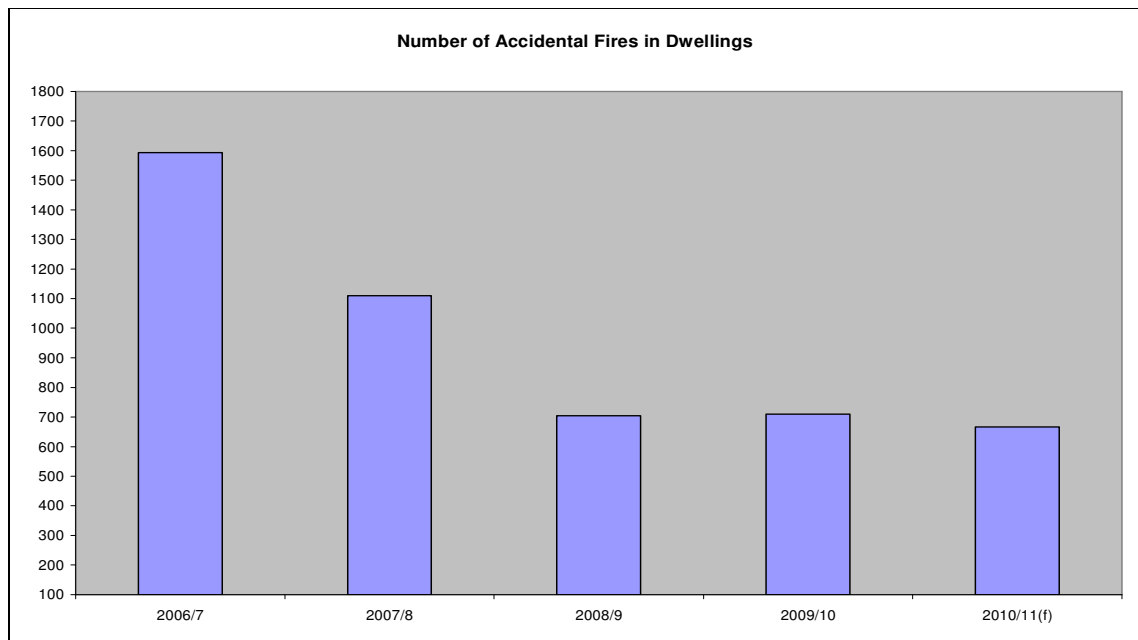
2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2010, Members agreed the 2010/11 IRMP Action Plan, which included a review of the Prevention and Education (P&E) function, with a focus on identifying potential efficiencies. This paper presents the outcomes of the review.
- 2.2 Since the removal of outdated property based standards of fire cover in 2004, this Authority has reconfigured its services so that resources are better balanced across prevention, protection and response activities, based on the concept of reducing the risk to life from fire. This change reflected the national impetus set out in the National Fire Framework with its requirement to produce IRMP's based on risk to life, but was also a recognition that Tyne and Wear had, at that time, the highest number of dwelling fires of any area in the country.
- 2.3 This re-balancing of priorities has involved substantial changes in working practices and daily work programmes, together with the redistribution of some resources into the preventative activities of the service. As part of this work the P&E function was created, including centrally located policy and specialist staff as well as community safety teams deployed in local areas of risk. The work programme that was developed included established activities, such as the schools education programme, and new areas of activity with particular emphasis placed on the home safety check (HSC) programme. The new teams that were created were separate from the operational firefighting staff as this was deemed necessary in the early stages in order to provide the required focus on what was a new area of service.
- 2.4 Since the inception of the P&E function there have been several developments as well as considerable success in driving down emergency incidents. However, the department as a whole has not been subject to a fundamental review since its creation. Therefore, the current review is felt to be appropriate.

3 REVIEW FINDINGS

Effectiveness

- 3.1 In terms of effectiveness, there can be no doubt that the investment in community safety/preventative activity has helped the Authority to achieve notable reductions in fires and related injuries over the years, thereby reducing the risk to the community. These achievements have been acknowledged by partners and by external bodies such as the Audit Commission. The following charts illustrate the success of this increased focus on prevention.
- 3.2 The first chart illustrates the reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires, which have fallen from 1593 in 2006 to 710 last year (55% reduction). This improvement in performance is expected to continue with a forecast of 666 such incidents in 2010/11.



- 3.3 As Members will be aware, most accidental dwelling fires that occur in Tyne and Wear start in the kitchen. Over recent years community safety campaigns and education literature aimed at this specific problem have been used along with the HSC process to target this type of incident.
- 3.4 As a result of this work the number of accidental kitchen fires has reduced from a total of 1295 in 2006 to 422 last year (67% reduction), with further improvements expected in 2010/11 (the forecast is 396 such incidents).



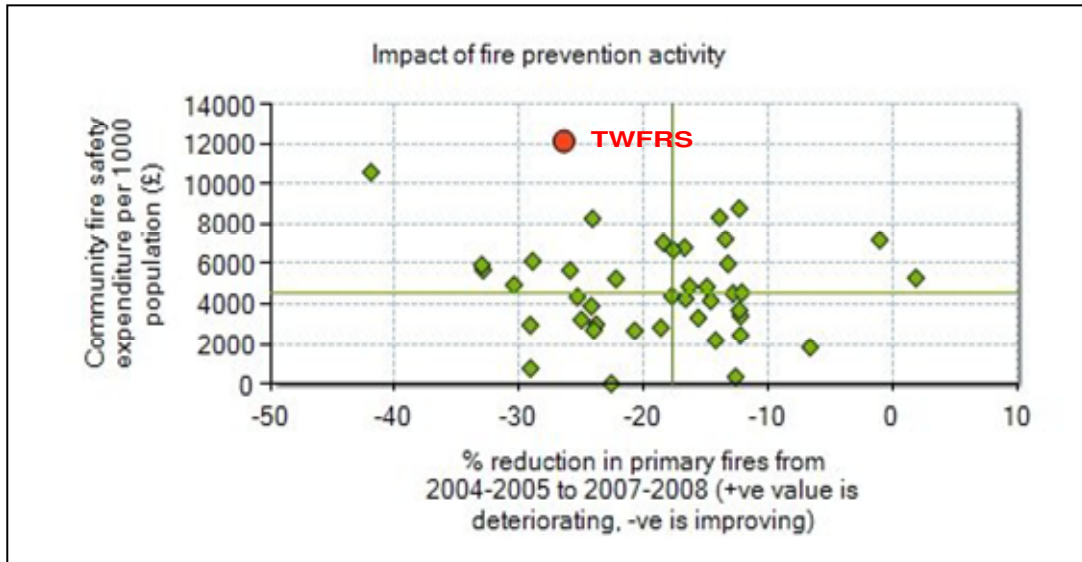
3.5 These reductions in fires have also helped to reduce the number of injuries from 258 in 2006 to 168 last year (35% reduction) and this trend is also forecast to continue in 2010/11. The chart below highlights this impressive decline in fire related injuries over time.



Efficiency

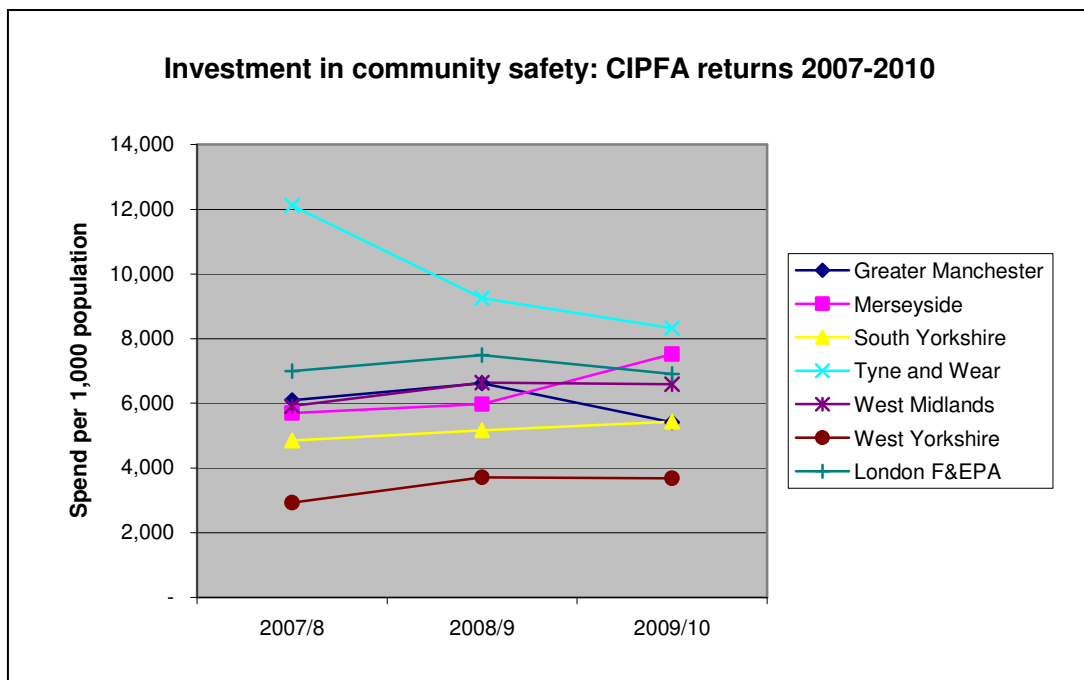
3.6 Whilst the focus on prevention has clearly shown results in terms of effectiveness, the review also sought to explore the efficiency of the current structures and arrangements. However, gathering accurate comparative data to underpin this work has not been straightforward and what data is available should be viewed with circumspection. Nevertheless, the information available has highlighted the significant level of investment made by this Authority.

3.7 A good example of this is contained in the Audit Commission’s ‘Rising to the Challenge’ document, where data shows that in 2007/8 the Authority was achieving good reductions in fires, but was also investing a greater level of funds in to the preventative function than other Authorities. This is illustrated in the chart below:



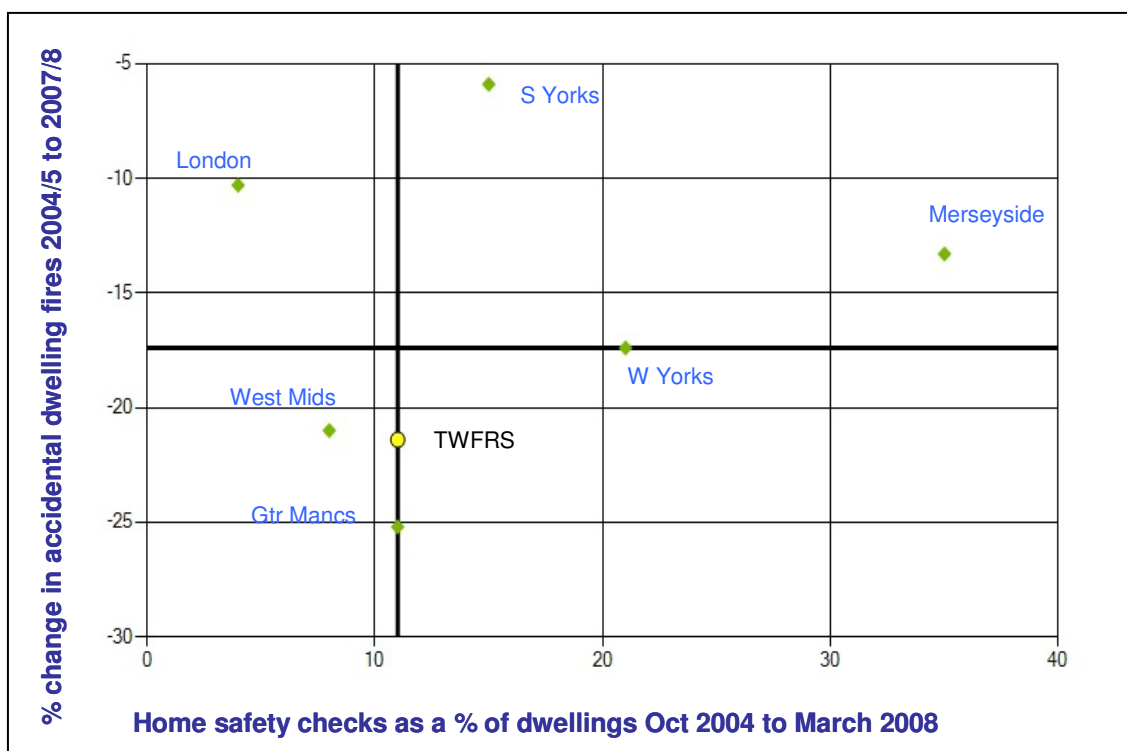
3.8 However, since 2007/08, the Authority has realised efficiencies in this area of work through a more targeted approach to HSC’s. Importantly, this has been achieved whilst continuing to drive down the number of fires as the chart at paragraph 3.2 highlights.

3.9 Thus, figures from CIPFA show that the level of investment of this service is now closer to that of other metropolitan fire and rescue services, although it remains significant. This is illustrated in the chart below:



FURTHER DEVELOPING THE P&E FUNCTION

- 3.10 Whilst the P&E structure has not materially changed since 2003/4, some key changes in processes and policies have been developed and implemented in recent years and these have had a positive impact on the service delivered.
- 3.11 Thus, for example, developments in intelligence systems such as Fire Service Emergency Cover model (FSEC) and the introduction of the Community Fire Risk Management Intelligence System (CFRMIS) has allowed the function to become ever more sophisticated in targeting those most vulnerable to fires in the home.
- 3.12 The advantages of placing an emphasis on risk based HSC targeting methodologies is supported by evidence from the Audit Commission's updated Value for Money profiles, which indicate that a targeted approach to investment in community safety is more likely to yield success than a traditional mass coverage approach. The chart below illustrated this fact and highlights that this Authority achieved the second highest reduction in accidental dwelling fires in this period, despite conducting HSC's at a smaller percentage of dwellings.



- 3.13 The better availability and quality of data has been crucial in informing the work of the service's Performance Action Group (PAG), whose role it is to drive community safety improvement across the service by monitoring trends, evaluating plans and directing delivery to better support implementation of the Authority's priorities.
- 3.14 Another key development in recent years has been the ongoing development of the HSC programme so that it can be more readily undertaken by firefighters. This allows an integrated use of firefighters which is more efficient; the same staff who are always available to tackle incidents and fight fires, are also able to spend part of their time preventing them.

- 3.15 In essence, these developments have allowed a significant amount of community safety activity to shift from a specific P&E function to service delivery teams and operational crews.
- 3.16 This is illustrated by the fact that In 2009/10 over 17,700 HSCs were carried out by firefighters, affording them the opportunity to frequently engage with members of the public who can be hard to reach and influence. This is all the more notable when compared to 2003/04 where no such activity was undertaken. The standing of firefighters as trusted role models in society has undoubtedly assisted in their ability to do this.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 As a result of all of these developments it is considered that the scope exists for a realignment of P&E function. More specifically, the existing Neighbourhood Fire Teams and CS teams will be merged into five compact teams with one based at each of the districts managed by the District management structure and supported by PAG.
- 4.2 The main role of these teams role will be to concentrate upon the more complex areas of CS work thus allowing the station based crews to lead on core preventative activities. Each team will be appropriately sized to deliver the work required within the individual district and will have the required specialist skills available to them. If approved this structure will reduce the establishment by 15 posts therefore releasing significant efficiencies without reducing service quality.
- 4.3 Consequently, the review proposes to:
- continue the transfer of community safety work from P&E teams to station based crews and district management structures
 - reduce the size of the P&E teams whilst maintaining a core of personnel to support and further develop our approach to community safety, focusing on specialised areas such as diversionary work, anti social behaviour (ASB) related incidents and specialist HSC
 - continue to evaluate the new team approach in the coming years as greater efficiencies may be achievable.
- 4.4 If agreed, this proposal will mean a reduction of 2 Watch Manager (B), 5 Watch Manager (A), 4 Crew Manager and 4 Community Firefighter posts from P&E. These reductions will be achieved through natural wastage and redeployment.
- 4.5 It is estimated that the adoption of these changes will save in the region of £625,735 in a full year and reduce the spend on community safety to approximately £7,692 per 1000 population (based upon 2009/10 actual CS spend). This level of investment is still significant when compared to the other metropolitan fire and Rescue Authorities, which is recorded as £6,268 per 1000 per population. This level of investment continues to underline this Authority's commitment to preventative activity.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Implementation of the proposed structural changes would allow efficiencies of **£625,735** to be realised (inclusive of on costs), to be factored into the budget from 2011-2012 onwards.

6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Health and Safety implications resulting from this report

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity Implications resulting from this specific report

8 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A more sophisticated approach to targeting risk together with the further use of operational crews in the delivery of preventative work underpin the proposals contained in this report. Nevertheless, there is the potential risk that the proposed reduction in staffing could lead to an increase in fires within Tyne and Wear.
- 8.2 However, the Chief Fire Officer is of the opinion that this risk is low given the level of sophistication now available with regard to identifying vulnerable individuals, the increased involvement of operational personnel and the significant ongoing financial investment that will continue to be made in the P&E function.
- 8.3 If Members approve the proposals then the impact of them will be kept under regular review by the Chief Fire Officer and will be subject to further reports.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Consultation on the proposals has commenced with the representative bodies. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has previously expressed strong views regarding any reduction in the operational establishment, although they have made it clear that their overriding concern is the maintenance of the operational response establishment. They have also stated previously, that where reductions in establishment do take place, any subsequent savings should be re-invested in other areas to bolster the work of other departments.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members are requested to:
- A) Consider the contents of this report
 - B) Approve the implementation of the review of Prevention and Education, including the removal of posts as set out in 3.15 from April 2011
 - C) Receive further reports as appropriate

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- IRMP Action Plan 2010/11
- TWFRS quarterly and annual performance reports
- Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency. *Audit Commission 2008*
- Value for Money profiles (updated 2010). *Audit Commission, available online*
- Fire and Rescue Service Statistics. *CIPFA 2005-10*
- Annual Audit Letters 2008/9 and 2009/10