

**MEETING: 15 DECEMBER 2008**

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**SUBJECT: REMEMBRANCE DAY 2008 – MENIN GATE - YPRES**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline, for the information of Members, the Authority's involvement and representation at this solemn and highly regarded act of remembrance.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The annual Remembrance Day commemorations are held on 11<sup>th</sup> November every year at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium. There are three main events, one on 10<sup>th</sup> November at 2000 hours; the main event at 1100 hours on 11<sup>th</sup> November and again at 2000 hours. Each event commences with a full parade through the streets of Ypres and is well supported by the Belgian public as well as the many visitors from the United Kingdom and other countries of the world.
- 2.2 Since the end of the First World War the 'Last Post' ceremony has been conducted every day at 2000 hours at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium in remembrance of those comrades who gave their lives in the name of freedom and justice. The only time the ceremony was suspended was during World War Two.
- 2.3 Until the 1950s, the ceremony was conducted by the Belgian Military, however since that date the ceremony has been undertaken by buglers from the Ypres Fire and Rescue Service, and indeed the Fire and Rescue Service are now the recognised leaders for this event. Since 1986, members of the United Kingdom Fire and Rescue Services have also attended and participated in the ceremonies on Remembrance Day.

**3 REMEMBRANCE DAY 2008**

- 3.1 As in previous years, the Chairman of the Authority had the honour and privilege to represent the Authority and members of the United Kingdom Fire and Rescue Service at the Ceremonies this year. Also in attendance were the Ceremonial Squads and Pipe and Drum Bands from Devon FRS, Staffordshire FRS, Cornwall FRS, London Fire Brigade, West Midlands FRS, Kent FRS and the Devonport Naval Contingent as well as the Tyne and Wear Ceremonial Squad and Pipe Band.
- 3.2 The main parade was held at 1100 hours on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and on parade were well over 400 people including representatives from the United Kingdom Police Forces, Army, Navy and Air Force as well as representatives from the Belgian and other European Armed Forces. In addition, the small

market town of Ypres played host to numerous visitors from the United Kingdom, Belgium and other countries of the world. This year was particularly poignant as it is the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War I which was recognised by the increased number of participants.

3.3 The Chairman laid a wreath on behalf of fallen comrades and was joined at the Menin Gate by Government representatives from across the world, including Australia, New Zealand, France, Belgium and other commonwealth countries.

3.4 The Tyne and Wear Ceremonial Squad and Pipe Band are also deserved of recognition as they give their own time to attend these and other Ceremonies representing the Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The Authority is requested to:-

- a) Note the contents of this report, and;
- b) Convey appreciation to the members of the Ceremonial Squad and Pipe Band for their professionalism in representing the Authority at the event.

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#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- Strategic Plan 2008-2013