

TYNE & WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 10

MEETING: 11 DECEMBER 2017

SUBJECT: BONFIRE CAMPAIGN 2017

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY) THE STRATEGIC FINANCE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members the impact of the 2017 bonfire campaign.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, the Bonfire period is traditionally the busiest time of the year for the Service and this year was no exception. As in the past, measures were taken to ensure that the Service had the capability and resources to deal with the increase in calls to bonfires, whilst also maintaining the operational capability to respond effectively to life threatening incidents.
- 2.2 A proactive Bonfire campaign was undertaken during the weeks prior to the 5th November. The campaign was developed in conjunction with local partners and incorporated educational activities, publicity and media messages, bonfire uplift schemes and operational command and control arrangements.
- 2.3 The key objectives of the campaign were:
- To raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of the misuse/abuse of bonfires and fireworks amongst young people.
 - To encourage everyone to attend an organised display
 - To reinforce the message amongst young people that attacks on fire crews will not be tolerated and legal action will be taken
 - To work with partners to ensure that effective arrangements are in place to uplift illegal bonfires, prior to ignition
 - To investigate and prosecute where necessary, any concerns relating to the storage of fireworks

3 BONFIRE CAMPAIGN

- 3.1 A Bonfire collaboration group was established in August, with representatives from the Service, Northumbria Police and Local Authorities, to ensure effective delivery of the objectives within each community. An internal bonfire task and finish group was also established, comprising of members from multiple departments, to ensure an effective and co-ordinated campaign.
- 3.2 The Bonfire campaign aims to influence young people in the target age group (11-14 years old). Service staff developed a risk based education programme to target all secondary and non-mainstream schools within Tyne and Wear.
- 3.3 Service district teams in collaboration with Northumbria Police adopted a data led approach to target and visit 32 secondary schools across Tyne & Wear. Bonfire and firework safety education talks were delivered to 17,291 students using an updated version of Ryan's Regret, one of our service DVD's, that highlights the serious consequences of misusing fireworks.
- 3.4 For those young people outside of mainstream education, sessions were delivered to 5 Pupil Referral Units (PRU's) and to 20 Special Educational Needs Schools (SEN's) by SafetyWorks! 388 young people from outside of mainstream education attended SafetyWorks! and received this targeted Bonfire campaign education.
- 3.5 A service-wide communications campaign was launched to encourage residents to have a safe and enjoyable Bonfire period, in collaboration with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Northumbria Police and Northumberland FRS.
- 3.6 The campaign was delivered predominately via social media, featuring the previously produced and then updated Ryan's Regret DVD, which has proven in the past to have been our most successful and influential DVD. The campaign also included the creation of a new bonfire campaign poster, entitled 'facing consequences'.
- 3.7 We actively sought support from a number of local celebrities and clubs, including ex-footballer and TV pundit Alan Shearer and SAFC through their community events. During our bonfire campaign, the Service Facebook page likes increased by 1,593, up to 9.2k, with one post reaching over 400k. The Service Twitter followers increased by 200, up to 13.8k with our most successful tweet reaching 115k people.
- 3.8 The Service LinkedIn page, particularly with our messages and videos to target businesses, gained 50 new followers and our most popular post reached over 2,000 organisations / individuals.
- 3.9 Messages were incorporated to support fire safety for firework licencing and storage as well as for prevention & education for schools education talks and the protection of our firefighters across Diwali, Halloween and the Bonfire weekend.

- 3.10 The Service website was updated with fresh Bonfire related content. Our pages on organised displays (supporting one of our key messages) received a 79.3% increase in visits and we saw an increase of 4,076 new visitors.
- 3.11 The Service delivered 40 newspaper and on-line articles, 6 TV bulletins and 8 radio features. The Trinity Mirror Group requested the use of our Ryan's Regret film and associated campaign content to be placed on all of their regional media websites across the UK.
- 3.12 The Service also generated coverage in all our key print media and interviews / features on BBC Look North; ITV Tyne Tees News, Made in Tyne and Wear; BBC Radio Newcastle; Metro FM, Sun FM; Spark Radio and Spice FM.
- 3.13 Local Authority Bonfire uplift schemes were in operation throughout the bonfire period. Uplifts involved the removal of fuel such as refuse, furniture, and wheelie bins. The uplifting of illegal bonfires prior to ignition clearly reduces the risks to the community and to operational firefighters.
- 3.14 In 2017, Local Authorities and partners carried out 665 uplifts. This represents an increase on the 2016 figure of 629. The increase demonstrates an incredible effort by Local Authorities, given the reduction in their funding and staffing for dedicated uplift schemes, across all Local Authorities of Tyne & Wear.
- 3.15 The Service granted 86 explosives licences, with a total of 145 licences in force for the Halloween and Bonfire selling period from 15th October and ending on 10th November 2017.
- 3.16 These licenced premises led to 52 explosives inspections being completed by the explosives officers on the lead up to and within this selling period. The service conducted joint inspections with Northumbria Police and local Trading Standards teams across Tyne & Wear. A leaflet was developed by the service for use by our partners and our staff, on the safe storage and selling of fireworks, to be issued to local retailers on the lead up to Bonfire night.
- 3.17 There has been a decrease of 10 licences and a decrease of 28 inspections throughout the period. A number of high profile seizures of fireworks have been carried out by the Service over this period, which have been publicised in local and national press, including during radio interviews.
- A large seizure in Newcastle's west end, involved two separate seizures from an individual which totalled 469kg. The service are revoking the individuals licence and investigating to take forward for prosecution.
 - A large seizure in Concord, Washington saw 80kg being removed from a shop due to unsafe storage conditions, where the individual did not have a licence to store and has admitted to storing and selling for a number of years.

4 INCIDENT STATISTICS

4.1 Statistics for the bonfire periods 2009/10 to 2017/18 are displayed in appendix A. Highlights for the period 1st - 6th November and variance from 2016 are:

- 62.5% increase in the number of calls received by Control – 729 to 1192
- 42.5% increase in the number of incidents attended - 468 to 667
- 85.3% increase in the number of deliberate secondary fires – 177 to 328
- 22.2% increase in the number of attacks on our fire crews – 9 to 11
- 75.0% decrease in the number of Firework related primary fires – 4 to 1

4.2 To enable the Service to deal effectively with the increased demand and ensure business continuity, additional command and control arrangements were in place over the period. Additional officers were in attendance at both Police and Fire Control on both the 4th and 5th November.

4.3 Also on the 4th and 5th November the Targeted Response Vehicles (TRV's) at Washington Community Fire Station were primary staffed from 1500-0000 hours to ensure frontline appliances were available for risk level one and two incidents. Between these hours the TRV's attended 103 out of 342 secondary fire incidents (accidental and deliberate).

5 ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS

5.1 There were 11 reported attacks on operational fire crews in 2017, which represents an increase of 2 in comparison to 2016. There were 9 incidents of physical attack (objects and fireworks thrown) – 1 in Gateshead, 5 in Newcastle, 1 in North Tyneside, 1 in South Tyneside and 1 in Sunderland. There were also 2 incidents of aggression & verbal abuse – 1 in Sunderland and 1 in South Tyneside.

5.2 No injuries were sustained by firefighters over the 2017 bonfire period, but in light of this increase, the Service will continue to work in collaboration with local partners and Northumbria Police to tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour and attacks on all emergency crews.

5.3 National statistics in 2016/17 show an increase on the attacks on firefighters. There were 738 incidents involving attacks on firefighters, an increase of 116 on the previous year – Please see Appendix: Figure 6-7

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Collaboration through a partnership approach to the bonfire period continues to be the most efficient and effective way of reducing the risk to the community.

6.2 It can be clearly seen that the total number of calls received and the total number of incidents attended have increased. There are a number of factors that have contributed to this increase.

- The number of bonfire and refuse uplifts undoubtedly prevented many more incidents and further reduced the risk to members of the community and firefighters alike. However, this year saw a significant decrease in the number of resources and funding available on the week end of bonfire night.
- Bonfire night fell on a Sunday this year and as a result, increased the number of incidents on the Friday and Saturday nights, most likely due to an increase in community bonfire events and fireworks parties.
- The weather was very mild across Tyne & Wear this year, inviting more residents outdoors. The temperature was moderate and it was dry, with low wind, providing optimal conditions for bonfires and fireworks displays.

6.3 The bonfire campaign group have met to evaluate the campaign against its objectives. A full evaluation is being completed, which will inform the planning for next year's campaign and future anti-social behaviour reduction and prevention campaigns.

7 LOOK FORWARD: FUTURE SAFETY INITIATIVES

- 7.1 The service continues to deliver locally devised intelligence led initiatives, to address the issues regarding deliberate fires and anti-social behaviour.
- 7.2 The Service has recently developed a deliberate fires/ anti-social behaviour 'task and finish' group, with representatives from multiple departments to understand the problems across Tyne & Wear. The group will work with community youths, schools, local authorities and other blue light partners, in order to establish a better understanding of the problems we face as an emergency service and to reduce the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour, deliberate fire setting and attacks on fire crews.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report. Commitments to the bonfire campaign were met through existing budgets.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the report.
 - b) Receive further reports as necessary.
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:
"Fireworks and Bonfire incidents 2016" Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service.

APPENDIX A –INCIDENT STATISTICS 1st – 6th NOVEMBER

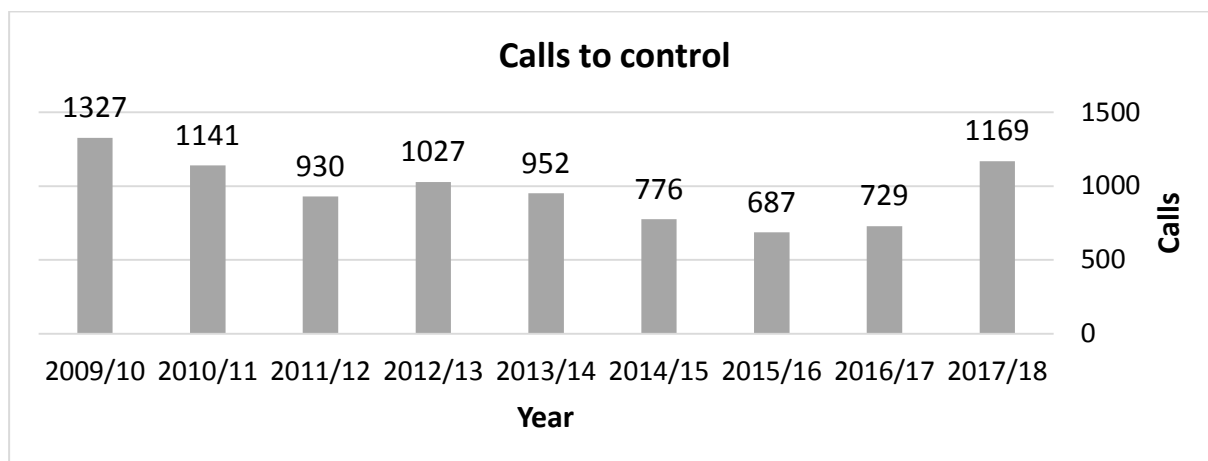


Figure 1

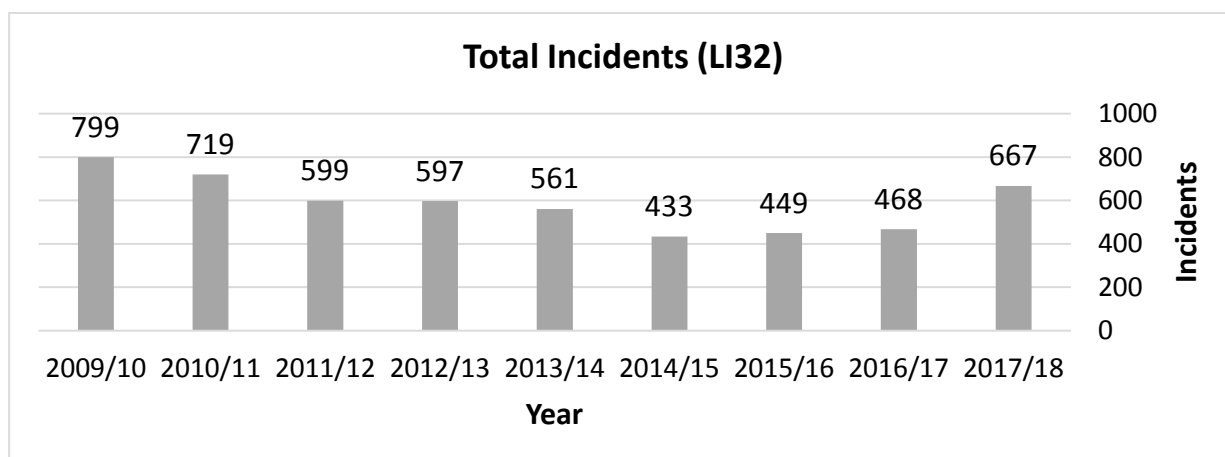


Figure 2

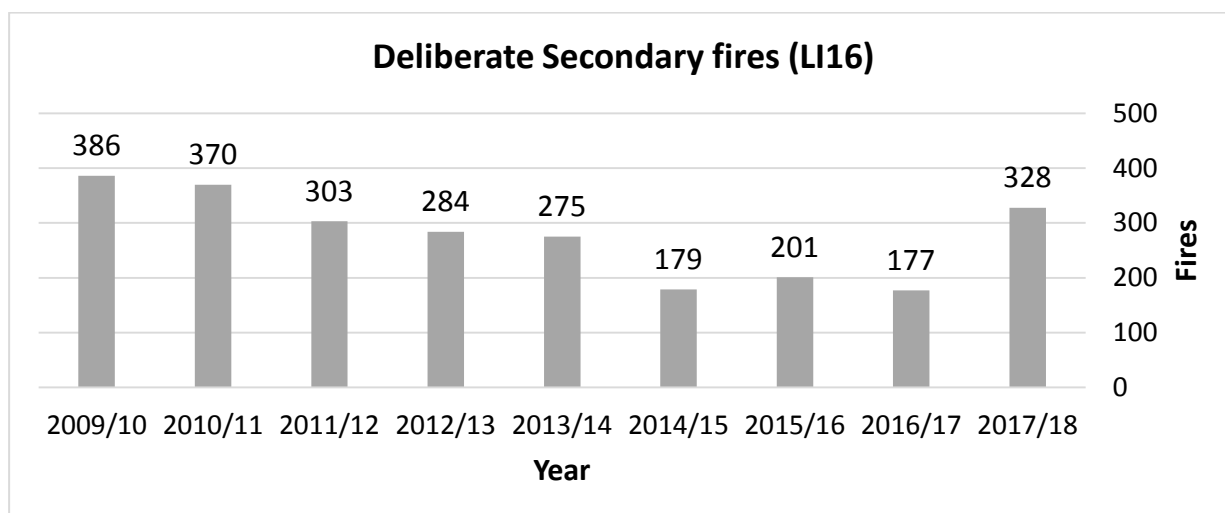


Figure 3

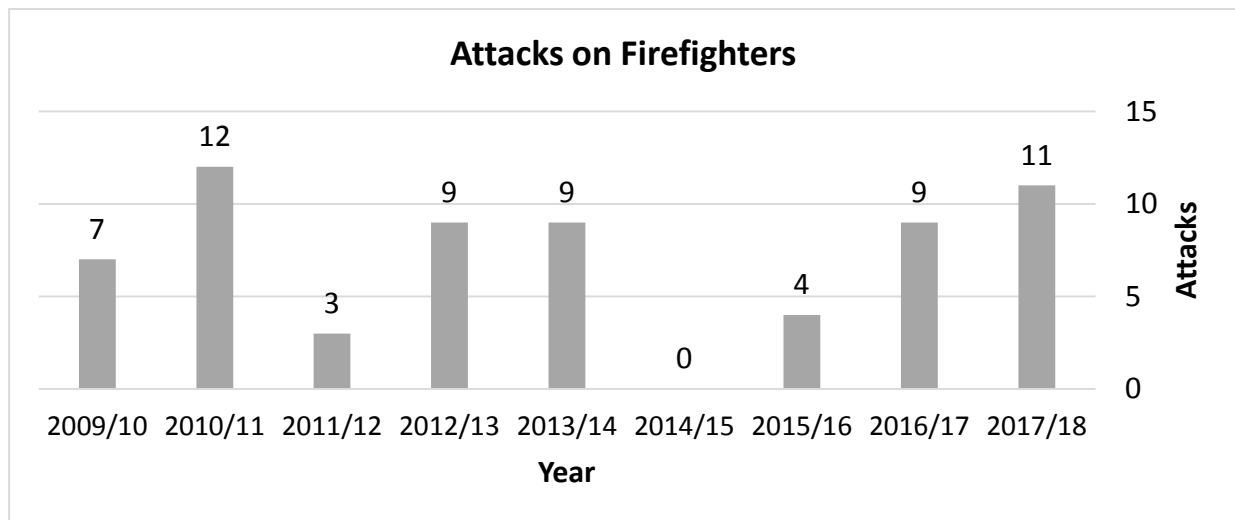


Figure 4

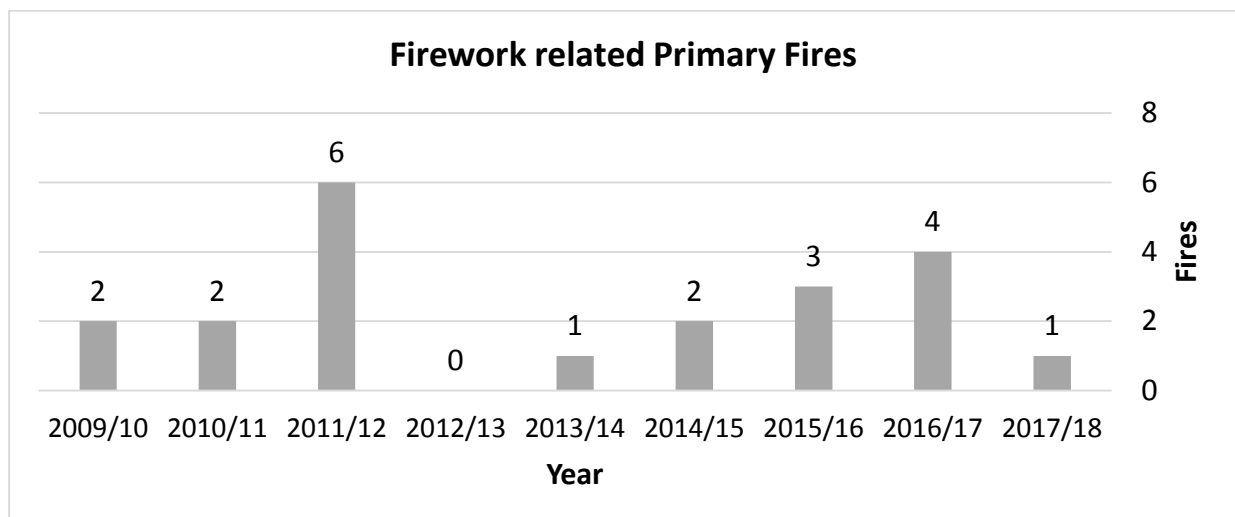


Figure 5

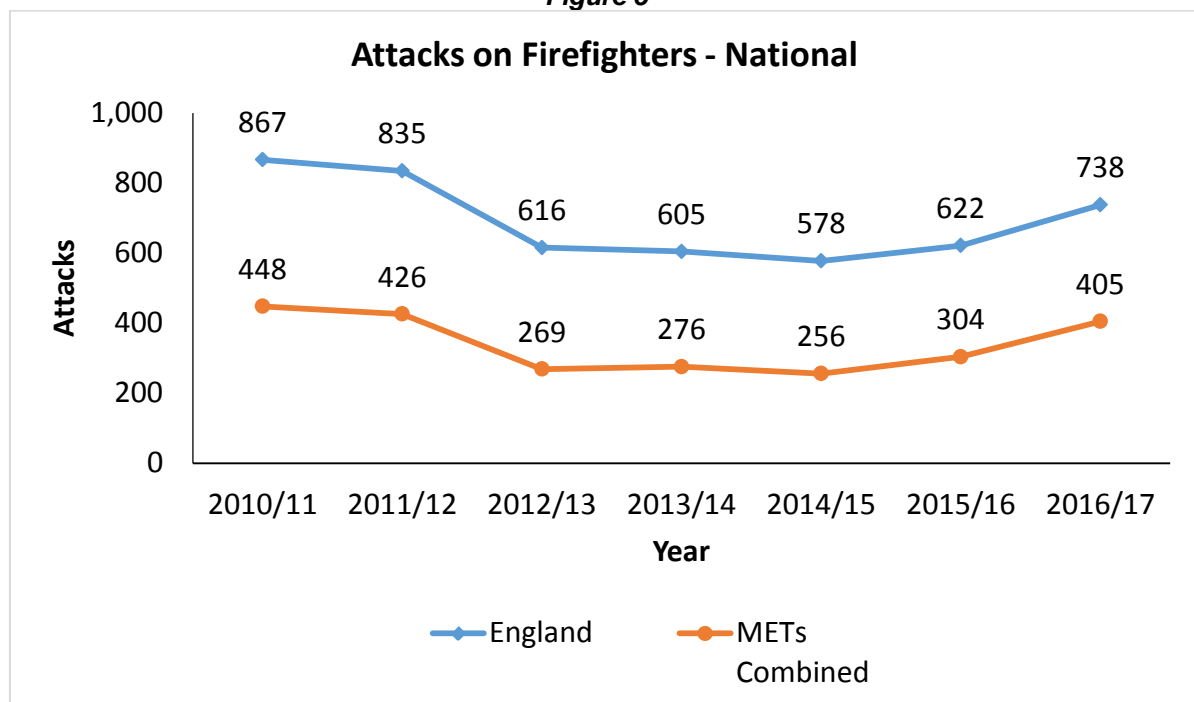


Figure 6

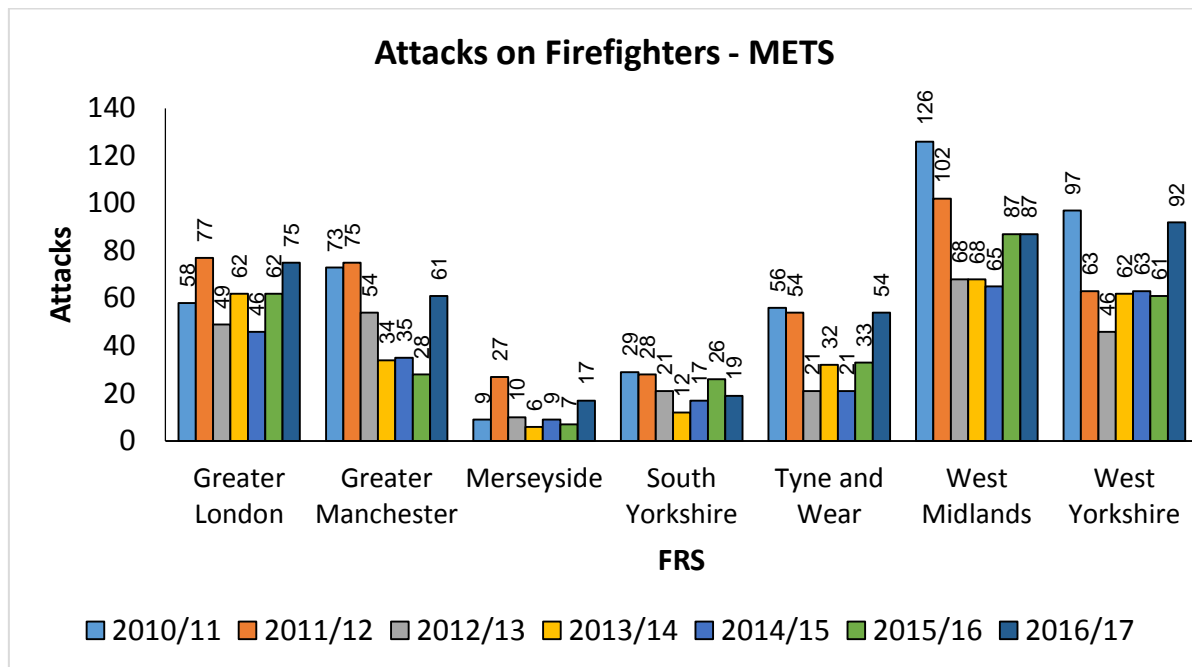


Figure 7

**Tyne and Wear Fire
and Rescue Authority**
Creating the Safest Community

www.twfire.gov.uk

