

**TYNE & WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item 6**

**MEETING: 10 DECEMBER 2018**

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**SUBJECT: BONFIRE CAMPAIGN 2018**

**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**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the 2018 bonfire campaign.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The bonfire period is traditionally the busiest time of the year for the Service for deliberate fires. Measures are taken to ensure that the Service has the capability and resources to deal with the increase in calls and response to bonfires and deliberate fires, whilst maintaining operational capability to respond effectively to other life threatening incidents.
- 2.2 A proactive bonfire campaign was undertaken during the weeks prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> November. The campaign incorporated educational activities, publicity and media messages, bonfire uplift schemes and operational command and control arrangements.
- 2.3 The aim of this year's campaign was to prevent deaths and reduce the number of injuries caused by bonfires and fireworks.
- 2.4 The key objectives of the campaign were:
- To raise awareness of the dangers and consequences of the misuse/abuse of bonfires and fireworks, especially amongst young people.
  - To encourage all people to attend an organised display.
  - To ensure timely and accurate fireworks licences are issued.
  - To inspect premises storing fireworks, to ensure safe conditions are being met.
  - To investigate and prosecute where necessary, relating to the storage of fireworks.
  - To work with partners to ensure arrangements are in place to uplift illegal bonfires.

- To reinforce partnership working throughout the darker nights and bonfire period.
- To ensure business continuity arrangements are in place to minimise the effect of calls during this period on the operational response of TWFRS to life risk incidents.
- To reinforce the message amongst young people that attacks on fire crews will not be tolerated and legal action will be taken.

### **3 EDUCATION AND COLLABORATION**

- 3.1 A TWFRS bonfire group was established by Prevention and Education in August, with representatives from relevant departments within the Service. This ensured effective delivery of the objectives.
- 3.2 The bonfire campaign aims to influence young people by educating and raising awareness of the dangers and consequences of setting bonfires and misusing fireworks. The targeted age group this year was 13-17 years old in secondary schools. P&E developed a risk based education programme targeting secondary and non-mainstream schools in Tyne and Wear.
- 3.3 Service district teams in collaboration with Northumbria Police adopted a data led approach to target and visit 21 secondary schools across Tyne & Wear. Bonfire and firework-safety education talks were delivered to 12,057 students.
- 3.4 For those young people outside of mainstream education, sessions were delivered to three Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and 14 Special Educational Needs Schools (SENs) by SafetyWorks! 410 young people from outside of mainstream education attended SafetyWorks! and received this targeted bonfire campaign education.
- 3.5 A service-wide communications campaign was also launched to encourage students and residents to have a safe and enjoyable bonfire period, encouraging all to attend organised displays. Social media was utilised to target the parents / carers, in a bid to encourage them to educate their children about bonfire / firework dangers – challenging problematic behaviour.
- 3.6 The campaign was delivered predominately via social media, using a DVD featuring Connor Rowntree. Titled 'Could YOU live with this', the DVD was developed to highlight the serious and life changing consequences of messing with fire and the effects it can have on all involved. It showed the life changing journey that Connor and his family have been on.
- 3.7 Local Authority bonfire uplift schemes were again in operation throughout the bonfire period, involving the removal of combustibles from local communities. The uplifting of illegal bonfires prior to ignition historically supports the reduction of risk to the community and to operational firefighters attending deliberate fire incidents.

- 3.8 In 2018, Local Authorities and partners carried out 549 uplifts. This represents a decrease of 116 on the 2017 figure of 665. The decrease has been recognised on district, as being a result of reduced funding allocated to local authority uplift teams.
- 3.9 The service P&E teams and operational crews, in collaboration with key partners continue to deliver locally devised and intelligence led initiatives. Partnership initiatives continue to address the issues across Tyne and Wear regarding deliberate fires and ASB.

#### **4 COMMUNICATION**

- 4.1 During the bonfire campaign the TWFRS Facebook page likes increased by 2,040 to 21,533, with our highest organic (not paid for) post reaching 24,600 people and the highest paid for post reached 44,600.
- 4.2 TWFRS Twitter followers increased by 360 with the most successful tweet reaching more than 7,000 users.
- 4.3 TWFRS LinkedIn – particularly with our messages and videos to target businesses. The Service gained 55 new followers and the most popular post reached more than 1,500 organisations/individuals.
- 4.4 The TWFRS website was updated with fresh bonfire related content this year. Our pages on organised displays received a 79.3% increase in visits and we saw an increase of 4,076 new visitors to the TWFRS website.
- 4.5 Social media statistical overview (1-7 November):
- +888 likes on Facebook
  - +75 followers on Twitter
  - +64 followers on Instagram
  - +8 followers on LinkedIn
- 4.6 Facebook
- 3,895 page views up 221%
  - 255 page previews up 227%
  - 364,798 people reached up 640%
  - 111,163 post engagements up 480%
  - Since 31 October – 6 November 88,332 video views up 878%
- 4.7 Twitter
- Engagement rate 1.9%
  - 442 link clicks
  - 378 retweets and 50 replies
  - 901 likes

## **5 FIREWORKS**

- 5.1 Fire Safety granted 70 explosives licences, with a total of 137 licences in force for the Halloween and bonfire selling period from 15 October and ending on 10 November 2018. This data was made available to operational crews via firefighter risks on appliance MDTs.
- 5.2 119 explosives inspections being completed by specially trained staff on the lead up to and within this selling period. As part of these inspections, fire safety conducted 15 joint inspections with Northumbria Police and local Trading Standards teams across Tyne and Wear.
- 5.3 A leaflet was further developed for use by our partners, Local Authority Trading Standards and Northumbria Police, and our own staff on the safe storage and selling of fireworks, to be issued to local retailers on the lead up to Bonfire night.
- 5.4 This year saw a decrease in 16 licences being issued and an increase of 8 inspections being carried out during the bonfire period.
- 5.5 Last year saw a number of high profile seizures of fireworks, which the department are still investigating, however 2018 saw a significant reduction in the quantities seized from over 550Kg NM in 2017 to 35 Kg NM in 2018:
- Fireworks were seized from a business in Washington for breaching the terms of the explosives licence, by selling HT3 fireworks which were not permitted for safety reasons, due to the adjoining sleeping accommodation.
  - Fireworks were seized from a home in Felling where officers believe fireworks were being stored and sold illegally. Investigations into both these cases continue.
- 5.6 During the 2018 period it has been noted that by working collaboratively with our partners specifically Northumbria Police and Trading Standards, Fire Safety has seized less due our partners seizing fireworks under their powers. Through this increased collaborative working the cost and time associated with seizures was reduced, when compared to previous years.
- 5.7 It was identified that the work carried out by our Explosives Officers was extremely successful. The licencing of premises lead to 119 Explosives Inspections being completed by the Explosives Officers on the lead up to and within this bonfire selling period. In addition to our licensing activities, the Service also conducted enforcement activities under relevant legislation such as the Explosives Regulations 2014.

## **6 INCIDENT STATISTICS**

- 6.1 Bonfire period 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> November validated data and variance from 2017.
- 9.6% decrease in the number of fire calls received – 1192 to 1078
  - 18.6% decrease in the number of incidents attended – 667 to 543
  - 26.8% decrease in the number of deliberate secondary fires – 328 to 240
  - 27.3% decrease in the number of attacks on our fire crews – 11 to 8
  - 100% increase in the number of Firework related primary fires – 1 to 2
- 6.2 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 duty officers attended mobilising control on both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The total number of calls received and the total number of incidents attended decreased this year. A number of factors that appear to have contributed to this decrease, namely:
- Local authority bonfire and refuse uplift schemes prevented many more incidents and further reduced the risk to members of the community and fire fighters alike, by removing waste and combustibles.
  - Targeted education of older youths in schools in problematic areas, non-mainstream schools and education centres ensured that P&E teams educated those youths most likely to be involved in deliberate fire setting and ASB.
  - Increase in following and interactions on social media and the TWFRS website meant that our educational 'reach' significantly increased and affected/influenced more people. This increased awareness of the issues.
- 7.3 The bonfire campaign has proven to be a success, as the Service experienced a reduction in all measure outcomes from the same period last year. There were also no reported deaths or injuries in relation to bonfires or fireworks this year, meaning the campaign successfully achieved its aim and delivered its objectives.
- 7.4 A full evaluation is being undertaken, with a full campaign debrief planned for January. This will be used to inform the planning and delivery of next year's campaign and inform future deliberate fire and ASB campaigns or initiatives.

- 7.5 The Service will continue to work with key partners – youth groups, schools, local authorities and blue light partners, in order to establish a better understanding of the problems. This will also be supported by Newcastle University, who will be actively involved in the evaluation of the delivery and success of our deliberate fire reduction initiatives and campaigns.

## **8 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 There are no direct risk management implications in relation to this report.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

## **10 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **11 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There were eight reported attacks on operational fire crews in 2018, which represents a 27% decrease from eleven in 2017. Of the eight incidents – one was in Gateshead, four were in Newcastle and three were in Sunderland. North and South Tyneside experienced no attacks on fire crews this year.
- 11.2 Whilst firefighters did not sustain any injuries over the 2018 bonfire period, crews still suffered attacks and we are committed to work in collaboration with local partners and Northumbria Police, tackling incidents of anti-social behaviour and attacks on our crews. Each incident will be investigated and action taken against the perpetrators where evidence supports such action.

## **12 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 The Authority are recommended to:
- a) Endorse the contents of this report
  - b) Receive further reports as appropriate
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