

REPORT OF Cllr Picken – Member Champion for Civil Resilience

CIVIL RESILIENCE UPDATE

1 Purpose of Report

To update the Fire Authority on my activities as the Member Champion for Civil Resilience over the last six months and outline the proposed activities for the remainder of the year.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of the report.

3 Last Six Months

In March 2006 I became the Member Champion for Civil Resilience. To date I have attended regular meetings with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) to bring myself up-to-date with all operational response areas of the Service and to gain a better understanding of the context of Civil Resilience in the wider role of the Service.

One of the first actions was agreeing with the DCFO the role and responsibilities of the Member Champion. Following discussions this resulted in the Role Description, which is set out within report 6a – Member Champions. From this role description I then gathered background information on a number of Fire Service initiatives and challenged a range of underlying principles of Civil Resilience.

The first area was Incident Command (IC). The method of IC used by the Service appears to be very robust but is limited to commanding the normal range and size of incidents experienced by the Service. This situation makes sense and is financially sensible. There are not enough officers on the IC system, however, to manage a simultaneous number of large (5 pumps+) incidents, especially at weekends, when numbers are at minimum.

Recognising this, and the need to have capacity to deal with multiple large terrorist or civil emergency incidents, the Service is introducing new systems to increase capacity through regional collaboration and recall to duty processes. These replace the systems currently in place under the old Fire Services Act.

The Service has implemented a number of new procedures, and introduced a range of new vehicles and equipment to deal with large-scale civil emergencies, including



an Incident Response Unit designed to decontaminate large numbers of the public and a new Heavy Pumping Unit. Both of these units are part of the national resilience fleet. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has had a heavy pumping unit for many years, so it was asked to support the initial training of the British Fire Service by providing our experienced Retained Duty staff to visit the Fire Service College to offer support.

The Service has recently also taken delivery of a robe / re-robe vehicle to further support the large-scale decontamination of people. Regionally this Service has in place a team on 24 hour call, which is able to identify hundreds of chemical agents to support local officers trained to deal with chemical incidents.

The Service has been carrying out a number of table-top exercises to develop and test a range of local resilience procedures. This year we have carried out an exercise in preparation for extreme cold and hot weather; and an exercise simulating multiple terrorist incidents in the County. In addition officers have attended a large number of regional and national exercises involving New Dimension type incidents. These have ensured that the officer team is well prepared for this type of incident.

I am particularly pleased about the three-day multi-national 'Exercise Oasis' that our officers took part in during September. We were able to demonstrate and use our state-of-the-art radio and command systems with officers representing services from across Europe.

Senior Officers have also attended regular Silver Command meetings with Police and Ambulance officers, thus ensuring effective communications between these officers at the critical early stages of an incident.

4 Next Six Months

Over the next six months I shall be further developing the role of Member Champion, in particular:

- Ensuring that there are frequent joint meetings between the Emergency Planning Departments of Shropshire County Council and Borough of Telford & Wrekin
- Gaining more information about the new urban search and rescue training being carried out locally and nationally
- Attending an exercise to review large-scale decontamination procedures
- Gaining greater knowledge of the local risk management systems within the Service
- Reviewing the development of water rescue facilities within the Service

I also wish to find out more about the cost to the Fire Authority of supporting these new initiatives now that central funding is reducing.



5 A Personal Perspective

I have been involved in emergency planning for many years and it has been very interesting and informative to build my knowledge and awareness of the work of the Fire and Rescue Service in supporting civil resilience. I am amazed at the range and number of new initiatives and processes that the Service has had to adopt locally in such a short time. It says much about the professionalism and capacity of our officers and firefighters that they have taken on these new skills with confidence and commitment. I am looking forward to the next six months as Member Champion. In particular, I hope that my connections with the Emergency Planning teams in the local councils will help the Brigade to provide an even better service to the public of Shropshire and beyond.

6 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk); the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balance Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act	*	National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Equality and Diversity		Retained	
Efficiency Savings		Risk and Insurance	
Environmental		Staff	
Financial		Strategic Planning	
Fire Control/Fire Link		West Midlands Regional Management Board	

For further information about this report please contact Cllr R Picken, Member Champion for Civil Resilience, on 01952 282471, Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Paul Raymond, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260205.

