

Supporting Local Area Agreements across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin 2009 – 2011

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond,
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1 Purpose of Report

This report, through the appendix, sets out the current position of the Authority and its Service in supporting the Local Area Agreements (LAA) for both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin areas.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the appendix;
- b) Agree the current position of the Service; and
- c) Task officers with communicating to Members any significant changes in the provision of support to the LAAs.

3 Background

The Authority and its Service has been supporting Local Area Agreements since their inception by the current Government and they are seen as a very effective and supportive partner.

In the appendix it can be seen that the Service supports the LAA in a large number of its objectives but limits this support to outcomes closely related to the core function or those objectives, which add value to the Service.

4 Financial Implications

The Service is able to support Local Area Agreements within current budgets. Any significant increase in support may, however, require additional funding, either directly from precept or from partnerships.

Equally, any significant decrease in budgets may have an impact on the support offered and officers will, therefore, carefully impact assess any changes to service before implementation.

5 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

This report is for information purposes. Individual Equality Impact assessments are carried out on each of the service functions identified in the report.

7 Appendix

Supporting Local Area Agreements across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
2009 – 2011

8 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.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Quality Service through Effective Partnership



Background to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Area

Shropshire Council and Borough of Telford & Wrekin are two very different areas. In 2003 the population density of the Council area was 0.9 people per hectare (232.2 per square mile), making it well below the national average of 3.82 people per hectare (990.1 per square mile) compared to Telford & Wrekin, which is well above the national average with 5.52 people per hectare.

The Council covers a very large area – some 1,235 square miles with a population of almost 290,000. The County is essentially rural in nature and almost one third is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Approximately 55% of the population are classed as urban and 45% are classed as rural.

The Borough of Telford & Wrekin was originally designated as a new town in 1963 and recent decades have seen remarkable industrial and residential growth in the area, which totals 112 square miles.

The Borough was among one of the fastest growing local authority areas in Europe throughout the 1990's, growth which will continue well into the new century. The majority of the population lives in the rapidly growing new town of Telford, where approximately 1,000 new dwellings are completed annually.



The Borough has a population of almost 165,000 with 65,000 dwellings and a significant manufacturing base, providing 30% of all jobs in the area. Wages tend to be relatively low, as a significant proportion of local employment opportunities are semi and unskilled.

The situation is reflected in the results of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, which found high levels of income deprivation and educational deprivation. The Borough has five neighbourhoods in the top 10% most deprived in England and 15 neighbourhoods in the top 10 – 20%.

Telford & Wrekin plans to develop further into a vibrant and diverse city of over 250,000 people.

The County of Shropshire has a higher than average percentage of retired people and lower percentages of children and adults of working age. Because of the rural nature of Shropshire (approximately 80% of land use is agricultural), a high proportion of residents work in agriculture compared to the national average.

In the County as a whole there are 70,786 people over 65 and 112,000 children and young people.



Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are beautiful places to live and work in but are not without their challenges. As a whole, the Fire Authority area is largely rural but interspersed with dense and fast growing centres of population. The demands on the Fire and Rescue Service are, therefore, diverse and such a range is unlikely to be encountered in many other Fire Authority areas in Britain.

Throughout the County there are over 6,500 farms, 110 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and over 6,000 listed buildings, including the World Heritage Site at Ironbridge. Many areas of the County are at high risk from flooding and many rural areas are at particular risk from fires during dry spells.

The use of Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) software through the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) process has identified that over 37,000 dwellings (approximately 20% of all dwellings) in Shropshire are classified as being well above average risk of fire.

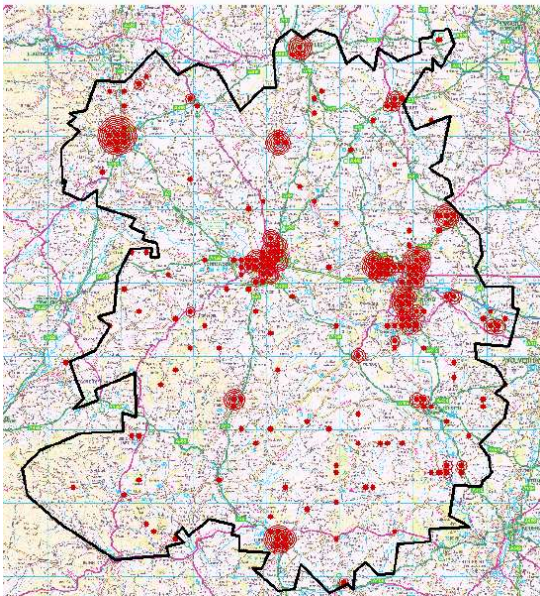


Figure 12 - Map indicating the number of Output Areas that have a risk of fatality due to dwelling fire that is higher than average

Although a high proportion of these (approximately 60%) are in those urban areas previously identified and targeted with community safety initiatives, many are in more rural parts of the County, with correspondingly higher response times, when a fire does occur.

Other incidents, which the Service attends, cause death and serious injury. Road traffic collisions, agricultural incidents and chemical spills all require our input.

Risk Rating (predicted fatality rate)	Population*	Households
Well Above Average	75,788	37,306
Above Average	18,431	8,054
Average	47,610	19,147
Below Average	58,287	24,755
Well Below Average	241,382	98,612
Total	441,498	187,874

Table 1 - Population of Shropshire in each Dwelling Risk Rating (FSEC results July 2004)

The 2004 Safer Shropshire survey identified that 28% of the 5,000 people questioned identified road safety as their biggest concern. In the County 70% of road accidents involve car occupants, with over 200 people seriously killed or injured in 2004.

Introduction

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has worked successfully in partnership with all local authorities for many years. Together we have achieved a great deal in making the communities and individuals across our area safer. Through working on Local Public Service Agreements and Local Area Agreements we have also become better at working in partnership and have learned how to get the most from our diverse organisations to deliver an improved service to all, and particularly the hard to reach.

Moving forward under the new Local Area Agreements, we intend to be a hard-working partner that is fully involved in delivering the vision of both LAAs across Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire.

How the Fire and Rescue Service's Aims Match the Vision

Our Purpose is to:

'Save life, protect property and the environment and reduce the risks from fire through effective Prevention, Protection and Response'

Or, put more simply, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority is:

Putting Shropshire's Safety First

But what does that mean?

The Community Safety teams of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service strives to deliver a number of key outcomes. Many of these are shared with other organisations, with whom we work, as well as with the people we serve in our diverse communities. Indeed, we can only deliver our purpose by sharing our key outcomes with our communities, customers and partners.

We believe that the **key outcomes** of the work we do to support safe, strong, prosperous and sustainable communities are:

A Safe Community – where all residents and visitors to the area are safe from fire, fire-related anti-social behaviours and other hazards whilst at home, work, study, during leisure activities, travelling through our area or being cared for by others.

A Prosperous Community – where all of our wealth-creating organisations are safe from the dangers of fire and other emergencies and where the wealth creators of the future, our children, have an education undisrupted by fires in schools and colleges.

An Attractive Community – where the environment is sustainable, healthy, clean and attractive to both residents and visitors; and where the rich natural and built heritage within the area is protected from fire and other emergencies.

A Cohesive Community – where all people work together at a neighbourhood or local level to improve and maintain a tolerant and diverse society. Where we all respect the freedom of the individual and accept the responsibility of living in a free society. Where social exclusion is reduced and the most vulnerable people are supported and protected.

To achieve these ambitions we have set ourselves a number of Corporate Strategic Aims. Of these the ones relevant to our work within the LAAs are:

Number	Corporate Aim
1	Reduce the incidence of deaths and injuries in the community
2	Reduce the incidence of fires and false alarms
3	Ensure the effective enforcement of fire safety legislation
4	Ensure the provision of an appropriate risk-based response to fires
5	Ensure the provision of an appropriate response to non-fire emergencies
6	Minimise the effect of our intervention actions on the environment
10	Promote a partnership approach in pursuance of continuous improvement, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness
11	Ensure the provision of a service that meets the needs of the community
14	Provide a fair and equitable service to the communities of Shropshire

In delivering these objectives we will support the overarching LAA themes of community cohesion but in addition we will continue to work towards:

- Improving **Customer Care** and the community's access to our services
- Improving **Communication** with the communities we protect
- Improving the **Competence** of our colleagues and the Service
- Increasing our **Capacity** to deliver better services in an efficient way

Supporting LAA Delivery Structures

The arrangements for developing the Agreement have been based on simplification not complication. The structures within the LAAs that we will support can work quickly and effectively to performance manage our desired outcomes. Within the partnerships across our area we will deliver our identified outcomes and will support other partners in the achievement of their outcomes, wherever we are able.

The Chief Fire Officer will champion the Local Area Agreement within the Service and will represent the Authorities at Board and Executive Level.

Our **Director of Safer Communities** and our **Head of Prevention** will both support the partnerships and will sit on relevant Management Boards.

Our **Youth Officer** will support the Children and Young People streams.

Our **Vulnerable Persons Officers** will support the Healthier Communities and Older People streams.

Our **Community Fire Safety Manager** will support the Sustainable Communities stream.

We will ensure that each of our delivery teams in the area have geographical safety responsibilities that match the boundaries of the lead authorities and maintain liaison with all partners within these areas, attending relevant meetings in support of our objectives and the outcomes identified in this paper, but, perhaps most importantly, listening and responding to our citizens; their needs and fears.

Supporting the Major Themes

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service will support the local strategic partnerships in all of their major delivery blocks:

- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities and Older People / Health and Wellbeing
- Sustainable Communities

Each of these themes is briefly explored below. Specific activities and objectives are set out in the next section.

Children and Young People

The young people of today will be the householders and tax payers of tomorrow. They will be the life-force of our economy and the future of our country. Young people are too often the victims of fire, suffering painful and disfiguring burns that affect them for their whole life and impact on them socially and often financially. Young people can also be the cause of many fires within communities - resulting in severe damage to buildings and local economies.

We must, therefore, do all we can to influence, educate and safeguard this group, if we are to succeed in our aims and ambitions in the long term.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police Reform Act 2000 also influence our involvement in working with children and young people in addressing the issue of deliberately started fires.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has worked for many years educating children about the dangers of fire. We will use this experience and our large number of well-trained staff to support the outcomes of the LAAs.

Healthier Communities and Older People

There are over 70,000 people in our area aged over 65, with around 8.5% of the population being over 75.

We have long recognised that those citizens over 65 are more likely to suffer from the effects of fire than the population as a whole. Recent research has identified that, rather than age alone, factors, such as low incomes, low mobility and living alone, are the key factors to the increased risk from fire. So it will be our goal to improve the safety of older people within our community, both by protecting them from fire and also in supporting our partners in making older people safer in their home in other ways.

By doing this we will ensure that older people can maintain an active role in our local communities and remain a valuable resource to the whole of society. To do this we have to think carefully about the kinds of service we provide now and in the future to ensure that we tackle the fire-related issues that are important for older people.

A key aspect of this approach will be the development and implementation of the **Sign Posting Protocol**, whereby any public / voluntary sector worker, who enters a home, can carry out a simple assessment of total need and has access to systems that inform all relevant agencies about the findings. For example a firefighter carrying out a **Home Fire Risk Check** may identify the need for mobility aids and home security and then report these through a central communications hub to the relevant agencies.

Many of the unhealthy lifestyles and habits exhibited by our citizens are recognised as having chronic health issues associated with them. Most people, however, do not recognise that smoking or drinking can kill – not over decades but almost instantly. Many fire deaths and injuries are caused by excessive drinking or careless smoking habits. Many deaths on the road also are related to alcohol consumption. Increasingly we are identifying that illegal drugs are a significant causal factor in fires; fire deaths and road accidents.

For this reason we will be fully involved in the healthier communities' agenda, particularly pointing out and preventing the **acute** health problems with smoking, alcohol and drugs. We also believe that this may have a greater impact on younger people than information about the chronic, long-term impacts.

Safer and Stronger Communities

We will continue to work with partners around the County to make our communities even safer and by ensuring that people in our County have a say in the delivery of their Fire and Rescue Service.

We will strive to empower communities to make them see fires within their neighbourhood a failure. In the same way that governments have made smoking and eating fat socially unacceptable we will work with local communities to make them feel responsible for the fire safety of their neighbours. We will at the same time give people around the County the skills and tools to make safety a reality within their town or village.

Local wardens and fire safety advocates will act as safety advisors and, with the support of local firefighters, will ensure that localities achieve increased safety for all the residents. We will approach Calor© and work with them to include safety as a key part of their Village of the Year competition.

The areas where we will be particularly involved in reducing crime are; **Criminal Damage, Vehicle Crime, Domestic Abuse** and **Hate Crime**.

Many of these crimes are precursors to, or result in, fire-related incidents, so it is essential that we are involved. Additionally, as a local authority, we are morally obliged to eliminate hate crime and support those suffering from domestic abuse.

Working with organisations in the area we will support:

- Reducing the level of criminal damage by fire;
- Reducing vehicle crime;
- Reducing the number of domestic burglaries;
- Work with children and young people, who are, or may become, young offenders;
- The building of confidence in reporting hate crime and take action to prevent it; and
- Reducing the incidence of business crime and anti-social behaviour.

Many drug users expose themselves, their families and people living around them to danger, not only by taking illegal drugs but in the paraphernalia associated with drug taking. Open flames, candles and solvents are all used and together make a lethal fire 'cocktail' that is increasingly a cause of fires within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. Obviously this danger affects the drug user and other occupiers of their home. Working with local drug action teams and the Primary Care Trust, we will support work with identified drug takers to ensure that they have the support they need to make sure that they and their families are fire safe.

We will reassure the community and build community involvement at a local level by:

- Delivering co-ordinated local action and planning to improve responses on the ground;
- Encouraging involvement and empowerment to build community involvement in decision making; and
- Improving 'liveability' by building confidence and reassurance amongst local communities through rapid response to local issues.

Our area is known for its beauty, unique heritage and natural environment. It is why many people choose to live and work here, why many people visit and often why large employers create employment opportunities. We will ensure that both the natural environment and the built heritage are protected from fire through education, enforcement of legislation and responsive fire fighting measures.

As a public service the Fire and Rescue Authority must work with partners for the general benefit of all the people, who live and work in our area. Inclusive and cohesive societies are safer, stronger and more affluent places to live. We will support the achievement of the LAAs by:

- Ensuring that we deliver a service fairly and equitably to all people within the County;
- Working hard to employ a workforce representative of the communities we serve;
- Ensuring that all hard-to-reach communities in the area, including Black and Minority Ethnic residents and migrant workers, have the best opportunity to access our preventative and protective services; and
- Working within local communities to support community cohesion and supportive localism.

Sustainable Communities

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service understands the importance of ensuring that our communities are sustainable. Vibrant rural communities, in particular, are important to us, as it is from these rural areas where we recruit over 70% of our staff, who need to work and live within 5 minutes of our community fire stations. The environment is important to all of us. We will continue to act as the front line in acute environmental threats, such as chemical spills and fires. As an example, a single house fire can release 40 tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere and rebuilding that house creates even more carbon.

Even a small fire in a kitchen can create 2.5 tonnes of carbon and with over 110 such fires in 2007 / 8 more than 263 tonnes of carbon were created. This was 55 tonnes less than the previous year but still a substantial impact on our environment and almost totally preventable with awareness and care by the home occupier.

In support of the LAA we will work with partner agencies to:

- Protect local companies with effective fire prevention policies;
- Protect local businesses through effective operational planning and response;
- Work with owners of local heritage sites to protect them from the harm caused by fire; and
- Reduce carbon emissions both from our own buildings and vehicles and also from reducing fires.

In addition to the above the Service will also strive to employ local people as firefighters and support staff. We will particularly target the employment of women and people from our minority ethnic communities and make all of our workplaces more user-friendly for people with disabilities.

The next section sets out our delivery targets in support of the Local Area Agreements.

Section 2 - Our actions in Support of LAA Targets

Major Theme: Children and Young People	
LAA Indicator	Our Approach / Key Actions
Telford & Wrekin	
NI 11 First Time entrants to the youth justice system aged 10 to 17	Our Intervention Workers will work with young people experimenting with fire to prevent their becoming arsonists. We will act on each referral from partner agencies within 48 hours.
	We will take an active part in car crime courses, reducing offending rates for young people.

Major Theme: Safer and Stronger Communities	
LAA Indicator	Our Approach / Key Actions
Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire	
NI1 Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	We will actively support anti-hate crime initiatives across the area. We will meet BME employment targets for the whole area, employing staff representative of the community we serve.

Major Theme: Safer and Stronger Communities

LAA Indicator	Our Approach / Key Actions
	We will provide specialist fire safety services for those particularly vulnerable to fire through Fire Safety Advocates with specialist language skills.
NI 5 Overall / General satisfaction with area	We will work with partners to reduce the number of house fires by 18% We will work with business owners to reduce the number of commercial fires by 19% by 2011
Telford & Wrekin	
NI 17 Perceptions of anti-social behaviour	We will reduce deliberate fires in vehicles and other anti social fires by 24% and 19% respectively.
NI 39 Alcohol-related hospital admission rates	We will work with partners to raise awareness of alcohol abuse issues. We will use the media to link fire with harmful effects of excessive alcohol consumption. We will use the 'Be Cool Be Safe Quiz' in schools to give information to young people about the harmful effects of alcohol.
Shropshire	
NI 19 Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders	Our Intervention Workers will work with young people experimenting with fire to prevent their becoming arsonists. We will act on each referral from partner agencies within 48 hours. We will take an active part in car crime courses, reducing offending rates for young people.
NI 39 Alcohol- related hospital admission rate	We will work with partners to raise awareness of alcohol issues. We will use the media to link fire with the harmful effects of excessive alcohol consumption. We will use the 'Be Cool Be Safe Quiz' in schools to give information to young people about the harmful effects of alcohol.

Major Theme: Healthier Communities and Older People / Health and Wellbeing

LAA Indicator	Our Approach / Key Actions
Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire	
NI 142 Proportion of vulnerable people, who are supported to establish and maintain independent living	<p>We will continue visiting the homes of the vulnerable and carrying out risk assessments.</p> <p>We will continue to work with partners to improve the referral mechanism to identify at-risk individuals.</p> <p>We will work with partners to develop a 'Home Support Protocol', where multiple assessments are carried out for each visit by a public sector / voluntary sector worker.</p>
Shropshire	
NI 145 Adults with learning difficulties in settled accommodation	<p>We will continue visiting the homes of the vulnerable and carrying out risk assessments.</p> <p>We will continue to work with partners to improve the referral mechanism to identify at risk individuals.</p>
NI 120 All age all cause mortality (a) men, and (b) women – Standardised Rate per 100,000 population	<p>We will continue to aim to reduce accidental fire deaths and injuries to 1 death and 28 fire injuries per year (whole of area).</p> <p>We will continue to work with partners to reduce road traffic collisions across the area.</p>
NI 49(i) Number of Primary Fires per 10,000 population	<p>We will reduce the number of primary fires by 14% over 3 years by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing our rural fire safety strategy; • Rolling out our Home Safe initiative; • Increasing youth education, particularly in rural areas; • Targeting deliberate fires by implementing our fire crime strategy; • Increasing the number of local business that have carried out a fire safety audit; and • Auditing high-risk businesses to ensure that they are applying effective fire prevention strategies.

Major Theme: Sustainable Communities

LAA Indicator	Our Approach / Key Actions
Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire	
NI 172 Percentage of small businesses showing employment growth	We will increase the number of local businesses that have carried out a fire safety audit. We will offer all local businesses support to ensure that they are applying effective fire-prevention strategies.
NI 163 Working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher	We will work towards offering new starters to the organisation a level 3 qualification within 2 years of starting work with us.
Shropshire	
NI 047 Number of people killed and seriously injured on roads	We will work with partners in educating 16 to 25 year olds in road traffic collision prevention. We will support partners in delivering cycle safe schemes across the area.

Resources

This document has identified where we can support delivery of LAA targets through carrying out the work we already do. We may need additional funding, if the partnerships require us to increase work in any particular area, but, if this is not the case, we will not require additional funds. In addition we will, wherever possible, create synergies in the work we do, so that resources are shared across the partnerships and we create 'more bangs for the buck'.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each nominated Fire and Rescue Service representative on the groups will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of each action. They will report on a frequent basis to their groups and to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer on the activities and outcomes set out above.

The Service will report annually on the overall achievement of targets.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service will also request outside evaluation from other partners, wherever partnership money is allocated to any project, so that the funding is seen to be used efficiently.

Consultation and Communication

The Fire and Rescue Service has limited consultative structures across the area and these are primarily designed to facilitate fire service specific actions. We will, therefore, support all opportunities to participate fully in the range of structures available to partners, including the PACT meetings etc, to ensure consultation and feedback from communities and hard-to-reach groups.

This document sets out in clear terms what we wish to achieve over the next three years together with partners delivering our Local Area Agreements. If you require further information, please write to:

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