

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Item 7

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

18 November 2010

Promoting Fire Protection Systems – Progress Report

Report of the Chief Officer

Contact: Stewart Adamson Telephone: 07918 887596
Email: stew.adamson@hantsfire.gov.uk

1 Summary

- 1.1 Objective 08 of "Our Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2008-2011" related to Promoting Fire Protection Systems and included:

“...action plans will include initiatives to secure landmark installations of sprinklers. These will be used to influence planning considerations for future developments. The action plans will be in place by October 2008, followed by formal agreements with planning authorities by April 2010.”

- 1.2 We have made good progress with influencing and securing significant sprinkler installations. However, we have not managed to secure formal agreements with planning authorities and it seems unlikely that we will be able to achieve this ambition. Whilst planning authorities are supportive and assist where possible, they are reluctant to sign up to formal arrangements for operational reasons.
- 1.3 In acceptance of this we have re-focussed and re-energised our resolve. Further, we have expanded our thinking and widened our scope to include all forms of automatic water suppression systems (AWSS), rather than just sprinkler systems in our strategy.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee support the content of this report and the progress made to date.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The championing and promotion of sprinklers for safety has been included in numerous service and medium term plans since 2007. This at a time when national reports such as “The effectiveness of sprinklers in residential premises” by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and “Guide to automatic water suppression systems” from the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA), highlight the

effectiveness of sprinklers in saving life.

- 3.2 The reports also refer to the significant property protection afforded to premises with these systems in place, even though installed for life safety. This being a welcome addition particularly within the current financial climate, where all are looking to optimise expenditure.

4 Work with Local Authority (LA) planning departments

- 4.1 Objective 08 within "Our Plan 2008-2011" looked to formalise links with planning departments to get sprinklers considered at the planning stage of developments.
- 4.2 Since the introduction of this corporate objective, Protection fire safety officers have met with numerous planning officers across the county to drive this objective forward.
- 4.3 The Planning Manager for New Forest District Council is also the chair for the southern region committee for planning. We have met to explore the local and regional position and express our desire to secure formal arrangements.
- 4.4 All planning departments lobbied to date have shown no indication of the desire to enter into formal arrangements with HFRS to drive the use of automatic water suppression systems, though they observe and understand the benefits sprinklers provide.
- 4.5 We believe that competition between local authorities for developments which will enhance local economies has affected our ability to influence planning officers to ask for sprinklers, especially in this difficult financial environment.
- 4.6 No formal arrangements have been agreed or are in discussion currently.

5 Strategy

- 5.1 We are now refreshing our strategy for automatic water suppression within HFRS as an integral part of our wider Community Safety Strategy.
- 5.2 Our key objectives within our automatic water suppression system strategy are:
 - 5.2.1 Development of sprinkler strategy group:

Traditionally this group has consisted of predominately protection fire safety staff. This group is being reviewed and it is proposed to include members of the Fire Authority - with Councillor Keith Chapman agreeing to join initially. Other areas of Service Delivery and support from Marketing and Communications and other departments, will assist to deliver on the objectives set within the strategy and consult with key stakeholders.

5.2.2 Widen the scope of our strategy:

We plan to widen our strategy to include all aspects of automatic water suppression, not just sprinklers, and to develop new technology based suppression solutions such as water mist.

5.2.3 Further representation at national level:

We have secured representation of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service on the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) national working group for automatic water suppression systems (AWSS). We intend to build on this by investigating representation at other national groups such as the National Fire Sprinkler Network. Active membership of these groups, will allow HFRS to shape our strategy, to utilise good practice set by other fire and rescue services and to keep current with national and international developments. It will also allow HFRS to publicise our achievements.

5.2.4 Joint protocol with local authority planning authorities:

We will aim to influence local authority planning departments to include literature and advice for prospective developers. We will do this through informal arrangements, our existing and new partnerships and using the influence of elected members involved within the strategy group.

With Councillor Chapman's enthusiasm and commitment we have canvassed the support of local Members of Parliament and provided demonstrations extolling the benefits of automatic water suppression systems.

6 Progress towards Objective stated in Service Plan 2009-2012

- 6.1 Our Fire and Rescue Service Plan states that we will secure the installation of 15 sprinkler systems in major building projects by 2012 (from 2008).
- 6.2 Our current work and the success of our Hampshire County Council partnership, together with the adoption and delivery of a refreshed strategy, has already been successful against this objective.
- 6.3 We have installed a domestic sprinkler system within our Command Suite at Service Headquarters and have also included a full sprinkler system within the design of the new Winchester Fire Station. We continue to maintain a facility to demonstrate the effectiveness of sprinklers.

7 Hampshire County Council (HCC) Partnership

- 7.1 Our pro-active partnership, with a fire safety officer within Hampshire County Council offices, has been successful in making Hampshire County Council's buildings safer. There are now 26 Hampshire County Council buildings protected by sprinklers as a direct result of positive influencing by HFRS protection fire safety officers. These buildings are elderly care homes (13), schools (5) and public

assembly buildings (8). There are also three other large premises under construction where sprinklers now form part of the design specification. Hampshire County Council building stock is now significantly safer for the occupants in a fire, but also more able to resist a devastating fire and the associated costs of this.

- 7.2 The successes of this partnership will be further used to promote how working in partnership can attain successful outcomes and the benefits of sprinkler installations. We have not fully publicised the successes of this partnership within the fire sector, this being a key objective within our new strategy.

8 Impact Assessment

- 8.1 A full impact assessment for our refreshed sprinkler strategy will be conducted.
- 8.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

9 Resource implications

- 9.1 There are no resource implications as a result of this report or its outcomes.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 We will seek to consult with key stakeholder groups to shape our strategy and build on successes.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The sub-objective set within 'Our Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2008-2011' to set up formal agreements with local authority planning departments has, unfortunately not been possible for us to achieve, even after extensive lobbying by HFRS. However, our refreshed strategy will drive HFRS' commitment to automatic water suppression systems and help deliver on our aims and objectives and to reduce risk within our communities and make Hampshire safer.
- 11.2 Active membership of national groups such as Chief Fire Officers' Association's automatic water suppression systems group, will assist in this process. Additionally, active membership of key Fire Authority Members in our Strategy Group will assist to drive forward our commitment in the political arena.

12 Background papers (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)

- 12.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

- 1 HFRS "IRMP 2007-2010" – Objective PR6
- 2 HFRS "Our Plan 2008-2011" – Objective 08

- 3 HFRS "Our Plan 2009-2012"
- 4 Service Delivery Strategy 2009
- 5 Effectiveness of sprinklers in residential premises – BRE
<http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=422>
- 6 A Guide to automatic water suppression systems – Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)
<http://www.nfsn.co.uk/case-studies/pdf/CFOA-SYFRS%20Sprinkler%20document.pdf>