Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Periodic Report of the Chairman on Authority Matters

Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Authority

1. The Authority has appointed Mr L W Bloomer as its Chairman and Mr B Mycock as its Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

Fellow of the Institution of Fire Engineers

2. Mr. P. Dartford, the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, has been accorded fellowship status with the Institution of Fire Engineers in recognition of his contribution to fire and rescue services. The Authority has congratulated Mr Dartford on his achievement.

Monitoring Officer Duties

3. Cheshire Fire Authority have requested the Secretary to take up the role of Monitoring Officer to Cheshire Fire Authority on an agreed secondment from this Authority as the present Monitoring Officer at Cheshire will be standing down. Under a reciprocal arrangement, Ms Janet Henshaw, the Deputy Monitoring Officer at Cheshire Fire Authority, will fulfil the role of Deputy Monitoring Officer to this Authority.

Critical Success Factors

4. Fire casualties for the period April 2008 – March 2009 have reduced by one when compared to the same period in 2007/08. Although for 2008/09 there have been six fire deaths compared to five in 2007/08. The annual target of 34 casualties has not been reached. The Service is working with partners to reduce these casualties and addressing the route causes of these fires.

Primary fire activity between April 2008 and March 2009 showed a decrease of 270 (12%) when compared to the same period in 2007/08. The annual target for 2008/09 has been reached.

For the period April 2008 to March 2009, accidental dwelling fires showed a decrease of 63 compared to the previous year. Although there has been a 10% reduction, the annual target has not been met for 2008/09. Performance on accidental dwelling fires was 559 for 2008/09 compared to the year end outturn of 621 in 2007/08. This represents a 10% improvement on the previous year, although the 2008/09 year end target has not been achieved. The campaign to increase targeted HFRC’s is expected to improve performance.

The period April 2008 to March 2009 saw a decrease in grass fires of 303 when compared to 2007/08. The small fire activity (excluding grass fires) decreased by 603 when compared to the previous year, a 25% reduction.

Home Fire Risk Checks - HFRC delivery was enhanced in 2008/09, The numbers delivered by each Area Command were as follows: Stoke – 5722, Lichfield – 1578,
South Staffs – 2013, East Staffs – 2859, Tamworth – 1560, Moorlands – 1439, Cannock – 1526, Newcastle – 2064, Stafford – 1727, Service – 20488. Approximately 50% of all of the HFRC’s delivered were to the vulnerable priority groups. In 2009/10 the target for delivery of HFRC’s is 50,000 across the Service with 75% to be delivered to priority vulnerable households. Data transfer arrangements were also in place with County and City Social Care and Health partners, to help identify and target those members of the community who were most vulnerable.

Arson is also amongst the National Indicators which can be used by LAA’s, but Stoke and Staffordshire LAA’s do not have this measure amongst the designated indicators. The Service and most Area Commands have beaten their targets and improved year on year performance during 2008/09. Arson prevention partnership arrangements with Staffordshire Police have been effective in targeting deliberate fires across the Area Commands.

The 2008/09 year end position for Unwanted Fire Detection Signals was 3460 incidents against a target of 3408, and therefore slightly over target for the year, although this was a 5% improvement on the 2007/08 performance of 3650.

Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Killed and Seriously Injured –15% of all drivers were aged 18-24 but were involved in 40% of all serious RTCs. The Authority ran “Crash Course” and other interventions. They also ran the student firefighters scheme and education programmes which helped young people’s understanding of the impact of RTCs.

Attacks on firefighters - during 2008/09 there were 15 attacks in total, which compares with 34 for the 2007/08 year - broken down as follows: Moorlands - 2 cases of verbal abuse; Tamworth - 1 case of verbal abuse; East Staffs - 1 case of verbal racial abuse; Stoke - 1 case of racial verbal abuse, 3 cases of verbal abuse, 4 cases of missiles thrown, 2 cases of threatening behaviour and 1 case of physical attack (firefighter was barged out of the way). This is an area of concern, particularly for Stoke Area Command. CCTV had been fitted to all pumping appliances with the aim of addressing this issue.

Following two accidental dwelling fires in May 2008 which took the lives of an 82 year old male and a 77 year old female, the MORE for Less Campaign was created and launched in June 2008. The campaign is aimed primarily at making elderly people (over 65’s) safer in their homes by carrying out a Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC) although the service can also be accessed by other referral systems. Access to this service is via a freephone number 0800 0241 999 and a dedicated call team based at Service Headquarters. Since the launch, 21,519 Home Fire Risk Checks have been completed; 11,207 booked by the team; 24,730 smoke alarms have been fitted; 410 specialist alarms have been fitted for the hard of hearing; 4,425 fused extension leads given out; and 1,648 Chip pans have been replaced with deep fat fryers.
Accidental Fire Deaths Working Group

5. Since the last report to the County Council in March 2009 the Accidental Fire Deaths Task Group had concluded its work. The Task Group was established as a ‘task and finish’ body comprising both Members and Officers with the following terms of reference:

- Examine the causes of Fire Deaths within the County and table a report to the Authority relating to their findings and any recommendations from this examination.
- To invite evidence from external bodies and individuals who, in the opinion of the Task Group, can assist in providing information that will inform its work.

The Task Group met on nine occasions and interviewed representatives from a number of organisations whom it believed could assist in both understanding the issue of fire deaths and who could help in considering whether there were initiatives that could be implemented to address and reduce the frequency of fire deaths occurring.

The Task Group commenced by examining the fire deaths that had occurred since the Service implemented the ‘Olive Branch’ initiative in 2006. They examined the statistics provided by the individual Fire Services in England for the years 2002 to 2007 which showed that the number of fire deaths experienced in Staffordshire during that period placed the Authority in the lower half of the national table for fire deaths. The Group particularly noted that 80% of all fire deaths involved people over the age of 65, and 67% involved people who were alone at the time of the fire. The Task Group considered there were two specific issues that required examination: namely the instances of accidents in the home particularly involving older people and, the issue of fire deaths in the home. In examining the evidence obtained from various agencies it became clear that no single agency had overall responsibility for the task of reducing the instances of accidents in the home.

The Authority approved that a Senior Officer would be identified to represent the Fire Service on the multi agency, sub-group, to look at accidents in the home and set up initiatives and partnerships to address the instances of accidents involving older people. As a result of the work undertaken relating to accidental fire deaths Mr Dartford had been appointed by the Chief Fire Officer’s Association as “Champion of Older People” and would be developing a strategy. This Authority was leading the way in the UK.

The Authority would be considering ways to ensure the Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC) Project continues to be in the forefront of the communities minds by further advertising and re-branding when necessary.

The Service will review its partnership arrangements and actively considers what further or alternative arrangements it can make with other bodies for partnership working to maximise its influence and effectiveness.

The Service will ensure that its HFRCs contain advice relating to any grants available to people for replacing their coal fires with a more efficient heating system.
and or where the likelihood of direct contact with a naked flame is removed. This will include such schemes as the national Warm Front Scheme.

Monitoring of the recommendations made by the Task Group will be carried out by the Scrutiny and Performance Committee.

**Corporate Governance Policy**

6. In May 2009 the Authority approved a new Code of Corporate Governance based upon the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework document which has been welcomed by Members.

**Provisional Capital and Revenue Outturn Report 2008/09 Report**

7. At their May 2009 meeting the Authority considered the capital and revenue outturn position for 2008/09, the efficiencies achieved and the consequential impact on reserves and balances:-

- Capital – the provisional capital outturn for 2008/09 is £4.275m compared to the revised capital budget of £5.144m
- Revenue – the provisional revenue outturn for 2008/09 shows a variation of £19,000 (0.05%) compared with the total approved budget of £40.020m
- Efficiency – the provisional outturn for efficiencies amounts to £0.807m which exceeds the target of £0.8m set by the Authority, along with £0.737m non-cashable efficiency savings.
- Reserves – the impact on reserves is that the general reserve remains at £1.906m.
- Balances (money set aside to meet future commitments) have been reduced by £0.182m

The capital budget has been reduced by £0.577m, as the expenditure has been transferred to revenue.

**Members Allowances**

8. The Authority are to reconvene its Independent Remuneration (Members Allowances) Panel with a view to it submitting a report to the full Authority meeting in October with recommendations for the future allowances policy.

**Committee Structure and Terms of Reference**

9. A full review of the Committee Structure would be undertaken this year by a Working Group which had been set up to consider the accountability, responsibility, terms of reference and inter-relationship of the Committees to ensure they provided the best possible connection between the Authority and the Service.
Staffordshire Partnership Award

10. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has received an award from the Staffordshire Partnership relating to the delivery of work experience. The Service was applauded for their excellent work.

LGA Fire and Rescue Authority Equality and Diversity Charter

11. As set out in the shared vision Towards 2017 the LGA wants to see Equality and Diversity at the heart of the Fire and Rescue Service culture, with Elected Members and staff reflecting the communities they serve, where people from diverse backgrounds can achieve the highest positions in the Service.

Members of the Authority have been asked to demonstrate their leadership on this issue by signing up to the Equality and Diversity Charter. All Members who were in attendance at the meeting of the Authority on 30 June 2009 have signed up to the Charter.

Private Finance Initiative 2 (PFI 2)

12. An Expression of Interest has been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in response to the Fire and Rescue Service Circular 35/2008 issued on 25 July 2008 announcing the availability of approximately £130m in PFI credits for Fire and Rescue Service projects. The Expression of Interest details a proposal to replace part of the current refurbishment programme with the new build of a significant proportion of the remaining property assets. Following the Minister’s decision to set aside £30m in PFI credits for the Staffordshire proposal, the Authority’s project team has developed a Mini Outline Business Case which was submitted to CLG following Authority Approval in April 2009.

The reservation of £30m PFI credits represents a significant reduction to the £54.4m applied for in the expression of interest. The scope of the project has been adjusted to deliver the optimum solution within the available funding.

CLG has indicated that its key driver for PFI 2 was ‘deliverability’.

L W BLOOMER B MYCOCK
Chairman Vice Chairman