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

Annual Audit Letter

1. The Authority has been advised of the positive Annual Audit Letter which summarised the key findings arising from the work that was carried out at Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority by the external auditor for the year ended 31 March 2016. The report provided a commentary on the results of the audit work to the Authority and its external stakeholders, and highlighted any issues that the Auditor would wish to draw to the attention of the Public.

Grant Thornton provided an unqualified opinion on 27 July 2016 (2 months ahead of the deadline), this was enabled by the excellent engagement between Finance and the Audit Team. This showed how efficient the Service had been as this was the second year running that they had produced the accounts two months early. The financial statements submitted for audit were, yet again, of good quality delivered by an effective close down process and supported by excellent working papers. The audit provided a positive value for money conclusion demonstrating that the Authority continues to provide Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness. The Authority’s accounts show a good financial position going forward, due to the appropriate level of reserves which form part of the overall financial strategy, and the ability to provide value for money.

This Authority is one of only a select few that was named in a national publication by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) as having their accounts signed off two months early. This publication covers all Local Government Bodies including Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue Services and Police Forces.

Performance

2. The Authority has been advised of the performance for the second quarter of the 2016/17.

All Attended Incidents - There have been 2322 incidents in Quarter 2 of 2016/17, compared to 2321 during the same period last year.

Accidental Dwelling Fires - There have been 137 Accidental Dwelling Fires in Quarter 2 2016/17 compared to 138 during the same period last year. The trend over the five period timeframe is static.

HFRC’s Delivered - During Quarter 2 2016/17 there were 7105 HFRCs delivered compared to 7961 in Quarter 2 2015/16. The approach during this time has been to increasingly target HFRCs to priority groups.

Accidental Dwelling Fires in Gold, Silver or Bronze Households - The number of Accidental Dwelling Fires in Gold, Silver, Bronze households is 16 during Quarter 2 this year compared to 18 during the same period last year.
HFRCs Delivered to Gold, Silver or Bronze Households - The number of HFRCs delivered to Gold, Silver or Bronze households continues to increase over the five quarters to Quarter 2 2016/17. 1494 were undertaken compared to 1341 in Quarter 2 of 2015/16.

Deaths and Injuries in Accidental Dwelling Fires - There has been one death and three injuries during Quarter 2 of 2016/17 compared to three injuries during the same period last year.

Corporate Safety Plan 2017 - 20

3. The Authority has approved the content of the Corporate Safety Plan for 2017 – 20, subject to minor amendments being made and with delegation to the Strategy and Resources Committee to give final approval to the document at its meeting in March 2017. The Corporate Safety Plan (sometimes referred to as the Integrated Risk Management Plan) is a legal requirement under the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 through the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2012 and seeks to set out the organisational priorities for the period of the plan. The next iteration of the CSP is to run from April 2017 to March 2020 and has undergone a comprehensive process of development and consultation throughout 2016. Through consultation and thematic analysis we have transformed the current 5 priorities into the proposed 3 priority areas which will continue to build on the previous successes and provide a more focused approach to consolidate the Service’s position as a high performing Fire and Rescue Service.

Development of a Police and Fire Emergency Services Organisation for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

4. Over the last 10 months through the leadership of a Member-led Joint Collaboration Working Group (5 Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Deputy Leaders of Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner), the potential for the development of an emergency services organisation for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (with police and fire services within it) has been explored, through the work of a joint team led by an Independent Project Lead. The Authority has considered a report of the team.

The Group, in the consideration of this task, formulated the question “Is there a case for full integration?” The Authority considered a report prepared by the Independent Project Manager and the joint team considering this question. The report in particular sought to provide some preliminary answers to the question posed. Whilst not written to be a full business case the report concludes with the view that the potential benefits set out in the report are significant and that further detailed investigation and progress towards a final agreed model with an indicative timetable should occur.

The report will also be presented for consideration to the following:

- Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The Authority has noted the contents of the Independent Report concluding that the timelines set out in the report were unrealistic and needed to be reviewed. The joint team will continue its work in further considering the viability of a Joint Emergency
Organisation and will support the development of a robust Business Case for consideration and scrutiny by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

**Stafford Fire Station and Life Skills Centre (Safe+Sound) Update**

5. The Authority has considered a further detailed report on the Life Skills Centre on the financial sustainability of the project, the ongoing cost and how these would be met. The Project involves:

- Re-purposing the existing Fire Station at Stafford to create both a re-sized response base, together with a co-located Ambulance facility
- Providing a flagship “Lifeskills” facility delivered centrally, incorporating outreach work (hub and spoke model) for use by all public and third sector partners
- NHS Partnership Trust (SSOTP) co-locating their training academy on site
- Richmond Fellowship delivering ‘Sparky’s’ Community Café within the Lifeskills facility
- The Princes Trust Team located at the site.

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) will independently run the centre and be responsible for its financial and operational sustainability. The Authority has noted the progress made to date and the additional information provided.

**Public Health England (PHE) ‘Stay Well This Winter’ Campaign (jointly funded by PHE and the Service)**

6. Stay Well This Winter is an integrated multi-channel campaign, aimed to ease seasonal pressure on NHS urgent care and emergency services. The winter months can be challenging for the NHS, especially for urgent care services. While the NHS can usually manage high levels of A&E attendance, the seasonal increase in hospital admissions can lead to repeated and sustained breaches of the urgent and emergency care standard, which states that 95% of patients should be seen, treated, admitted or discharged within 4 hours of arrival at A&E.

The Stay Well This Winter campaign is aimed at easing seasonal pressure on NHS services. It is designed to reduce the number of people who become so ill that they require admission to hospital. The objective for the programme is to ensure that people who are most at-risk of preventable emergency admission to hospital are aware of and, wherever possible, motivated to take those actions that may avoid admission this winter.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, alongside Greater Manchester and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service are working in partnership with Public Health England (PHE) in order to create scale and amplification across all phases of the Stay Well This Winter campaign.

PHE are developing a suite of materials to aid communication of the Stay Well This Winter messages to target audiences, including posters, leaflets and materials, bespoke for the Fire and Rescue Service. Press releases and media promotion will take place over the coming months and the campaign is scheduled to run until March 2017.
In addition to these materials, the Service is working with PHE to install livery on its ten whole-time appliances carrying the campaign health messages and will also show banners outside all Community Fire Stations to reinforce these messages. The artworks message will read:

1. Do you have a long term health condition or are you 65 or over?
2. Cold weather can be seriously bad for your health
3. For more information and advice visit www.nhs.uk/staywell

This campaign is aligned to the Safe and Well concept that was piloted in winter 2015 with endorsement and support from PHE and the aforementioned Fire Services.

**Safe and Well Visits**

7. Work to implement Safe and Well visits across the County has progressed significantly. The scheduled “Go Live” for Safe and Well was the week commencing 5 December 2016.

The Service has been working very closely with a number of departments in preparation for this transition so that the electronic recording system is updated to capture additional question sets and marketing material, and also to ensure that the Service website contains consistent and updated messages, and most importantly that all staff are fully briefed on the purpose and content of Safe and Well.

The initial phase will concentrate on Safe and Well over the winter period with particular focus on winter warmth, falls, isolation, flu immunisation and home security. This is in addition to the existing fire safety messages, and equipment that is provided as part of the current Home Fire Risk Check.

**A Multi-Agency Approach to Waste Site Inspections**

8. The Risk and Response Assessment Sub Group has been set up to conduct a series of multi-agency joint inspections at authorised and un-authorised waste sites within the County. The Group will feed into the Recovery Co-ordination Group, following the waste site incident in Rugeley Slitting Mill.

The purpose of this group is to identify priority waste sites within Staffordshire and then conduct a multi-agency joint inspection to either produce a joint approach of action using our legal frameworks or/and produce a shared joint understanding of risk to inform pre incident tactical plans. A new focus will be to challenge what avenues the Service has that may not have been explored previously to resolve the issues.

To date a priority list has been created and the first visit completed. Staffordshire County Council are now providing support with arranging the next sites to visit. The list has been created taking into account high risk fire sites, un-authorised sites and previous fires and locations within built up areas.
Men’s Health Day

9. On 18 November, dozens of colleagues from across the Service attended two sessions held at Fire Headquarters focusing on men’s health. They were given three presentations to highlight common medical issues experienced by men, and they also received advice on how to resolve or mitigate them. The sessions touched on prostate cancer, mental wellbeing and resilience. One colleague who attended the presentation said it had raised his awareness and prompted him to book a check-up with his GP, while another described the session as a ‘real eye-opener’.

The Contribution Women make to a Safer Staffordshire Conference

10. Colleagues from across Staffordshire and further afield, attended this annual event held at Yarnfield on 3 November, which was organised by the Service and was attended by over 200 people. The Conference included talks from inspirational speakers including Professor Liz Barnes, Vice-Chancellor of Staffordshire University; Danny Flynn, CEO of North Staffs YMCA; Dr Anna Einarsdottir, Organisational Behaviour Expert and Lovejit Dhaliwal, award-winning documentary maker. The Conference also played host to three interactive workshops.

S J Sweeney
Chairman

R A Irving
Vice Chairman