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Devizes Area Board Report

March 2017

Dorset and Wiltshire Combination: One year on !!

The two Services combined on 1st April 2016 to form Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service with Darran Gunter as Chief Fire Officer (CFO).

Since then there have been some changes in Senior Personnel. Ben Ansell is now the CFO and he has been in post since 1st December 2016. Jim Mahoney is now an Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) and has responsibility for Operations (Response).

A great deal of work was put into the combination prior to 1st April 2016 in order that the transition could occur with minimal disruption. On the whole this has been achieved, however there is still work to do in order align some of the management systems and methods of recording.

Locally, the public should not have noticed any significant change. The local crews still respond to emergency calls, carry out visits and engage with the community in the same way they always did. If anything, in the future, it is this community work that will increase so the crews become more visible to members of the public through new partner initiatives.

Fire Service Precept Increase.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority approved a budget of £53.735 million for 2017/18 at its meeting on the 9th February

Within the recommendation was the requirement to increase council tax with a 2.6 pence per week increase for Band D properties in Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, Swindon and Wiltshire – resulting in an **annual fire precept Band D of £70.59** for the Fire and Rescue Service within the council tax for the year starting on 1 April 2017.

Mobilising to Incidents.

Last week, DWFRS featured prominently in local and national BBC news programs.

The partnership, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS), Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS) and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

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(HFRS), responded to FOI requests from BBC Radio 5Live concerning operational problems with the Vision control room system provided by Capita.

On Sunday 19th Feb, BBC 5Live broadcast the story as part of their '5 Live Investigates' programme, concentrating predominately on issues with LFB, rather than the partnership, however, the partnership was mentioned as we use the same system.

Since the system went fully live across the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP) last year, some intermittent issues have been experienced. These are being worked through with Capita and we are now experiencing much improved stability in the system.

At no point have 999 calls gone unanswered or fire appliances not been despatched. On the occasions the system has experienced issues, back-up and resilience procedures have ensured there is no interruption to our services.

The statement below, given to the BBC, sets out our NFSP partnership's position:

"Since the Vision system went live, all 999 calls have been answered. Robust back-up systems and resilience arrangements are in place, as with every emergency service control room in the country, to ensure there is absolutely no interruption to our service.

"We continue to work closely with Capita to address any issues and further develop the system. We are also working to resolve any network problems."

"The partnership between Hampshire, Devon & Somerset and Dorset & Wiltshire provides significantly improved resilience and will save taxpayers in the region of £15m over the next 10 years."

Following the broadcast on 5Live, BBC Radio Wiltshire approached DWFRS for further comment. After liaising with Capita, DSFRS and HFRS assisted their journalists with this story and re-issued the above statement. This programme was then broadcast in their breakfast show on Feb 22nd.

Following the radio coverage, BBC Points West and South Today picked up the story. A union representative from Control was interviewed at Potterne, along with a member of the FBU, a local Wiltshire MP as well as ACFO Mahoney, who reiterated the partnerships views in a face to face interview, also recorded at Potterne. This was also show on Feb 22nd during the regional TV programmes.

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I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the residents of Devizes that our systems are such that we will always respond to emergency calls.

Want to become a firefighter ?

Or know someone who does?

On-call Firefighters provide a part-time service around other commitments. They let us know when they are available and respond to emergency call outs.

To find out more about the role please visit the 'Working for us' pages of our website or drop into the station on a Wednesday evening for a chat.

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