

Safest People, Safest Places

County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Authority



## **COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

**13 FEBRUARY 2018**

## **ARSON AND DELIBERATE FIRE REDUCTION**

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### **REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To provide members with an update on progress of the Service's Community Safety Strategy in relation to arson and deliberate fire reduction.

#### **Background**

2. In 2016/17 the Service reviewed its suite of organisational strategies and the amended documents were published in April 2017. The Community Safety Strategy covers five main workstreams, one of which is arson reduction.
3. In October 2017, the Arson Prevention Forum published its second 'State of the Nation' report which provides a national overview of the cost and consequences of arson, as well as insight into what is being implemented to reduce its considerable impact on society.
4. In December 2017, Members were presented with a paper outlining the 'Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics: England 2016/17'. The report detailed the national and local long term downward trend for deliberate primary and secondary fires; however, it also showed there had been a steady rise in fires at both a local and national level over the past three years. It also highlighted the challenges we face, as when benchmarked with other Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) are in the lower quartile in terms of both deliberate primary and secondary incident types. The report also showed that deliberate fires are more prevalent across the rest of the North East and in Yorkshire and Humberside.
5. This paper highlights the actions the Service is taking to address deliberate fire setting both at a Service wide level and also the specific initiatives in the Easington area which has seen the most significant increase in these incident types.

#### **CDDFRS Community Safety Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20**

6. The Service's Community Safety Strategy, like all our strategies, is a three-year plan with a range of specific actions, which for arson reduction focuses on proactive work to reduce the number of deliberate primary and secondary fires. Over the life of the strategy, these actions include:

- a. Delivering initiatives through multi-agency partnership working;
  - b. Using improved data and intelligence to allow better targeting of resources and campaigns into areas at the greatest risk;
  - c. The community risk management team working with district teams to resource and support national and local campaigns as appropriate;
  - d. The Communications and Governance Team using a range of traditional and social media initiatives to ensure arson reduction messages are aimed at the relevant target audience;
  - e. Additional training and education to be delivered to personnel providing them with increased knowledge and understanding with respect to arson prevention work;
  - f. The use of intelligence gained through fire investigation and information sharing with our partners to improve our service delivery and assist in the prosecution of perpetrators of arson where necessary.
7. Although the strategy sets out our strategic direction for three years, it will be constantly reviewed in the light of new information such as the Arson Prevention Forum's 'State of the Nation' report and the 'Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics: England 2016/17' to ensure we remain flexible to respond to local issues and changes in the risk and our environment.

### **Arson reduction initiatives**

8. There has been a considerable amount of work delivered across all areas of the Service for a number of years including educational programmes and arson reduction audits which have contributed to the long term downward trend in arson incidents over the last ten years. Highlighted in the following sections are examples of further proactive initiatives being delivered under the new Community Safety Strategy in 2017/18 to address the increase in incidents in the last three years.

### Service wide initiatives

9. Deliberate primary and secondary fire data is now available via webmap layers in lower level super output areas which improves the identification of problematic trends in localised areas. This data is also shared with partner agencies daily through the Orcuma 'First' system and is combined with other multi-agency information e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) data, to provide a more comprehensive picture of local activity.
10. Monthly arson reduction intelligence meetings have been introduced within the Community Risk Management (CRM) team, with monthly workshops being made available to provide analytical support to District Management teams.
11. A strategic partnership group has been established between Durham County Council (DCC), Police and Fire specifically looking at arson and ASB activities in derelict and disused buildings across County Durham. This group commenced on 16 October 2017 and has resulted in partners developing tools and techniques to prevent buildings that are not currently being used, falling into disrepair and becoming a location for fire setting and other forms of ASB or criminal activity. The group is reviewing the 2011 Safe Durham Partnership Memorandum of Understanding 'Reducing arsons and deliberate fires' to ensure a multi-agency approach is taken to address this problem.

12. An arson escalation process has been introduced to focus prevention work on the top 30% of wards with deliberate fires, with the top 10% being escalated to the Multi-Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) groups. Deliberate fire setting has been established as one of the priorities of the County ASB Strategic Group helping to ensure it has the required focus from all partners.
13. CDDFRS District Managers now chair two out of the four MAPS, these being East MAPS and Darlington MAPS and this gives us greater opportunity to influence the agenda with regards to arson and deliberate fires.

### Easington initiatives

14. The Service has provided funding to support initiatives in the Horden area such as securing buildings and yard areas in the terraced streets; providing a swift response to clearing fuel sources from back streets and open ground and engagement with the local communities.
15. With regard to deliberate vehicle fires in Easington, the Service's Fire Investigation (FI) Team provided multi-agency training on vehicle fire investigation and fire scene preservation to the Police, FRS supervisory managers in Easington, Easington vehicle recovery teams and Cleveland Fire Brigade FI team on a number of occasions during the summer. Following this, the Police delivered multi-agency problem solving training to the Police, CDDFRS, Local Authority and Trading Standards, exploring forensic evidence, the 'issue' of arson and potential solutions.

### **Next steps**

16. The Service's Communication and Governance Team are developing a communications plan bespoke to the issues we face in Easington. The plan will take a multi-agency approach and it is anticipated that delivery will commence at the end of February 2018.
17. Arson and deliberate fire reduction requires data analysis and a full range of problem solving initiatives delivered through multi-agency working. However, evidence in the State of the Nation report and analysis of other FRS's performance shows that having additional resources allocated to arson reduction work can have a positive impact. Therefore, the Service will be exploring options on how best to utilise station-based staff in proactive arson and deliberate fire reduction on a sustainable basis.
18. Although the overall trend nationally, in relation to deliberate fire setting, shows an increase, a number of FRSs have managed to reduce the number of incidents occurring in their areas; therefore the Service will be looking to see what lessons it can learn from those FRSs to inform the development of future initiatives.
19. A presentation specifically covering the issue of deliberate fires in the Easington area was delivered to the Performance, Policy and Review Committee in December 2017 and at the Chair's request the presentation will be delivered to the Full Fire Authority at its March meeting.

## Recommendations

20. Members are requested to:

- a. **note** the contents of the report.

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