report

meeting	**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY**
date	**30 APRIL 2004** agenda item number **8**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

COMMUNITY FIRE STATIONS

1   PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1   To highlight successful initiatives from which to consider developing concepts and ideas to inform medium and long-term planning.

1.2   To propose that CFA Members visit Handsworth in the West Midlands in order to view, first hand, their purpose built community fire station. The aim is see and discuss how it has enabled the fire service to integrate more effectively with the local community and with other agencies, in the delivery of a safer community. Opportunities will then be created to discuss approaches in Nottinghamshire

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   Enhancing the effectiveness of Community Safety work and a closer direct involvement between staff and the public is a constant theme within the approach of this Fire Authority and the management of the Service. As is the drive to continuously improve and learn from good practice and the experience of others.

2.2   One approach that has been regularly brought to our attention from successful experiences elsewhere in the UK and in the USA is the concept of Community Fire Stations. The aim of which is to bring together a combination of public, community safety training /awareness facilities and operational fire-fighters to interact on the same site.

2.3   This may include bringing together on the site of an operational fire station a combination of:

- flexible meeting rooms and facilities that can be booked by community groups and other agencies for meetings and events

- facilities from which community services can be delivered (e.g computer and other learning facilities in partnership with local colleges or learn direct etc)

- facilities from which multi-agency community safety teams can work (e.g. local outreach work such as the Fire Service/Sure Start/City Council project operating out of Stockhill Fire Station and the Service led Avoidable Injuries work based in Newark Fire Station etc).

- special home safety awareness training/delivery facilities using innovative fire and community safety presentations etc that can be delivered to the public.

2.4 The basis of a community fire station is that facilities for both fire service personnel, community agencies and the public are fully integrated in one building as a local focus for the delivery of safety awareness and response to the public.

3 REPORT

HANDSWORTH AND SOUTH SHIELDS COMMUNITY FIRE STATIONS

3.1 **Handsworth** Fire Station is situated within a multi-racial, inner city community; a community subject to past inner cities riots which has a high crime rate including fire related incidents.

3.2 The community fire station was completed in 1999 as an operational base for two wholetime appliances with partially integrated community facilities which include, a presentation theatre, conference room, small meeting room, and a computer training room. All the facilities are available for use by all agencies and community members who are working to improve the safety and welfare of the community.

3.3 In addition, there is a purpose built virtual experience training facility that provides on site fire training to commercial organisations, fire safety education training to the public, and operational training facilities for fire service personnel.

3.4 In contrast, **South Shields** Community Fire Station is located on a dual carriageway a short distance from the urban area. The site is not conducive to use by the local community, being isolated (by the dual carriageway and distance) from local high density of housing. The basic facilities are much the same as Handsworth but without the virtual experience training facility. However, there is a focus on providing a base for multi-agency community safety initiatives and teams – which has its own additional advantages.

3.5 Although the community training facilities are available to all sectors of the community the main use of the facilities and staff time is focused on young fire-fighters team (youth development project) and an arson reduction team.

3.6 The operational facilities for the fire-fighters are separated from the community facilities at both stations for security reasons, but integration between fire service personnel and public is encouraged (but remains limited) in all common areas.

3.7 There is much that can be learned and built upon in the examples of community fire stations both in the UK and the USA. The two examples given above provide contrasting situations from which we can learn and develop thinking and long term planning in Nottinghamshire. The example in Handsworth provides a particularly good location for members to visit due to it's locality and that there is much to see (including their community safety facility and the presence of members of the public) other than meeting rooms and lecture halls.

3.8   It is considered that the proposed visit be used to experience first hand some of the things that can be done in order to catalyse informed debate within the Fire Authority and the Service on:

- the current station-based approach to community safety

- the development of existing physical facilities

- a model for new fire service facilities.

3.9   The locations of fire stations needs to be determined by risk within the surrounding community. The Fire Service Emergency Cover Model is being populated with risk information, so as to aid in the identification of appropriate locations. The effective delivery of community safety services needs to be taken into account when determining location and facilities

4   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Other than travel and related expenses there are no financial implications that will arise directly from this report.

5   PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no personnel implications arising directly from this report.

6   EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no equal opportunities implications arising directly from this report. The incidence of fire and other avoidable accidents and injuries falls disproportionately on the poorer and most disadvantaged of in our communities. Many of our existing fire stations are located within or in the near proximity of such communities.

7   RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

8   RECOMMENDATION

That Members approve visit to Handsworth Fire Station and that this is used as a precursor to discussions concerning this approach to community engagement.

9   BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

CD-Rom produced by West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service, which includes an introduction to Handsworth Community Fire Station.

P. Woods
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER