

Report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY	
date	11th June 2004	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

ARSON TASK FORCE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the successful outcome of the Service's bid for funding from the Arson Control Forum and a update on the progress made in establishing the Arson Task Force.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1. The Arson Control Forum was established in April 2001 to provide strategic direction to address the problem of arson. The Forum is responsible for the implementation of the Government led strategy to reduce the incidence of deliberate fires by 10% by March 2010.

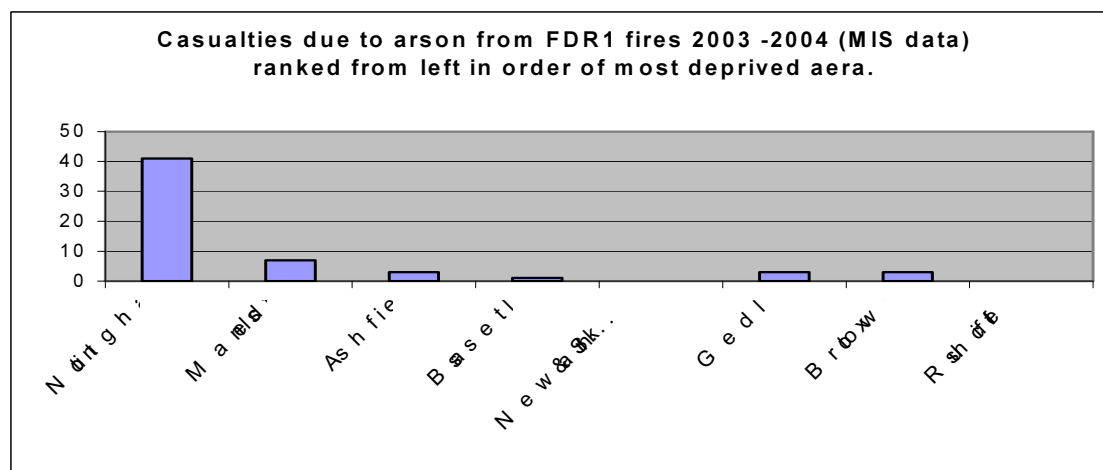
2.2 In April 2003 the Forum secured funding from Government of £13.3M in total with £4M being set aside to be invested in local initiatives beginning in 2003/04. In August 2003 brigades were invited to submit funding bids for arson control work within their areas.

3 REPORT

3.1. Arson is currently the largest single cause of fire in the UK accounting for over 117,764 deliberate fires, 111 fatalities and 3,300 non-fatal casualties in 2002. It is of worth noting that these figures do not take into account any arson related outdoor fires (Secondary). The Association of British Insurers estimates that arson costs the insurance industry £1M each day and society as a whole £2 billion annual.

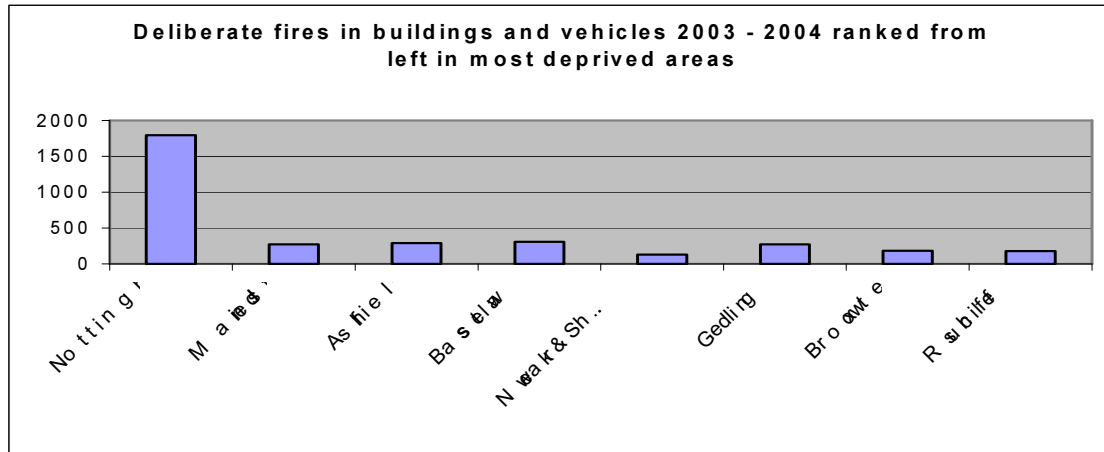
3.2 The situation in Nottinghamshire presents quite stark reading with 3,600 deliberate fires, 2 fatalities and 58 non-fatal casualties in 2003/04.

Table 1.



3.3 There were also 7,023 arson related secondary fires, these were mainly grass, vegetation and rubbish which accounted for 6,266 fires. The scale of the problem in Nottinghamshire can be seen when a national comparison is undertaken, with the County having the second highest number of deliberate fires in the UK per head of population.

Table 2.



3.4 The Association of British Insurers does not provide figures regarding cost for each brigade area so determining the cost of arson in Nottinghamshire can only be estimated. The Home Office published 'The Economic Cost of Fire' (Weiner, 2001) which provides estimates on the average cost of fires. Utilising this research it can be reasonably suggested that the overall annual cost of deliberate fires (excluding secondary fires) in Nottinghamshire is £44M, and if we were to factor in secondary fires the figure would be in the region of £52.5M.

3.5 Table 2: Economic cost of deliberate fires in Nottinghamshire 2003 –2004 (Appendix A District table).

Location	Number	Cost
Dwelling	368	£7.91M
Building	202	£8.94M
Vehicle	2,344	£11.95M
Other	681	£15.19M
Total	3,595	£44M

3.6 However difficult to quantify there is also cost of arson to the community. In the case of a deliberate fire to a school the damage goes beyond the school gates. There is the potential through loss of years of coursework and teachers preparation that can have a long-term damaging effect on the career prospects of young people.

- 3.7 Areas that suffer a large number of small deliberate fires can affect residents who can develop damaging psychological effects, this can be especially true of the elderly. Finally the effect on the environment should not be discounted with toxic gases and burnt out vehicles causing damage to the local environment.
- 3.8 Arson is a severe inhibitor in developing sustainable communities as it has damaging effects on social cohesion, economic development and the local environment. Arson affects the most disadvantaged communities with people on low incomes being 31 times more likely to be victims of arson than the general population. This makes arson one of the key barriers that needs to be removed to ensure Nottinghamshire is a more socially inclusive community.
- 3.9 In response to the Arson Control Forum's request for funding bids, the Service formulated a bid jointly with the Regional Sponsorship & Marketing Officer that was submitted in August 2003. The bid detailed a partnership approach with all of the eight district 'Crime and Disorder Partnerships' and especially the formation of an 'Arson Task Force' that included team members from both the fire service and police.
- 3.10 Members will be pleased to hear that the Service's bid was successful and the Arson Control Forum has allocated £270,000 over a 3-year period until March 2006. The funds will be released quarterly and will be subject to a 3-monthly auditing process that will check the progress of the 'Task Force'.
- 3.11 Currently an Arson Strategy is being developed and will be based around the Arson Task Force maintaining a strategic focus on arson within the County, setting policy and direction through detailed analysis of arson in Nottinghamshire. A key aspect of the work will be embracing key partners to establish a countywide co-ordinated approach and ensuring that there is evidence-based targeted response in arson 'hot spot' areas.
- 3.12 The Service has been working with Nottinghamshire Constabulary to appoint a Police Officer who will be an integral part of the team and provide a direct link to Police intelligence and be able to develop robust links with the investigative and criminal justice systems. It is anticipated that the Police Officer will join the Task Force in early July 2004.
- 3.13 The Task Force will also consist of a Fire Investigation Manager and Arson Co-ordinator who are fire officers, the Fire Setters Co-ordinator and the Unwanted Calls Manager. They will work closely with the Community Safety team to ensure that the Task Force engages with the community.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Arson Control Forum will release the funding over three years £30,000 in 2003 - 2004, £120,000 in 2004 – 2005 and £120,000 in 2005 –2006. The Service and partners will be providing match funding, the Services contribution will be contained within existing budgets.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The Police Officer will be a Nottinghamshire Constabulary appointment and as such there are not any Personnel implications contained in this report.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

Through the Arson Task Force the Service will be able to address both sustainability within communities and the wider issues of social inclusion.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has set a target of reducing deliberate fires by 10% by 2010 against a baseline of 2001 –2002. This is recognised by the ODPM as a challenging target and only by working in true partnership across the whole of Nottinghamshire with targeted responses in those communities at most risk from arson will the Service successful reduce deliberate fires to the required level.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note this report and will seek to promote this issue within.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

None

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix 1

THE COST OF ARSON IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 2003 - 2004

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Nottingham	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark & Sherwood	Rushcliffe
Dwelling	£0.473M	£0.301M	£0.387M	£5.397M	£0.473M	£0.409M	£0.237M	£0.237M
Building	£0.842M	£0.842M	£0.443M	£4.65M	£0.709M	£0.576M	£0.443M	£0.399M
Vehicle	£0.877M	£1.173M	£0.653M	£6.42M	£1.122M	£0.663M	£0.546M	£0.454M
Other	£1.338M	£1.72M	£0.959M	£6.244M	£0.959M	£1.739M	£1.338M	£0.847M
Secondary	£0.788M	£0.886M	£0.457M	£3.82M	£0.536M	£1.1M	£0.712M	£0.287M
Total Cost	£4.318M	£4.922M	£2.9M	£26.53M	£3.8M	£4.49M	£3.276M	£2.224M
Cost per Head	£38.55	£45.57	£26.85	£99.36	£33.93	£45.82	£30.91	£20.98