



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on **4 OCTOBER 2013** at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham from 10.00 am to 11.02 am.

Membership

Councillor Harwood (Chair)
Councillor Barnfather
Councillor Grocock
Councillor Rigby
Councillor Wilmott

Members absent are marked ^

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None

9 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2013 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

10 FIRE INVESTIGATION

Deputy Chief Fire Officer John Buckley introduced the report of the Chief Fire Officer informing members of the arrangements for fire investigation currently in place in Nottinghamshire and the effectiveness of it. Station Manager, Glenn Mears and Police

Liaison Officer Kevin Poxon presented the report to the Members, the main points of which were:

- fire investigation currently operates at two levels in Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS); level 1 is conducted by Supervisory Managers and level 2 is conducted by specialist Fire Investigation Officers;
- level 1 investigation is conducted by supervisory managers at the scene of all fires and produces information that is recorded as the most likely cause of the fire on the Incident Recording System (IRS). Information from this system is used, together with other factors to direct where community safety resources and interventions are allocated. Where a cause cannot be established, a level 2 Fire Investigation Officer may be requested to attend the scene;
- level 2 Fire Investigators are mobilised by Fire Control to various situations including; fires involving fatalities or serious injury, fires requiring the use of six or more pumping appliances and on request from the senior police investigating officer. From 1 January 2013 to date, 57 level 2 fire investigations have been conducted in Nottinghamshire, compared to 102 in total for 2012;
- the fire investigation function is managed and co-ordinated by the Station Manager in the Arson Reduction and Investigation Team;
- the crews attending fires are regarded as the eyes and ears of the Service. As part of the investigation process, statements will be taken from crew members attending the scene of a fire as well as from other witnesses. Fire and burglar alarms are interrogated and photographs and videos taken of the scene. Any CCTV footage can be very useful;
- the first stage of an investigation at the scene of a fire involves identifying the room of origin of the fire followed by the ignition point in the room of origin and identifying any smoke patterns. Preservation of any evidence at the scene is crucial to the investigation. The first decision to be made is to ascertain whether a fire is accidental or deliberate and then to eliminate possible causes;
- the NFRS prides itself on a very close working relationship both with the police and H M Coroners office. There have been two fire fatalities in Nottinghamshire so far this year and these have been investigated by level 2 Investigators in conjunction with the Police. Reports on the deaths are then presented to H M Coroner for consideration. When asked to prepare a report for the Coroner, the Coroner will not only require information on the origin and cause of the fire, but on the circumstances of the individual and their lifestyle in order to show why this individual has died as a result of the fire and to make recommendations for further actions or interventions to prevent further deaths or injury from fire;
- if the Coroner feels that the evidence he/she receives gives rise to a concern that circumstances creating a risk of other deaths will occur or continue to exist, he/she may make a Rule 43 Report (Coroners' Rules 1984) which is sent to the organisation that has responsibility for the circumstances. A recipient of a Rule 43 Report must send a written response within 56 days. The response must give details of any action which has been or is proposed will be taken, or provide an explanation when no action is proposed. Rule 43 Reports may offer

some assurance that the circumstances which brought about the death are being addressed, and that future deaths may be avoided;

- the Fire Investigation Officers may be contacted by others with a vested interest in the investigation, for example, insurance companies;
- a regional agreement provides funding for a regional hydrocarbon detection dog and handler. The dog and handler can be requested 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by level 2 Fire Investigators or by request from the police. The dog will be requested at all fatal fires and those resulting in serious injury together with those where an accelerant is suspected to have been used. The dog will not be used where there is any threat to its safety.

The meeting was then given a demonstration by Dave Coss, Dog Handler and Freckle, the dog. Mr Coss dropped a very small amount of accelerant on the carpet whilst Freckle was outside the room. On entry to the room Freckle demonstrated to Members that she was able to sniff out even a very small amount of accelerant and indicate to Mr Coss where it was in the room. Since April this year, Freckle has attended around 40 investigations in Nottinghamshire.

The Chair thanked Glenn Mears and Kevin Poxon for their very interesting presentation and Mr Coss and Freckle for their impressive demonstration.

Councillors suggested that a further report would be welcome at a future meeting of the Committee, on identifying vulnerable individuals and the action being taken to mitigate risks in relation to vulnerable people. Mr Buckley agreed to arrange for this.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and to continue to support the activity of the Fire Investigation Team.