

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

PERFORMANCE REPORT TO THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2015

SUBJECT: WIRRAL DISTRICT UPDATE

REPORT NUMBER: CFO/018/15

APPENDICES: APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF FATALITIES IN ADF'S WITHIN WIRRAL

APPENDIX B: WARDS AND STATION GROUNDS IN WIRRAL

APPENDIX C: WIRRAL DISTRICT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

REPORTING OFFICER: DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: DEB APPLETON – DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE

OFFICERS CONSULTED: GM PAUL MURPHY, SM ALAN FLETCHER, SM STEVE GADSDON, SM ANDY FORSHAW, WM ANDY ANDERSON, DPM JENNY WELSH.

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members consider the performance of the Wirral District over 2014/15.

Introduction and Background

2. This aim of this report is to update members on key areas of performance and activity from 2014/15 and to provide further information on Wirral District's actions and local priorities for 2015/16. The report accompanies a short

Learning Lunch presentation for Members, prior to the Performance & Scrutiny Committee on 19th March 2015.

3. Wirral is a borough of contrasts; a peninsula of 60 square miles, with 25 miles of coastline, comprising of both urban and rural areas. The population of Wirral is 320,200 and growing, with 197,400 of working age. There are 7,000 businesses in Wirral providing employment for 105,800 people across a unique combination of industries.
4. Merseyside Fire Rescue Service Wirral District is well prepared to respond to incidents across these complex areas. Personnel train at and gather risk critical information on local risks such as oil and chemical works, shipbuilding, docklands, large retail developments, major transport links such as motorways and the Mersey Tunnels, as well as the growing leisure and tourism industry which last year saw the return of the Open Golf Championship which drew a crowd of over 250,000 people over four days of competition.
5. There are extremes of wealth in Wirral; the affluent West of the borough contrast sharply with the more deprived East where social deprivation and problems such as anti-social behaviour are concentrated. This polarisation is apparent in ill health and disability rates and there is a difference in life expectancy of 10.3 years between the most and least deprived areas of Wirral.
6. Wirral's elderly population is higher than the national average and is growing. This group is particularly vulnerable to fire, with a large proportion of Wirral's fire fatalities over the last 10 years occurring within the over 70 age group. Additionally 34% of over 65's live alone in Wirral, a factor which also increases fire risk.
7. There is also a higher prevalence of severe mental illness, alcohol and drug misuse in Wirral, and high incidence of fuel poverty and dementia. All of these issues increase risk of fire significantly in the home. Alcohol and mental health issues, however, are not isolated to the more deprived wards and a number of related serious fires have occurred in more affluent areas in recent years, in particular in the homes of middle aged occupants who live alone.
8. Key areas of Operational Preparedness and Response performance forecasted from 2014/15 are shown in the breakdown of incidents (below) along with how they are distributed across Wirral council wards. Accidental fires in the home and anti-social behaviour fires are found mostly in the urban areas of Birkenhead and Wallasey. However, it is interesting to see the even spread of Road Traffic Collisions across the Borough which makes targeting very difficult.

	Accidental Fires in the Home	Small Anti Social Behaviour Fires	Commercial Building Fire	Special Service - Road Traffic Collisions
Wards with most Incidents	Rock Ferry	Bidston & St James	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Clatterbridge
	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Birkenhead & Tranmere	Bidston & St James	Pensby & Thingwall
	Bidston & St James	Rock Ferry	Liscard	Bidston & St James
	Leasowe & Moreton East	Seacombe	Rock Ferry	Bromborough
	Seacombe	Bromborough	Bromborough	Claughton
Wards with Fewest Incidents	Pensby & Thingwall	Oxton	Moreton West & Saughall Massie	Leasowe & Moreton East
	Hoylake & Meols	Greasby Frankby & Irby	Wallasey	Heswall
	West Kirby & Thurstaston	Prenton	Hoylake & Meols	New Brighton
	Eastham	Wallasey	Bebington	Hoylake & Meols
	Clatterbridge	Clatterbridge	Leasowe & Moreton East	Moreton West & Saughall Massie

Table 1 – Breakdown of Incidents per ward 2014/15

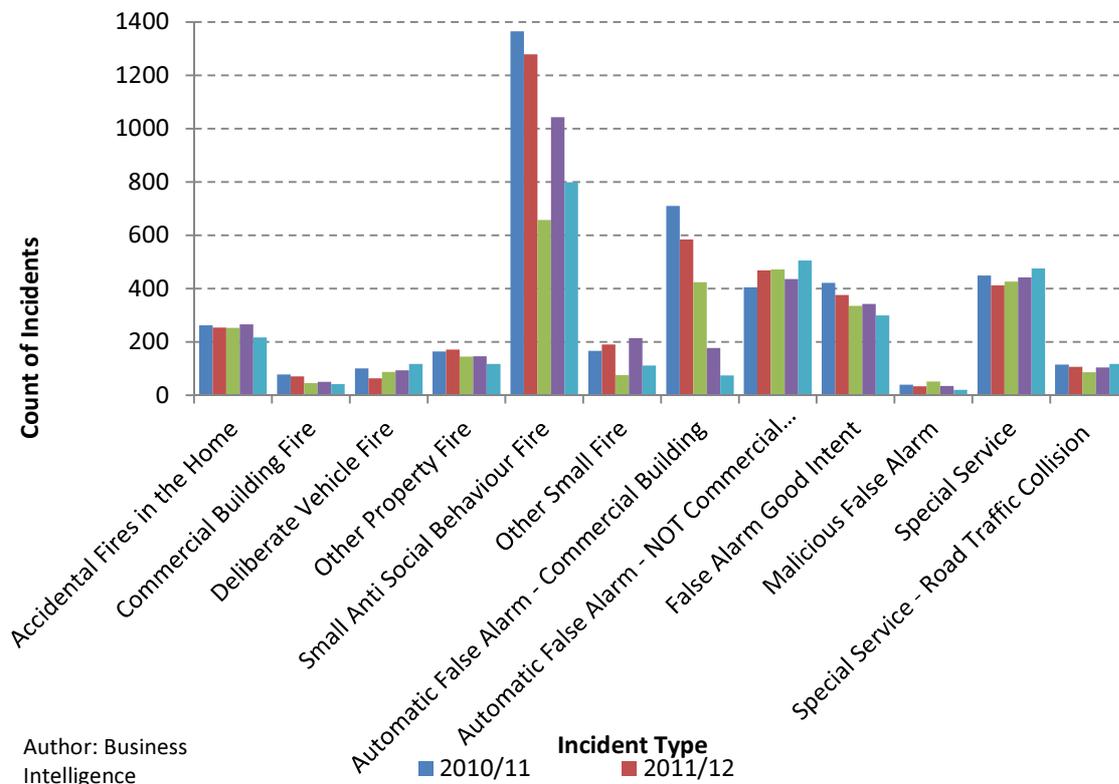


Table 2 – Incidents attended in Wirral between 2010/11 and 2014/15

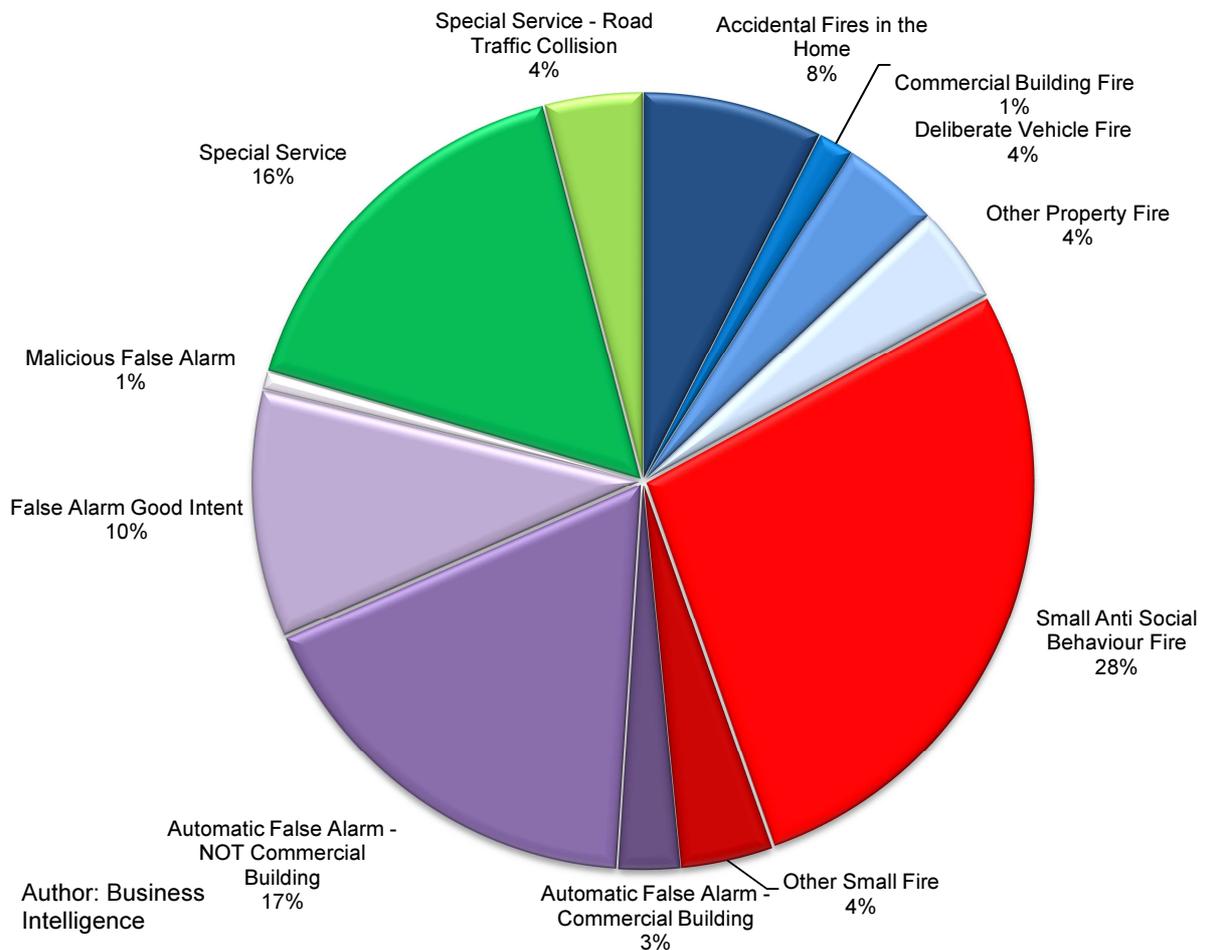


Table 3 – Breakdown of Incident Types attended in Wirral 2014/15 – Estimates

- Unfortunately, in Wirral this year we saw one* fire death despite our comprehensive Community Safety Strategy. Following a historical analysis of fatalities in Accidental Dwelling Fires in Wirral (Appendix A) the winter month of January saw the greatest number of fire deaths. There is no bias towards gender, but when analysed, the four age groups at greater risk are the 40-44, 45- 49, 75-79 and 80-84 groups. An analysis of the lifestyles of victims has been conducted using customer insight community profiling which identified one distinct segmentation of “residents living in privately owned properties” who either live alone or were alone at the time of the fire. The majority of ignition sources in fatal fires were as a result of “smoker’s materials” and there is a similar pattern when alcohol consumption is taken into account. We are working closely with our partners to identify vulnerable and at risk residents who share these factors, many of whom live outside areas designated as being at high risk of fire. (* It is important to note that some of the data during 2014/15 is still pending confirmation by the coroner and therefore fatality numbers could be subject to change subsequent to this report).

10. Since 2010/11 we have seen a gradual reduction in fires in the home, but in 2013/14 these figures started to rise again. However in 2014/15 we are estimating a reduction in Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF's) to a five-year low.
11. MFRS incident statistics show that accidental fires in the home are more concentrated in the built-up areas of Birkenhead and Wallasey, however serious and fatal fires are more complex and not occurring solely in the historical hotspot areas. These incidents have informed our community safety strategy which focuses on individual vulnerability and partnership working to reduce risk in the community.
12. Like dwelling fires, anti-social behaviour fires occur more frequently in deprived areas. There was an increase in these fires in 2013/14 but following extensive work with partners and within our communities, including a successful bonfire period, we have since seen a decrease in the numbers of incidents of this nature in 2014/15.
13. There is an even spread of Road Traffic Collisions across the Borough. This year's figures have shown a slight increase in attendance at RTC's and a larger increase in corresponding injuries. To address this issue, the Service are expanding road safety interventions, by working in partnership with Wirral Metropolitan College to deliver the interactive "Suddenly from Nowhere" educational package to our target group of 17-25 year olds in schools, colleges and at local fire stations across Wirral.
14. We continue to support the business community in further reducing the number and impact of fires in commercial premises which have reduced in 2014/15, following a slight increase in 2013/14. Our Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) Strategy has successfully reduced the number of attendances at AFAs in commercial buildings to the lowest level in 5 years, enabling stations to be more productive within the working day.
15. False Alarms have decreased due to our engagement campaigns in schools and within the community.
16. We continue to work alongside our colleagues in Merseyside Police to reduce the number of Deliberate Vehicle Fires across Wirral where we have witnessed a year on year increase since 2011/12.
17. To evaluate our Operational Preparedness and Response, the Service carry out a comprehensive programme of offsite exercises. During 2014/15 we tested our operating procedures, and joint working practices with other agencies at a number of exercises across the district during a COMAH exercise at Tranmere Oil Terminal, Exercise Joint Endeavour and Exercise KMAF Warrior on the River Mersey.
18. Key areas of Prevention & Protection performance from 2014/15 as prioritised in Wirral's Community Safety Plan are highlighted in the paragraphs below. There was an increase in anti-social behaviour fires from 33 to 49 (48.5%)

during the 2014/15 bonfire period which followed on from extremely low figures in 2013/14 which delivered a 49% reduction in incidents. There have been significant reductions over the years 2012 (-37%) and 2011 (-36%), which have contributed to making Wirral much calmer and safer for residents and has been achieved by intensive work with Merseyside Police, Magenta Living, Wirral Anti-social Behaviour Team and other key partners.

19. The Service has worked proactively to provide fire safety advice and education in the community, which has resulted an estimated reduction in 2014/15 to a five year low in Accidental Dwelling Fires. However, serious fires still persist with Wirral experiencing 26 fire fatalities over the last ten years despite our comprehensive community fire safety strategy.
20. Figures show that one in three homes in Merseyside that have a fire caused by accident do not have smoke alarms. Between 1st January 2014 and 18th December 2014 222 accidental dwelling fires occurred across Wirral. In 83 of those incidents, which is 37%, there was no smoke alarm present.
21. We continue to work closely with partner agencies in Health, Wirral Council, Merseyside Police and the Voluntary Sector to identify and assist our most vulnerable residents and prevent fires in the home. In 2014/15 we have improved our targeted approach to Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC's) utilising information from our partners to identify vulnerable people. This year this was expanded to include Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Trust who set up an information sharing protocol so that service users, including those with mental health, substance abuse issues, learning disabilities and dementia, would be offered a HFSC.
22. Referral processes continue to be developed with a wide range of public, voluntary, housing and private sector organisations, with over 80 front line professionals attending Home Fire Safety Awareness Training sessions facilitated by Wirral Prevention Team to assist them to identify hazards in the home and refer vulnerable occupants to MFRS. An evaluation showed that feedback was overwhelmingly positive and the project has resulted in an increase in the number and quality of 'high risk' referrals received from the partner agencies who attended. Plans are in place to expand these sessions this year in response to demand for our partners.
23. During 2014-15, we have rolled out 'Choosing Health' training to all Wirral personnel, delivered by Wirral Community NHS Trust. A tailored version of the training session was provided to fire crews to enable them to offer brief health advice and be able to signpost members of the community as well as conduct their own personal evaluation and self-assessment. The sessions have enabled firefighters to feel more confident discussing issues impacting on fire risk (e.g. smoking and alcohol use) as well as play an important role in reducing the significant health inequalities that exist in Wirral.
24. This year in Wirral over 9,000 targeted Home Fire Safety Checks were delivered by MFRS personnel, around 1,000 of which were carried out in the homes of the most vulnerable. These visits include the fitting of smoke alarms

and providing tailored safety advice to residents. A number of campaigns took place throughout the year such as Road Safety Week and Winter Warm campaigns which involved a variety of initiatives and community engagement activities. A key focus was on kitchen fires as 60% of ADFs this year were caused by cooking. Our kitchen safety campaign delivered a wide range of talks, events, and localised campaigns which emphasised safe cooking messages. Although kitchen fires are high in number, it is reassuring to find that due to the early warning given by fitted smoke alarms, most of these fires require little or no firefighting action on arrival, thus increasing safety for both residents and firefighters. Additionally high profile reassurance campaigns have been delivered following serious fires.

25. To promote our safety activities we have introduced 'themed' open days across Wirral Fire Stations. Two marketplace events were organised this year aimed at older people, and a recent family event was held at Birkenhead Fire Station during the Christmas period, where partner agencies were invited to showcase the services available to the community, whilst reinforcing our own safety advice. MFRS will continue to innovate and find alternative ways of reaching and supporting people within local communities who are socially isolated.
26. We have continued to support the role of Fire Community Safety Officers within Wirral and these Officers are embedded into our partner organisations to working in areas such as Road Safety, Anti-Social Behaviour, Youth Engagement, and Wirral's 'Intensive Family Intervention Programme' (IFIP) supporting 'troubled families.'
27. Wirral's local fire stations are all dedicated "Safe Havens" and have also become a hub for local communities, with children, families and a diverse range of community groups all using our resources.
28. The MFRS Wirral Community Safety Plan continues to support Wirral Council's move to four constituency areas (Appendix B). The Wirral District Manager is a standing member of the Wirral Public Service Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership, Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards, and the Vice Chair of the Intensive Family Intervention Programme. Wirral's strategic partners have supported MFRS in the development and delivery of the community safety planning process over the last four years which has led to a collaborative approach in outlining the level of community risk in each of the constituency areas, assisting identify those who are most vulnerable or at risk from fire.
29. As we look forward to 2015/16, our key local priorities are identified in the Wirral Community Safety Plan. The plan is informed by a number of key factors such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), social demographics, information sharing agreements, historical incident data and social deprivation in order to target our local community safety strategies to prevent fire more effectively, the plan is underpinned by an Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C).

30. MFRS personnel continue to engage with young, old, and vulnerable people alike to promote health and wellbeing to help reduce Wirral's health inequalities whilst continuing to deliver key fire safety and social responsibility messages. We recognise that social isolation is an increasing problem in Wirral but to truly respond to the needs of Wirral's communities, we need to understand them, their problems, concerns and challenges and we need to shape our service to respond to those needs efficiently and effectively by working together with our community and our key partners.

Equality and Diversity Implications

31. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Wirral District and is attached at Appendix C.

Staff Implications

32. There are no staff implications contained within this report.

Legal Implications

33. There are no Legal Implications contained within this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

34. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

35. There are no risk management, health and safety or environmental implications contained within this report.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

36. As well as focusing on the fire and rescue related risks in Wirral, this report reflects our continued role in local partnerships. Wirral District works closely with our key partner agencies; in particular Wirral Council, Merseyside Police, Health and the Voluntary and Faith Sector to deliver improved outcomes for our firefighters and our community.

Recommendation

37. That Members;
- a) Consider performance in relation to this report concerning Wirral District, and
 - b) Scrutinise the information contained within this report concerning Wirral District
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO/ CFO/111/11
 CFO/058/14

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

COMAH Control of Major Accident Hazards