

AVON FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING:	Avon Fire Authority
MEETING DATE:	Wednesday, 5 October 2022
REPORT OF:	Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
SUBJECT:	Service Round-Up

1. **SUMMARY**

This report is to highlight the areas of good work across Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS), which has taken place between June and September 2022.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Avon Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 This report aims to give an overview of the work across Service Delivery, Service Delivery Support, Corporate Services and other proactive communications activity, project or teamwork.

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This report has no financial implications.

5. **KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

The death of Her Majesty The Queen

- 5.1 Following the sad announcement of Her Majesty The Queen's death on Thursday 8 September, the Service joined The King and the rest of the world in a period of mourning.
- 5.2 During this time, Union Flags were raised and lowered in line with protocol, all community events ahead of The Queen's funeral were cancelled and staff were encouraged to follow protocol as a sign of respect to the Royal Family.

- 5.3 On Sunday 11 September, members of the Service attended Proclamation events in Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare and Kingswood to mark the incoming monarch, King Charles III.

Transformation

- 5.4 The Digital Project Manager has been working closely with HR to redesign the Return-to-Work Interview and Self Certification forms/processes. Smart forms have been created and launched on a new dedicated Forms group on Microsoft Teams, making the process more accessible and easier for all.
- 5.5 A new Combined Scoping Impact assessment tool has been designed and launched following extensive in-house consultation and testing. This tool, launched as a Microsoft Teams Form, combines initial scoping questions at the early planning stage on subjects such as Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality, Environment, Data protection and safeguarding and informs whether a full impact assessment is required.
- 5.6 The Transformation Programme Scope has been revised to have a much stronger emphasis on digital transformation and improvements that will make the biggest difference to making our Service stronger between now and the end of the programme in March 2024.

Business Fire Safety (BFS)

- 5.7 A new video has been launched highlighting the measures business owners and responsible persons can put in place to keep safe from fire and comply with the law. The video is aimed at small and medium sized local businesses, including takeaways, retail outlets, guest houses and others and is being adopted by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
- 5.8 The 5-9 September was Business Fire Safety Week, which saw the Service host many events and campaigns, including providing 'fire door advice' and 'dangers of wedging doors'. Content was shared across social media including the promotion of the online fire safety toolkit, an interactive tool to help business owners understand their legal duties for fire safety in the workplace.
- 5.9 A review and update of the West of England housing protocol Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is underway, to ensure a consistent approach to fire safety compliance, where AF&RS collaborate with unitary housing associations.
- 5.10 An internal audit of BFS and more specifically the Risk Based Inspection Programme has recently been completed. The feedback from this process was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting much good work that has been done by the team.

Vulnerable Adults (VA)

- 5.11 Following on from the success of the Ukraine Welcome Event, the Service and local crews were invited to the Ukraine Independence Day in Yate; an excellent day enjoyed by all.
- 5.12 The VA team arranged and hosted an event for the Chinese Wellbeing Society, initially to provide fire safety advice to society members. However, working together we extended the event into the afternoon for the families. The event saw internal departments working together, allowing information to be provided around Business Fire Safety and Children and Young Persons information. We were also able to connect with other local agencies and partners including the Community Cohesion Team at South Gloucestershire Council, Public Health England, local vaccination team and SARI (Stand Against Racism and Inequality). The event was a real success with people signing up for home fire safety visits.
- 5.13 The VA team continue to provide training to our crews, including to the new recruits during their training school. More recently, an input on VA, Children and Young Persons and Safeguarding to the Firefighter in Development Phase 3 course.
- 5.14 The VA team also attended a community engagement event in Patchway, led by the local police team and the Violence Reduction Unit.

Children and Young Persons (CYP)

- 5.15 The CYP team delivered a series of Summer of Safety Sessions at Weston-super-Mare, Yate, Southmead, Patchway, Kingswood stations, including a quiet session designed for children with additional needs. The focus was on fire safety, water safety and keeping active with Fido Fire Fitness Exercises. Sessions were suitable for children in primary school (Key Stage 1 and 2, ages 5-11).
- 5.16 Following on from the Marcus Rashford initiative in summer 2021, the CYP team worked in collaboration with South Gloucestershire Council's education department to attend 13 Holiday Activity and Food Programme sessions. Held at schools across the local authority area, approximately 60 children attended per session, with Yate, Kingswood and Patchway stations delivering messages on water safety and fire safety.
- 5.17 A new young person's safety tool has been made available online. The CYP team has released a new online resource for teachers, parents and carers to use with Key Stage 1 children. The new tool was signposted to during the Summer of Safety Sessions and will be officially launched to teachers, youth groups, parents and carers later this year. Using the resource children can evaluate their safety skills, identify hazards and recognise how they can stay safe from fire and safety risks in their lives.

- 5.18 The CYP team attended Fresher's Week events across the Service area meeting with students and delivering water safety messages focusing on hidden dangers and float to live; and fire safety messages focusing on personal electronic devices (such as not leaving laptops on charge on beds etc).
- 5.19 The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Fire Setters working group, made up of staff from six Fire and Rescue Services including AF&RS, have created a national training course about fire setting which has already been delivered to most fire services around the country. The course is currently being refreshed, ready for it to become a recognised qualification.

Cost of Living

- 5.20 The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has released a statement following the latest announcements on increased cost of living and in light of the ongoing national pay award negotiations for fire Service employees.
- 5.21 The statement outlines the CFO's concerns for the welfare of staff and the measures they are resorting to due to the increased cost of living, in particular the rise in gas and electricity bills and the disproportionate pay they are receiving.

Summer heatwave

- 5.22 Between 11-18 July 2022, Fire Control received 418 calls where 'fire' was mentioned in the narrative, topping the 330 calls of the same nature received in the previous week.
- 5.23 The calls came as more bonfires, barbecues and other deliberate fires spread out of control due to soaring temperatures. Working alongside our local partners, guidance on how to barbecue safely was issued to local communities.
- 5.24 The heatwave that continued into August 2022, also saw our crews travelling to Norfolk to support Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service following a call for national assistance to tackle the desperate conditions they were facing.
- 5.25 Between 8-14 August 2022, the Service responded to 212 fires, 155 false alarms, 101 non-fire calls, alongside other incidents. A total of 1,306 calls were taken by Fire Control, an increase of 658 calls compared to the previous week.

Supporting Pride

- 5.26 As part of this year's LBGTQ+ Pride celebrations, the Service unveiled two new fire engine designs in celebration. One of the fire engines is based in Weston-super-Mare and the other at Temple in Bristol.
- 5.27 The artwork features a rainbow stripe representing the different groups in the LBGTQ+ community and a skyline silhouette unique to each station's location.

Also featured are the messages: 'Celebrating with Pride' and 'Fire doesn't discriminate and neither do we'.

5.28 Throughout July staff attended local Pride events in Weston-super-Mare and Bristol. In Bristol, staff hosted a healthy Big Pride Breakfast for over 100 local people and visitors who came along and fuelled up ahead of the day.

Stepping Up Programme

5.29 The Service has been recognised for its outstanding contribution to Bristol's Stepping Up Programme, a programme that the Service has supported since its inception in 2018.

5.30 The Service was presented with the 'Outstanding Contribution to Diversity Award' and Richard Stokes, AF&RS Diversity and Inclusion Manager, also received a Rising Star Award for his work in changing the face of diversity both within the fire Service and in the wider local community.

6. RISKS

6.1 This report has no operational, financial or reputational risks.

7. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report has no legal or policy implications.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

This report has no background papers.

9. APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Press releases and incident report of note June 2022 – September 2022

10. REPORT CONTACT

Amber Foreman, Head of Corporate Communications