

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY



REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSCPC/08/3
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY & CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	4 SEPTEMBER 2008
SUBJECT OF REPORT	COMMUNITY SAFETY – TARGETING OF RESOURCES
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Safety)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the content of this paper 2. To endorse the bid to support further targeted CS prevention work in retained areas. 3. To endorse, in principle, the future procurement of a technical solution to improve targeting.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Fire & Rescue Authority approved funding in February 2008 to increase Community Safety delivery by £60,000 for the purpose of supporting the growing preventative work of stations, especially retained stations. The collective bids far outweighed the available funding. The bids were provisionally approved on the basis that this work strongly supports the Corporate Priorities and Targets, and Group Commanders encouraged to identify more efficient ways to deliver the service to our communities.</p> <p>This has been achieved through the introduction of Community Safety Action Teams (CSAT), partnerships and increasing the focus on hard to reach groups. However, a significant gap still exists between the available funding and the planned activities and a recent review of Group budgets has shown that current expenditure for community safety delivery activity is exceeding the budget provision. This report therefore sets out a request for the Committee to support further funding and the reasons behind this.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>£161,000 to support the delivery of CS activities across the service</p> <p>This is subject to approval by the Resources Committee to vire funds from the existing retained pay lines for this financial year, therefore there will be a net nil impact on the budget</p> <p>Funding for subsequent years is the subject of a MTFP bid</p>
APPENDICES	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Fire & Rescue Authority approved funding in February 2008 to increase Community Safety delivery by £60k for the purpose of supporting the growing preventative work of stations, especially retained stations. This increased the total delivery budget for the 12 Groups at the commencement of this fiscal year to £232k. Prior to April this year the Group Commanders were asked to submit financial bids based on their proposed activities as projected in their Group Plans. These bids were subsequently considered and the funding was apportioned with emphasis very firmly placed on delivering effective but cost efficient activities. As a result, the Group Commanders generally employ more efficient methods of delivery, such as; employing lone workers whenever possible, using alternative delivery options such as secondary contracts, and applying more efficient time management with regard to co-ordinating journey times and so on.
- 1.2 However, the collective bids far outweighed the available funding. The bids were provisionally approved on the basis that this work strongly supports the Corporate Priorities and Targets, and Group Commanders encouraged to identify more efficient ways to deliver the service to our communities.
- 1.3 This has been achieved through the introduction of Community Safety Action Teams (CSAT), partnerships and increasing the focus on hard to reach groups. However, a significant gap still exists between the available funding and the planned activities and a recent review of Group budgets has shown that current expenditure for community safety delivery activity is exceeding the projected out-turn; hence, the Committee is now being asked to support this paper's findings and the subsequent financial demand. The alternative to this will be to reduce community safety activities back to levels that will ensure no significant overspend on the budget line.
- 1.4 Members will also be aware of the continuing improvement in the reduction of all emergency calls, including those to domestic property fires, across the service. This has made a significant contribution to the current underspend due to reduced turnout and attendance fees, which could be used to meet the increased need for community safety activity.

2. **SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

- 2.1 Whilst the Service's performance for reducing fire fatalities and injuries is improving there are certain indicators that are showing that these 'hard to reach' and 'hard to influence' groups are not receiving the attention of our employees.
- 2.2 Members will be aware of the indicator regarding smoke alarm activations ¹ (reported to the Authority's Audit and Performance Review Committee on 30 June 2008) which shows that although the number of dwelling fires is reducing compared to last year (by more than 10%) there are an increasing percentage of dwelling fires that are not being identified as having a smoke alarm that activated at the time of the fire. This may be that there was no smoke alarm fitted or may be the result of a lack of awareness on the part of the incident commander that a smoke alarm was even fitted. This latter point is being addressed by the Group Support Teams through awareness and training for all station-based crew and watch commanders.

¹ BVPI 209 (i) Percentage of fires attended in a dwelling where a smoke alarm activated

2.3 This indicator is more likely to be negatively affected by our employees successfully visiting the homes of many elderly and vulnerable people but not being able to penetrate the more difficult to reach groups who are known to be experiencing fires in their home. Consequently there is a need to undertake more targeted work to identify their approximate location and lifestyle habits and to subsequently reverse this negative indicator.

3. **TARGETING CRITERIA AND TOOLS**

3.1 The criteria for targeting risk groups is set out within the Home Safety policy document which makes it clear that the following groups have been identified through national research and should receive our full attention with an advisory visit and the installation of a ten year smoke alarm on all levels of the property;

- Residents living as part of a single adult household
- A lone parent to young children
- On a low income / unemployed / never worked
- Impaired as a result of substance abuse or physical / mental / age-related.

3.2 Furthermore, local studies by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS), Dorset FRS and the University of Exeter have more accurately described the risk groups as being;

- Older people living alone, as households without children, or, where the household contains at least one person with a long-term illness.
- Those who live in relatively densely populated areas, where a high percentage of men and women are working in service industries.
- Younger people in education living independently, many of whom may be non-UK residents.
- People co-habiting in converted, often rented, accommodation where in general all occupants are employed.

3.3 Whilst these are considered to be 'at risk' there are a percentage within these groups who constitute the highest risk to themselves, to our employees and to our communities. Smarter targeting can allow us to predict the profile and possible location of our next fire victim, but if we are to achieve this then our targeting process will need to be further refined and our resources aligned to meet these needs without losing sight of the existing 'at risk' members of our communities.

3.4 Targeting is able to be improved by mapping various data sets such as fire, crime, demographics, health data and social lifestyle activities. This will provide a more focussed risk profile for stations and groups, but much of this data is not yet available to the Service. Other responsible authorities (such as Police, Local Authority, Primary Care Trust) are duty bound to provide data that supports the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, but as yet have been unable to share critical information in an intelligible format for targeting use. This is being worked on and will soon be available to the Service.

- 3.5 Additionally, there are commercially available technical solutions yet to be employed by the Service. One such solution (MOSAIC) combines over 400 separate data sources and divides the UK adult population into 61 different types and eleven groups covering the full spectrum of British society. Data sources include the 'edited' electoral roll, lifestyle information, house price data, council tax returns, consumer credit behaviour and 'Office of National Statistics' local area data. This solution alone will not provide us with a full appreciation of the risk groups and their locations but it will add to the overall risk landscape if overlaid with fire data and the previously mentioned data from our significant partners.
- 3.6 This solution is widely used in the public sector and by some Fire & Rescue Services and is able to focus on the socio-economic compositions of neighbourhoods and single households.
- 3.7 Clearly the ability to execute effective targeting is only one part of a larger solution if we are seeking to further reduce fire fatalities and injuries, and make a positive impact on smoke alarm ownership within our highest risk groups.

4. **RESOURCES**

- 4.1 Over the fiscal year 2007/08 there were 13 fire fatalities (includes accidental and deliberate) in domestic dwellings across the Service area, and only 3 of these occurred in wholtime station areas. This clearly shows the rural nature of our communities and emphasises the need to promote preventative work amongst our retained firefighters, but naturally this comes at a cost.
- 4.2 A further improvement to the way in which we target our resources will be the use of our own data on the occurrence of fire combined with the information provided by partners and the targeting solution. To accomplish this, a restructure of existing staff within the community safety team will be carried out, this will be reported to Members as a separate report.
- 4.3 If we are to effectively act on the targeted information coming to stations over the next 6 month period then we need to invest in the salaries of our retained firefighters, therefore ensuring that Groups are able to fully implement their proposed activities for the current year.
- 4.4 By shifting resources from emergency response budget lines into the delivery of community safety we are clearly meeting the expectations of the National Framework and our Corporate plan.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 To note the content of this paper
- 5.2 To endorse the bid to support further targeted CS prevention work in retained areas.
- 5.3 To endorse, in principle, the future procurement of a technical solution to improve targeting.

PETE SMITH
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (COMMUNITY SAFETY)