



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	RC/12/9
MEETING	RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	20 JULY 2012
SUBJECT OF REPORT	ANNUAL GRANT TO SERVICE CEREMONIAL UNIT 2012/13
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That a grant of £6,000 be made towards the costs of Ceremonial Unit activities during the current financial year and particularly towards the cost of attendance at the Ypres Remembrance parade in November.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>For a number of years the Ceremonial Unit has represented the Service at the Ypres Remembrance parade and other more local events and has received appropriate financial support from the Service to do so.</p> <p>This paper now seeks approval, in accordance with Financial Regulations, to the making of a grant to the Unit to cover events in the current financial year – particularly attendance at the Ypres Remembrance parade.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Any grant made to the Unit will be contained from within existing resources.
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Not applicable
APPENDICES	Nil.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	Ceremonial Unit Memorandum of Understanding

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Ceremonial Unit. The Unit comprises a Corp and Pipe section and is a voluntary organisation open to existing and retired officers of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, together with the former Devon and Somerset fire and rescue services. The Unit has a stated aim of projecting the good image of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service and the British fire service generally. Its President is the Chief Fire Officer, with the current Authority Chairman (Mark Healey) as Patron and former Authority Chairman, Councillor Bernard Hughes OBE, Honorary Life Vice-Patron.
- 1.2 Through its public appearances the Ceremonial Unit significantly promotes the fire service, and in particular, Devon & Somerset, in the eyes of the general public and the special interest groups for whom they display.
- 1.3 In particular, the Unit has, for a number of years, represented the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (and the former Devon fire and rescue service, prior to combination), at the internationally-recognised Armistice Day Commemoration held in Ypres, Belgium, in November of each year. This culminates in a special Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial, one of four British and Commonwealth memorials to the missing in the battlefield area of the Ypres Salient in Belgian Flanders. The memorial bears the names of 54,389 officers and men from United Kingdom and Commonwealth Forces (except New Zealand and Newfoundland) who fell in the Ypres Salient before 16 August 1917 and who have no known grave.
- 1.4 The ceremony is attended by representatives of the United Kingdom, Belgian and other nations' Armed Forces, local dignitaries, ambassadors, members of the clergy, representatives of United Kingdom fire brigades, Royal British Legion Standard bearers, ex-Service organizations, Friends of the Last Post Association and invited guests.
- 1.5 Additionally, the Unit also represents the Service at the annual UK Firefighters Memorial Service (usually held in London in September) and up to a maximum of six other occasions each year at the request of either the Chief Fire Officer or the Chairman of the Authority.

2. FUNDING IN 2012/13

- 2.1 As mentioned, the Unit is voluntary and as such is dependent on grants, sponsorship etc. for the majority of the funding it needs to operate. In particular, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Service and the Unit provides that the Service will provide annual funding of £5,000 each financial year to the Unit. This is subject to annual review by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman of the Authority but the intention is that, when made, the grant made will provide for an increase of no less than the rate of inflation measured over the preceding 12 months. The primary purpose of this funding is to support expenses incurred by attendance at the Ypres Remembrance Ceremony.
- 2.2 The Unit has costed attendance at this event in 2012 at £5,400. This relates to travel only – other costs associated with attendance are borne by the individuals in the Unit attending the event. As previously indicated, however, attendance at Ypres represents only one such event attended by the Unit during the course of the year. In light of this, it is suggested that the Committee may wish to award a grant of £6,000 in the current financial year to cover the quoted transport costs associated with attendance at Ypres and leave a small surplus by way of a contribution to the costs of other events.

2.3 Financial Regulations require the making of any grant in excess of £5,000 to be approved by this Committee. Any grant made to the Unit for the current financial year will be contained from within existing resources. The approved revenue budget contains provision of £10,000 for the making of grants to outside organisations. Historically, the Service has supported both the Ceremonial Unit and the Fire Service Sports and Athletics Association from this provision.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Unit has an exemplary record of meeting its stated aim of projecting the good image of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service and the British fire service generally. This is particularly the case in relation to the Ypres Remembrance Ceremony for which the Unit has achieved well-deserved international recognition.

3.2 As such, the Committee is asked to approve – in accordance with Financial Regulations – the making of a grant to the Unit of £6,000 to support its activities in the current financial year and particularly attendance at the Ypres Remembrance Ceremony.

LEE HOWELL
Chief Fire Officer