

Minutes of the meeting of the SAFETY PANEL of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor Wright (Chairman)
Councillors Baldwin, Bhatti, Edwards, Rowlands (substitute for Councillor Woollard), and Schofield

Officers: B Dugdale (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), D Keen (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), C Bailey (Area Manager Safety), C Bell (Area Manager Operational Support), T Ridgley (Group Manager Prevention), J Oliver (Community Safety Partnership Manager), M Brightman (Unwanted Fire Signals Officer), S Choudhry (Equalities and Diversity Officer), J McVey (Operational Assessment Peer Reviewer), Simon Heap (Democratic Services Manager) and K O'Callaghan (Committee Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Potts and Woollard

Also Present: Councillor Birchley

SP10 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Safety Panel held on 31 July 2009, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the post title of A Gosling being amended to read "(Station Manager)" and the post title of S Choudhry being amended to read "(Equalities and Diversity Officer)".

SP11 KEY STATISTICS AND TRENDS (INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY STATISTICS)

The Equalities and Diversity Officer reported on recent community safety initiatives that had been undertaken in the Castlefield area of High Wycombe.

The Panel noted that the initiatives included:

- (a) offering Free Home Fire Risk Checks which included an arson audit in areas surrounding Castlefield;
- (b) a Fire Safety Presentation from the Partnership Manager to school children at Castlefield School, including providing the children with literature to take home and reassurance following recent events in the area;
- (c) situating the Community Safety Exhibition Vehicle in High Street, High Wycombe in partnership with Thames Valley Police to promote Crime Prevention and Fire Safety;

- (d) communicating fire prevention and general community safety messages at the Castlefield community day;
- (e) providing a sparks course for young people in Years 10 and 11 from local secondary schools which would contribute towards a key skill qualification as part of the Award Scheme Development Achievement Network programme;
- (f) preparing a bid for submission to 'Positive Activities for Young People' to run an emergency services course for young people attending youth clubs in the High Wycombe area which would introduce young people to career opportunities, improve their knowledge of the emergency services and gain personal experience and confidence as well as learning team building skills;
- (g) being part of developing a 'Tackling Disadvantage Project Programme' which would oversee implementation of a strategic partnership approach to dealing with groups and communities that were disadvantaged;
- (h) funding under the 'Safe at Home Scheme' funding to Anchor Housing in the sum of £50,000 and to Age UK in the sum of £30,000 for additional Home Fire Risk Checks.

The Panel also heard about measures being undertaken elsewhere in the Authority's areas which included initiatives such as work on the Lakes Estate and a 'One Stop Shop' in Aylesbury promoting Home Fire Risk Checks.

The Panel noted that a Health and Safety Quality System Audit of the Authority had been undertaken between 12 and 16 October 2009 provided the Authority with recommendations for improvement, action plans to achieve the improvement and a benchmark against which to measure improvement. It was reported that the initial feedback had been positive.

The Area Manager Safety reported on a fire that had occurred at the YMCA building in Crest Road, High Wycombe, on Monday 6 April 2009. It was noted that investigation into the fire would be completed by the end of November 2009 but so far it had been identified that certain fire doors could not be opened. Depending on the final outcome of the investigation the Authority might consider prosecuting the owners.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager reported on a new multi-agency rural safety initiative launched at the Buckinghamshire County Show. The Panel heard that the scheme involved the Authority together with a host of local organisations to promote safety within rural communities and enhance the services provided by the Fire Service.

The Panel noted that two performances on arson prevention were being undertaken at Leon School, Bletchley prior to Bonfire Night.

RESOLVED –

1. That Buckinghamshire County Council's Local Area Forums be requested to consider a report on the Brigade's rural safety initiative.
2. That the Parish Councils be requested to display the leaflet regarding "Rural Safety in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes".

SP12

INCIDENTS OF INTEREST

The Panel received a report on public relations/press activity for the period July to September 2009.

It was noted that 79 news releases had been issued during the period July to September 2009, with 1,042 incidents listed on the Authority's website.

The Authority's external website had received 87,229 visits from July 2009 to present.

The Panel noted that relevant hyperlinks from specific incidents took users through to a tailor-written news release or to appropriate safety advice. Safety advice on the website currently related to chimney fires, kitchen fires, deliberate vehicle fires, deliberate rubbish fires, deliberate skip fires, cooker fires, and washing machine/dishwasher/ tumble dryer fires, bonfires, flooding and Home Fire Risk Checks.

It was reported that the following community safety messages had been issued during the last quarter:

- (a) the importance of having smoke alarms that were in working order;
- (b) use of hair straighteners
- (c) concerning a school governing body that had been fined for breaches of safety
- (d) fire safety advice for students (coinciding with the start of university term-time)
- (e) publicising a special offer for fire safety training courses
- (f) warning businesses regarding deliberate fires including advice on storing combustible materials
- (g) safety plan following toaster fire where a man suffered burns
- (h) reminding members of the public regarding booking a free Home Risk check and what was involved in the check
- (i) launching a Firework Safety Competition for schools on 23 September 2009
- (j) publicising Chimney Fire Safety Week 21 – 27 September 2009

The Panel also noted that community safety open days and events had been held as follows:

- (a) 12 July 2009 – Chesham Safety Day;
- (b) 19 July 2009 – Open Day at Broughton Fire Station
- (c) 25 July 2009 – Open Day at Great Holm Fire Station
- (d) 20 August 2009 – Road Safety Day at Beaconsfield M40 Service Area;
- (e) 23 August 2009 – Open Day at Safety Centre Milton Keynes;
- (f) 5 September 2009 – Open Day at Bletchley Fire Station;
- (g) 19 September 2009 – National Car Wash Day
- (h) 10 October 2009 – Amersham Safety Day; and
- (i) 14 October 2009 – Newport Pagnell ‘Stay Safe Day’

The Panel heard that the open day at Bletchley Fire Station and Newport Pagnell’s Stay Safe Day had between them generated over 100 Home Fire Risk Check referrals and at the ‘Stay Safe Day’ 35 electric blankets had been tested and five winter vehicle checks carried out.

The Panel noted that the Communication Team was helping to generate an increase in the number of applications and referrals for Home Fire Risk in order to contribute to achieving the Integrated Risk Management Plan target of 10,000 Home Fire Risk checks every year. In addition the Communication Team was also assisting with the following;

- (a) providing safety resources in 32 languages other than English;
- (b) supporting community safety initiatives run by individual stations by providing publicity material;
- (c) developing plans for the promotion of the home safety check scheme generally to vulnerable residents and in rural areas;
- (d) developing a thatched property fire safety campaign; and
- (e) providing more information on the website regarding domestic sprinklers

The following major incidents attended recently by the Brigade included the following:

- (a) 16 October 2009 – Fire at Gulliver’s Land, Milton Keynes
- (b) 19 October 2009 – fire in fitness club, Milton Keynes
- (c) 21 October 2009 – fire at block of flats under construction High Wycombe

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

SP13**UPDATE ON THE EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE LAKANAL FIRE IN CAMBERWELL, LONDON**

The Panel considered actions taken by the Authority regarding issues arising from the fatal fire that had occurred at Lakanal House, Camberwell, London, on 3 July 2009 and had resulted in the deaths of six people including three children.

The Panel heard that Sir Ken Knight, Chief Fire Rescue Advisor, had submitted the report to The Secretary of State on 30 July 2009 highlighting the following issues:

- (a) the application of the building regulations;
- (b) the maintenance of the building and any upgrades and changes to be included;
- (c) the maintenance of the fire safety arrangements in the building;
- (d) the advice given to residents; and
- (e) the application of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and the effect it had on fire fighting operations

The Panel noted that there were 12 high-rise buildings in the county served by the Authority, although none were the same style of build as Lakanal House it was recognised it was important to consider the emerging issues highlighted by Sir Ken Knight regarding the Brigades operating procedures.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the report be noted
- 2. That reports on any emerging issues be submitted to future meetings of the Panel.

SP14**SUMMARY OF RECENT AUTHORITY ACTIVITY UNDER THE REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005**

The Panel considered the recent activity by the Protection Department regarding the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The Panel heard that as part of the Strategy for Risk Reduction the following were planned:

- (a) further thematic inspections and enforcement as appropriate
- (b) seminars for managers and owners of accommodation
- (c) training and information for operational crews and officers
- (d) establishment of key principles for residents in the event of a fire
- (e) Home Fire Risk Checks and Home Safety Check projects
- (f) better liaison with adult social care

The Area Manager Safety Group reported on a Protection survey of non-domestic properties by the Chief Fire Officers Association South East.

The results of the survey were as follows:

- (a) The Authority had a ratio of 1 Risk Reduction Officer Protection for every 1,165 non-domestic premises whereas the new regional averaged was 1 Risk Reduction Officer Protection for 980 non-domestic premises; and
- (b) The Authority carried out 47 audits for every 1,000 premises with the national average being 38 audits for every 1,000 premises.

The Unwanted Fire Signals Officer reported on the results of unwanted fire signals activity over the last three years, which were as follows;

All Premises

	Domestic	Commercial	Total
2006/07	810	2474	3284
2007/08	834	1754	2588
2008/09	769	1439	2208

The Panel heard that with the expansion of the communities within Buckinghamshire over the last three years there was now an additional 500 commercial and 750 domestic premises with the potential for Unwanted Fire Signals.

It was reported that unwanted fire signals from commercial properties were continuing to fall and that there had also been a decrease in the number of unwanted fire signals from domestic properties.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the report be noted.
- 2. That officers be congratulated on the recent activity undertaken by the Protection Department in enforcing the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

SP 15

**UPDATE ON THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009/10
ACTON PLAN – SAFETY**

The Panel received a presentation on the delivery against work stream activities of the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2009/10 for which the Prevention and Protection Department was responsible and included the following:

- (a) homes
- (b) roads
- (c) workplaces
- (d) communities

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that there were a total of 24 work streams and 178 projects and activities within those work streams.

The Panel noted that the percentage of actions on target (Green) for delivery in Quarter 1 and 2 were as follows:

- (a) homes – 51%
- (b) roads – 68%
- (c) workplaces – 50%
- (d) communities – 61%

RESOLVED –

That the report be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel on the quarterly performance of Prevention and Protection measures against the IRMP Action Plan detailing the areas of performance showing Red and Amber.

SP16

UPDATED ON RECENT LEGAL ACTION TAKEN BY BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PROTECTION GROUP ON BEHALF OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

The Panel received details of the recent legal action taken by the Authority against the Governing Body of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Chalfont St Peter, which had pleaded guilty to breaching fire safety regulations as a result of a prosecution by the Authority

The Panel noted that the Governing Body had breached three articles of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order:

- (a) failure to take general fire precautions
- (b) failure to adequately implement the findings of a fire risk assessment
- (c) failure to appoint fire wardens

The Governing Body was fined £2,250 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £5,750.

The Panel heard that a briefing would be presented to School Governors on Fire Safety issues.

RESOLVED –

That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel on the briefing to be presented to School Governors on Fire Safety issues.

SP17

ANTI-SOCIAL PARKING

The Panel received a presentation on 'Anti-Social Parking' and noted that

- (a) the Risk included preventing emergency access, hydrant access, safety

- (b) the Incident Recording System would be used for the purposes of monitoring and review.
- (c) areas identified in the Operational Neighbourhood Plans would be treated as priority areas.
- (d) actions undertaken would include leaflets, posters, signage, visits and planning.

RESOLVED –

1. That Jeremy Williams, Station Manager be requested to contact Councillor Bhatti regarding anti-social parking in Chesham and Councillor Edwards regarding anti-social parking in Bletchley.
2. That Officers be requested to consider using a press release highlighting the problems caused by anti-social parking.

SP18

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 22 January 2010.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.26PM