

# Community Newsletter

Stoke-on-Trent



Winter Edition 2024



## Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber welcome

Welcome to this latest edition of our community newsletter. It's been a busy period for us since our last edition with: a full inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate, our biggest public consultation to date, fundraising for our 50th year anniversary, two large open day events, campaigns to recruit the firefighters of the future and that's not to mention the numerous incidents our crews have attended.

The inspection carried out by His Majesty's inspectorate, gave us a positive report, stating we were outstanding at responding to multi agency incidents and graded us good in a further six areas, with no areas requiring improvement.

We are now over half way through our 50th anniversary year and we are aiming to raise £50,000 for The Fire Fighters Charity, which supports ill and injured fire service personnel and their families. So far we have raised over £33,000 and I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all of those members of our community who have generously donated. Remarkably we have a current member of staff who has this year celebrated 50 years of service, you can find out more about his story on page two.

During the summer/autumn we carried out our biggest consultation exercise to date for our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which is our four-year plan. We received over 1500 responses which have helped to shape the plan which we will launch in the New Year, so another big thank you to all those who took the time to give us their views.

Finally, it's always important for us to share some fire safety advice as we want everyone in our county to be as safe as possible from fire. So as the temperatures dip make sure you are heating your home safely and ensure elderly neighbours and relatives are doing so too.

## We are outstanding at responding to major incidents

Our latest His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report graded us at outstanding at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

The report follows a full inspection during the Spring in which inspectors graded us against 11 areas, the majority of which were graded as good. The inspectors state we have made progress since the last report and highlight ten areas where they have seen improvements.

Two areas of promising practice were highlighted, one was the area in which we received our outstanding grading and this was how we work well with the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) to provide a preventative and a reactive response to multi-agency or major incidents. The second was our work with the NHS for our falls response and home from hospital service.

Chief Fire Officer Rob Barber said: "We are very pleased to receive such a positive report and to receive an outstanding grading for our response to major incidents is fantastic. Our staff work tirelessly to work towards our vision of making Staffordshire the safest place to be, and to see that hard work recognised in this report is very encouraging.

"It is important to us that the inspectorate stated that we are good at promoting the right values and culture, this is really key to us as our people sit at the heart of our organisation and everything we do. It will also be welcome news to our communities that the report states we represent value for money for the public."



## Fire officer celebrates 50 years of service

A firefighter who joined as a trainee in 1974 is celebrating 50-years of service in the same year as our 50th anniversary.

Protection Manager Kelvin Knapper has served local communities in Staffordshire for five decades after starting his career at Burslem fire station at the same time that Stoke-on-Trent Fire Brigade, Burton-on-Trent Fire Brigade and Staffordshire Fire Brigade merged into a single organisation.

Kelvin dealt with the long summer wildfires in 1976 just two years after joining, alongside a number of large factory fires, chimney fires and electric blanket fires before smoke detectors were widely used.

Kelvin said: "The service has changed massively. Not only in the range of incidents firefighters now attend, but the role has also changed over the years.

"It's less about responding to incidents now and more about stopping those incidents happening in the first place by educating the public and businesses about the importance of fire safety.

"We're also much better prepared now should an incident occur and the advances in technology have ensured firefighters are much safer when responding to incidents. What hasn't changed is the camaraderie, skills and commitment of all the persons involved in Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

"It's a fantastic organisation to work for and I wouldn't still be here after 50 years if it wasn't. For anyone who is after a career that is rewarding, offers variety and the opportunity to progress, I'd definitely look towards the fire and rescue service."



## Consultation shapes Community Risk Management Plan

At the end of December we will be publishing our new four-year plan, called our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). We received over 1500 responses to our consultation on a draft version of the plan in summer/autumn.

The plan leads with three overarching priorities of OUR PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITIES and OUR ENVIRONMENT.

The consultation responses indicated positive support for a number of projects including our three-rider trial which sees on-call firefighters responding in teams of three to certain incident types to improve response times, with 83 per cent of those surveyed indicating support. As a result of this consultation and three separate staff surveys which were in favour, we have now adopted the policy but with some changes to the incident types we go to, to address to concerns the representative bodies and some staff had.

For our two projects supporting the NHS, 82 per cent of respondents were in favour of these schemes and the NHS has agreed to extend funding for these schemes until 31 March. Our falls response team attend non-injury falls to relieve pressure on the ambulance service whilst our homes from hospital team transport patients back home after a hospital stay and ensure they are settled back into their properties. Both teams have dedicated personnel that are not on duty firefighters.



Areas where people are telling us they want us to do more are to:

- **Prevent incidents happening in the first place;**
- **Work with vulnerable people; and**
- **Carry out fire safety inspections of buildings including high rise.**

Chief Fire Officer, Rob Barber said: "We're really pleased that so many people took the time to feedback their views. We've taken these comments on board and used them to shape the final plan. We have a vision of making Staffordshire the safest place to be and the input we have received is helping us to work towards that vision."

The plan will be available to view on our website from the end of December, ahead of the plan going live from 1 January.



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## Stay warm safely this winter

You may be thinking of making a few changes at home as the weather turns colder and homes need heating. It's important you do this safely.

The winter months see us attending more incidents involving open fires, chimney fires and electric heaters, sadly some of these result in serious injury and even death.

Last winter three people in our county sadly died in accidental house fires and two people were injured.

This is why it's so important you do all you can to protect yourself, your loved ones and your property from the effects of a possible fire in the home.

Ian Read, Prevent, Protect and Partnerships Lead at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "It is vital that we continue to get the word out there about how people can heat themselves and their homes safely this winter.

"It's getting cold already and we know it can be tempting to look at different methods in maintaining comfortable temperatures in the home.

"However, if you over-load sockets, use logs and fuel improperly or don't keep a watchful eye on candles or heaters, you run the risk of inadvertently falling victim to a fire.

"To check how safe you or a family member are from fire we have an online fire safety tool that takes you through a basic check. If the check identifies you as being at higher risk of fire it will generate a referral so we can come out to visit you to reduce your risk."

To find out more tips and to access our online fire safety checker visit the Be Warm. Be Safe page on our website.



## Community sprinkler project success

In 2017 we set ourselves an aim of getting all 42 blocks of flats over five storeys, within the county, fitted with sprinkler systems. We are now half way towards achieving that aim with 19 blocks of flats fitted and two in the pipeline to be completed in the near future.

Housing providers Midland Heart and Bromford Housing, along with Stoke-on Trent City Council and Tamworth Borough Council, have all supported the project arranging for the fitting of sprinklers in several of their blocks of flats.

Fire sprinklers are widely recognised as the single most effective method for fighting the spread of fires in their early stages. Sprinklers reduce injuries by at least 80 per cent, reduce property damage by 90 per cent and substantially reduce damage to the environment from fire.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has already fitted sprinklers systems in seven of their blocks of flats with a further two blocks due to be installed in the near future. Councillor Chris Robinson, cabinet member for housing and planning at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, said: "We are committed to the safety of our residents and it's pleasing to see how well the new sprinklers instalments have been received by residents who report feeling much safer in their homes."

Protection Lead, Matt White said: "Sprinklers really are life savers, should a fire ever break out, it will be contained to the room where it started, limiting the amount of damage and more importantly significantly reducing the likelihood of injuries. These sprinklers will help to keep people safe in these building for decades to come."



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## Performance information

This section provides the data in relation to our performance for the last six months in the local authority area.

Attended Incidents	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Total
Stoke-on-Trent	238	276	282	284	294	222	1,596

These figures detail the total number of incidents firefighters attended, these incidents can vary but typically include business fires, house fires, outdoor fires, road traffic collisions and animal rescues.

Accidental Dwelling Fires	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Total
Stoke-on-Trent	10	14	13	12	7	14	70

These figures detail the number of accidental house fires firefighters attended. The most common cause of these incidents is cooking, however other common causes are electrical fires and cigarettes not fully put out.

Road Traffic Collisions	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Total
Stoke-on-Trent	15	19	18	14	10	7	83

These figures detail the number of road traffic collisions firefighters attended. Firefighters don't attend all road traffic collisions however of the ones they do they are either required to make the vehicles safe or at the most serious collisions they often have to cut casualties free from their vehicles using specialist cutting equipment.

Safe and Well Visits	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Total
Stoke-on-Trent	364	350	370	368	318	314	2,084

## In an emergency always dial 999

General enquires: **0300 330 1000** (freephone)

Safe and Well: **0800 0241 999**

For people who are deaf or hard of hearing text: **07528 983 101**



[www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk)



**Staffordshire**  
**Fire and Rescue Service**  
preventing • protecting • responding