

## Employment of Police Community Support Officers as 'On-Call' Firefighters

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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### 1 Purpose of Report

This report updates the Committee on the current position relating to the proposed dual role for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) operating as 'on-call' firefighters within Shropshire.

### 2 Recommendations

- a) The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report; and
- b) Endorse the recruitment of PCSOs as on-call firefighters in Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

### 3 Background

In August 2015 representatives from West Mercia Police, Shropshire Fire and Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service met to discuss the feasibility of on-duty PCSOs providing fire cover at retained stations.

Following an expression of interest, the Service has four individuals in Shropshire, who have tentatively shown an interest. Their base stations would be Oswestry, Market Drayton, Wem and Albrighton.

## 4 Existing proposal

After a very positive meeting, the following points were agreed by all parties:

### Recruitment

Individual PCSOs, who declared an interest, will be tested and recruited against the existing standards for on-call firefighters. The only exception would be exemption from undertaking the theory element of the job-related tests, as the entry level educational requirements for PCSOs is significantly higher than that for on-call firefighters.

### Contractual Arrangements

As this is a new initiative, PCSOs will be employed for a trial 12-month, fixed-term period under the same contractual arrangements as the Service's existing on-call firefighters.

Initially, cover will only be permitted during duty time at the station within the patrol area of each PCSO. If, however, the opportunity arises, a future development could see PCSOs providing cover, whilst off duty, at a station where they live.

The retained station, to which the PCSOs turn out, will be classed as their 'home' station for purposes of completing their weekly retained training programme.

### Financial Arrangements

Pay arrangements will be aligned to the existing contracts of the Service's 'on-call' staff. West Mercia Police will not pay their staff, when undertaking fire-related work and training.

### Proposed Timetable and Progress to Date

25 August 2015	A PCSO Taster Session was held at Ludlow Fire Station and the numbers interested were: Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service - Initially 8. 2 have withdrawn. Out of the 6 candidates left, 4 have passed the job-related tests and 2 are still to do them. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Initially 6. 2 have withdrawn. Out of the 4 candidates left, 2 have passed the job-related tests and 2 are still to do them.
3 September 2015	Job-related tests at Telford Training Centre
17 September 2015	Job-related tests at Redditch Fire Station

1 October 2015	Job-related tests at Telford Training Centre
29 October 2015	Medicals and fitness tests for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service candidates at Shrewsbury
To be confirmed	Medicals and fitness tests for Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service candidates at Hereford
25 January to 12 February 2016	Three weeks' basic core skills training at a jointly arranged and run training course venue to be agreed
15 February 2016	One week annual leave
22 February to 4 March 2016	Two weeks' breathing apparatus course training at a jointly arranged and run training course venue to be agreed
4 March 2016	End of course

## 5 Conclusions

This is a new initiative in Shropshire, and provides a good opportunity for the Service to demonstrate increased blue light collaboration and closer working with colleagues in West Mercia Police. It also demonstrates real collaboration between Shropshire and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Services. A number of elements, such as the sharing of resources, appliances and buildings and combined recruitment and training, have been established to move this initiative forward.

## 6 Financial Implications

Recruitment of four additional on-call firefighters on three-quarters pay can be met from within the existing Area Command budget.

## 7 Legal Comment

Section 37 of the Fire Services Act 2004 maintains the longstanding prohibition on the employment by a fire and rescue service of a member of the police force. This prohibition relates, however, to warranted Police Constables and does not extend to PCSOs.

The Chief Constable of West Mercia and the Chief Fire Officer of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service are in agreement that this group of employees may work in both roles simultaneously, subject to approval being given under the Service's Brigade Order Personnel 3, Part 8 - Outside Employment.

Under the Working Time Regulations, the Fire Authority has an obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure that workers do not exceed an average of 48 hours per week.

## **8 Initial Impact Assessment**

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

## **9 Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. An Equality Impact Assessment is not, therefore, required.

## **10 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **11 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.