

Annual Review 2014/15

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Louise McKenzie, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260280.

1 Purpose of Report

This report presents the draft Annual Review (also known as the Annual Statement of Assurance) for 2014/15 and gives the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft, prior to its going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to comment upon the draft Annual Review 2014/15.

3 Background

A National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service has been in existence since 2004 and has been regularly revised. During 2012 the Coalition Government published a new Fire and Rescue National Framework, which placed particular requirements on the Fire Authority regarding the development and publication of an Annual Review.

With Fire and Rescue Authorities ultimately accountable to their local communities, the Framework states that they need to be transparent about decisions and actions taken, and engage with communities, so local people can scrutinise and influence service delivery. They should also ensure that local communities can access information to compare the performance of their Authority with that of others.

The Annual Review is the means by which the Authority is required to communicate such information clearly. It is in effect a report, which looks back at the last financial year and explains the Fire Authority's objectives, performance, risks and initiatives, along with its plans for the future.

It also acts as a signposting document to other information, which may be of interest to the audience. Last year, for the first time, this was posted on the Service's website, rather than produced as a printed document.

4 Web-Based Annual Review 2014/15

Attached at the appendix is the draft Annual Review for 2014/15. It is again intended that this will be posted on the Service's website.

In future, officers plan to look to make the document more interactive and easy to update, drawing on information hosted on the internal network through the SharePoint project. This means information will be easier to co-ordinate and collect and more news stories, which occur throughout the year, can be included, as they best demonstrate the range of activities, in which the Service is involved.

5 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6 Legal Comment

Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 provides the statutory authority for the Fire Service National Framework and requires fire authorities to have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions. The proposed Annual Review addresses the requirements of the Framework (and associated Government guidance), but should not be considered as representing a 'qualified' statement or opinion regarding the Authority's or Service's performance. There are currently no Government arrangements in place to verify formally Annual Reviews / Annual Statements of Assurance.

7 Initial Impact Assessment

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

8 Appendix

Draft Annual Review 2014/15

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.



Annual Review 2014/15

Foreword from the Chief Fire Officer, John Redmond, and the Chair of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, Stuart West

Our Annual Review, which is also known as the 'Annual Statement of Assurance', describes our progress in making Shropshire safer during the last year. It is part of the Authority's five-year Corporate Plan and demonstrates how the Service continues to meet its statutory duties and operational objectives and, in particular, to put 'Shropshire's Safety First'.

We are pleased to report on a busy and productive year and we continue to perform well against our objectives. This is in large part down to the efforts of our committed staff, who are always keen to make a difference in their local communities and are open to looking at new ways of doing things.

This year we have continued to update and improve our ICT network as part of an expansive ongoing programme: new systems have been installed and old systems replaced, which has improved the efficiency of a number of our basic services.

Developing our work with partners has been the key to many of our improvements this year. One example is that, by expanding our data sharing agreements with our local councils, we have been able to improve the targeting of our fire safety advice and information to some of the most vulnerable groups in our community, in particular, our elderly population. We will build on this in the forthcoming months by using data from General Practitioners to support us to reach those most vulnerable to fire in addition to our general fire safety programme.

In the last year we have also become involved with volunteer groups, such as the Shropshire and Staffordshire Blood Bikes Service. Volunteers provide a service transporting vital medical material and information between hospitals and other providers via motorbikes. We have provided facilities to locate bikes at Wellington and Shrewsbury stations to support this Service.

As we look forward to the coming year we recognise that there is more to do. We will begin delivery of our new five-year plan and continue work to meet our financial constraints. Our service reviews are underway and will help to shape our service delivery for the years ahead.



**Chief Fire Officer
John Redmond**



**Chair
Councillor
Stuart West**



The communities we serve

We serve a community of approximately 473,000 residents, who live within the two administrative council areas of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. We also protect the many visitors, who come to Shropshire each year for business and leisure.



Shropshire is England's largest inland county (3,487 km² / 1,347 sq. miles) but one of the most sparsely populated. It has a rich historic and cultural heritage, dating back to the times of the Celts and the Romans. Shropshire boasts some of the nation's most innovative businesses, with a vibrant and growing business sector based in Telford. A new town, Telford includes a tourist economy based on the Ironbridge Gorge area, which hosted the birth of the industrial revolution in the 17th century and a farming and livestock industry, which is one of the largest in the UK.

Governance Arrangements

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is accountable to the community and is governed through locally elected councillors from both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, who form Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority. Our Members play a very active role in governing and they are involved in consultation with local communities and staff across the County.

A number of committees exist to support the Fire Authority in carrying out its functions. Meeting dates and reports are available on our website.

National legislation places the statutory responsibility for provision of fire and rescue services upon the Fire Authority. The key responsibilities are set out within:

- ❖ **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004**
- ❖ **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**
- ❖ **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

In addition to the legislative requirements, the Fire Authority is also required to deliver the Government's priorities for the nation's fire and rescue services, which are set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework (July 2012):

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide

Full details of the Fire Authority's governance and financial arrangements are published on the Service's website.

Statement of Contracts Involving a Transfer of Staff

The Local Government Act 1999 requires all Best Value authorities to provide a statement of contracts involving a transfer of staff. Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority has not been party to any contracts, involving a transfer of staff to or from the Authority during 2014/15.

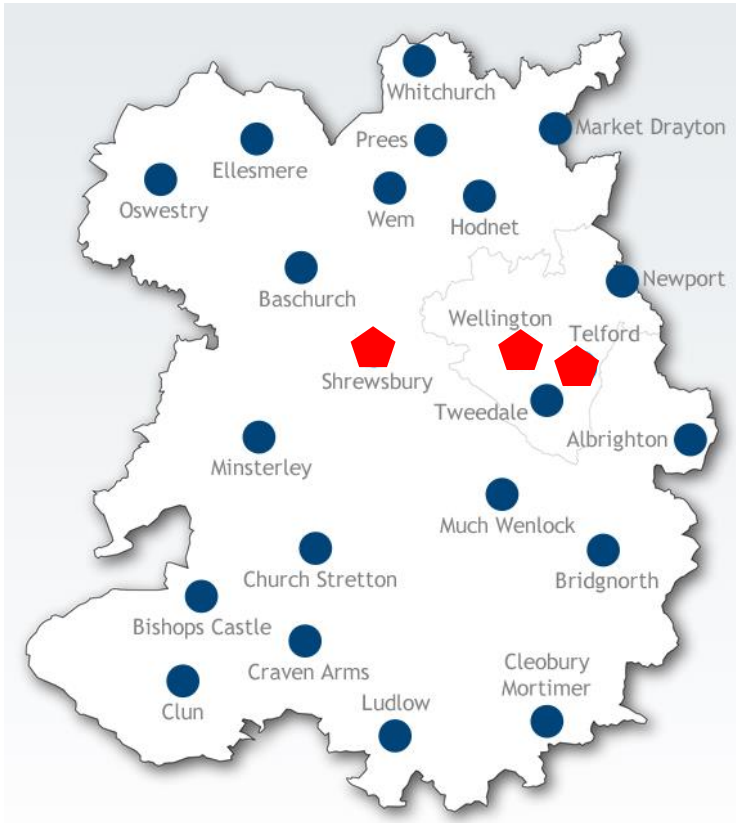
Overview of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer with two main directorates, one responsible for **Service Delivery**, and one responsible for **Corporate Services**, each led by a Brigade Manager. The directorates comprise of a range of functional departments and the latest organisational diagram is available on our website.

The Service employs approximately 600 staff in full and part-time roles, based across 23 locations. Our Headquarters, Workshops, Fire Control and Community Safety / Prevention functions are based in Shrewsbury, with the Training and Development facilities located at Telford.



Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service



There are 23 fire stations, located strategically across the County, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The majority of our fire stations are crewed by part-time staff on the retained duty / on-call system. This means that, whilst they have other employment, they are available at short notice to respond to incidents.

Fire stations located in the Shrewsbury, Wellington and Telford areas have full-time firefighters and retained duty / on-call firefighters.

Where possible, we aim to prevent, rather than respond to, incidents. Working with partners, the Service engages widely with the local community and businesses to raise awareness of the dangers of fire and offers education (and where necessary enforcement) to achieve its aims.

As well as preventing and responding to incidents, we perform an essential civil protection role and provide an emergency response to road traffic collisions, flooding, animal rescues, chemical incidents, and rescues from height or water.

 Wholetime stations

 Retained stations

Our Vision, Purpose and Core Values

Whilst the Fire Authority's statutory responsibilities are enshrined in law, the vision and purpose of the Service are:

Vision:

Putting Shropshire's Safety First

Purpose:

To save and protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies

Our Core Values

The Service has, for many years, adopted the national Fire and Rescue Core Values of:

Service to the Community

We value service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do

People

We value all our employees by practising and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

Diversity

We value diversity in the Service and the community by:

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination

Improvement

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by:

- Accepting responsibility for our performance
- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others

The risks we face

Although the risks faced by the Service largely arise from providing a fire and rescue service in a predominately rural, sparsely-populated community, we also face the potential impact of adverse weather and international terrorism. A thorough analysis of our risks is provided in our Service Plan 2015 to 2020, which is available on our website.

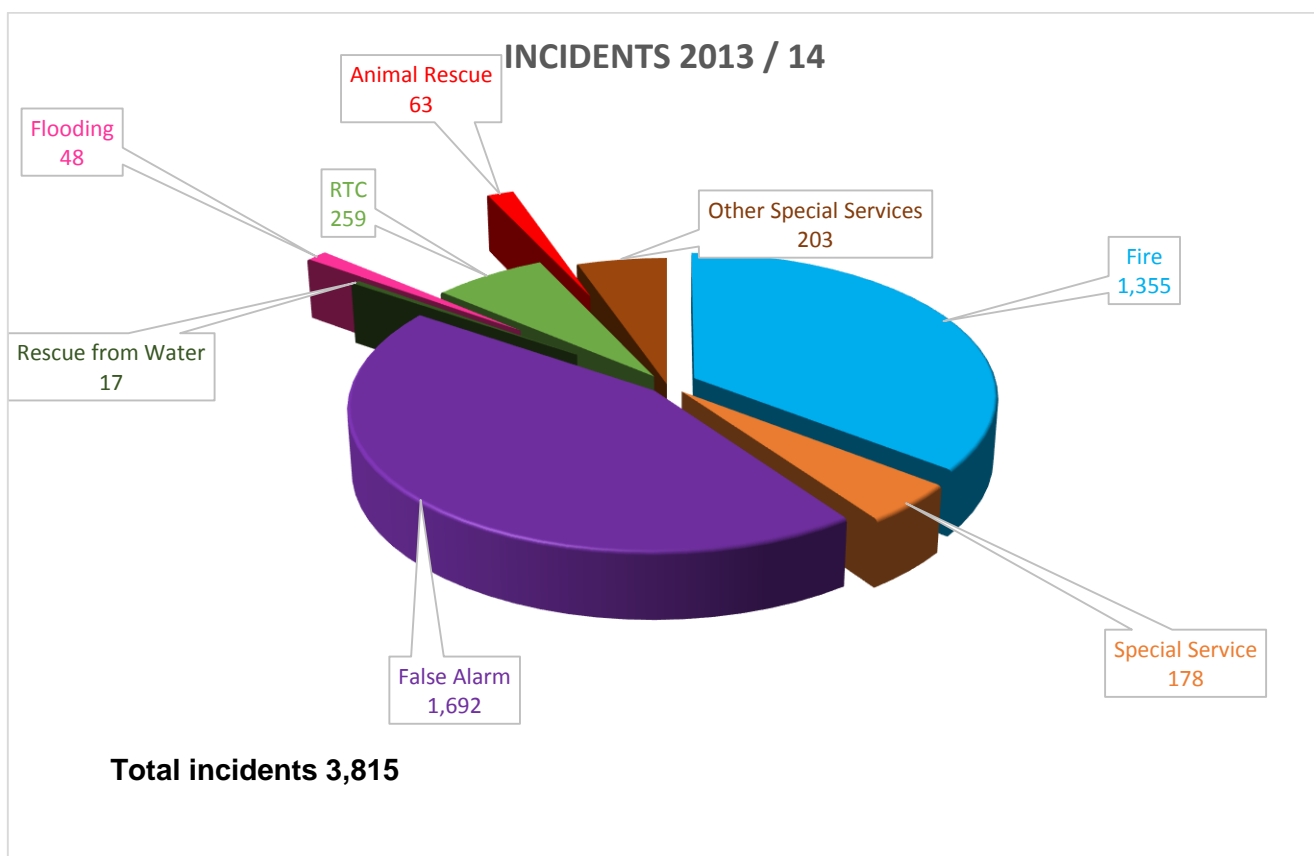
Our priority will always be the preservation of life, and the protection of property from fire and other emergencies. We also respond, where needed, to mitigate the impact of fire and other emergencies on the natural environment.

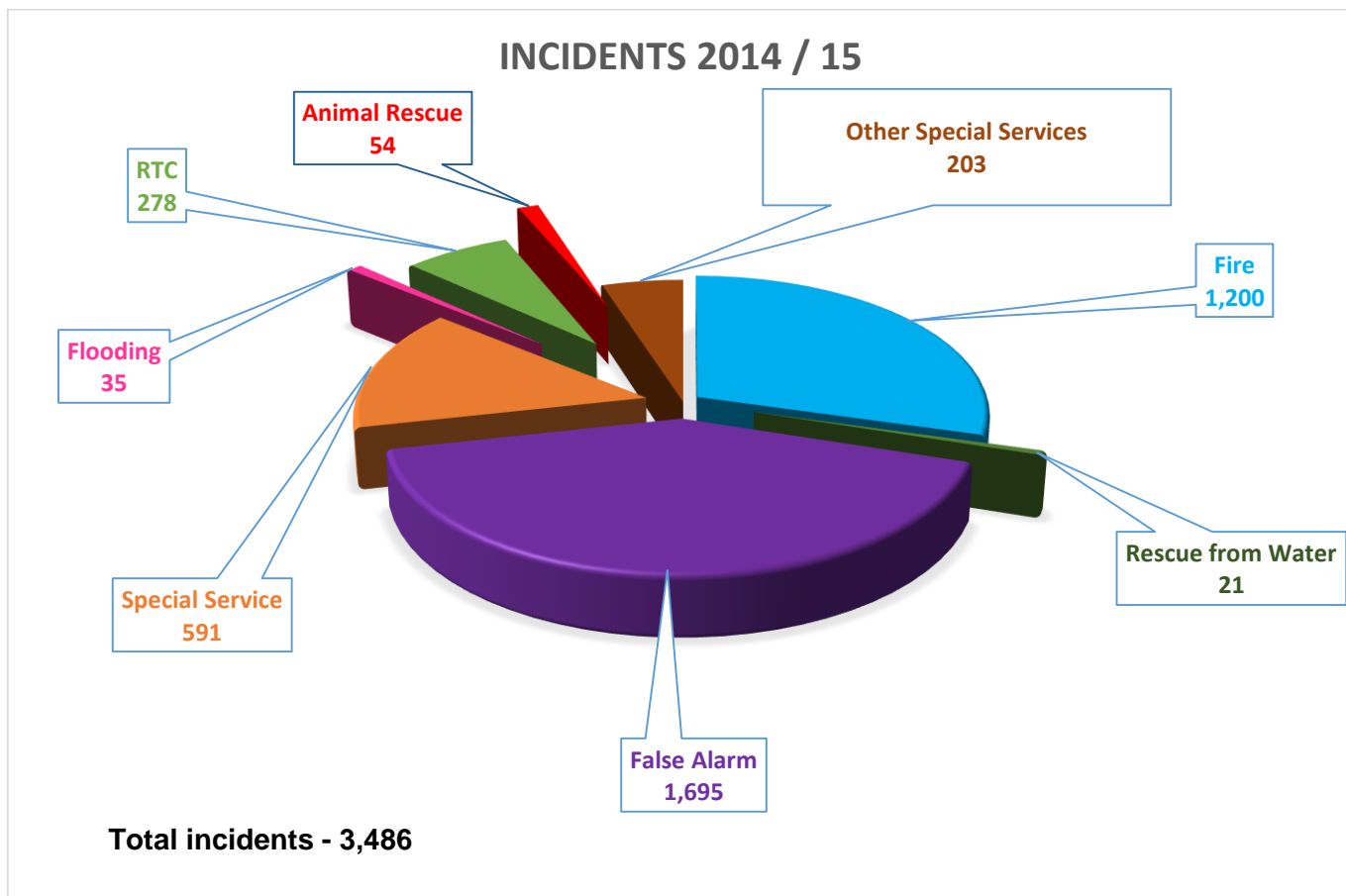
The communities within Shropshire present many challenges and risks. For example, we have an increasingly older population, which poses particular issues for the Fire Service, because older people are more vulnerable to fire. The County appears affluent but does have areas of social deprivation in both the rural areas and in the towns.

The Service is very clear on the importance of a thriving business sector to the local economy and the community and so a proactive prevention and protection strategy exists to reduce the incidence and impact of fire on local businesses. The strategy extends to include the numerous heritage risks that lie within Shropshire, many of which are of national and, in the case of Ironbridge Gorge, of global importance.

Risks, which the Service, together with its partners, is tasked to address, are recorded within local and national risk registers.

During 2014/15 the Service attended 3,486 incidents, compared to 3,815 during 2013/14, a breakdown of which is shown below:





The Service experienced 1 fire death in 2014/15. This compares with 1 in 2013/14.

Progress against activities set out in the Annual Plan 2014/15

Each year we create an annual plan setting out a number of activities for the year, which directly affect the way we manage and respond to the risks within our community. Each activity is shown below along with a summary of the outcome achieved.

1. Changes to the shifts currently worked by wholetime staff

Following receipt of a report from officers in October 2014 the Fire Authority agreed to undertake a project to identify all possible options that could reduce the current wholetime staffing costs by approximately £400k per annum, whilst continuing to deliver a service matched to risk. This project will run from April 2015 and report back to the Fire Authority within 12 months.

2. The merger of the Service's Fire Control function with at least one other organisation

The Authority agreed to suspend the existing merger proposals, to monitor the partner collaboration opportunities, which may arise in the future, and undertake a Fire Control Review project. This should identify alternative options for improving the cost-effectiveness of the Fire Control function by up to £300k per annum. This project will run from April 2015 and report back to the Fire Authority with proposals for change within 12 months.

3. A reduction in the overall support staff budget

This issue was considered by the Human Resources and Standards Committee, which agreed to continue with the commitment to reduce the support staff pay budget by £105k by 2020 without defining a value of reduction to be achieved each year.

4. Converting current uniformed staff (i.e. Grey Book conditions of service) roles in Business Fire Safety, into non-uniformed (i.e. Green Book conditions of service) roles

The Business Fire Safety Department was reviewed to ensure that it is delivering the right service, at the right cost and that the right levels of safety are provided for staff and the community. No specific cost-cutting target was established as part of that review and the new structure was implemented with effect from 1 April 2015.

5. Use Retained Duty System staff to fill short-term wholetime gaps

In line with the proposal for progressing the wholetime shift system review project (above) that same review will consider how the Service can make best use of its Retained Duty System staff.

We also set out a number of activities aimed at supporting the transformation of the way that we work. A description of those and the progress made is set out below.

Activity	Progress to March 2015
<p>1. Deliver the information strategy</p> <p>a) Implementation of SharePoint</p> <p>b) Implement the interim retained availability system</p> <p>c) Upgrade Resourcelink to Self Service</p>	<p>Portal rolled out September 2014</p> <p>Rolled out September 2014</p> <p>Roll out completed November 2014</p>
<p>2. Implement the recommendations of the mobile working review</p> <p>a) Continue the investment in the infrastructure and equipment</p> <p>b) Introduce video conferencing</p>	<p>New Wide Area Network (WAN) installed by January 2015 and new hardware issued to retained stations</p> <p>Deferred to September 2015 due to the dependency on completion of the WAN project</p>
<p>3. Deliver the recommendations of the training facilities review</p>	<p>Four new drill towers are being installed at Much Wenlock, Clun, Church Stretton and Whitchurch.</p> <p>A 'below ground' training unit is in the plan drawing phase, with costs being reviewed, and the intention to install later in 2015 following a tender process and other building works being completed.</p>
<p>4. Continue collaborative working with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service on the 999 Fire Control Project</p>	<p>The project closed on time in March 2015. Additional work to strengthen to the collaboration is ongoing.</p>

During the past year we are also pleased to have been involved in supporting Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service to manage the financial pressures that they face by taking a number of their staff on secondment. Starting in May 2014, the secondments were initially intended to last for 12 months. We were pleased to be able to extend that for a second year and to accept a second cohort in December 2014.

This benefits our Service in terms of managing staffing requirements, whilst the duty system review project is completed, and allowing our staff to share experience and knowledge informally with our neighbours.

The refurbishment of Wellington Fire Station has continued throughout the year. This is the second of our three full-time fire stations to be modernised and defining our plans for Telford fire station form part of the work for the coming year.

Business continuity is critical to us and all reasonably foreseeable and actual risks are the subject of regular review. We have back-up arrangements in place, which we can use, if needed. Our identified risks are recorded and monitored through the Corporate Risk Register.

To fulfil our vision and purpose the Authority has four key aims and each aim has ways in which we measure our success. Progress is monitored internally every month and reported quarterly to the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee. The aims and measures for 2014/15 are set out below.

Aim 1 To be there when you need us in an emergency with a professional and well equipped team

- Measure 1 The first fire engine will arrive at an emergency incident with at least 4 firefighters within 15 minutes on 87% of occasions
- Measure 2 The first fire engine will arrive with a minimum competent crew on 100% of occasions

Aim 2 To reduce the number of fires in our community

- Measure 3 Accidental fires will be maintained to not more than 529 fires during 2014/15
- Measure 4 Fire crimes will be maintained to not more than 943 fires during 2014/15

Aim 3 To reduce the number of fire related deaths and serious injuries

- Measure 5 Fire related deaths and serious injuries in the community will be maintained to not more than 31 during 2014/15
- Measure 6 Injuries sustained to staff through firefighting will be maintained to not more than 28 injuries during 2014/15

Aim 4 To deliver an effective fire and rescue service at a cost that is acceptable to our community

In 2014/15 we achieved 4 out of the 6 targets set by the Fire Authority. The measures are reviewed annually by the Fire Authority and adjusted to promote continuous improvement.

Community Work and Achievements

As only one of several local organisations responsible for community safety within Shropshire, we are involved in delivering a variety of initiatives with these partners. Over the last year we have worked with many groups, including the British Red Cross, local mental health teams, Shropshire and Staffordshire Blood Bikes, housing providers, carers' groups and the Women's Institute.



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service



March
High powered motorcycles used by the Staffordshire and Shropshire "Blood Bike" charity have been given a new home at fire stations in Shrewsbury and Wellington

April 2014
Members of the Community Fire Safety team based at Shrewsbury fire HQ launched their annual Friends and Family campaign to encourage the use of smoke alarms in the home.



May
Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service have raised a rainbow flag over their Shrewsbury Headquarters and Telford Training Centre to demonstrate their support for the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO).



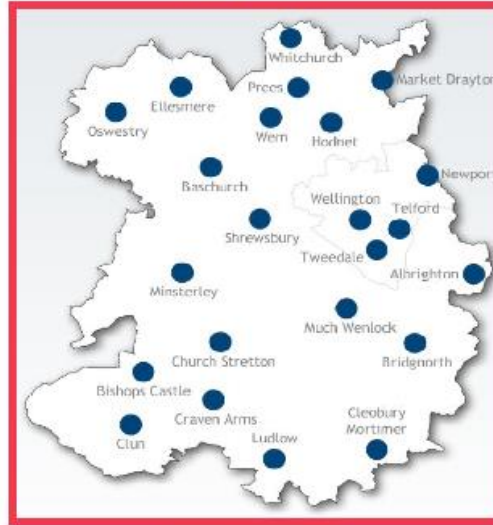
February
A campaign was launched by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to help the county's "vulnerable" people who are most at risk from fire breaking out in their homes.

June
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service supported Child Safety Week aiming to raise awareness of the number of accidents that seriously injure or kill children every year and the steps we can take to help prevent them.



January 2015
A campaign to get more women to become firefighters was launched Taster sessions for women were held at fire stations in Oswestry and Craven Arms.

July
A major fire safety campaign was launched to reduce injuries from accidental fires that traditionally increase during the summer, including fires involving barbecues.



December
We held our annual Festival of Carols at St Georges's church, Frankwell on 11 December. The event was very well attended and we were proud to raise £757 for local charities.

August
Companies were urged to send a senior representative to seminars at stations in Telford, Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Ludlow, to learn more about their fire safety legal responsibilities



November
About 300 first year students from Harper Adams University, Newport, watched a crew from Newport retained station demonstrate rescue techniques.

October
The dramatic rescue of a Shropshire farmer impaled by a metal tractor fork in a bizarre accident was featured on the new series of the popular BBC Close Calls: On Camera.



September
Red Cross FESS volunteers received further training to familiarise them with the scene at a mock fire exercise at The Grove School, Market Drayton.



In the course of 2014/15 we provided a number of business education seminars to local businesses, educating 329 people from 273 local businesses.

We were involved in educating 5,000 children through the 'Crucial Crew' programme and nearly 7,000 children through other education activities, including the 'Be Cool Be Safe' quiz.

Our staff have also trained 120 carers and staff from other agencies to provide first-line safety advice in the home, including our own Brigade Chaplain.

We regularly hold open days across our stations to celebrate and share what we do and to help us to attract more staff to the Retained Duty System.

Financial Performance

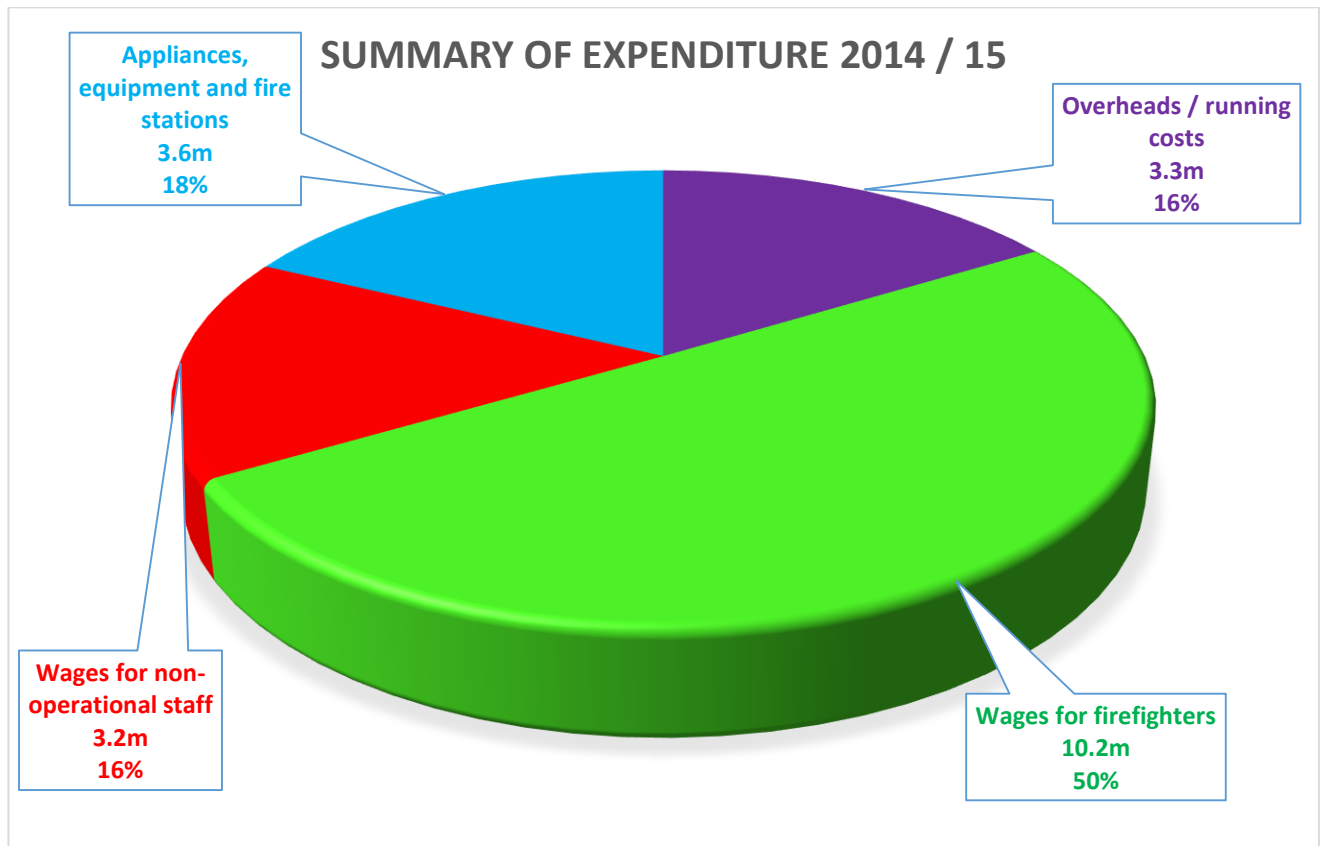
In February 2014, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority approved a revenue budget of £21.38m for 2014/15. This budget quantified the Service's strategic and operational plans, and the further sub-division into business areas also enabled individual business plans to be quantified, and achievements monitored.

For Band 'D' council tax properties, the annual contribution towards Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service was £90.42.

The revenue budget for 2014/15 was funded as follows:

Council tax income	£13.260m
Non domestic rates from authorities	£1.395m
Business rates top up grant	£2.103m
Revenue Support Grant	£4.622m
	£21.38m

The Service spent the money in the following key areas:



A principal objective of the Fire Authority is to provide value for money and ensure that it acts responsibly in how it spends public funding. A range of audits by external auditors takes place on a regular basis allowing independent scrutiny of our financial and corporate governance. We regularly seek the views of those, who have contact with the Service (through inspections, incidents or visitors etc.), regarding their perception of our performance in respect of value for money.

The Fire Authority is transparent in its financial affairs, publishing an Annual Governance Statement, Annual Audit Letter and Statement of Accounts. The future financial plans and commitments (2012 to 2017) of the Fire Authority are set out within our Medium Term Financial Plan. All of these documents are available on our website and have now been updated to reflect our planning for 2015 to 2020.

Our Future Plans 2015/16 and Beyond

We recognise that balancing funding and service demands will continue to need considerable attention in the coming years. In 2014/15 we reviewed and integrated our plans, creating a single Service Plan for the period 2015 to 2020. This draws together our corporate information, our medium-term risk management plan and financial planning and our service transformation projects into a single plan.

Have your say

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is paid for in part through local council tax.

You can have your say and influence how the Service is managed and delivered. The meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees are open for the public to attend. Reports and minutes arising from these meetings are published on our website and we always welcome feedback.

You can also give us your comments through:

Our website: www.shropshirefire.gov.uk



<http://facebook.com/shropsfire>



<http://twitter.com/shropsfire>

By phone: 01743 260200

In person: at our Headquarters in St Michael's Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2HJ