



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Annual Report
2008 - 2009

How to get in contact with us ...

If you would like to obtain further information about any aspect of this Annual Report document please contact us, using one of the methods shown below:

Letter: **Annual Report Issues**
Performance Assessment and Improvement Team
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham B7 4HW
 Phone: **0121 380 6613/6656**
 Fax: **0121 380 7007**
 E-mail: **corporate.planning@wmfs.net**

You can also visit our website at www.wmfs.net

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 your home, by your local firefighters
 Freephone 0800 389 5525 or
 register via www.wmfs.net**

**West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters Address:
 99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham, B7 4HW**

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"FSC Chain of custody"

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Cutting up the train for Safeside



Exercise Phoenix

Joint Foreword from the Chief Fire Officer and Chairman of the Authority



Vijith Randeniya OBE

Chief Fire Officer
West Midlands Fire Service



Chairman West Midlands
Fire & Rescue Authority

During 2008/2009 the West Midlands Fire Service has once again faced many challenges and difficulties. It is to the credit of all of our staff and with the support of Members of the Fire Authority that we have ended the year with excellent results and achievements in all areas. The year has once again seen our staff engage in inventive, exciting and boundary breaking activities with the focus continually on improving our service to the communities whom we all serve. The evidence can be seen in this document of the achievements of all of our staff, not just in isolation but working with partners across a wide range of issues

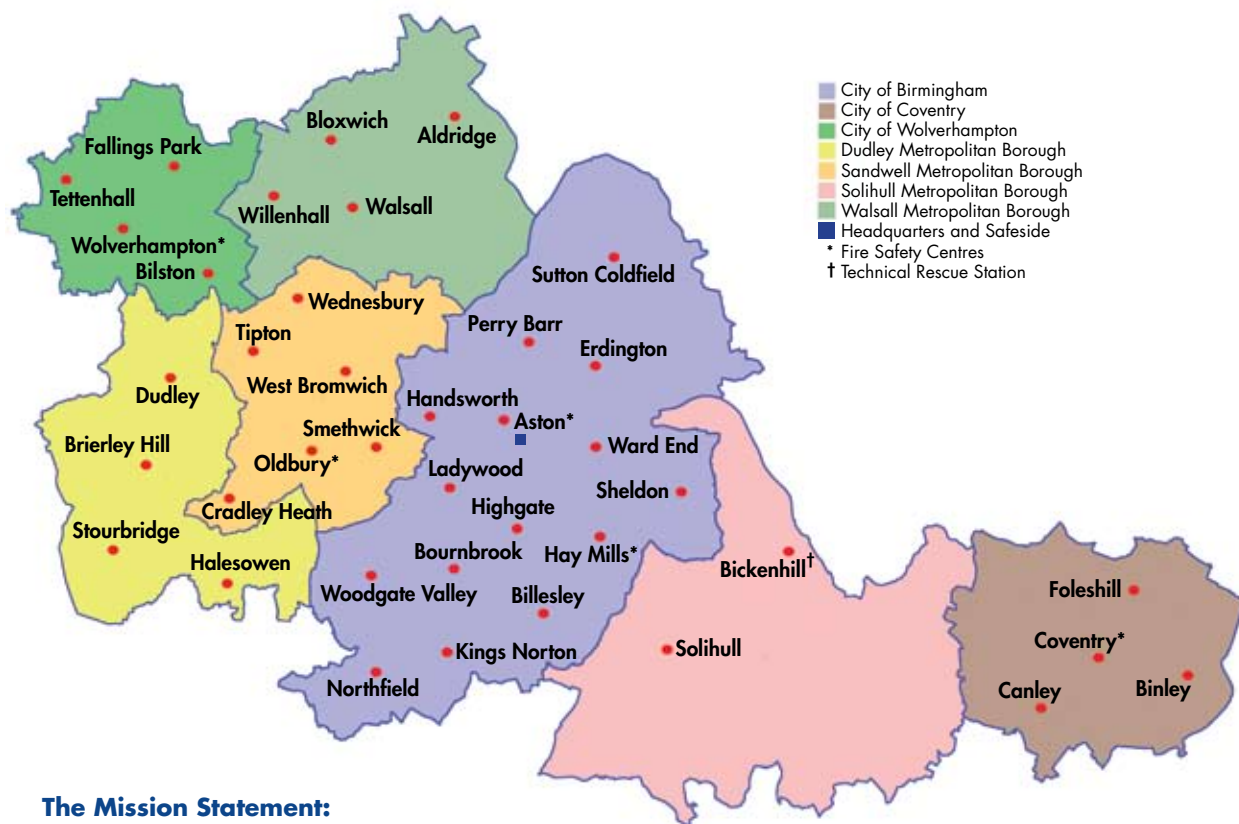
that face the communities of the West Midlands, which include the effects of the recession. We do take note of these results but are just as proud of the achievements that are not recorded by performance indicators or counted by auditors. A real measure of our staff is how they face up to the challenges of change and how they have reacted in times of difficulty which have faced our Service over the last 12 months. Our staff have reacted with real versatility to the changes to work patterns, shift patterns and the move to the new Headquarters, the introduction of the fantastic Safeside facility and the service demands we face across the conurbation. We would like to take this opportunity to place on record our sincere gratitude to every single member of the West Midlands Fire Service who has worked to push this organisation forward for the benefit of the people of the West Midlands.

Indeed HRH the Duke of Kent, who opened the West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters in April of this year, commented: "What I have seen here today has been immensely impressive. I have seen a range of equipment used by a modern Fire Service but what I have been most impressed by is the quality of your people. You should be most proud of the skill and courage of the firefighters. I am sure you will go on to achieve all your ambitions."

The next year will present even greater challenges and opportunities for us and we are confident that with your support and hard work we can surpass these and move our Fire Service to where we all know it can be: that is recognised as the best in class of any Fire Service in the world.

Provision of Services

The West Midlands Fire Service covers the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall. It is accountable to the public, via the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, made up of 27 Elected Members from all of the above areas. This is headed by the Chairman of the Fire Authority. The Service is managed directly by the Chief Fire Officer and the senior management team.



The Mission Statement:

“Providing a quality service to reduce risk by:
Preventing • Protecting • Responding”

The Vision Statement:

“Making West Midlands Safer”

Profile 2008/2009

Area (in hectares):	91,276
Population:	2,603,900
Fire Stations:	39
Wholtime Uniformed Posts:	1861
Control Staff Posts:	65
Non-Uniformed Posts (fte):	517
Operational Vehicles:	92

Operational Responses 2008/2009

Fires:	15,360
Other Emergency Incidents:	6,640
False alarms : Good intent	4,571
Automatic Detection Systems	10,719
Malicious	1,864
Total:	39,154

Fire Safety 2008/2009

Deaths from accidental dwelling fires:	12
Injuries from accidental dwelling fires:	123

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE
HEADQUARTERS
Reception

Looking back on success over
the last year **2008/2009**

Royal Opening for New Headquarters and Safeside

His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, KG has officially opened West Midlands Fire Service's new headquarters and Safeside, an innovative interactive safety centre on Wednesday 29th April 2009.

During his visit to the environmental award winning Headquarters site, the Duke was given a tour of Safeside, which features 16 different risk scenarios based around a realistic street scene, complete with a house, pub, police station, canal and even a fully stocked shop and a real train.

On arrival at the new Headquarters he was greeted by dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenant Paul Sabapathy CBE, High Sheriff Paul Bassi Esq, the Lord Mayor and Mayoress of Birmingham Chauhdry Abdul Rashid, JP and Shafait Begum Rashid, Chairman of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Councillor Peter Howard and Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya, OBE. Dignitaries from across the West Midlands Fire Service area were also in attendance.

West Midlands Fire Service's new ceremonial unit was on parade and members of the Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) formed an honour guard, as well as giving a demonstration of their skills. The Band of the West Midlands Fire Service played while the Duke and dignitaries were shown the displays.

The Duke was shown a number of demonstrations outside Headquarters, featuring the Technical Rescue Unit's specialist skills and equipment, the micro-drone aerial camera system Isis, specialist vehicles and a decontamination unit.

Once inside Headquarters, Fire Service staff from each of the City and

Borough Councils, as well as departmental representatives spoke to him about the work of the Fire Service in their areas of responsibility.

The Duke declared the site officially open by unveiling a specially commissioned glass sculpture in the reception area of the Headquarters building. The sculpture is based on a famous painting from 1892 called Saved, which depicts a Victorian firefighter carrying a girl from a building.

Councillor Howard said: "It was a great honour for us to have a Royal guest to officially open our new site, and we were especially pleased to welcome HRH The Duke of Kent due to the link with his father. West Midlands Fire Service is committed to providing the community with the best possible service and our new Headquarters site is a symbol of our ambition and desire for continual improvement. We are incredibly proud of Safeside, which is a fantastic new facility for the West Midlands that allows us to cover a wide range of safety messages in an exciting and memorable way."

Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya said: "Today showcased West Midlands Fire Service at its best, with a huge sense of pride and confidence that we are a world-class organisation. It has been a fantastic day for us all. We have achieved great successes in recent years with reductions in fires and improvements in community safety, and I think it is fair to say the Duke was impressed by what he saw."

The opening of the new site marks the start of a new era for West Midlands Fire Service. The facilities at our new site are designed to provide the best possible support to our frontline firefighters and an exciting educational experience for our communities, allowing us to build on our successes and move forward into the future with confidence and pride."



Chairman greeting HRH The Duke of Kent



HRH The Duke of Kent being shown Safeside facilities



Talking to Technical Rescue

Operations Commanders and Departmental Heads demonstrate their initiatives





New Fire Service Headquarters and facilities

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Friday, May 15, 2009

NEW FIRE HQ WINS TOP AWARD

West Midlands Fire Service's new Headquarters and Safeside interactive education centre are celebrating after scooping a top building and environment award.

The site in Vauxhall Road, Nechells, Birmingham, won in the Sustainability category at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) West Midlands Awards, held at the Botanical Gardens in Edgbaston last night.



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – continued

These awards are widely acknowledged as an annual celebration of built and natural environment projects that demonstrate true excellence and commitment to value for money and sustainability.

Regional winners are automatically entered into the national RICS Awards, where they will compete against other leading projects from across the UK at the grand final in October.

The new Headquarters site, was also short-listed in two other categories, Community Benefit and Regeneration.

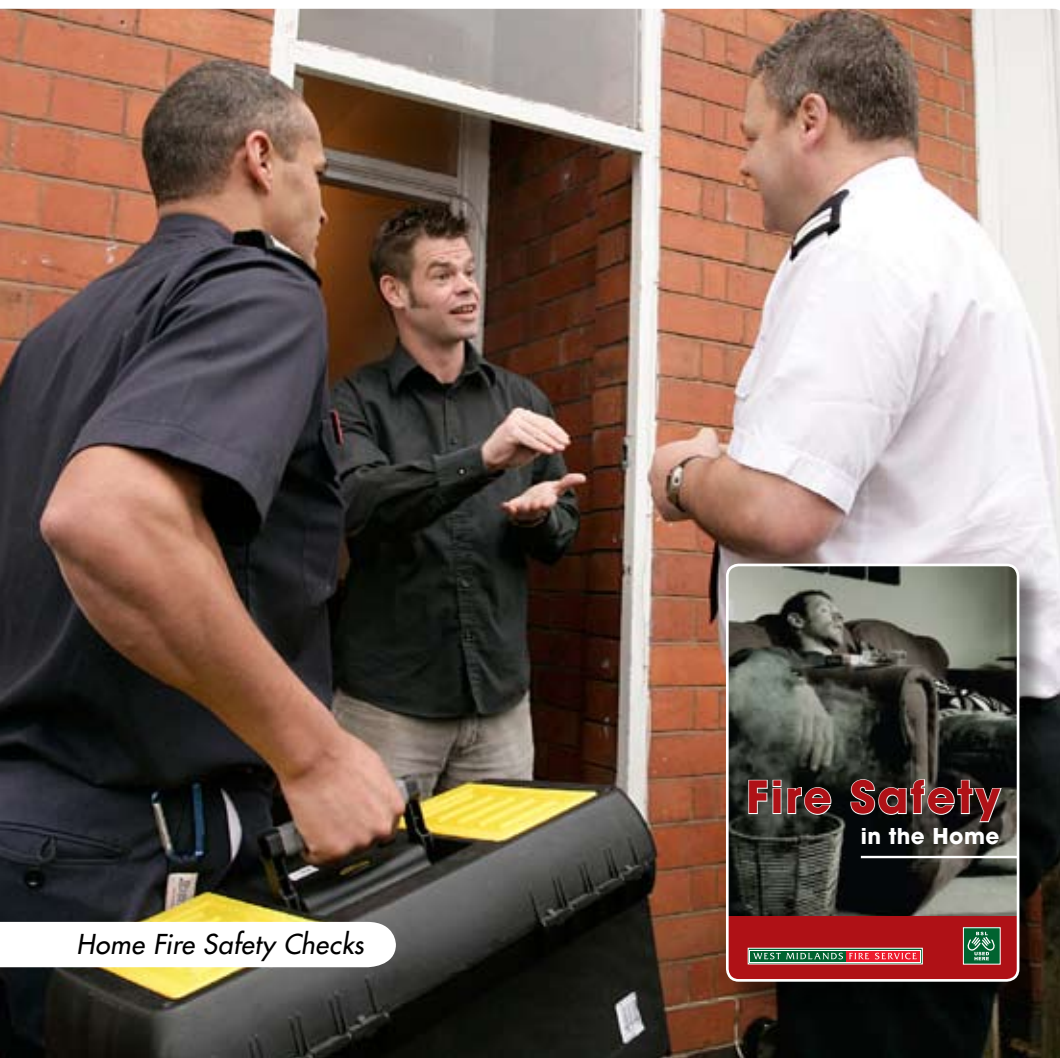
Councillor Peter Howard, Chairman of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, said: "We are extremely proud of our new Headquarters site and Safeside and it is fantastic that they have been recognised with this prestigious award.

"A lot of work went into making sure the buildings offer excellent accommodation for the staff who play such a vital role in enabling our front-line crews deliver services to the community, while representing the latest thinking in sustainability and protecting the environment.

"The site is a fitting symbol of our ambition to continually improve and provide the best possible service to the public."

Our Successes 2008-2009 – Prevention

Climate change is the largest issue that we face today. Tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility and must be at the centre of local government's vision for communities.



Home Fire Safety Checks

Safety DVD for the Deaf Community

West Midlands Fire Service's work with the deaf community has continued with the launch of a new Fire Safety DVD.

The DVD is designed to assist the organisation to deliver vital fire safety information to people with communication barriers.

Its target audience is the Deaf Community, meaning profoundly deaf people whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL). However, it is also accessible for other community groups who may have difficulty in receiving these vital messages, for reasons such as language barriers, dyslexia or other additional needs.

Communication methods on the DVD, produced by Watch Manager Clive Robinson and his team, include BSL, English subtitles, clear actions and a voice-over or presenter.

Contents cover kitchen safety, smoking materials, electrical safety, candles, smoke alarms, night-time routine and escape plans. Each section shows actors either performing a safe or dangerous action, with a large tick or cross appearing as appropriate.

The DVD is designed not to be over complicated or confusing. Every section is visual and obvious so that it can be viewed without the need for language of any type.

It is the latest in a number of projects done in conjunction with the Deaf Community and designed to ensure we can successfully communicate our vital messages to them.



The website features specially designed pages for the Deaf Community. Firefighters trained in BSL can carry out Home Fire Safety Checks and we can install specially designed smoke alarms.



Operation 'Deliver' Targets Coventry Neighbourhood

Firefighters from across Coventry joined forces with community advocates, outreach workers, council officials, police officers, police community support officers, street wardens and other community representatives in May for a week long initiative to increase the safety of residents in the Willenhall area of the city.

The aim of Operation Deliver was to focus upon households that had previously proved to be very hard to reach in similar campaigns in the area. Four areas were identified as being 'at risk' and the hope was to conduct at least 400 Home Fire Safety Checks in the area.

This was quite an ambitious target considering the results of some previous campaigns there.

District Commander, Paul Burnham said: "Fire crews, advocates and partners worked extremely hard throughout the week to make this community safer in all respects.

We achieved in excess of 400 HFSCs, cleared litter, cut grass, gave crime prevention advice and improved the area for local residents. Several of our senior citizens have directly benefited from advice from outreach and care assistants.

Throughout the week a lot of hard work, planning and enthusiasm was evident and the results speak for themselves. We have learned an awful lot from this week and we are hoping to improve upon this and replicate it in other high risk areas across the city of Coventry over the coming year."

A total of 445 HFSCs have now been completed in the area, there were 23 referrals to Contact & Connect, which is an advice service funded by Coventry City Council and Age Concern, as well as several to the housing associations.

Throughout the week fire engines were stationed at various locations in the area so that crews could speak to residents and give potentially life saving advice on fire safety, as well as arrange to fit free smoke alarms.

Representatives from Contact & Connect were based at a community centre in the neighbourhood to talk to people over the age of 60 about any concerns or issues.

They were able to help people with things such as security, home repairs, benefit claims, care needs, environmental issues, loneliness and financial concerns.

As part of the operation, officers from Chace Avenue police station visited homes in the area to offer crime reduction advice to residents, relating specifically to burglary.

During the operation, firefighters and representatives from other agencies visited Willenhall Community School's Stay and Play coffee morning to talk to children and parents about their work, met the congregation at St. John The Divine Church and were guests at the Surestart group based in a local nursery.

(See Front Cover for picture)

Protecting the environment

Tackling Climate Change - **Playing Our Part**

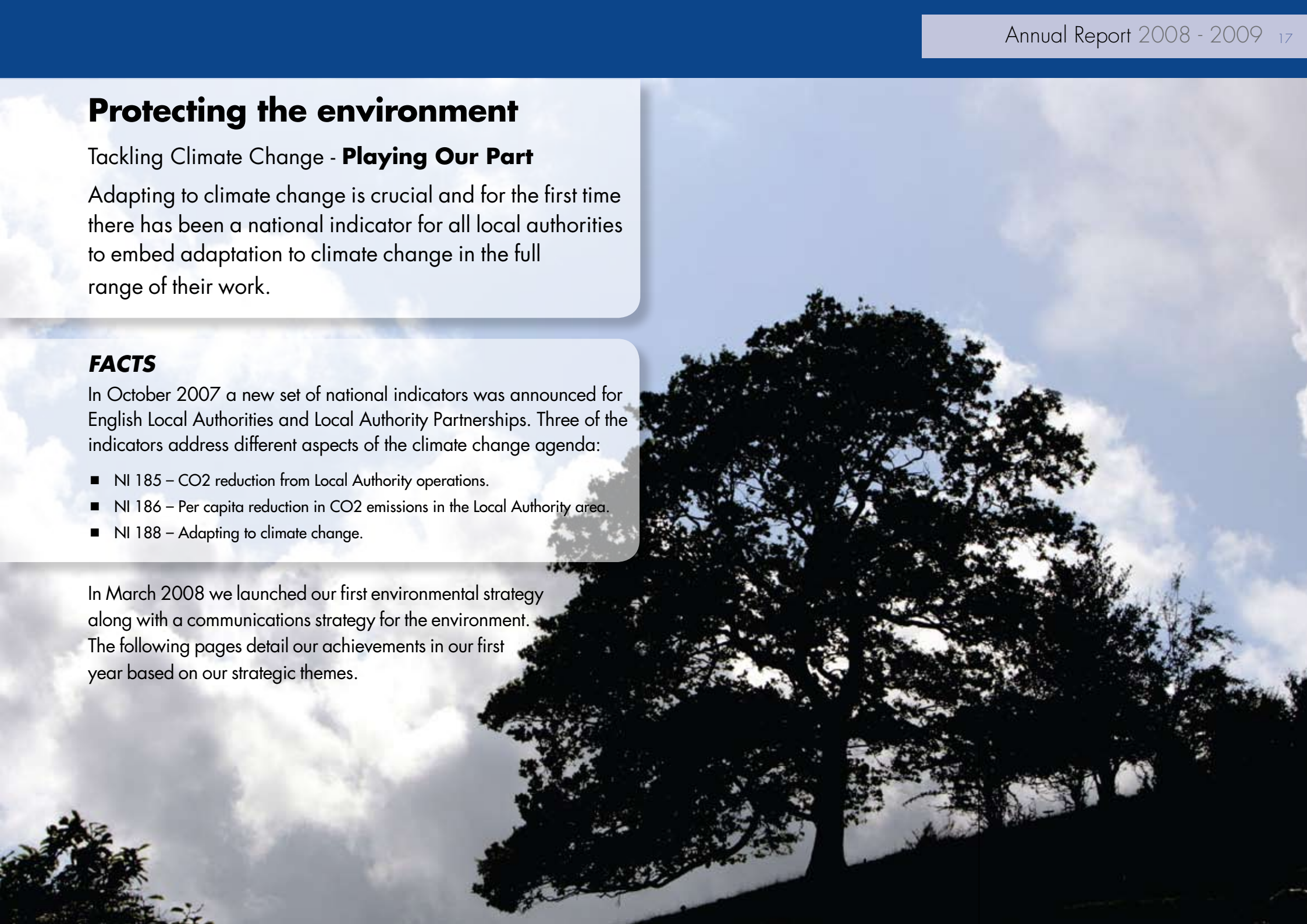
Adapting to climate change is crucial and for the first time there has been a national indicator for all local authorities to embed adaptation to climate change in the full range of their work.

FACTS

In October 2007 a new set of national indicators was announced for English Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships. Three of the indicators address different aspects of the climate change agenda:

- NI 185 – CO2 reduction from Local Authority operations.
- NI 186 – Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the Local Authority area.
- NI 188 – Adapting to climate change.

In March 2008 we launched our first environmental strategy along with a communications strategy for the environment. The following pages detail our achievements in our first year based on our strategic themes.



Support, Communication and People

Initial Strategy

To place the management and protection of the environment at the core of our business.

Actively promote and raise awareness of the environment in all that we do.

Develop environmental awareness campaigns and supportive material.

Develop and support a green culture across our workforce.

Address environmental training and education.

Highlights Of The Year

To drive our pledges for a more sustainable future we introduced a meeting structure that has an Environmental Steering group at its core to agree policy and direction. A member of the Corporate Board chairs this meeting and this gives visible commitment from the top of the organisation. This group is supported by subgroups in key areas of our business.

We expanded the Health and Safety Team's remit to include the reference for the environment. They deal with day to day enquiries and coordinate initiatives and the driving forward of the strategy. This has been supported by the Corporate Board and funding had been given to help introduce new initiatives and projects.



Internal Governance Diagram

Support, Communication and People

- Nominated Environmental Champions
- Training to recognised standards

Waste, Water and Natural Resources

- Recycled all we can
- Used recycled sustainable materials
- Limit vehicle washing
- Surveyed water saving

Operations

- Reduced the number of primary fires
- Introduced site risk surveys
- Reviewed flood response
- Built Headquarters and Safeside, achieving an 'Excellent' BREEAM rating
- Introduced Targeted Response Vehicles

Buildings Energy and Management

- Commenced carbon foot printing
- Worked with the carbon energy trust
- Achieved an "Excellent"* BREEAM rating for Headquarters
- Displayed energy performance of buildings

Transport

- Introduced car share/travel budi scheme
- Introduced Cycle to Work scheme
- Introduced Headquarters Cycle Pool
- Introduced Community Cycle Team
- Introduced Corporate Travel Scheme
- Further reduced overall mileage

Further details can be found in our Environmental Strategy www.wmfs.net

*The first public building in Birmingham to achieve this rating.





Winning team from Solihull



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Thursday, July 17, 2008

SCHOOLS QUIZ FINAL WINNERS

Pupils from Our Lady of the Wayside RC Primary School in Solihull won the West Midlands Fire Service Schools Quiz 2008.

They claimed the trophy and a range of prizes, including £300 for the school and a £10 gift voucher each, in a close run final on Tuesday evening (July 15) at the Fire Service's Training Centre in Smethwick.

Woodthorne Primary School from Wolverhampton was second and Ridge Primary School in Stourbridge took third place.

All of the teams did extremely well and it was obvious they had all been working very hard. They all enjoyed themselves, while at the same time learning some important safety messages.

A team from the Solihull area won last year as well, so we are looking forward to next year's quiz to see if Solihull can get a hat-trick, or if a school from another area can knock them off the top spot.

Year Five pupils in schools across the West Midlands Fire Service area took part in lessons and activities on fire safety in line with the requirements within the National Curriculum.

All Year Five pupils in the schools taking part were involved, and then teams of six were then chosen by each school to take part in the quiz itself.

This year's quiz included questions on a wider range of safety issues than in previous years, including road safety, water safety and First Aid.

Nine schools from across the West Midlands Fire Service area took part in the Grand Final. The event also featured demonstrations of firefighting and rescue techniques and equipment.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Wednesday, October 22, 2008

ROADKILL: ACCEPT IT OR CHANGE IT

Leading experts in road safety met to discuss innovative ways to reduce the numbers of people killed and injured on our roads.

West Midlands Fire Service hosted the RoadKill: Accept It or Change It conference at its Training Centre in Dartmouth Road, Smethwick, on Tuesday, October 21.

Every year more than 3,000 people are killed and 31,000 severely injured on the UK's roads, leaving families devastated and having a massive impact on the economy.

More than 770 people from across the country involved in various aspects of road casualty reduction work were expected to attend the event, including firefighters, police officers, health workers and representatives from local authorities.

Subjects discussed included evaluation of road accident statistics and the impact they have on real people, the Police perspective on road casualty reduction, the psychology of young drivers and road safety education.

'Roadkill – Accept It or Change It' will also feature demonstrations of the latest road safety technology and emergency response techniques.





WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Friday, December 5, 2008

YOUNG FIREFIGHTERS CROWNED NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

A team from the Binley branch of the Young Firefighters Association celebrated after being named as UK champions at a prestigious competition.

They travelled to Eccles in Greater Manchester on November 29 to compete against six other teams from across the UK in the Fire Service Youth Training Association European Drill Competition.

The competition included a fire service obstacle drill involving hose running, pumping water, equipment recognition, knots and lines and a 400m obstacle relay race.

Having won the event, the team from Binley, which consisted of 10 members with ages ranging from 12 to 15, will now represent the UK Fire Service at the 2009 CTIF Firefighters Olympiad in the Czech Republic in July.

They will be joined there by a team of Greater Manchester Fire Cadets, who came second.

Carl Rylatt, Officer in Charge of Binley YFA, said: "The team trained very hard and represented West Midlands Fire Service with dignity.

"They showed great skill and professionalism during the competition, and were willing to help the other teams by giving advice and tips during the training sessions."

Binley YFA were also UK champions two years ago and represented the UK Fire Services at the international event in Sweden last year.

Our Successes 2008-2009 – **Protection**

A Vital Resource Site Risk Survey (SRS)

Information is one of the most vital resources available to crews responding to any sort of emergency.

The more information available, the more informed the decision making can be, improving the emergency response and firefighter safety.

As a result of the Site Risk Survey project, up-to-date information about site-specific risks and a range of factors to assist the response can be accessed by operational crews via fire engines' on-board IT systems.

Crews across West Midlands Fire Service have been carrying out the vital work to identify sites that present a potential risk and gathering information about them.

Dave Janes from the SRS team, said: "The work done by the firefighters to collect the information is key to making this work and they have done an excellent job. I hope they can clearly see the value in having this information available when and where it is needed."



Information about fire safety is also captured, such as whether or not a premise has an up-to-date fire risk assessment, and can be reported back to Fire Safety Officers. Information from sources, such as Fire Safety teams, can also be fed into the system to ensure it offers a comprehensive picture of the premises.

Crews can record any information that they feel is relevant and add any premises they feel present some form of risk. For example, back-street garages with acetylene cylinders or private homes where residents are involved in activities or hobbies with a fire risk element, such as storing ammunition for shooting.

The benefits of the information gathered through Site Risk Surveys are not just limited to immediate emergency response. The information captured can add a new dimension to planning resource allocation, allowing information about current risks to be considered alongside historical incident data.

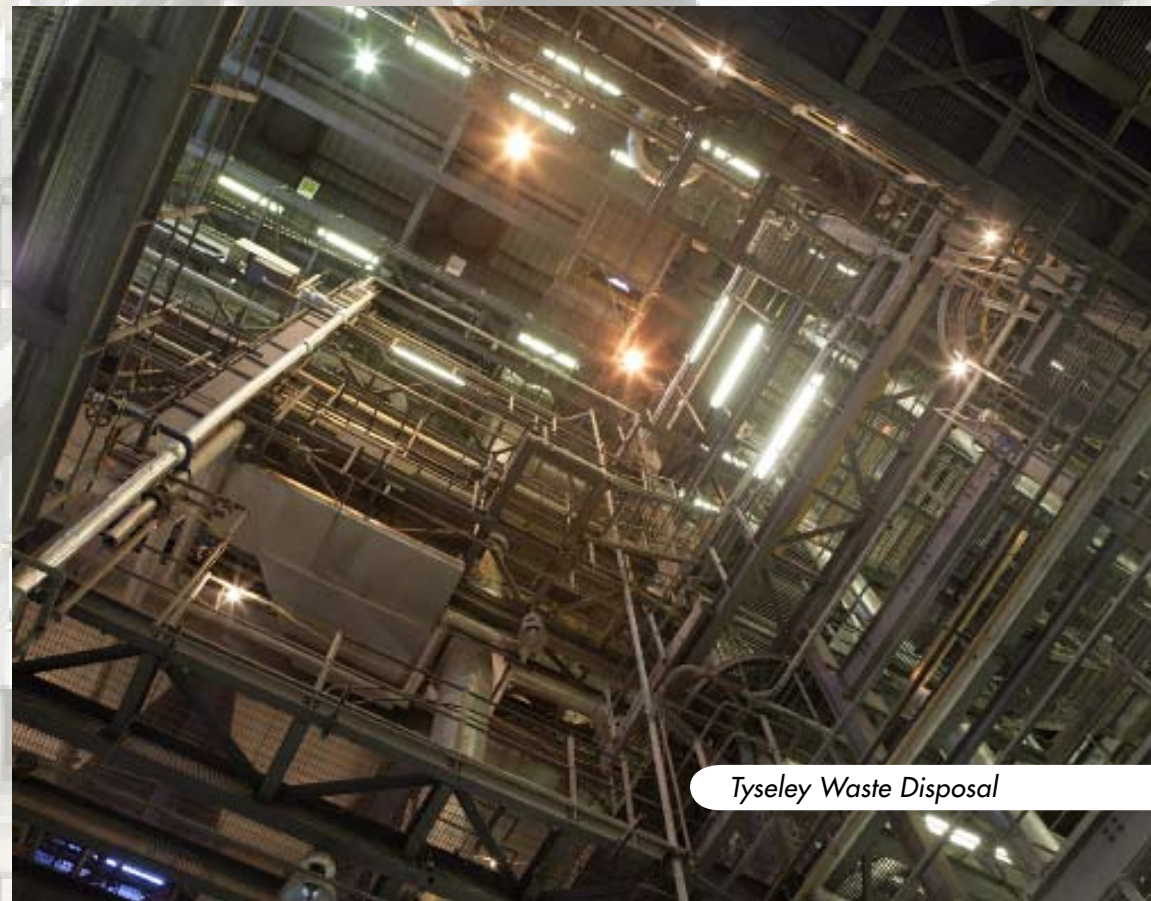
Fire safety inspection programmes that prioritise sites according to risk can also be developed as a result of the information being gathered.

Training will benefit from the Site Risk Survey project, as the skills of the crews can be developed to reflect the specific risks and scenarios identified in the area that they cover. Operational personnel who are moving station will also be able to get a picture of the risks faced at their new location and identify any training or skills needed.

The system can also help crews maintain and develop skills and knowledge, as it allows for 'virtual familiarisation' of a wide range

of premises and the opportunity to consider appropriate tactics for response.

There is potential in the future for more information to be added to the database created by the Site Risk Survey project. Information about residents who have oxygen on their premises for medical reasons is already included. Similar information gathered during



Tyseley Waste Disposal

Delivering Legislative Fire Safety

Over the last twelve months there has been a major restructure in the way West Midlands Fire Service delivers its legislative fire safety. Three geographic delivery areas have been created with a manager responsible for each, covering:

- The Black Country,
- Birmingham,
- Coventry and Solihull.

Delivery is supported by the Fire Safety Policy, Engineering and Training Team based at Fire Service Headquarters.

This change in service delivery has created a more effective and efficient response in carrying out audits, responding to identified risks, consultations and supporting partnerships as well as benefiting local businesses by providing a greater consistency of enforcement across the West Midlands.

The support to the delivery areas has also been greatly enhanced by the Engineering Team which has relocated to Fire Service Headquarters to provide greater, in-depth, technical knowledge to Inspecting Officers when dealing with engineered solutions or complex buildings. They have also provided support to planning officers in dealing with major developments within the West Midlands including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Birmingham New Street Railway Station.

There have been some excellent working relationships with other enforcement agencies that have evolved over the last twelve months, in

particular the Licensing Task Forces. These consist of licensing, enforcing and inspecting officers from:

- Fire Safety,
- Local Authority,
- Police,
- Trading Standards,
- Environment,
- Customs and Excise

They jointly assist the night time economy ensuring that licensed premises are safe, prosperous and attractive to those residing in and visiting the West Midlands.

West Midlands Fire Service has also established a partnership agreement with Birmingham City Council to deal with unsafe houses of multiple occupation at the time of discovery to ensure the safety of the occupants.

Fire Safety Officers have delivered numerous multifaith seminars to businesses and faith leaders from all backgrounds across the West Midlands to raise awareness of their new responsibilities and how to comply with the Fire Safety Order. Practical advice has been given to over 1,300 people and consumer feedback from these places of worship has included comments such as;

“the fire demonstration was ‘horrifying’ how quickly it took hold. How quickly it could destroy our church. Good mix of delegates with a wide spread of questions. Answers from the guys (officers) were honest and sometimes uncomfortable for people who asked them. No second chance with fires. Thanks.”



Interior facilities at Safeside

Safeside - Safeside Open For Business

Where can you find out what can happen if you play on a railway track, take risks crossing the road, leave candles unattended, play in unsafe water or take a dangerous shortcut home all without getting hurt?

Where can you learn what to do if you have a fire in your home, how to get help in an emergency, and how to stay safe when travelling by bus, train and car?

The answer, of course, is Safeside, the new, state-of-the-art, interactive education centre provided by West Midlands Fire Service and located next door to the new Headquarters in Vauxhall Road, Nechells, just along from Millennium Point.

Centre Manager Pete Wilson said: "Safeside is an exciting new resource for the whole West Midlands community.

Our full size indoor village – complete with interactive technology includes a real street scene with pedestrian crossing, double decker bus, car, railway, canal, open and green spaces, shops, police station and much more.

We are planning programmes for a wide range of user groups including school children, people with disabilities, young adults, local community groups and older people on a range of different topics. These could include general safety, specific issues such as home safety or fire safety, and programmes in areas such as parenting skills or work with young offenders.



Safeside also offers some excellent conferencing and meeting facilities for users working in similar areas to us." Rob Hattersley, a former deputy head teacher, is leading the development of the educational programmes at Safeside and is working on the first scheme for Year 5 pupils (9-10 year olds).

The Y5 Junior Citizen scheme involves children being taken around 10 different real life situations with a trained visitor guide. Delivered in a lively and interactive style. The two and a half hour session teaches children about fire and water safety, safety in the home, personal safety and road safety, looking at the possible dangers of cars, buses and trains.

This is especially relevant as these children are preparing for the transition to secondary school which requires more independence and less adult supervision."



Street views inside Safeside

Our Successes 2008-2009 – Emergency Response

Replacement BA Sets

The current Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets used by West Midlands Fire Service are due to be replaced in early 2010 as they will be reaching the end of their planned life expectancy.

Work is now underway to select the right equipment to replace them. Thirty firefighters from West Midlands Fire Service, along with others from Fire and Rescue Services around the country, have been evaluating the options in trials at the Fire Service College.

Their collective views and opinions about the equipment will play an important part in deciding which BA set West Midlands Fire Service buys.

One of the technological advances that is being developed by BA set manufacturers is 'Telemetry'. This is a method of radio communications between an entry control and a wearer. It provides 'current wearer information' to the Entry Control Officer (ECO), including current cylinder pressure and therefore predicted duration. It also enables the ECO to immediately identify the actuation of a distress signal unit and therefore provides a rapid awareness of firefighters in difficulty.

Talks are also ongoing with other Fire Services in the region to explore the benefits of buying the same or similar BA equipment.



Testing breathing apparatus

New Home for Technical Rescue Unit

West Midlands Fire Service's dedicated Technical Rescue Team is now operating from a purpose designed and built base.

The Technical Rescue Unit (TRU) within the Bickenhill Fire Station site enables them to pool their resources into one central location, providing them with significant logistical benefits.

The new building also features an essential training area designed to allow them to carry out the diverse and bespoke training required to maintain and develop their specialist skills and procedures.

It comprises of eight double bays for housing Prime Movers and the various demountable units needed when attending major incidents.

A separate area of the facility houses the Training Rig, which will be utilised by the TRU Team to carry out a variety of diverse training exercises that include; rope rescue, concrete/metal cutting, shoring and confined space training.

Due to the dust produced from concrete cutting, a stand alone dust extraction unit designed by West Midlands Fire Service's Estates team has been installed to collect any hazardous dust produced, safeguarding personnel whilst training.



Putting training into practise in Turkey

Within the welfare area there is a debriefing room, technician's workshop, shower facilities, as well as a PPE changing area. Viewing panels are located in the corridor of the welfare areas to enable training to be viewed whilst in progress thus giving a broader training benefit.

The Estates Team, led by Paul Timmins, Alan Jones and Mark Burston, worked closely with the Technical Rescue Team and CLG to produce the bespoke brief and design for the TRU, and has overseen the project from inception through all the key stages to completion.

The Bickenhill site was chosen because of its close proximity to the existing motorway and major road networks, and because the site was large enough to accommodate the new building within its boundary.

In addition to the building works the security of the existing site has been significantly improved with new security fencing and gates to the perimeter.

Pete Mills, Technical Rescue Unit Commander, said: "The new Technical Rescue Unit at Bickenhill is purpose built to meet the specific needs of the Tech Rescue Team and really is at the cutting edge of specialist rescue facilities.

Having dedicated Technical Rescue Teams available around the clock with all of their equipment at one location means we are ideally placed to meet the needs of our communities here in the West Midlands, as well as play our role in wider resilience, both regionally and nationally."

'Jed' is Tech Rescue's Newest Recruit

The Technical Rescue Unit at West Midlands Fire Service has taken on a new four-legged recruit.

Following the announcement of funding from Communities and Local Government (CLG) for the provision of search and rescue dogs, Jed, a Border Collie, has arrived.

Jed and his handler Technician Paul Jobbins will work with the Technical Rescue Unit based at Bickenhill.

A national network of search dogs is now under development under the management of the Chief Fire Officers' Association and, in due course, will provide a bespoke canine search capability to support the fire service search and rescue operations at collapsed structure and major transport incidents.

Paul said: "Jed is our new addition to the Technical Rescue Unit. He is one of a number of dogs training in brigades throughout the UK as air scenting dogs, enhancing our USAR and immediate area search capabilities.

He came from a breeder in Kent, who was happy for me to have him for a month's trial to ensure he would be suitable for search and rescue work. He soon settled in to his new home and on March 25 he went to Leicester Fire and Rescue Service for his assessment by Chris Pritchard.

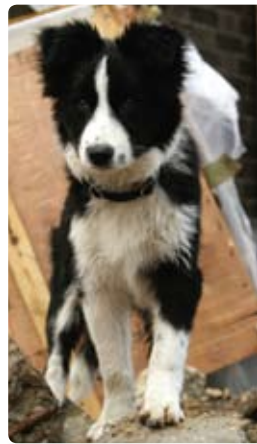
Chris put Jed through his paces observing his possessiveness, attention, willingness and strength. He carried out various exercises



Jed and the team

revolving around prey drive which is an essential quality for all working dogs. He scored 'excellent' in all areas.

Jed has already spent a training weekend in Ballater in Scotland with the Canine Working Group, hosted by Grampian Fire and Rescue Service. The aim was to do some helicopter and snow training but unfortunately the helicopter was unavailable, but there were plenty of other training scenarios prepared to make it a very successful and worthwhile weekend.



He got to meet his canine colleagues and watch them work, and enjoyed playing in the snow and getting used to travelling for long periods.

Normally it takes about 18 months to 2 years for a dog to be trained and graded for operational work. In the next six months, Jed will be concentrating on socialisation, obedience and confidence building."

The CFOA Canine Working Group is made up of qualified handlers from various Fire and Rescue Services in the United Kingdom and is co-ordinated by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

They organise various monthly training venues throughout the UK with the objectives of developing dogs in training and maintaining the skills of dogs and handlers that are currently assessed as competent for operational work.

For more information on Jed please email paul.jobbins@wmfs.net
For more information on FRS search dogs or the work of the group please email chris.pritchard@lfrs.org

Northfield Do The Double

Firefighters from Northfield Blue Watch are celebrating wins in two prestigious West Midlands Fire Service competitions.

The Watch won the Breathing Apparatus Competition back in November, claiming the right to represent the Service at the national competition to be held at the Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire, in October.

They also came out on top in the RTC extrication competition held at the Training Centre in April. Bournbrook Blue Watch were second and Hay Mills Red Watch were third.

Northfield Blue also went away with two individual prizes, with Gary Braid named Best Incident Commander and Andy Connelly Best Medic.



They also did well in the Trauma competition held on the same day.

Northfield Blue Watch and the top two teams in the Trauma Competition will go forward to represent West Midlands Fire Service at the National RTC and Trauma Competition to be held in Scotland in August.

Sacha Quinney and Steve Mann from Sheldon Red Watch took first prize, with Lee Renenhen and Andy Connolly from Northfield Blue in second place.

Zach Villers and Ian Sturmey from Sheldon Red Watch were named Best Novices.

The then Assistant Chief Fire Officer Martin Clark, Director Operations, said: "The competitions are an important part of the work that is undertaken to ensure individuals and teams achieve the highest professional standards in our emergency response work.

I recognise the effort and commitment that the participating teams put into the event and would like to express my thanks to the teams and those who provided background support. These events require a great deal of effort and organisation and I would also like to thank all those people who were involved.

On behalf of all staff within the service I would like to offer congratulations to the winning teams and wish those going forward to represent West Midlands Fire Service in the national finals the best of luck."

Firefighters Get On Their Bikes

Teams of firefighters are out and about on bikes this summer to talk to young people about the dangers of fire and anti-social behaviour.

Members of the Community Cycle Team are targeting areas in the Northfield and Edgbaston areas of Birmingham that suffer from high levels of deliberate grass and rubbish fires and other similar nuisance problems.

Their role is to talk to young people congregating in these areas about the dangers of fire and the consequences of arson. They are also able to point them towards activities on offer in the area during the school holidays.

Andy Simmonds, Station Commander for Northfield, said: "High levels of anti-social and nuisance fires, which peak during the school summer holidays, can put a significant demand on our resources, not to mention the negative visual, economic and environmental impact that they cause.

The bike teams are another way for us to try and reduce these types of incidents by working with young people and getting across to them the dangers and consequences of starting fires.

The teams also have links to environmental services and local housing offices so can report any incidents of fly-tipping and graffiti, or problems with void properties.

It is an exciting project for us that builds on the work we already do with young people and in partnership with other agencies to ensure the best possible service to the community."

The south Birmingham pilot project started at the end of May and is due to run for around 14 weeks. The firefighters taking part have volunteered to take part on their days off. They operate in teams of two, working from two bases, Northfield and Woodgate Valley fire stations, and maintain high-visibility patrols in the target areas.



Community cycle team



Fircroft College, Bristol Road, Birmingham





Flooding at Bournbrook, Frankley and Halesowen



TGI Friday's 15 Fire Engines, Hagley Road, Birmingham

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Saturday, April 18, 2009

FIRE ENGINES TO CARRY DEFIBRILLATORS

Equipment that can provide life-saving aid for heart attack victims is now carried on West Midlands Fire Service fire engines for the first time.

The Fire Service has teamed up with the British Heart Foundation to arrange for Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) to be added to the equipment available to fire crews.

A total of 82 AEDs have been funded in partnership with the BHF at a cost of more than £100,000. They will be kept on fire engines across the West Midlands Fire Service area and at key locations across the organisation.

West Midlands Ambulance Service provided vital training in using AEDs for Fire Service personnel.

Andy Cashmore, from West Midlands Fire Service's Operations Support department, said: "We are committed to continually improving our First Aid and trauma management provision and see this as a very important step.

While we are not changing our procedures in terms of what we respond to, it does mean that we will be in a position to provide life-saving treatment should we come across someone suffering a heart attack as we go about our work.

There is a real drive to have this equipment available in more public places and work places – the Fire Service is ideally placed to support this as our work place is very much out and about in our communities.

This move will greatly benefit the communities that we serve and our own staff," he added.

AEDs are used to treat sudden cardiac arrest, which is when the heart stops beating or pumps ineffectively. This can happen without warning and the majority of people have no previously-recognised symptoms of heart disease.

Claire Goodman, West Regional Director, British Heart Foundation, said: "Sudden cardiac arrest can affect anyone. Yet less than five per cent survive, largely because a defibrillator does not arrive in time.

For every minute someone is not defibrillated, their chances of survival decrease by a further 10 per cent. The British Heart Foundation's aim is to place defibrillators all over Birmingham, so that wherever people may suffer a heart attack, they are never very far from the help that they will need to save their life."





Our Successes 2008-2009 – Organisation

Springboard to Success

An exciting development opportunity for non-uniformed women support staff with West Midlands Fire Service has been launched at Training Centre.

The Springboard Programme has been specifically designed for women by women and is designed to enhance their personal and professional development.

It features four interactive workshops and covers topics such as assertiveness, setting goals, self-assessment, managing stress, making things happen, networking and work/life balance.

The programme is open to those in positions up to and including Grade 10. The initial course was launched on January 30 and finished in April. It is being delivered by Jan Morris, an accredited Springboard Trainer.

It is hoped that further programmes will take place in the future.

There will be more about the Springboard programme in the next edition of FirePower when delegates will be reporting on their experiences and progress.

If you would like to find out more about Springboard, please visit the www.springboardconsultancy.com website.

Fire Service Personnel honoured at Police Awards

On the evening of April 24, 2008, members of the West Midlands Fire Service were invited to a West Midlands Police Awards Evening where they celebrated the outstanding achievements of their staff. The evening was shared with members of the community who have also carried out excellent work in support of others.

During the evening Fire Service personnel from the late crew at Bournbrook were nominated for the Blue Lamp award, which is awarded to members of the public who have shown courage or assisted with police related issues.

The citation, read out by Superintendent Matt Ward, stated: "On March 5, 2007, a 16 year old boy and his friend were walking in Birmingham city centre. They noticed a rival group of males and they both ran in opposite directions to avoid confrontation.

A number of members of the public witnessed the chase and saw that a number of the offenders were in possession of knives.

The 16-year-old boy managed to evade the group but as he continued walking a car pulled up alongside him, the males alighted the vehicle and surrounded him and began to violently attack him with knives.

During the attack the 16-year-old boy received multiple injuries including a stab wound to the heart.

Despite being severely wounded he managed to cross the main dual carriageway and collapsed. A passing member of the public, Kimisha

Lovence, and Fire Service personnel David Deadman, Simon Jackson, Paul Smith and Jim Rottenbury gave first aid and assisted at the scene.

I am pleased to say that three males were charged with an offence of murder and ordered to serve 12, 10 and 10 years respectively."

The awards were presented by Chief Superintendent Malcolm Coall.

Birmingham South Commanders Mark Harper and Andy Simmonds attended the event to support the Fire Service personnel.

Group Manager Harper said: "We were all made to feel very welcome by our colleagues from West Midlands Police. The evening was extremely successful and it was an honour to see our staff rewarded for their actions with prestigious awards."



OUR KEY PRIORITIES

So, what of our key priorities in 2008/2009?

In our Corporate Strategy document for 2008-2011 we grouped them under our four main priority headings of:

- Communities and Partnerships
- Response
- People
- Value for Money

A range of objectives were agreed under these headings and here is our progress in respect of them.

Communities and Partnerships

Action
Reduced injuries and the impact of property damage on our communities as a result of reducing preventable fires in the home.
Built a new community safety facility – ‘Safeside at Eastside’ within the new HQ site.
Relocated Headquarters and Fire Control from Lancaster Circus to Vauxhall Road.
Procured and implemented a new Command and Control system.
Continued to minimise the impact of arson on communities, businesses and local authorities by working with partners to prevent deliberate fires, through education, development of good practice and provision of support for other agencies.
Reviewed and developed data-sharing protocols and systems with other agencies. To review and validate the current security arrangements relating to corporate data.



The new Fire Control facility in the Safeside building

Response

Outcome

Undertook a feasibility study to develop current water support capability into a water rescue capability.

Developed and implemented an ICT security strategy.

Further embedded risk management principles and then develop and implement appropriate processes within the organisation.

Developed a radiation strategy to include the issue of CLG equipment.

People

Outcome

Supported the development of staff within the organisation to ensure our managers develop and demonstrate excellent leadership skills.

Supported the organisation in attracting and retaining people with excellent leadership skills.

Implemented revised brand identity incorporating a marketing strategy.

Produced a long-term media strategy incorporating press office cover.

Further enhanced the integrated action planning template utilising ICT.

Implemented a new Incident Recording System.

Reviewed the Equality Impact Assessment process and training. Implement any appropriate changes.

Achieved the new level 3 Equality Standard for Local Government award.

Reviewed the provision of equality training in the organisation. To implement new courses as appropriate.

Improved the framework for consultation and communication and review processes for the resolution of employee relations issues.



People - *continued*

Outcome

Used IPDS to provide development for all staff across Operations to enable them to perform their roles competently.

Developed a second facility for Fire Behaviour training.

Undertook a functions' audit to identify and generate internal departmental efficiencies to be realised on relocation to the new Headquarters.

Ensured the organisation's recruitment, retention, reward and development strategies and practices deliver the skilled workforce needed in the medium to long term.

Developed flexible working practices to support performance improvement and provide employment conditions that suit our diverse workforce and the needs of the organisation.

Continued to care for the health, safety and well-being of our staff and create a culture of full attendance at work.

Worked with managers to reduce the number of days lost due to sickness absence and rehabilitate employees at the earliest opportunity.

Developed and delivering a programme of thematic Health and Safety audits and system reviews.

Scanned research into climate change and potential impact on service demand.

Value for Money

Outcome

Improved the systems and operational resources that are used to deliver prevention, operational preparedness and learning and development activities in order to: make more effective, efficient and economical use of our resources and minimise the environmental impact of those activities.

Developed asset plans that identify the facilities required by our communities and staff and which take account of the environmental impact of our buildings and activities.

Improved our business support systems and increase efficiency by creating a suite of standardised business processes across Operations.

Developed a forward looking Route Map that will provide a positive focus with an emphasis on preparing for Direction of Travel, Value for Money and Use of Resources assessments.

Co-ordinated through the Corporate Strategy Working Group and action planning process the requirements of the 'Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011'.

WM Success at World Firefighter Games 08

Firefighters and support staff from West Midlands Fire Service did the region proud when they competed against colleagues from around the globe at the World Firefighters Games 2008 and brought back an impressive haul of medals.

The games were held in Liverpool from August 25 to September 3 and featured 60 events staged at top sporting venues such as the Liverpool Echo Arena. More than 5,000 competitors from all over the world took part in the Games.

More than 50 people from West Midlands Fire Service entered, in events including running, cycling, swimming, shooting, karate, judo, golf and rugby.

The then Acting Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya said: "I am extremely proud of all of our people who took part in the World Firefighter Games. They were all excellent ambassadors for West Midlands Fire Service and the region they serve.

The collection of medals they have brought back from Merseyside is very impressive and they should all be proud of their achievements."

West Midlands Fire Service reimbursed competitors for accommodation costs and the cost of purchasing an official World Firefighter Games tracksuit.



Amanda Savage and Paul Rudge from the Occupational Health section also provided health care and support to competitors.

Fallings Park Fire Station was very well represented at the Games. Firefighter Calvin Allen from White Watch said: "On behalf of all the firefighters from this station I would like to thank the organisers of the Games, the volunteers and the people of Liverpool for hosting an amazing event. I would also like to thank all at West Midlands Sports and Well Being for their efforts and support."

The World Firefighters Games were first held in Auckland, New Zealand in 1990. They have taken place every two years since then, at locations including Las Vegas, Perth, Hong Kong and Sheffield.

This year's Games in Merseyside were part of Liverpool's celebrations for being the European Capital of Culture 2008. During the Games, around £50,000 was raised for the Fire Fighters Charity, which supports injured firefighters and their dependants.

Congratulations to all staff who took part.

Fire Authority Scrutiny Role Enhanced

As part of the Authority's feedback regarding its Use of Resources Assessment by external auditors, the use of the Policy Planning Forum (PPF) and the Audit Committee were specifically highlighted as helping to fulfill the role of active scrutiny in the governance arrangements for the Authority.

The PPF gives an opportunity for Members to have a discursive consideration of strategy issues with Officers and recent forums have seen even more emphasis placed on greater interaction between Officers and Members. The style of PPFs may vary in the future depending on the topics for discussion at the forum. Use of different meeting layouts to encourage greater interaction have been tried and these will be used when appropriate.

The Audit Committee too have significantly enhanced the scrutiny arrangements for the Authority, providing a robust challenge to expenditure in the accounts and detailed consideration of Internal Audit reports into a range of Fire Service activities.

Background

The Audit Committee was established by the Authority in January 2008. Its purpose is to provide:

- independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment,

- independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to
- oversee the financial reporting process.

The key benefits of an Audit Committee can be seen as:

- Increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting.
- Reinforcing the importance and independence of internal and external audit and similar review processes.
- Providing additional assurance through a process of independent review.
- Raising awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations.

Audit Committee Members have received training on key issues throughout the year.

The Committee undertook a self assessment exercise in December 2008 using a toolkit designed for Local Authority Audit Committees. This highlighted that the Committee was operating within a recognised best practice framework. Following the exercise an action plan was prepared in order to address the limited number of issues that arose. Progress in the implementation of these actions has been monitored at subsequent Committee meetings.





Skills on Display

Members of the armed forces, police, local government and voluntary organisations were special guests at a day of demonstrations to show the range of skills and expertise held within West Midlands Fire Service.

Brigadier Jonathan Bourne-May, Commander of 143 (West Midlands) Brigade of the Territorial Army and 11 of his Senior Command Officers, plus officers from West Midlands Police, Carat Leadership Consultancy, Birmingham City Council, St Basil's and two other Housing Associations attended the event at Training Centre.

An introductory presentation set out what West Midlands Fire Service is trying to achieve and some of the methods we are using. The whole day was designed to show the guests how sophisticated, well trained and capable we are in our approach to all aspects of our work.

The majority of the guests agreed to experience the main fire house. Those of us in the fire service joined up knowing we would have to wear breathing apparatus, but for some of our colleagues it presented a real challenge. We were most impressed with those who conquered their fear, with special congratulations to Jackie Mould from Birmingham City Council.

Next was the Incident Response Units (IRUs) and the full decontamination apparatus. A number of military personnel were surprised that firefighters also carry out the IRU related role, as they thought that this may be restricted to specialist personnel.

The Technical Rescue Unit had a range of equipment on display, but unfortunately had to leave to attend an incident after a short while. The High Volume Pumping Unit was also on show.

Next on the circuit were the Command Support Vehicle and the Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Team. The DIM team was also demonstrating Isis, the microdrone. The examples showed the first-class technology we now have available.

Our colleagues were particularly impressed with the level of knowledge and sophistication of the personnel they met and the equipment on display.

The Pump Rescue Water Tower (PRWT) again showed another example of West Midlands Fire Service leading from the front. Its capacity to deliver vast quantities of water via a remotely controlled operation will be a huge bonus in firefighting operations.

Last on the outside was fire dog Ellie with trainer Matthew Dixon. This specialised team, sponsored by Marks & Spencer, again showed the Brigade's approach to forensics, scene investigation, partnership and sponsorship.

The focus then moved inside, with a fully interactive presentation by Area Commander Tony Prosser. "The COALESCE system and the supporting mosaic data were used to highlight the level of sophistication with which we are targeting the most vulnerable in order to reduce fires. Much has been done although there is clearly much more to do".

Tony went on to say, "I hope to make these annual events where we can influence people from the agencies with whom we work on a day to day basis. We are the best advert for what we do and sometimes I wonder if we hide our light under a bushel.

It is clear from the "thank you" letters we received afterwards that we have significantly changed people's perceptions of what we do.

We can best serve others if they have a greater understanding of ourselves and vice versa. When all is said and done, getting on together is just one step in delivering a more efficient service".



Peer Support Scheme Goes From Strength to Strength

The Peer Support Officers Scheme which offers a confidential, non-judgemental information signposting and guidance service to colleagues, continues to evolve.

The scheme has been up and running for more than a year and, while still in its infancy, has proven to be a successful initiative.

Peer Support Officers (PSOs) are not counsellors - their role is to listen and 'sign post' people to appropriate agencies either in or outside the organisation. They are equipped with knowledge of the Fire Service's personnel and equality and diversity policies and procedures. They provide assistance to empower the individual to regain control of the situation.

Support and assistance is available to all staff via PSOs, regardless of rank or role.

Their support is not limited to issues concerning harassment and bullying. Some of the topics that PSOs have dealt with in the last year have involved: gender, relationship trauma, disability, stress, workplace procedures and religion.

At a recent training day, PSOs discussed the service's policies on smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. They reflected on cases where assistance had been provided; success stories, highlighting how they had helped colleagues and friends deal with a range of issues that were troubling them and cases where further discussion and possible training is required.



The main part of the day was given over to discussing the future of the PSO scheme, and to two guest speakers from Gender Matters – a charitable organisation which supports people affected by gender issues, and their families. It was a superb presentation, highlighting some of the issues and stigmatisation faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite and transgender people.

The day provided an excellent opportunity for all PSOs to get together, give and receive feedback and discuss the development of the PSO network.



The Equality and Diversity Team have made great progress during 2008-2009.

During 2008, the West Midlands Fire Service successfully met the criteria required to be awarded with the All Formats Charter Mark.

West Midlands Fire Service is the first Fire and Rescue Service to achieve this award. All Formats is a national charity for the blind and vision impaired, based at Queen Alexandra College in Birmingham.

In September 2007, they launched their Charter Mark which is awarded to organisations who can demonstrate their commitment to the visually impaired community. This means that the West Midlands Fire Service has made a commitment to:

- provide members of the public with information relating to products and services in alternative formats, Braille, large print or audio format;
- ensure there is a clear process for staff to request material in an alternative format when this information is requested by members of the public; and
- demonstrate our compliance with current equality and disability legislation, for example, accessibility of information on our website.

Further progress has been made in relation to raising the profile of the Equality and Diversity Team, through a series of events promoting the importance of Equality and Diversity issues. In October 2008, the team facilitated an event to promote Black History Month. There was



an exhibition on Black and Ethnic Minority Heroes and Heroines and food and entertainment was also provided.

In November 2008, the Equality and Diversity Team organised an inspirational speakers' event as part of the commemoration of International Disability Day. It was the first time that the new Headquarters opened for the public in the evening and it was the first time that the E&D Team organised an evening event.

Our honoured guests were: Dave Heely and John Hay, MBE.

In December 2008, employees from Malmö (Sweden) Fire & Rescue Service came for a two day visit of the West Midlands Fire Service. Our Swedish colleagues were particularly interested in our approach to diversity and recruitment. They had a two day programme which consisted of visits, presentations and meetings including a tour of Safeside, Training Centre and Handsworth Community Fire Station. Our Swedish visitors were very impressed with the work that is being undertaken in the West Midlands, particularly in the area of E&D, recruitment, training and community work.

The team also facilitated a number of bespoke training sessions targeted at Station Commanders and other employees, these included; Dyslexia Awareness Course, facilitated by Dyslexia Action and a British Sign Language Course. 32 members of staff attended the Dyslexia Awareness Course and 20 staff received training in British Sign Language.

In December 2008, the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority has become a member of Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Champions Programme.

The Programme is Britain's good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall and with each other in order to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. Diversity Champions gain access to best practice sharing, networking opportunities and research from the programmes in England, Wales and Scotland.

Equality Standard for Local Government

In February 2009, the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority was formally recognised for its commitment to equality and diversity and achieved a prestigious national award in the form of Level Three of the Equality Standard for Local Government. In order to confirm its progress from Level Two to Level Three of the Standard, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority was subject to assessment by external Peer Reviewers. Assessors from the Improvement and Development Agency spent two days at the Fire Service Headquarters and interviewed senior managers, Elected Members and facilitated a series of focus groups with employees from across the organisation.

The assessment covered four headings:

- Leadership and Corporate Commitment
- Community Engagement and Accountability
- Service Delivery and Customer Care
- Employment and Training



Equality and Diversity officers receiving their award



Band Marks the Armistice Anniversary

The Band of the West Midlands Fire Service took part in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres on the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

On Tuesday, November 11, the Band paraded through Ypres and performed during the well-attended Remembrance Service in the Cathedral. They then took part in a ceremony at the famous memorial site alongside buglers from the Last Post Committee.

A total of 30 musicians from the Band of the West Midlands Fire Service and five representatives from the Brigade, including the then Deputy Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya, took part in the trip. The musicians ranged in age from 15 to 72.

They were among approximately 200 people from a number of UK Fire Services, including Staffordshire and Warwickshire at the event, which was attended by members of the Belgian Royal Family. In fact, the UK Fire Service had more representatives at the event than any of the other organisations that took part.

Honor Carney from the Band of the West Midlands Fire Service said: "We were extremely proud to have been invited to take part in this year's ceremony, especially as this is a special year as it marks the 90th anniversary of the end of the Great War.

The ceremony has very close links with the Fire Service and we were proud to represent West Midlands Fire Service."



Menin Gate in Ypres

The Menin Gate is a monument that features the names of soldiers killed in action but who were never found or buried in formal war cemeteries. Every night, the Fire Service in Belgium performs the Last Post ceremony to honour their memory.

On the Sunday before the ceremony in Belgium (November 9) the Band of the West Midlands Fire Service took part in the Remembrance Parade in Birmingham.

The then Deputy Chief Fire Officer Randeniya said: "We are living in freedom today because so many people over so many decades have fought for us and made the ultimate sacrifice.

It is vitally important that we remember those who fell in previous conflicts, while sending our thoughts and prayers to all the members of the armed forces who are still today fighting for our country, while engaged on operations abroad."

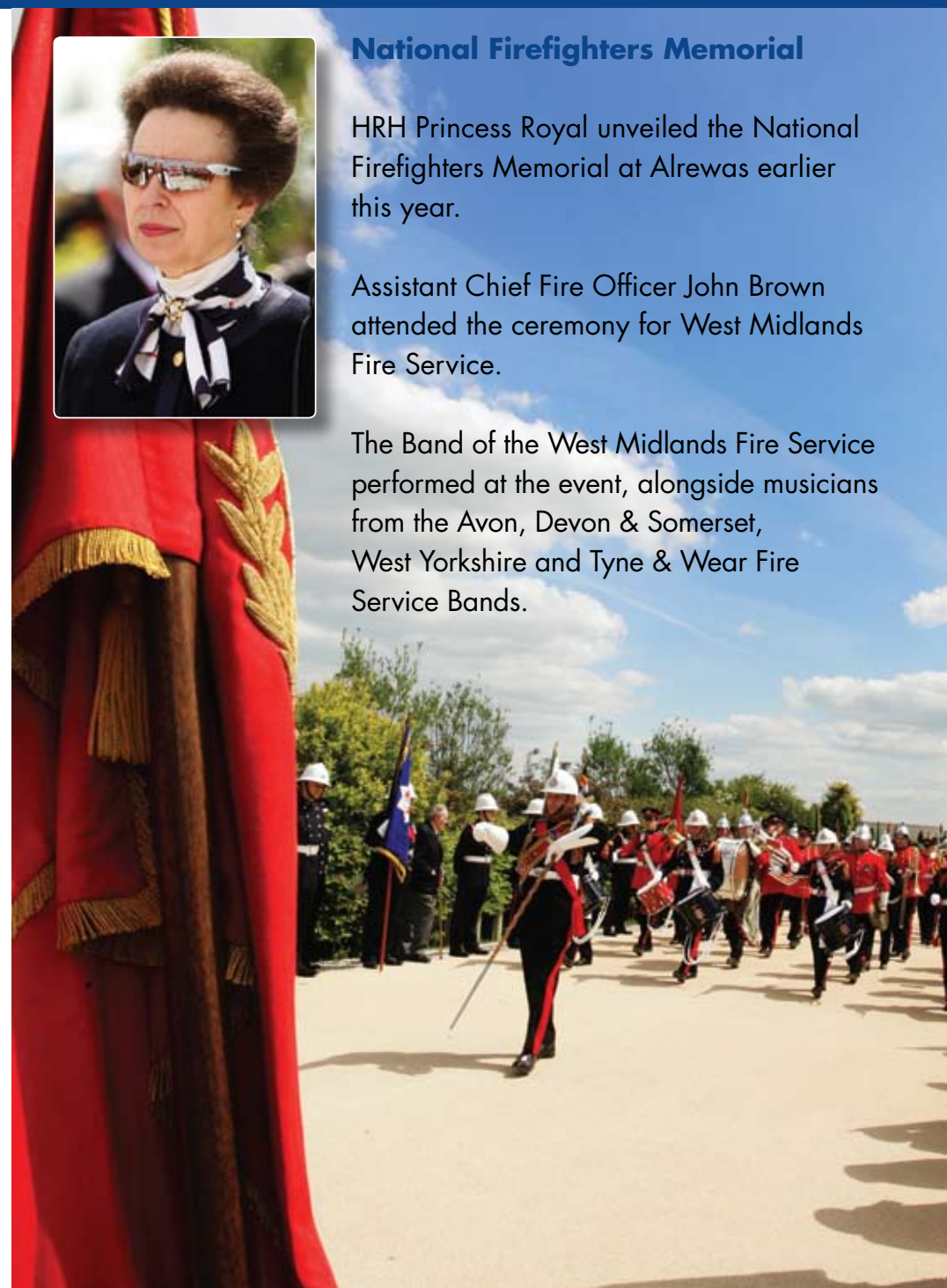


National Firefighters Memorial

HRH Princess Royal unveiled the National Firefighters Memorial at Alrewas earlier this year.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer John Brown attended the ceremony for West Midlands Fire Service.

The Band of the West Midlands Fire Service performed at the event, alongside musicians from the Avon, Devon & Somerset, West Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear Fire Service Bands.



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Monday, March 30, 2009

GOLD AWARD FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

West Midlands Fire Service is celebrating a prestigious award for health and safety.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) awarded the Brigade the Gold Award for Occupational Health and Safety.

The award is presented to organisations who can provide evidence of excellent occupational health and safety management, strong occupational health support and falling rates of injuries.

West Midlands Fire Service injury data shows a 62 per cent reduction over 18 years (1990 – 2008) in total injuries.

The Gold Award was presented to West Midlands Fire Service at a ceremony at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel at the NEC on Thursday, May 14. The ceremony was part of the Safety and Health Expo 2009, Europe's leading annual health and safety exhibition.

David Rawlins, RoSPA Awards Manager, said: "West Midlands Fire Service has shown a commitment to protecting the health and well-being of its employees and others.

Entering the RoSPA Awards reinforces the message that good health and safety is good for business, and clearly demonstrates an organisation's dedication to improving performance in this crucial area."



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

PRESS STATEMENT – Tuesday, January 27, 2009

NEW FLAG RAISED AT FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS

A new flag is now flying outside West Midlands Fire Service's recently completed Headquarters in Birmingham.

Fire service staff and members of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority gathered for the raising of the colours outside the building in Vauxhall Road.

Ann Collins who works in the Registry department, was chosen to represent all Headquarters staff and was given the honour of formally raising the colours as the firefighters stood to attention.

Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya then saluted the new flag displaying the existing Brigade colours, as uniformed staff stood to attention.

Ann, aged 35 from Birmingham, said: "It was a great honour to be chosen to represent the staff here at Headquarters and raise the Brigade colours.

I was a bit nervous but it went really well and it was wonderful to see the officers standing to attention as the flag went up.

I do enjoy working for the Fire Service in the Registry department, and it is my ambition to be a firefighter. Raising the Brigade colours was a very proud day for me."

CFO Vij Randeniya said: "The raising of the Brigade colours for the first time at our new Headquarters is another landmark occasion as we head into a new era.

Headquarters houses many of the support services that ensure our crews on the frontline have everything they need to deliver their vital work in our communities.

The new building is a symbol of our commitment to continual improvement and to aim for excellence in all that we do."



Partnership Working

The management and organisation of partnerships within the West Midlands Fire Service continues to develop and improve. This has been reflected in the recent Direction of Travel and Use of Resources assessments carried out by the Audit Commission. The report stated that the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority is improving well and making a positive contribution to wider community outcomes. A strategic review has recently been carried out reinforcing our commitment to working with and supporting our partners in delivering and improving services for local people within the communities of the wider West Midlands.

Partnerships are recognised as a key method of delivering services, increasing organisational capacity and making sure that value for money services are both obtained and delivered. We will co-operate in partnerships both inside and outside the Local Area Agreement Framework. We will put in place a robust process for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and performance of all our partnership activities.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act was introduced on 30 October 2007. Parts of this Act detailed a new statutory framework with regard to Local Area Agreements, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and the simplified best value regime involving a new duty to involve. Everyone has a role to play when it comes to creating stronger, safer and more prosperous communities. Some partnerships are already in place and in order to build upon

the approaches currently being undertaken, a new performance framework has been developed. There are various pieces of legislation relating to this framework that all link together with the aim of making some real differences to people and the places they live in.

Left: Lloyds Pharmacy giving fire safety leaflets with prescriptions

Right: Housing Fair at the lower Precinct Coventry

Below: Promoting the RRO Documents for Community Protection





Casualty Partnership Group

FIRE SAFETY SUCCESS CONTINUES IN 2008/09

The latest performance figures for West Midlands Fire Service show that improvements continued in key areas of community safety in 2008/09, with fewer people and businesses experiencing the trauma and distress that fires bring.

Performance statistics for the last financial year show reductions in the number of accidental fires in the home and in business premises, and a reduction in arson attacks on properties and vehicles.

Councillor Peter Howard, Chairman of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, said: "We recently celebrated the official opening of our new Headquarters. We now have another reason to celebrate as the performance figures for 2008/09 are really good news for our communities.

The trend for improving community safety and making the West Midlands safer has continued for another year and I am incredibly proud to be Chairman of a top performing fire service that is making a real difference to the communities it serves.

In the current economic situation, I am particularly pleased with the reductions in the numbers of fires and arsons involving non-domestic premises. It can be hard for businesses to recover from fire at the best of times, let alone when they are already struggling.

Our crews regularly attend fires at business premises, and their quick and decisive actions often ensure those businesses are back up and running with minimum disruption. That coupled with our prevention and safety work which is successfully reducing the numbers and impact

of fires means we are making a significant contribution to the local economy."

The number of accidental fires in dwellings fell nearly seven per cent, from 1,958 in 2007/08 to 1,867 in 2008/09, while the number of people injured as a result of accidental dwelling fires fell from 137 in 2007/08 to 124 in 2008/09.

Accidental fires in non-domestic properties fell from 697 in 2007/08 to 643 in 2008/09, a fall of more than 6 per cent, exceeding the target figure of 650.

Arson fires in dwellings fell from 558 on 2007/08 to 487 in 2008/09, a fall of nearly six per cent. This exceeded the reduction target, which was to bring the figure down to 525.

There were 242 arson fires in non-domestic properties in 2008/09, down from 293 the previous year. Vehicle arson fell four per cent from 1,583 in 2007/08 to 1,373 in 2008/09.

Fire crews from West Midlands Fire Service attended 1,865 malicious false alarm calls in 2008/09, a fall of seven per cent from 2,160 the year before. The target for the year was to reduce the figure to 2,000.

Chief Fire Officer Vij Randeniya said: "We recently welcomed the Duke of Kent to the West Midlands to open our new Headquarters and showed him the work that we do.

He said while the equipment and skills he saw were impressive, he was even more impressed by the quality of the people he met.

It is the hard work and expertise of our staff that has seen us make huge improvements in community safety over recent years, which the latest figures show continued in 2008/09.

I would like to thank all of our staff for their contribution, which is resulting in less and less people experiencing the distress and trauma that fire brings, or being injured as a result.

We must now continue to build on these successes and strive to become the best we can be."



Fitting smoke alarm

Regional Collaboration

West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) was established following the publication of the Government's White Paper 'Our Fire and Rescue Service' that included a requirement for all Fire Authorities to establish Regional Management Boards (RMBs) by 1st April 2004.

The Boards take responsibility for delivering, under national policies, six strategic functions listed in paragraph 2.7 of The Fire and Rescue National Framework which are:

- integrate common and specialist services, for example fire investigation;
- put in place effective resilience plans for large scale emergencies;
- introduce regional personnel and human resource functions;
- develop a regional approach to training;
- establish regional control centres and as an operational priority
- introduce regional procurement within the context of a national procurement strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service.

The West Midlands Region comprises:

- Hereford and Worcester Combined Fire Authority
- Shropshire and Wrekin Combined Fire Authority
- Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Combined Fire Authority
- Warwickshire County Fire Authority
- West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

These Fire Authorities have been meeting for a number of years as a forum and this group became a shadow Regional Board in January 2004 and then formed the West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) on 1st April 2004. WMRMB is a joint advisory committee created in accordance with Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act. This means that, unlike a joint committee, all decision making resides with constituent Fire Authorities. Each Fire Authority supplies three Members to the WMRMB, one of whom is the Chair and the five Chief Fire Officers act as advisors to the Board.

WMRMB has a model constitution and standing orders agreed by the constituent Fire Authorities and has a programme of public meetings. It has appointed a Clerk, Treasurer, Legal Advisor, Assistant Legal Advisor, Programme Manager, Programme Accountant, Communications Manager and a Risk Manager.

Using the PRINCE2 project management system, the Board has a programme of projects to deal with the six strategic functions listed earlier. Each discrete project has been allocated to a Fire Authority, with a project manager and responsible owner appointed to each project.

Code of Practice on Workforce Matters

In producing this Annual Report, the Authority confirms that it will comply fully with Annex D of ODPM circular 09/2004 in respect of the code of practice on workforce matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.



Our Performance for 2008 - 2009

Performance Indicators relating to Fires

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2007-2008	Target 2008-2009	Actual 2008-2009
1	The number of accidental fires in dwellings	1,959	1,825	1,867
2	The number of injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	137	122	123
3	The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	8	7	12
4	The number of arson fires in dwellings	558	525	487
5	The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises	689	650	643
6	The number of arson fires in non-domestic premises	293	300	242
7	The number of arson vehicle fires	1,578	1,518	1,377
8	The number of arson rubbish fires	5,645	5,480	4,565
9	The number of malicious false alarm calls received by the Brigade	5,130	4,865	4,882

Our Performance for 2008 - 2009

Performance indicating relating to fires - continued

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2007-2008	Target 2008-2009	Actual 2008-2009
10	The number of malicious false alarm calls attended by the Brigade	2,158	2,000	1,864
11	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) in non-domestic properties	6,886	6,500	6,275
12	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms (AFAS) in dwellings	4,265	NEW	4,203
13	The percentage of dwelling fires where a working smoke alarm was fitted	41.52%	43.2%	59.8%
14	The number of Home Fire Safety Checks conducted by the Brigade	48,383	At least 40,000	45,993
15	The severity of accidental dwelling fires	NEW	NEW	NEW
16	The percentage of Home Fire Safety checks delivered to those at high risk	NEW	NEW	NEW

Performance for 2008 - 2009

Actual 2008 - 2009

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2007-2008	Target 2008-2009	Actual 2008-2009
17	The percentage of whole time uniformed and retained duty system employees with a disability	2.16%	2.49%	2.05%
18	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control employees with a disability	5.50%	6.79%	4.80%
19	The percentage of all employees with a disability	2.98%	3.35%	2.75%
20	The percentage of women firefighters	3.29%	3.60%	3.84%
21	The percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority communities	6.74%	7.20%	12.07%
22	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control staff from ethnic minority communities	13.21%	8.90%	15.17%
23	The number of all staff from ethnic minority communities	8.33%	8.90%	12.86%
24	The percentage of women recruited to operational roles	NEW	NEW	20.0%
25	The percentage from minority ethnic communities recruited to whole workforce	NEW	NEW	8.33%

Performance for 2008 - 2009

Actual 2008 - 2009

Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2007-2008	Target 2008-2009	Actual 2008-2009
26	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – whole time, uniformed (excl. Fire Control)	6.13	5.50	5.21
27	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed and Fire Control staff	6.34	5.50	6.11
28	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff	6.18	5.50	5.41

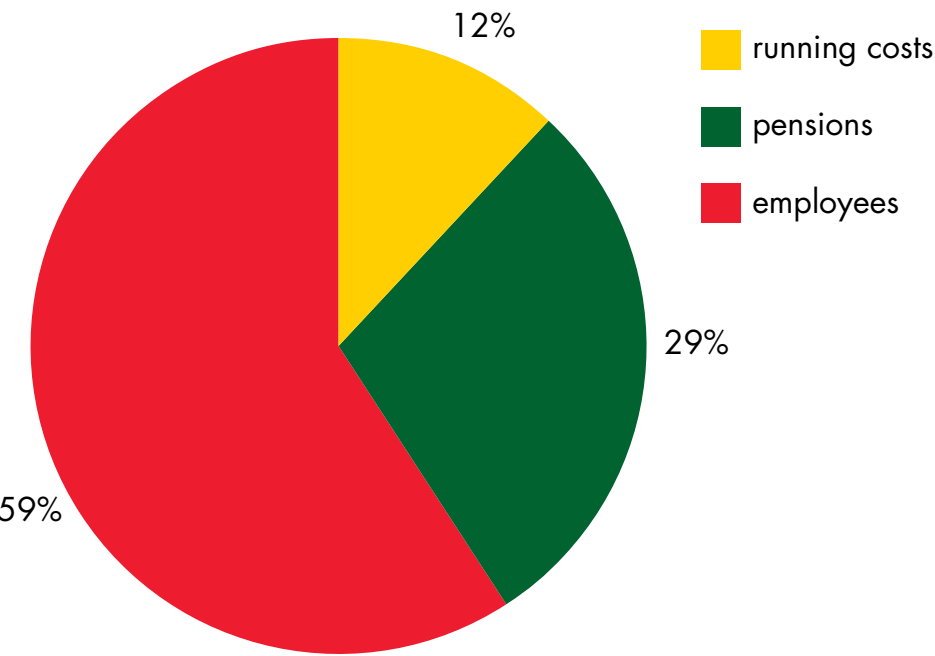
How the Service performed against its budget

How much did the service cost in 2008/2009?

The majority of the Net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to firefighting and rescue operations (£100m) and community fire safety work (£18m).

The total net operating expenditure for the Fire Service for 2008/09 was approximately £165m. This figure includes pension costs of £60m which need to be shown in accordance with specific accounting requirements.

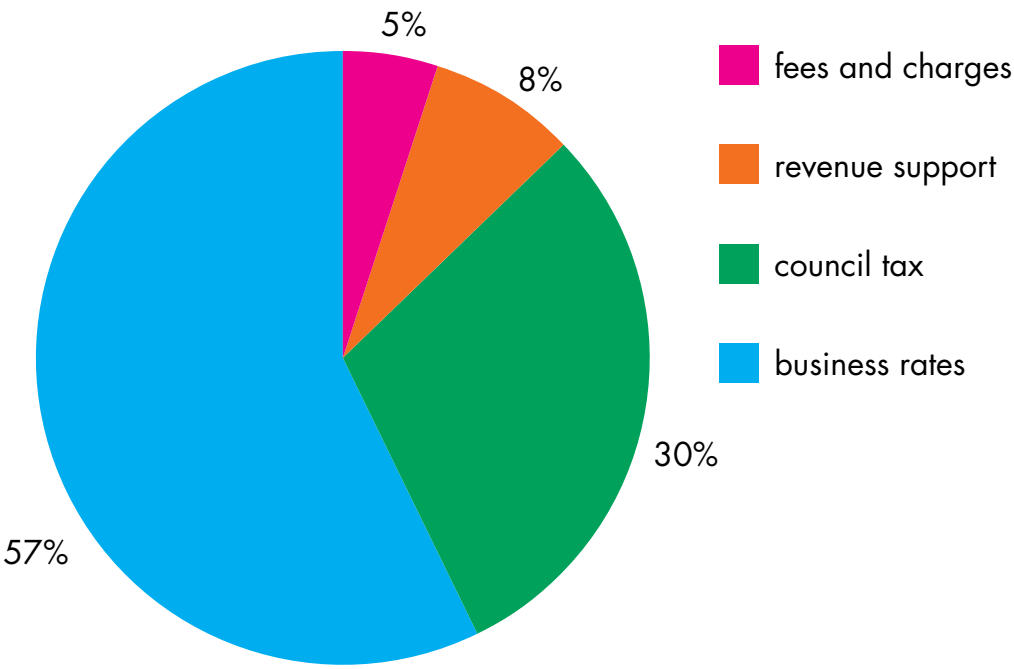
The types of costs can be broken down as follows:



How much was the service funded in 2008/2009?

The total income of the Authority in 2008/09 was £122m. The majority of funding comes from the Government in the form of grant and a share of business rates.

The various sources of funding are shown below:



Balances and Reserves

The Fire Authority must consider the level of general balances it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of Council Tax to charge in any year.

In order to set a balanced budget in 2008/09 the Authority assumed no movement in general balances. The level of general balances increased in the year by £0.391m, leaving £4.451m general balances at the end of the financial year.

The Authority holds general balances as funding to meet any unforeseen events which it may need to respond to. Interest is earned on any unused balances.

In addition, as part of the closedown of accounts process, consideration needs to be given to the level of earmarked reserves required. These are amounts set aside to meet specific anticipated future demands. The level of earmarked reserves decreased by the end of the year by £3.117m. This brought the total level of these reserves to £15.768m. Interest is earned on any balances until expenditure is committed against the demands identified.

Capital Expenditure and Funding

In 2008/09, the Authority spent £9.799 million on capital projects.

The expenditure was incurred on the following:

	£000s
Land & Buildings	8,115
Equipment	956
Vehicles	716
Software Licenses	12

A considerable amount of this expenditure was financed by direct revenue funding (50%) and borrowing (41%). The balance was funded by grants and capital receipts.

In the same way that borrowing was used to help purchase assets during 2008/09, borrowing in earlier years meant that at the end of 2008/09, the Authority had total loans of £49.157m (the interest and principal on any loans needs to be met from future revenue budgets). The value of fixed assets held by the Authority as at 31 March 2009 which the loans had helped fund was £108m, of which approximately 92% related to land and buildings and 8% related to vehicles and equipment.

Further information is available in our Corporate Strategy available via our website www.wmfs.net

Note: At time of going to print, the Authority's Statement of Accounts had not been externally audited.

All non-emergencies and general enquiries for
the whole of the West Midlands call
0845 5000900

For a FREE Home Fire Safety Check call
FREE 0800 389 5525

If you have any compliments, comments or
complaints about our service please contact us.

Customer Care Answerline

0121 380 7404

contact@wmfs.net

Public Relations
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham B7 4HW

Our website provides everything you need to
know about the services we provide including
details on our performance, our future plans
and fire safety advice

www.wmfs.net

For current recruitment opportunities go to
www.wmfs.net/jobs_online

**The information contained in this document can also be provided in other formats
including Braille, audiotape and large print. Please call 0121 380 6007**

In the event of an emergency please call 999 or 112

www.wmfs.net

