

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION  
SELECT COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2000 AT 10.30 AM**

Agenda Item No

4(a)

**SELECT COMMITTEE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL AGE PUPILS**

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Executive Member:- Gerald Game

**1. Purpose of the report**

To provide information of the activities undertaken by Hertfordshire and Rescue Service to promote Fire Safety Education for school age pupils to enable the select committee to consider areas for possible scrutiny.

**2. Events prior to 1999**

2.1 Before the formation of the Community Fire Safety Division, the Service had several programmes in place to deliver Fire Safety Education to School Age children, including:-

- A programme of general Fire Safety Education, delivered to 311 schools in 1999 by three specialist officers across the county, which received positive feedback from those schools which received this training.
- The “Crucial Crew” initiative, which was a very effective means of educating schoolchildren but was limited to four Districts within the County. In 1999, 90 schools took part involving approximately 900 children.
- An annual Fire Safety Youth Quiz which received a high level of support from schools and youth groups (unfortunately, this event has now been cancelled through lack of support in other fire brigades.) 50 teams (300 children) entered the event in 1999.
- Ad hoc presentations at special times during the year, e.g. Bonfire Night.
- Inclusion of fire safety education in the county's three Fire Cadet Units.

2.2 The budget for the whole of Fire Safety Education was about £18,000 per year, plus establishment costs for three Leading Firefighter Specialist Officers. Until 1999, operational personnel had limited involvement in Community Fire Safety Education.

### **3. Current initiatives**

- 3.1 The Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Safety Review (Published September 1999) recommended the creation of a further three posts dedicated to Community Fire Safety Education within existing establishment and a substantial increase in the Community Fire Safety Education Budget. It also recognised the need for greater involvement by Station personnel. The current year has therefore been a transitional year seeking to promote ownership of Community Fire Safety by operational personnel, and introducing more effective programmes which are measurable and targeted appropriately.
- 3.2 During the current fiscal year, the Fire and Rescue Service will continue to deliver the Schools Education programme and supplement it with new initiatives.
- 3.3 Expansion of “Crucial Crew” – the Fire Service is now able to properly resource their commitment to crucial crew and are actively trying to extend a similar scheme to all Districts within the County.
- 3.4 Firesetter intervention programme – this programme focuses on intervening at an early stage of firesetting behaviour and gives guidance on how to educate those children who demonstrate an unusual interest in fire. Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service now has a dedicated team of volunteers supported by Social Services Youth Justice Department. Up to 30 August 2000, the Service has dealt with 53 cases under the scheme, 39 of which are now closed.
- 3.5 ‘Safe Havens’ – This is a new program to be launched this term. The initiative was first developed in partnership with Havers School, Bishops Stortford and the local Fire Station. The objective is for every schoolchild to understand the importance of a smoke detector and to ensure that a detector is fitted in every child’s home.
- 3.6 ‘Red Box’ Project – The Fire and Rescue Service intend to launch a trial of this project in the new year. The scheme is aimed at children in the early years and is based on a successful Merseyside program. Each Red Box contains learning material and dressing-up items to make learning fun for younger children. The box is delivered and collected by the local Fire Station.
- 3.7 Overall, operational crews are becoming far more active in youth education by becoming closely involved in: School Fetes, Crucial Crew, Competitions, Lectures and Visits.
- 3.8 This increased level of activity was funded by an additional £20,000 from within budget growth of £210,000 in 2000/01.

### **4. Other Issues**

- 4.1 Ultimately the Service would like to progress in partnership with other organisations to a permanent ‘Crucial Crew’ site for the County, similar to ‘Hazard Alley’ in Milton Keynes.

- 4.2 Experience of the current year's Schools Education Programme has shown that, although it has the energy, commitment and innovation to produce educational material, the service will need to ensure that it is able to satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- 4.3 With the demise of the National Youth Quiz a team of Community Fire Safety Officers are currently assessing the value of a new County Quiz which will possibly be Internet based.
- 4.4 Members may wish to note that all aspects of Community Fire Safety will be included in the Best Value Review of Community Safety programmed for 2001/2002.