

PART 1 - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** Public Protection and Safety Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 28 June 2011

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** FIRE RISK REDUCTION OFFICER PROPOSAL

**Contact Officer:** Colin Newman, Head of Community Safety  
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**Chief Officer:** Nigel Davies, Director, Environmental Services Department

**Ward:** Borough Wide

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1. Reason for report

This report sets out proposals for the creation of the post of Fire Reduction Officer within the London Borough of Bromley. The proposal seeks the allocation of funding from the LAA monies in order to appoint the Officer for a two year period. The project seeks to enhance partnership working and achieve reductions in Dwelling Fires, Non Domestic Building Fires and Rubbish Fires.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 The Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on the proposals contained within this report and the presentation given by the London Fire Brigade Borough Commander.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder is asked to:

Request the Executive to consider the release of £15,000 from the LAA monies to provide funding for a Fire Risk Reduction Officer for a two year period commencing in September 2011.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A.
  2. BBB Priority: Safer Bromley.
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost £15,000 over 2 years
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
  3. Budget head/performance centre: LAA Reward Monies
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding: LAA Reward Monies
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: No statutory requirement or Government guidance.
  2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Borough Wide
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### **3. COMMENTARY**

- 3.1 This report represents a proposal for the employment of a dedicated Fire Risk Reduction Officer and is based on the contribution that would be made to the strategic aims and objectives of the Safer Bromley Partnership, and the outcomes of Building a Better Bromley.
- 3.2 Arson is a complex issue with a variety of causes varying from vandalism, playing with fire and crime concealment to revenge, fraud and mental illness. Over the last decade the number of fires started by arsonists has doubled. This is why the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority's (LFEPA) prevention activities specifically include work targeted at reducing arson and work with young people up to the age of eighteen who have been identified as starting deliberate fires. One of the major motivations for this work is the fact that arson attacks and thousands of small arson fires each year have a huge cost in terms of human suffering, and reduction in quality of life quite apart from their direct economic impact. The average total cost of all deliberate fire is over £5,520, the average cost of all deliberate primary fires (excl. vehicles) is £26,140 and the average cost of a vehicle fire is over £4,660 and a deliberate outdoor secondary fire is £1,970. Estimates for deliberate fires tend to be slightly higher than estimates for fires due to the assumption that the damage to property is more widespread as well as additional costs incurred by the criminal justice system.
- 3.3 In Bromley the total number of recorded deliberate fires in 2010/2011 was 505. Bromley has, on average, 11 deliberate fires a week, with the trend showing peaks around the hotter summer months and times when school holidays occur. An example of this can be seen in the month of April 2011 where the borough experienced 76 deliberate fires compared with 12 the previous year.
- 3.4 As the last British Crime survey suggests that 78% of fires go unreported, it is acknowledged that the totals of deliberate fires for the Borough could actually be considerably higher. The cost of deliberate fires is significant both in terms of the economic cost and the costs associated with emotional and community impact of such fires. Nationally, on average it takes 14 days to clear a burnt out vehicle. 90 days to repair a damaged building and 30 days to replace a damaged litter bin. During this period the local residents will have endured the mess and the sight of the burnt out property. Such experiences can contribute to the growth in feeling that an area has become run down then and prone to criminal activity.
- 3.5 In a bid to tackle the economic and community harm caused by deliberate fires, the Borough Commander in Bromley has proposed that a project be initiated, requiring the recruitment of a Fire Risk Reduction Officer. The outline of the project is set out below:

#### **Project Aim**

To reduce the number and impact of deliberate fires in the borough of Bromley, whereby creating a safer and community for all to live and work.

#### **Scheme Outline**

The core of this project is to introduce the post of Fire Risk Reduction Officer into the Borough by September 2011. The Officer would report to the Multi-agency Arson Sub Group and work towards finding sustainable solutions to reduce the number of non-accidental fires within Bromley. Specifically, the aims of the Officer will be to achieve significant progress against the following objectives.

#### **Scheme Objectives**

- Reduce and prevent young people from committing arson
- Reduce the fear of arson within communities

- To identify and target Priority Neighbourhoods within the Borough
- Ensure strengthened partnerships with Youth Engagement Projects and the Police to enable a joint approach to tackling anti-social behaviour related to fire activity.
- Raise awareness of arson issues, at Borough level and externally with the community, including the business community
- Reduce anti-social fire setting - specifically targeting refuse chambers, street refuse, street furniture, skip and wheelie bin fires
- Reduce vehicle fires - both primary fires (stolen and fraudulent insurance claim) and secondary fires (abandoned vehicles)
- Assist the co-ordination between partner organisations and the London Fire Brigade with their existing schemes that are working towards reducing the risk from fire to Bromley residents

### Measurable Outcomes

It would be part of the Officer's duties to collate the statistics that are available and report on trends and outcomes. This should be a transparent process and the Fire Brigade already collects large amounts of data as to the causes and numbers of incidents. The proposed reduction in types of deliberate and unknown cause fires is set out in the table below:

Local Indicator	Title	2011/2012	2012/2013
LI 1	Dwelling fires (Primary all motive) -	156	149
LI 20	Non-domestic building fires - all	83	82
LI 4	Rubbish fires (deliberate and unknown)	260	240

These forecasted reductions will be monitored monthly through the existing LFEPA borough reporting scorecard methodology and shared with the Council through existing data sharing protocols.

## 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Reducing crime and disorder, providing reassurance and making Bromley safer are key elements of both Building a Better Bromley and the Safer Bromley Partnership's Community Safety Strategy. The prevention of fires and speedy repair of damaged cars, road furniture, buildings etc. greatly enhances the public view of their own environment and reduces the fear of crime.
- 4.2 There are a number of schemes led by the Fire Brigade in Tyne and Wear, Nottingham and South Wales that have demonstrated good practice in relation to the objective of arson reduction. Evidence from these schemes can be used as best practice in developing the programme in Bromley. Such evidence from other areas demonstrates that the local area became a great deal tidier with the speedy removal of abandoned vehicles and rubbish from the streets. In Tyne and Wear there was a 23% drop in arson in the targeted areas over the 12 month period of the scheme.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In relation to the Local Area Agreement funding, the previous project to reduce the number of deliberate fires in the borough on target, thus generating a reward grant to the Local Authority of £15,000. The Portfolio is asked to suggest to the Executive that they consider granting permission for the draw down of funding as set out in this report in support of the ongoing funding of the Fire Risk reduction Officer fro a two year period from September 2011.
- 5.2 The officer would be supported by LFEPA in a number of ways, representing significant “in kind” contributions from that agency. The officer’s day to day management, office accommodation and their health, safety and welfare will be managed by officers based with Bromley borough’s fire management team. The officer will also have access to the various IT systems to support their analysis and investigation of arson data. This will require on the job coaching as well as ad-hoc attendance at both training events and seminars delivered by LFEPA.

## 6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 If the proposal to release funding for the employment of a Fire Risk Reduction Officer is approved, the appropriate assessment, grading and recruitment of the post will be undertaken in line with the policies of the London Borough of Bromley.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	N/A