

## 8. FIRE SERVICES

### 8.1 Fire

#### Introduction and Background

The County Fire Service discharges its duties through three service based delivery divisional commands based in Falmouth, St Austell and Bodmin. The commands are supported by the Brigade Headquarters' functions located in Truro. A considerable amount of the Brigade's enforcement and legislative activity involves district partners. Community safety, youth engagement and supporting community values are all areas which cross cut county, district, parish and private sector boundaries.

The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue Service Framework document 2006-08 sets out a broader role for the Fire Service than ever before.



## **Opportunities for improvement**

The proposals for unifying county and district services provide the opportunity for the service to contribute in areas other than those within the traditional fire boundaries.

A unified council will enable us, through the proposed Community Networks, to align with the LAAs (of which we are a named partner), in contributing more effectively to the proposed Sustainable Community Strategy. It will also allow us to:

- Move towards ensuring that the service is locally owned and delivered and responsive to the needs of local people
- Improve partnership working with other agencies to achieve greater effectiveness, efficiency and value for money for the public
- Engage better with our local communities
- Ensure that we enhance the democratic accountability of the service

The principle is to work in partnership where this can deliver a better service to the public than could otherwise be achieved.

A practical example of improved service delivery is outlined in the Regulatory and Protective Services case study (see Part 3, Case Study 4)

A co-ordinated multi-disciplined approach to inspection would reduce the burdens on business and the individual service inspection teams. Within the structure proposed, inspection regimes for premises can be amalgamated into one all-encompassing first tier visit, where 'hazard spotting' across professions would occur. Professionals would be on hand to deliver second tier visits at a later date if necessary. This model is the subject of a DTI study on retail enforcement activities of Fire, Environmental Health and Trading Standards. This will give us improved intelligence for targeting inspections and enforcement action.

Consultation with Building Control and Environmental Health would be more consistent if it were through a single authority lead. Logistically the brigade would deal with the consultations from one office, which would be dealt with by a specialist team. There would be an improvement to service delivery through improved protocols, relationships and developed MOUs. (Memorandums of Understanding)

## 8.2 Emergency Planning

Under the requirements of the Civil Contingency Act local authorities have a duty to participate in emergency planning functions. Prior to the Act, emergency planning was grant aided directly to county councils.

In Cornwall we have an agreement that all local authority emergency planning support will be centrally

provided from the Emergency Planning Unit managed from County Hall. The arrangement has worked well for the last two years. District councils all make a contribution, but are under pressure when faced with inflation and increased staff costs.

A single authority would make strategic management much more efficient, and would remove the possibility for conflicting decisions as to action to be taken in responding to emergencies.



a strong sustainable community for one and all