

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	15 February 2017
OFFICER	Neil Boustred, Head of Service Delivery
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor David Carroll
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Update on Sprinklers
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>At the recent Member's Workshop which was held on 16 November 2016, titled "Prevention, Protection and the Evolving Role of the Firefighter", there was discussion around how Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service supports sprinkler installations and how the different types of suppression systems operate. It was agreed to capture this in an Information Paper and also to show some of the footage from a live demonstration that was carried out in 2014 at Chalfont St Peter.</p> <p>This report provides an overview of how the Service promotes the use of these systems and how this links to both the Prevention and Protection Strategies. It will also include some footage from the live demonstration that clearly highlights the effectiveness of sprinkler and suppression installations.</p> <p>There is clear evidence that sprinklers can be effective in stopping fire spreading and extinguishing those fires that have started. The Fire Service plays a key leadership role in promoting better understanding of the benefits of sprinklers as a core element of the Prevention and Protection Strategies aimed at reducing the impact of fire on people, property, the commercial sector and the environment in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. In addition, sprinklers can be used by building designers to encourage innovative and sustainable architecture whilst maintaining the fire safety of occupants.</p> <p>Protection</p> <p>Although the Service encourages the use of sprinklers in all premises, it is appreciated that this cost must be balanced against the level of risk. The Strategies identify that sprinklers are one specific fire safety solution, but for most people, education, the use of smoke detectors, appropriate pre-planning and ongoing fire risk mitigation, will be sufficient to</p>

	<p>maintain personal safety from fire.</p> <p>Officers encourage the use of sprinklers on a risk-assessed basis, in those premises where there is a higher likelihood of fires starting, combined with an increased risk that occupants would not be able to escape unaided due to physical or mental impairment or due to a complex building layout.</p> <p>This Service has demonstrated its commitment to sprinkler installation by agreeing to use funding from Authority reserves to support other organisations to fit sprinklers into their premises where occupants are at significant risk of fire. The Authority will also install sprinklers into the new Emergency Services 'hub' at the West Ashlands site in Milton Keynes to demonstrate its belief in this approach of mitigating risk.</p> <p>This Service has also hosted two national sprinkler conferences, bringing together key organisations from across the sector. Feedback indicates that these were well-received and have helped place this organisation at the centre of progressing sprinkler discussions and activities.</p> <p>Prevention</p> <p>Aligned with the Prevention Strategy to improve the safety of people in their homes, the Service risk assesses domestic needs on an individual basis. For the majority of people, advice and smoke detectors are suitable and sufficient. When a person might not be able to respond to a smoke detector, there is a suite of other methods to improve safety. The Service uses a third-party installer to fit portable sprinkler units into those premises where a person is non-ambulant and due to their impairment and lifestyle are at higher risk from fire. To date, in those premises where a portable sprinkler has been installed within Bucks and Milton Keynes, there has not been a fire fatality or serious injury.</p> <p>Business Support</p> <p>Protection Officers use their influence to demonstrate support to businesses by explaining the benefits of sprinklers and other water suppression systems. Whilst primarily a life safety device, the commercial sector can see the benefit of property and stock protection as a means to safeguard their business continuity. In many older buildings, where it would be impractical or financially prohibitive, to comply with modern fire safety standards using a traditional approach, officers encourage the risk-assessed use of sprinkler systems or water mist systems. This flexibility has allowed businesses to continue trading and thrive, where a more rigid approach would not</p>
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	<p>permit this.</p> <p>Whilst, to date, the Authority has not been able to jointly fund sprinkler installations in higher risk premises, discussions are ongoing with owners of those premises where occupants are at a higher risk of fire.</p> <p>National Involvement</p> <p>Officers work closely with national bodies such as the British Automatic Sprinkler Association (of which BFRS is a member) and the Head of Service Development represents this Service on the Executive Committee of the National Fire Sprinkler Network. This allows officers to remain updated on progress and innovative means of water suppression technologies and ensures this Authority can influence strategic direction. This Service is also active in supporting research used to evidence the effectiveness of sprinklers. This organisation has previously hosted national sprinkler conferences and organised demonstrations to prove the effectiveness of sprinklers and to dispel some common myths and misunderstandings relating to sprinklers.</p>
ACTION	Information.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That Members note the content of this report.
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>Without supporting and encouraging the installation of sprinklers into domestic and commercial premises, there is a risk that officers will not meet the declared Prevention and Protection Strategies.</p> <p>It is also incumbent upon officers to explain the important role of sprinklers to those responsible for the most at risk domestic and commercial premises to maintain and enhance public safety and economic growth.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<p>Members agreed in October 2015 that up to £250,000 could be used from Authority reserves to support and promote the installation of sprinklers into the most at risk premises in Bucks and Milton Keynes. To date officers have not been able to achieve a jointly-funded sprinkler installation with a third party. However, discussions are ongoing. There are many myths and misinterpretations to overcome before potential partners can see the full benefit of this approach.</p>
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF	Officers meet regularly with colleagues from Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Services and all support the installation of sprinklers

COLLABORATION	as part of their own strategies. This Authority is the only one of the Thames Valley partners to agree to use funds to support sprinkler installation. The intention is that once this is successful, the methods of best practice will be shared with the other two Fire & Rescue Services.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.
USE OF RESOURCES	<p>Strategic Context</p> <p>The Prevention and Protection Strategies were approved by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority in 2014. Both these reference the support and promotion of sprinklers and suppression systems:</p> <p>Protection Strategy 2014/15 – 2019/20. "To promote the use of fire suppression systems, sprinklers and fixed installations in non-domestic properties to reduce the risk to life, property, the economy and environment from fire."</p> <p>Prevention Strategy 2014/15 -2019/20. "Lobbying for greater use of sprinklers especially in social housing and high rise buildings."</p>
PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>Prevention Strategy 2014/15 to 2019/20 http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/5014/0292/6321/PreventionStrategy201415.pdf</p> <p>Protection Strategy 2014/15 to 2019/20 http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4514/1803/5924/ITEM_14_Protection_Policy_Appendix_AB.pdf</p>
APPENDICES	None.
TIME REQUIRED	15 minutes.
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Richard Priest rpriest@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744480</p>