

## **LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

Meeting to be held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018

### **FIRE PROTECTION REPORTS**

Contact for further information:

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#### **Executive Summary**

This report deals with Lancashire Fire And Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions in respect of fire safety management failures and arson incidents within the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018.

In addition, Fire Protection and Business Support Information are included in the report.

#### **Recommendation**

The Authority is asked to note and endorse the report.

### **FIRE SAFETY CONVICTIONS**

#### **Prosecutions under the regulatory reform (fire safety) order 2005 (RRO)**

There have been no recent prosecutions; however a number of investigations are taking place which may lead to prosecution. Investigations into two premises in Blackpool are in the final stages, with interviews under Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 carried out in April and May. Case conferences will be held within the next fortnight to ascertain whether prosecution will be carried out. Other ongoing investigations include a Hotel in Burnley which was prohibited. This was a multi-agency inspection resulting in LFRS prohibiting its use with LCC re-housing long term residents.

### **ARSON RISK REDUCTION**

#### **Arson convictions**

##### **R v Chojecki**

##### **Nevett St, Preston**

This incident involved a bedroom fire on the first floor of the family home. Following an argument, Chojecki barricaded himself in his bedroom and set fire to the bed. Luckily his wife and children had slept downstairs and as such were able to effect their own rescue. When crews arrived, they had to force the bedroom door open where they located Chojecki in the corner of the bedroom. The breathing apparatus crew rescued him where he was then conveyed to hospital and placed in an induced coma due to severe smoke inhalation. Upon recovery, Chojecki was charged with Arson with intent to endanger life.

A thorough fire investigation was conducted and a report submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Chojecki pleaded his innocence right up to the day of his trial at Preston Crown Court. Three LFRS Officers had been called to present evidence. Upon their arrival at Court Chojecki pleaded guilty. He was later sentenced to 6 years and 6 months imprisonment.

**R v Wilkinson**  
**Hatfield Ave, Fleetwood**

This incident involved a ground floor flat of this mid terraced property. Wilkinson had set 3 separate fires with the flat then left the premises. Luckily, the fire was noticed by a neighbour across the road as one of the areas Wilkinson had set fire to was the curtains which were immediately noticeable. Upon arrival, the crews were faced with a severe fire and concern for the residents of the other flats within the premises. All the occupants had escaped prior to the arrival of the fire service.

A multi agency fire investigation was completed and a report submitted to the CPS. Wilkinson was later arrested and charged with Arson reckless as to whether life endangered. She pleaded guilty to the charge at the Plea and Case Management Hearing (PCMH) and was later sentenced to 2 years and 8 months imprisonment.

**R v Hamilton**  
**Warner St, Accrington**

This incident was a fire on the second floor of a nightclub that was in use at the time and full of customers. Hamilton had gone to the top of the stairs on the second floor and in an isolated area she deliberately set fire to an upholstered chair. The fire actuated the automatic fire alarm. Staff investigated the cause of the alarm and evacuated the club. Hamilton was arrested outside the club after the CCTV was scrutinised whereupon she admitted starting the fire.

A multi agency fire investigation was completed the following morning and a report submitted to the CPS.

Hamilton was sentenced to 2 year prison sentence suspended for 2 years and to multiple treatment programmes for her issues including alcohol abuse.

**R v Hitchen**  
**Burnley Rd East, Waterfoot, Rossendale**

This incident involved petrol being poured through the letterbox of a mid terraced house. A smoke detector that had been fitted by LFRS as part of a Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) activated and alerted the occupants who were able to make good their escape via the rear door. A fire investigation was conducted with a report being submitted to the CPS. Hitchen was later arrested and charged with arson reckless as to whether life endangered.

Hitchen denied the charges at first but later changed his plea to guilty upon arrival at Crown Court. He was later sentenced to 3 years and 6 months imprisonment.

**R V Furr**  
**Thorntrees Ave, Lea, Preston**

This incident involved the deliberate ignition of Furr's own semi-detached house. Upon arrival at scene, the crews were faced with a well developed fire in the hallway and stairs of this 2 story premises. Furr had got himself out of the premises and had suffered burns and smoke inhalation. Furr admitted to paramedics and a crew member that he had started the fire deliberately.

A multi agency investigation was carried out the following morning, where it was discovered that Furr had placed a large number of 2 litre pop bottles filled with petrol throughout the house on both ground and first floor, in an outbuilding, in his caravan and across the fence adjoining his neighbour's property. A note was discovered stating his intention to start the fire with himself in the property.

Luckily only the hallway was involved. Had the bottles of petrol scattered around the property got involved whilst the firefighters were in there, it could have resulted in some serious injuries to our staff.

A report containing an impact statement as to the risk to firefighters and neighbours lives was submitted to the CPS. Furr pleaded guilty at his PCMH and was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment.

## **FIRE PROTECTION & BUSINESS SUPPORT INFORMATION**

### **Hackitt review**

Following the tragedy at Grenfell in 2017 an independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety has been undertaken and now, a final report published by Dame Judith Hackitt. Its purpose is to make recommendations that will ensure we have a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future and to provide further assurance to residents that the complete system is working to ensure the buildings they live in are safe and remain so.

It examines building and fire safety regulations and related compliance and enforcement, with a focus on high rise residential buildings. This final report sets out over 50 recommendations for government as to how to deliver a more robust regulatory system for the future.

Further information can be found at the links below:

### **Review of building regulations and fire safety - Final Report**

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report>)

### **National Fire Chiefs Council response to Hackitt Independent Report**

(<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/News/nfcc-responds-to-todays-hackitt-independent-report-on-building-regulations->)

A workshop was undertaken by LFRS Protection Department to discuss the recommendations and potential impact on both the department and Service. This work will continue to be monitored based on Government outcomes and decisions.

### **LFRS Prevention and Protection Seminar 2018**

On 3 May 2018 LFRS hosted a Prevention and Protection half day seminar at Service Training Centre. Protection staff attended from across the North West Region. Guest speaker was Mark Andrews, Assistant Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. Mark delivered an awareness session on specialised housing. This covered the recently released guidance document on Specialised Housing which Mark had a role in producing. Amongst other invitees were managers from National housing providers. The topic generated some lively debate around the responsibilities and roles of those providers and that of the Fire Service.

### **Primary Authority Scheme (PAS)**

Since the last update three new Primary Authority partnerships with LFRS have been authorised by the Secretary of State and included in the Primary Authority Scheme:

**St Catherine's Hospice Care** - A local charity running 18 shops across Lancashire and the hospice and The Mill in Bamber Bridge.

**Student Roost** - Providing various types of student accommodation nationally.

**Progress Housing Group Limited** - Provides 11,000 homes for rent in England and Scotland, one of the UK's leading social housing providers.

LFRS is also at various stages of negotiation with other partnerships.

### **Business Risk**

Moderate – Members need to be aware of prosecutions related to fire safety activity and/or arson within Lancashire in order to satisfy themselves that the required robust approach is being pursued.

### **Environmental Impact**

None

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None

### **HR Implications**

None

**Financial Implications**

None

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985  
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		