



THE FIRE BRIGADE SOCIETY

www.thefirebrigesociety.co.uk

The organisation for fire and rescue service enthusiasts

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MEMBERSHIP UPDATE No 6 – DECEMBER 2023

Members will be saddened to hear that former Sales Unit Manager Eddie Mills has sadly passed away following a long illness. The Society sends its condolences to Eddie's family.

The Society Management Team are pleased to announce that the following vacancies have been filled –

SMT Positions – Gavin Stewart and Andrew Fenton have been nominated to fill two of the current vacancies and will commence their term of office as from the 1 January 2023 for a period of four years.

Vehicle Recorder – Wayne Davies has been nominated to take on this important position.

We are grateful to all concerned for offering their services and look forward to working with them in the future.

At the AGM the Society Management Team (SMT) were tasked by the membership to investigate the digitalisation of Fire Cover and to present a proposal for the future at the 2024 AGM. Due to several factors detailed in this update, the SMT have expedited this review and are now able to make a recommendation to the membership.

Background information - Historically Fire Cover was published four times per membership year. Those of you who have been a member for many years will remember the A5 black and white versions which included numerous adverts to offset the production costs. An A4 size Fire Cover was introduced in 1987, again supported by adverts and this was followed by an advert free publication solely financed from membership income in 1996.

In April 2022 the Interim Management Team reluctantly decided to reduce the number of editions of Fire Cover from four to three each membership year in an effort to reduce the operating costs of the Society and to recoup some of the reserves that had been used by previous management teams to finance amongst other things Fire Cover. It was this Interim Management Team that introduced full colour content to Fire Cover.

Printing costs - The cost to print Fire Cover continues to rise year on year. We have been advised by our printer that we will see a further 5% increase in production costs in 2024, this is in addition to the 5% increase we encountered this year. The cost to produce three editions of Fire Cover in 2024 will rise to **£7,654.50**.

Postage costs - In the last 12 months we have seen a significant increase in postage costs. Fire Cover 240 was posted during November 2023 and the postage cost totalled £924. This is an increase of nearly £300 since Fire Cover 237 was distributed in October 2022 and with more increases already being expected from Royal Mail it will not be long before the cost exceeds £1,000 per edition.

Finance - Our only source of income is membership subscriptions. Although we attract new members each year the total number drops year on year. We currently have 363 members which has generated £12,161 of income. If the income from membership remains the same in the 2024/2025 membership year, which is doubtful, based on the predictive expenditure, the cost to produce and distribute three editions of Fire Cover will be £10,062, this figure does not include the purchase of envelopes, labels, and printing materials which like everything else continues to rise year on year.

The Society has other running costs to consider such as the website and insurance so without a substantial subscription increase, we would be operating very close to our total income and we may need to use some of the surplus we have managed to accumulate over the past couple of years. This will not last forever so we need to plan carefully and sensibly.

Value for money - The SMT are determined to give members value for money without raising membership fees, which could make membership prohibitive to some members. There is no doubt Fire Cover is the premier magazine of its type currently in circulation and those who are currently and have been associated with its production over many years must be congratulated on developing the publication and making it what it is today,

As we have highlighted, production costs and postage continue to rise and to ensure the Society can afford to operate the SMT consider it necessary to propose some significant changes to the way Fire Cover is produced and distributed.

Proposal - Having completed a comprehensive review into all aspects associated with the production and distribution of Fire Cover, the SMT propose the following –

As from the 1st April 2024 Fire Cover will become a digital PDF version publication only. Distribution will be by email only to members, no hard copy versions will be available or distributed. Frequency of publication will increase from three editions to four editions per membership year. Current membership subscription rates will be cancelled and a standard membership rate of £15 per member will be introduced.

The benefits of this proposal include –

- No limit to the size of publication, if no material is supplied a smaller Fire Cover can be produced. If the Editorial Team are inundated with material the standard size of sixty pages can be increased without incurring additional costs.
- We revert to four editions per year.
- Significantly reduced membership subscription fee.
- Reduced workloads for the small number of members who are running the Society.

We appreciate this proposal will not be welcomed by some members, particularly those who do not currently have the option of receiving digitalised material via email, however the SMT urges you all to consider the information we have provided before voting.

Voting - Normally we would circulate a voting form to all members. Not only is this time consuming to those preparing and distributing it but is also very expensive. We are working to a tight schedule to ensure the proposed changes, whichever is the preferred outcome following the vote, can be introduced at the beginning of the 2024/2025 membership year.

We are therefore asking those members that receive this communication via email to respond via email to fbsupdates@gmail.com with the following information –

Email subject – FIRE COVER

Message content to read – I agree with the proposed changes to Fire Cover **or** I disagree with the proposed changes to Fire Cover.

Please add your name and membership number.

For members who receive hard copy correspondence please reply in writing with the same information as email respondents and send your letter to **Fire Cover Vote, 17 Kinsbourne Way, Southampton, SO19 6HB.**

Closing date for all voting is **12.00 Friday 12th January 2024.**

The result of the vote will be communicated with Fire Cover 241 which is scheduled for delivery to members in late February 2024.

What happens if the proposal is rejected?

If members reject the proposal, then the SMT will have no option but to implement a membership subscription increase to safeguard the continued production and distribution of Fire Cover. The revised membership subscription rates as from 1st April 2024 would be –

UK – £40.00

European (including ROI) - £45.00

Rest of world – £50.00

Junior – £25.00

Associate - £5.00

In closing the SMT look forward to receiving your vote and wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a prosperous 2024.

Issued by the Society Management Team.