

## REPORT TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

**DATE:** 22 October 2007

**REFERENCE:** FA/10/07

**SUBJECT:** Fire at Gwyn Hall NPT

### SUMMARY:

A report for information is attached which outlines the fire fighting operations at **The Gwyn Hall, Orchard Street, Neath** on October 18th 2007.

OBJECTIVES		IMPLICATIONS	
Trusted & Respect		Operational Risk Management	yes
More than Emergencies		Community Risk Reduction	
Saving Lives, Protecting Communities	yes	Training & Development	
Managing within Budget		Civil Contingencies	
Improving Efficiency		Finance & Procurement	
Resources to Priorities		H.R.	
Alternative Resources		ICT	
Managing People		Corporate Services	
Integrated Management Planning		Transport	
Partnership Working		Health & Safety	
Effective & Empowered People		Premises	
Sustainability & the Environment		Welsh Language	
Governance		Legal	

### COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

The lack of water supplies is noted and ORM department are preparing a report and associated recommendation to ensure effective fire-fighting measures are maintained.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

For information only

### BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

Report Author(s) and Designation	A Francis County Commander Swansea.
Telephone number/Extensions	2201

## **Fire at The Gwyn Hall, Orchard Street, Neath**

### **October 18th 2007 - Time of Call 21:10**

#### **Situation Prior to Fire:**

The premises were in the advanced stages of a total refurbishment. The premises due to the reconstruction was open throughout its width and height and did not have the benefit of fire resisting construction such as compartment walls, ceilings, doors etc. The premises was said to have been secured by means of locked ground floor doors and windows although the first, second and third floors were open to the elements due to the absence of windows. Extensive external scaffolding was in place on all external walls. Scaffolding was also in place internally from ground to the upper floor.

#### **On Arrival of the Fire and Rescue Service:**

On arrival of the fire service, crews were confronted with a fire developing on in the upper floor and roof of the premises at the rear M&S Car Park end of the building. The fire began to break through the roof within minutes of the arrival of the crews. Firefighting was carried out from the scaffolding and Marks and Spencer's flat roof in a bid to control the roof fire whilst protecting M&S from radiated heated.

#### **During Development:**

The fire began to spread rapidly and pumps were made to 4 and a Turntable ladder required within minutes of arrival by the duty officer. Subsequently pumps were made 8 and 3 Turntable Ladders required. Crews were deployed at the M&S end of the building to get the initial TTL to work and maintain water application through the roof via 2 large jets. As the fire rapidly developed the main roof supports began to fail and the crews were withdrawn from the scaffolding and the TTL repositioned to the front of the building. A request to have the towns water main pressure increased was made which could not be met by the water company. On arrival of the make up of appliances a full incident command system was put in place with 4 sectors being used. As the incident developed and additional pumping appliances came into use along with the second aerial appliance water supplies began to become over run and the incident commander had to balance the pressures at each section by selective and rotational use of branches and ground monitors. Due to the low water pressure and quantity a request was made for the attendance of a High Volume Pump (a New Dimensions Resource). On arrival of the HVP and the subsequent provision of additional water supplies the fire was extinguished.

**Result of Fire Fighting Action.**

Although the premises was severely damaged, in many ways due to the lack of fire separation and nature of the fire, the decision to protect surrounding buildings and the work of the fire crews in standing fast in difficult conditions on the roof of Marks and Spencer's, along with the work of crews at the St David's Church end prevented spread to both the M&S store and the Town Hall Chambers and connected buildings.

**Learning Outcome:**

Due to the inability of the water companies to give an increase in pressures, particularly in old towns such as Neath, there is a case for evaluating the need to have a HVP on the predetermined attendance for incidents of possibly 6 or more pumping appliances when attending property fires in such areas. No reliance can be placed on the water companies increasing the water supply and any resultant delay may result in adversely effecting fire fighting operations.