

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

16 APRIL 2012

**1. COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT FUNDING
AWARD FOR FIRE CONTROL COLLABORATION**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority notes the Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant funding award of £3.6m for delivering Fire Control services between the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 1.2 THAT the Authority notes the initial work for support arrangements that the Communities and Local Government have set out to provide assistance and support to Fire Authorities following the implementation of Fire Control improvement plans.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report is submitted to advise the Authority of the outcome of the Fire Control Collaborative funding bid and the subsequent CLG grant funding of £3.6m awarded to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 2.2 This report is also submitted to advise the Authority of the initial national support arrangements that the Communities and Local Government have set out to provide assistance and support for all Fire and Rescue Authorities.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Authority will recall that the national FiReControl project was terminated by the Department of Communities and Local Government on 20 December 2010. The Government's preferred approach to achieving improved resilience and efficiency is now through encouraging increased collaboration in a locally

determined way and funding of £81million was made available to England's Fire and Rescue Authorities to assist in developing local solutions for improving resilience and efficiency, that is, up to £1.8m per Authority.

- 3.2 Discussions took place between the Chairs of this Authority and the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to a collaborative Fire Control solution. It was agreed that an opportunity existed to deliver improved resilience, enhanced technology and efficiencies through a shared service approach.
- 3.3 A joint funding bid for £4.2m was submitted to the CLG from Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority in November 2011.
- 3.4 On 1 March 2012 the Authority was notified by the CLG that the bid was successful, though it did not receive the full amount of funding. The amount of funding awarded to the Collaboration was £3.6m. This figure is consistent nationally with the CLG awarding all Fire and Rescue Authorities £1.8m each. The only exception is the North West collaboration that involves utilising the existing Regional Control Centre building.
- 3.5 Currently there is a review of the initial plans in progress however early indications are that the funding received will not significantly affect the collaboration delivering the improved resilience and efficiencies for both Authorities.
- 3.6 The CLG have indicated in a letter to West Midlands Fire Service's Chief Fire Officer that they are currently in discussions with the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Local Government Association regarding the support that can be provided and the best way to monitor the progress of each Fire and Rescue Authority.
- 3.7 The CLG have indicated their intention to hold an event in the near future with all local Authorities to assist in shaping the support available and to raise awareness of what other Authority's are planning.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out due to the grant funding

facilitating the initiation of work within the collaboration.

Once the detail of this work is established any expenditures and plans that have implications requiring an Equality Impact Assessment will need to be incorporated in any future reports for consideration as part of the ongoing project.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008/11 sets out the Government's expectations for the Service and what is required of Fire and Rescue Authorities to meet those expectations. Fire and Rescue Authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their duties.
- 5.2 The National Framework states that working together remains essential to delivering efficiency, effectiveness and an enhanced resilience capability for Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Fire Minister in July 2010 emphasised the need for collaborative working, but stated that he would allow freedom for individual authorities to work on a collaborative basis in a way that worked best locally.
- 5.3 Currently the CLG is engaged in a consultation process to set out a new Fire and Rescue National Framework. One of the key themes integral to the draft Framework is enhancing resilience arrangements either through adjusting existing provision, more effective collaboration and partnership working or building new capability to respond to incidents within their areas and across the country to keep communities safe.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As indicated in section 3, Background, an initial joint funding bid of £4.2m was submitted in November 2011. Although successful, the amount of funding awarded to the collaboration by the CLG was £3.6m. A review of the initial plans is currently taking place to assess the impact of the £0.6m shortfall.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Communities and Local Government information for Funding Bids -
www.communities.gov.uk/statements/newsroom/2097824.

Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008/11

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England - Consultation

Authority meeting, 19 September 2011 – Collaboration with Stoke on
Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Executive Committee meeting, 12 December 2011 – Collaboration with
Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority;
Governance Board – Inaugural Meeting.

VIJ RANDENIYA
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER