

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND CIVIL DEFENCE AUTHORITY

27TH SEPTEMBER 2004

1. BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL - PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority support the request from Birmingham City Council's Chief Executive Officer that the benefits and risks of the City's Community Partnership Hub are shared between constituent members. The Partnership comprises Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Police, Heart of Birmingham Primary Care Trust and West Midlands Probation Service. Support for the request will enable the release of £5m to 'Clean and Safe' activities in the City; this includes approximately £1.4m for specific fire reduction work.
- 1.2 THAT the Authority notes the possibility of incurring an unspecified proportion of potential redundancy costs subject to staffing issues raised in paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10. The extent of the Authority's liability will be the subject of a further report to the Executive Committee once the staffing position is determined.
- 1.3 THAT the Authority approves the signing of the agreement proposed by Birmingham City Council's Chief Executive Officer.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to enable the continued development of partnership working with Birmingham City Council and the implementation of activity that will support that attainment of fire reduction targets.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Fire Service is a partner in Birmingham City Council's Public Service Agreement (PSA) 2001. The fire targets of the PSA were met in full and the fire specific Performance Reward Grant (PRG) of £2.34m was subsequently released to the City. The City's total PRG for the PSA was £15m.

- 3.2 The City has discretion over the use of the PRG and a paper setting out a number of proposals was submitted by the Chief Executive and Director of Strategic Resources to the City's Cabinet on the 28th June.
- 3.3 The total budget allocated to 'Clean and Safe' activities is £5m. Specific fire reduction works that support the attainment of fire targets are included within the proposed spend. A further paper concerning the use of the PRG for the Burglary and Fire Reduction elements of the PSA was subsequently submitted to the Crime and Reduction Partnership Implementation Group on the 7th September 2004. That paper set out a proposed spend of £1.48m on specific fire reduction activity over the period 2004/5 and 2005/6.
- 3.4 Following a change in the City's Administration, the original proposals have been the subject of further review and the potential has been raised for funding that was previously to be directed at fire targets, to be directed elsewhere.
- 3.5 The use of the PRG has been subject of discussion between the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the City's Chief Executive and other Community Safety Partnership members.
- 3.6 In addition to the above, the structure of the Community Safety Partnership has been revised by merging the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and the Drugs Action Team (DAT). Delivery of partnership activity will be via a Community Partnership Hub and it is proposed to advertise (through the partners) secondments for two senior posts to the Hub.
- 3.7 As a part of the changes, the Cabinet Members for Local Services and Community Safety and Equalities and Human Resources are seeking to share both the benefits and risk and associated with the secondment of staff to the Community Safety Partnership Hub amongst its constituent members. Specifically they are seeking written assurances from members that should the level of funding to the Partnership reduce, which results in staff redundancies, that any costs are shared by the five members of the Partnership.
- 3.8 As a part of the discussion with the Members regarding the future structure of the Hub, Birmingham's Chief Executive has raised the potential impact of the City not supporting the original proposals relating to West Midlands Fire Service and the fire agenda that were presented to Cabinet. West Midlands Fire is viewed as valuable partner and one that both delivered against the fire targets and supported other partners in the attainment of their targets.

- 3.9 To enable the Partnership to progress, the City's Chief Executive has written to the other four members and requested written agreement to support the underwriting of a proportion of the potential costs. Subject to agreement by the Partners, the original proposals that were set out in the Cabinet paper of the 28th June should receive favourable support. Agreement by the Committee to approve the request will provide valuable support for the Chief Executive and enable the partnership to move forward. Development of this and similar partnerships will provide important evidence for the forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 3.10 It is intended that, in order to reduce the likelihood of any such redundancies, staff will in the first instance be seconded. If employed directly, they will be subject to the redeployment mechanism within the Birmingham City Council. Only in the event of this not being realised would a potential for redundancy exist. It intended to identify with the City Council the level of involvement of staff in fire related activity as an indicator of proportional involvement and therefore cost as well as ensuring that the staffing issues are reviewed within the annual business cycle of the Hub.

4. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

The proposal will enable resources to be used for the benefit of those members of society who suffer disproportionately from the impact of fire.

5. **CORPORATE AIMS SUPPORTED**

The principal corporate aims supported by the information in this report are as follows.

1. To meet the Fire Authority's statutory duties, standards and expectations.
4. To work in partnership with communities, other agencies and the Government.
8. To contribute to the well being of the environment.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The spend of £1.48m on specific fire reduction activity over the periods 2004/05 and 2005/06 will be met from the Performance Reward Grant awarded to Birmingham City Council.
- 7.2 Potential redundancy costs per paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 will be the subject of a further report to the Executive Committee once the staffing position is determined.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Community Protection Files

Birmingham City Council Cabinet Paper
Report of the Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Resources – Public Service Agreement Allocation of Reward Grant 28 June 2004

Birmingham City Council
Report to the Crime and Reduction Partnership Implementation Group – 7 September 2004

Letter from Chief Executive Birmingham City Council
Report of the Implementation Group Towards a new CDRP/DAT Infrastructure – 2 September 2004.

F. J. E. SHEEHAN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER