

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

25 JUNE 2012

**1. UPDATE TO WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
OF THE FIRE CONTROL COLLABORATION WITH STOKE-ON-
TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority note the progress within the Shared Fire Control Project (SFCP) for delivering fire control services between the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (SSFRA) and the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA);
- 1.2 THAT the Authority note the background to the agreement for the SFCP and its implementation following the inaugural Governance Board meeting.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report is submitted to advise the Authority of the background to the implementation of the Fire Control Collaboration with SSFRA and the subsequent progress following the Communities and Local Government (CLG) grant funding of £3.6m awarded to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

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 The Authority, at its meeting on 19 September 2011, endorsed the principle of working with SSFRA and delegated power to the WMFRA Executive Committee to approve the governance arrangements for the project, and at the Executive Committee meeting on 10 October 2011 it appointed Members of this Authority to sit on the Project Governance Board.
- 3.4 A joint funding bid for £4.1m 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 A joint letter, agreed by the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of both Authorities, has been sent to the CLG requesting detailed feedback regarding the grant funding and clarification of the mechanism employed in order to justify the outcome. The letter also contained a request to register our interest in being able to access any underspend in the allocated national budget.
- 3.7 Due to the reduced funding proposed priorities have been allocated to the list of project deliverables as identified in the original bid and prioritisation for these will be agreed by the Project Board.
- 3.8 Detailed plans and milestones are being prepared along with the identified work streams below to support the delivery of the Project.
 - ICT work stream
 - IT

- Data
- Fire Control work stream
 - Training
 - Business Process
 - System Assurance
- Operations
- Business Improvement
- Performance Planning
- Human Resource
- Communications

3.9 A Single Project Risk and Issue Registers have been implemented and agreed as a method of reporting and escalating project risks with each FRS.

3.10 The first meeting of the SFCP Project Board took place on the 21 May 2012 at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) headquarters.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. Once future detail of specific work is established that have implications requiring an Equality Impact Assessment then this 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 Service 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**

- 6.1 As indicated in section 3.5 above, an initial joint funding bid was submitted in November 2011. Although successful, the amount of funding awarded to the collaboration by the CLG was £3.6m.
- 6.2 Section 3.7 informs the WMFRA that 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.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Communities and Local Government information for Funding Bids -
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/20975651.pdf

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.

Authority meeting, 16 April 2012 – Communities and Local Government grant funding award for Fire Control Collaboration.

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER