

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19 SEPTEMBER 2011

1. COLLABORATION WITH STOKE ON TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Report of the Clerk and Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority endorses the principle of working towards a joint arrangement 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 authorises the development of proposals for this joint arrangement by a Project Board, comprising members from both Authorities, to develop the overall strategy, supported by a joint officer Project Team to identify, plan and implement the optimum solutions;
- 1.3 THAT authority be delegated to the Executive Committee to approve the governance arrangements for the Project Board and Project Team; to appoint members of this Authority to the Project Board in accordance with those arrangements; to oversee progress and receive regular reports from the Project Board; and to make recommendations to the Authority as necessary on the implementation of joint arrangements for delivering fire control services.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to advise the Authority of discussions that have taken place with the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to possible collaborative work for delivering fire control services in the future.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Authority will recall that the national FireControl project was

terminated by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) on 20th 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 will be made available to England's Fire and Rescue Authorities to help them develop their own solutions for improving resilience and efficiency, that is, up to £1.8m per authority.

- 3.2 Discussions have taken place at officer level and between the Chairs of this Authority and the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to collaborative solutions following the termination of the national Firecontrol project, and it is believed that there is an opportunity to deliver improved resilience, enhanced technology and efficiencies through a shared service approach.
- 3.3 The Authority is asked to endorse this initiative to explore collaborative working with the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. The Authority is also asked to delegate authority to the Executive Committee to agree the governance arrangements for the collaborative work between the two authorities and to oversee progress. This is in keeping with the Committee's terms of reference to deal with matters that can be dealt with locally as part of the modernisation agenda, and its former function overseeing the work of the West Midlands Regional Management Board.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this particular report as it concerns the setting up of governance arrangements and a bidding process. 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. Such collaborative working was to have been driven by Regional Management Boards but the requirement for such Boards has been withdrawn from the Framework. 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.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 CLG has recently announced funding arrangements to support locally delivered solutions for fire and rescue control services. Each service is able to submit a bid for up to £1.8m. There are clear criteria as to how funding will be allocated based on resilience and efficiency outcomes and evidence of collaboration between Services. By working with another fire authority a potential sum of £3.6 m becomes available to develop solutions that are truly integrated for intelligence-led mobilising, collation of data and evidence, resource management and ensuring response outcomes are factored into preventative and protective services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008/11

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