

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 21 October 2010.

Present: Councillors Belsey, Bennett, Carden, Fawthrop, Freebody, Freeman, Harmer-Strange, Heaps, Howson, Kemble (Chairman), Kenward, Livings, Marsh, Ost, Pidgeon, Rufus, Scott and Sparks.

1. Communications, Consultation and Engagement Update

1.1 The Fire Authority considered the outcomes of the consultation and engagement process as part of its deliberations on the final outcomes of the Rural Review to assist with its determinations regarding the next steps as set out in the agenda item entitled 'Rural Review – The Next Steps'.

1.2 The form in which the consultation and engagement process had taken in order to collect the opinions of staff, partners, stakeholders and the public was summarised. Members noted that the transparency in which the views had been collected, recorded and presented to Members had been comprehensive and exacting and that every effort had been taken to ensure comments had been appropriately laid out for their consideration.

1.3 Reassurance was given that each watch and station that the recommendation may have had an impact on, both wholtime and retained duty system firefighters, had received a visit by a team of Officers to answer questions, listen to comments and suggestions and seek to allay fears over the proposed recommendations. All other staff not directly affected by the review had an invite to attend staff meetings.

1.4 Full commitment had been given by Officers to ensure that everyone's views and comments were captured effectively and that all staff comments were carefully considered.

2. Rural Review

2.1 The Fire Authority gave consideration to the options and proposals developed following completion of the Rural Review consultation and engagement process following full consideration and approval by the Policy & Resources Panel on 7 October 2010.

2.2 Officers gave professional advice on each of the recommendations in turn on the best way to proceed to ensure all Members were suitably informed of the key challenges, key implications, overall conclusions drawn and the various options to proceed where relevant.

2.3 The Review had been undertaken as part of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, the primary focus of which was to ensure that services were delivered in the most effective way to meet community needs and risks and that service effectiveness was maximised. The Review had not been financially driven and overall, the proposals were expected to be broadly cost neutral. Capital receipts received from the proposed service housing sales over a 4 year period would help

reduce the need for future capital borrowing on operational service investments and therefore, achieve a revenue budget saving.

2.4 Whilst some of the recommendations received almost universal support, others were deliberated upon. Of particular concern, was the transitional period regarding the removal of service housing and it was agreed that the period reported by officers should be extended from 3 to 4 years. All parties felt reassured by the compromise, although Councillor Rufus, Member of Brighton & Hove City Council, wished it to be recorded that he voted against recommendation 7.

2.5 Members considered the outcomes of the consultation and engagement processes together with the detailed results as well as the key concerns set out within the report. Members agreed the amended recommendations of the Rural Review following their approval by the Policy & Resources Panel on 7 October 2010 together with the additional amendment of extending the transitional period regarding the removal of service housing from 3 years to 4 years.

Ted Kemble
Chairman

24 October 2010