

REPORT OF THE 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 13 January 2011.

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

1. Fire Authority service planning processes for 2010/11 and draft revenue budget 2010/11 & capital programme 2010/11-2014/15

1.1 The Fire Authority considered the draft 2010/11 Fire Authority Service Planning issues for formal consideration. Members also received details about a fundamental review of the draft capital programme over the medium term which has substantially reduced the programme to schemes absolutely essential for business continuity purposes. The borrowing requirement up to 2014/15 was originally expected to be £15.043m, but has now been reduced over the same term to £1.644m aided by the recent Fire Authority decision to dispose of Service Housing over the medium term. Members noted that ESFRS still expected to receive some Capital Grant in 2011/12, although details were unknown and not included within the modelling.

1.2 Details were given of the Formula Grant. For 2011/12, there would be a 5.7% decrease on 2010/11, but for 2012/13 there would be a slight increase of 0.35% on 2011/12 figures. This gave an overall reduction of 5.4% over the two years. The Deputy Treasurer urged Members to be mindful that although the figures were not known for 2013/14 or 2014/15, the Fire Minister indicated that reductions would be back loaded and that over the four year period FRA Formula Grant was expected to be reduced by an average of 25%. On this basis, the FRA should plan for Formula Grant reductions of the order of 20% in the last two years of the CSR period. This would be a significant challenge.

1.3 The following key issues were approved by the Fire Authority:

- a) the committed budget for 2011/12 (nil increase on last year) including provision for pay awards, price increases and net inescapable commitments;
- b) the scale of fees and charges; and
- c) the amended Capital Programme for 2010/11 totalling £3.389m and Capital Programme for 2010/11 totalling £2.3m and related revenue consequences.

1.4 The final figures including information on the council taxbase, the collection fund position as well as the final savings proposals would be reported to the Fire Authority for approval on 3 February 2011 in order to set the 2011/12 precept which was expected to remain unchanged at £81.86 (Band D) for 2011/12.

2. Regional Control Centre

2.1 The Fire Authority considered an oral update that sought the Authority's opinion on the implications of the recent Ministerial Announcement regarding the future of the FiReControl project and the outcomes of a meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Regional Control Company (i.e. a Local Authority Controlled Company ('the LACC')) held on 7 January 2011.

2.2 On 20 December 2010, the Fire Minister, Bob Neill issued a Ministerial Statement on the long standing project to replace existing control rooms within the Fire and Rescue Service with 9 Regional Control Centres. The project had been subject to delays and delivery problems and following discussions between the CLG and the Contractor Cassidian, Members were informed that it had been agreed that the project could not be delivered to an acceptable timeframe and the contract would be terminated.

2.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive noted from the minutes of the LACC meeting that the recommendations of the meeting included a proposal to either make the Company dormant or for it to be dissolved. Members noted Officers' views that dormancy was not considered acceptable and that the Authority should respond to a formal letter now received from the LACC to express those views and that the company should be dissolved as soon as practicable.

2.4 The Panel resolved that the Fire Authority write a response to the LACC expressing its view that the LACC should be formally wound up.

TED KEMBLE
Chairman of East Sussex Fire Authority

15 January 2011