

## EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

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Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 13 September 2012.

**Present:** Councillors Fawthrop, Howson, Kenward, Livings (Chairman), Ost, Pidgeon, Powell, Rufus, Scott, Sparks, Theobald, Bob Tidy, Sylvia Tidy and Waite.

### 1. Review Of Service Provision Within The Hastings Borough

- 1.1 The Fire Authority had previously agreed to review service provision against community risk, within the Hastings area as part of the Authority's current Medium Term Plan. The local area covered in the Review was defined by the 'station grounds' of Bohemia Road and The Ridge Fire Stations, which includes Hastings as well as small areas of Rother nearest to the Hastings boundary.
- 1.2 The Fire Authority considered the analysis of local risk presented using a range of community risk and incident data along with service modelling tools. The Review report provided information on different models against the current provision that would reduce the risk to a greater number of the most vulnerable households across Hastings.
- 1.3 The review had indicated that:
  - if there was no fire station at The Ridge then this would not significantly affect the performance against the Fire Authority's approved response times to life threatening incidents in the area;
  - however, there would be benefits in maintaining The Ridge Fire Station with its current Retained Duty System (RDS) appliance, land rover and retained duty system personnel for the purposes of operational resilience;
  - service delivery response times to life threatening incidents for communities most vulnerable to fire in the area would actually be improved by relocating the wholetime appliance based at The Ridge Fire Station to Bohemia Road Fire Station as significantly more individuals defined as vulnerable to fire lived closer the Bohemia Road Fire Station than The Ridge. The review had concluded from the evidence obtained that The Ridge wholetime appliance was answering only 39% of its calls within its own station ground area, so the relocation seemed logical in placing

the services response resources geographically and therefore quicker to both the risk and majority of incidents.

- financial savings could also be realised by better aligning the existing resources by relocating the wholetime appliance based at The Ridge Fire Station to Bohemia Road Fire Station; and
- further financial savings could be realised by closing The Ridge Fire Station, should that be required.

1.4 In Hastings the area covered by the Bohemia Road Fire Station contained:

- 67% of all households
- 79% of all high risk households
- More highly deprived areas (IMD 2010)
- Many more above average fire risk areas
- More high risk premises
- 72% of all incidents

1.5 The majority of significant incidents in Hastings could be reached within 8 minutes from Bohemia Road Fire Station. Evidence showed that operational response standards and overall service delivery performances could be improved to those communities who are the most vulnerable to fire, and resources could be better aligned to the local fire risk profiles if an appliance from The Ridge Fire Station were to be relocated to Bohemia Road Fire Station.

1.6 The Fire Authority has agreed the following preferred option for its 12 week consultation with local stakeholders, businesses, partners and members of the public which meets the national consultation guidance on such issues:

- The relocation of the wholetime appliance from The Ridge Fire Station to Bohemia Road Fire Station.
- Maintaining the retained appliance and land rover at The Ridge using Retained Duty System staff with its existing establishment.

1.7 The consultation period started on 14 September 2012 and the Fire Authority will be considering the outcome of the consultations at its meeting on 13 December 2012 for an expected final decision.

## **2. 2011/12 Performance Outcome Report**

2.1 The Fire Authority has considered the 2011/12 performance outcomes, which highlighted an overall performance improvement, showing that ESFRS had continued to build on achievements made in previous years. 78.6% of the performance indicators had met the improvement targets set.

- 2.2 Members noted with concern that tragically there were 10 local people who had died in accidental fires in their homes in 2011/12. No more than 4 are predicted in any one year, and the Service continues to strive to reduce this figure to zero.
- 2.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive pointed out that in most of these cases, attendance by fire crews would not have prevented the fatalities. The only means by which such tragedies can be reduced is by all the agencies working together with the Service to minimise the fire risks in their homes appropriate to the individuals concerned.
- 2.4 The Chief Fire Officer also advised Members that whilst local interagency co-operation is improving including the sharing of key information to allow the Service to help those at need, there is still a long way to go.
- 2.5 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive referenced the need to not only consider risks arising from chronic underlying issues but also fast changing needs such as those arising from hospital discharges as exemplified by a more recent death. He concluded that there remained many more opportunities for public services to work together more effectively to seek to prevent any future recurrence of so many people dying unnecessarily.
- 2.6 Councillor Sylvia Tidy suggested that the Health & Well Being Board could play a greater role in community safety.

### **3. Sussex Control Centre – Progress Report**

- 3.1 The Fire Authority has considered a report on the progress in relation to the Sussex Control Centre which included an audit report of satisfactory assurance on the systems of controls within the governance arrangements of the project; progress with the procurement processes for the new joint mobilising system and associated IT and systems infrastructure, and the specification for a proposed Section 16 agreement which would provide the legal framework for the joint Sussex Control Centre to be created. In essence, although very much a joint project, it proposes that West Sussex County Council discharges its statutory function (Fire Service Act 2004 (Section 7(2)(c), Section 8(2)(c) and 9(3)(c) to East Sussex Fire Authority and for ESFA to become the Centre's employer and because of this, both Authorities need to agree for its legal requirements to provide call handling and incident management services to be discharged by East Sussex Fire Authority.

Councillor John Livings  
Chairman

14 September 2012