

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 16 October 2014

Subject: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES - UPDATE

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report updates Members on a number of issues relevant to the Authority at a variety of levels. At national level, a review of conditions of service for operational staff has recently been commissioned by the Government. It has also published an update on how fire and rescue services across the country are progressing in replacing command and control systems and also on the progress made by the sector in meeting the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities.

The report also provides a brief update on regional issues, and an update on the progress being made in implementing the Authority's primary strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the letter inviting the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to visit the Authority (paragraph 3 and **Appendix 1** refer).
2. Note the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Operational Staff (**Appendix 2** refers).
3. Consider, comment on, and note the update on the progress being made in implementing the Authority's five primary strategies (**Appendix 3** refers).

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. This report provides an update for Members on a number of issues relevant to the Authority, namely:-
 - National announcements, including:
 - The appointment of a new Minister with responsibility for fire and resilience;
 - The recent announcement of a review of conditions of service, arising from the Government's response to Sir Ken Knight's Facing the Future review;
 - The national picture in relation to the grant-funded programme to improve control room provision across England;
 - The national picture on compliance with the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities;
 - An update on recent business within the South East Fire Improvement Partnership;
 - An update on the progress being made in implementing the Authority's primary strategies.

New Fire Minister

2. Penny Mordaunt MP has been appointed as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and her remit includes fire and resilience. She replaces Brandon Lewis who has been promoted to a newly created role with the DCLG. At short notice and at her request, Ms Mordaunt visited Canterbury fire station on 6 August 2014 and met with local crews and the management team at that station. She also visited Folkestone fire station on 25 September to meet local crews. While there she was also given a briefing on the LifeBid project, which analyses behaviour when people have a fire in their homes. Following these visits, it is proposed to formally invite the Minister to Kent to meet with Members and senior officers. Members are asked to approve a letter (attached at **Appendix 1**) inviting Ms Mordaunt to visit the Authority.

Review of Terms and Conditions of Employment for Grey Book Employees

3. The Government has published its response to the Facing the Future review, written by Sir Ken Knight in 2013. Unusually it did this in the form of a written statement to the House of Commons. The full text of the response is available at www.gov.uk.
4. The response largely reiterates the position of "get on with it", taken by the previous Minister in various presentations over the last year. There are few surprises within

the statement, and the Government accepts almost all the recommendations made by the review. It advocates closer collaboration between fire and rescue services and other blue light services, a theme which was also touched upon in a speech given by the Home Secretary on 3 September 2014 to the Reform think tank. Members will be assured that this reflects the stance taken by this Authority in developing its work primarily with Kent Police, but also with the Ambulance Service and public health providers in Kent and Medway. It is intended to bring an update on work with the Police to a future meeting.

5. At the end of the statement is an announcement of an Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Operational Staff in the Fire and Rescue Service in England. This review is primarily aimed at Grey Book¹ employees, but with implications for Green Book² and Gold Book³ employees too. The review is due to report during 2015.
6. The Government has appointed Adrian Thomas, an expert in the field of personnel management and staff resourcing, as the lead for the review. It has also published very broad terms of reference. They are attached at **Appendix 2** for Members' information. Mr Thomas has recently issued, via the Government, a questionnaire to fire and rescue services, which is technical and statistical in nature and has a closing date of 17 October 2014. It is likely the Authority will have responded by the time of the meeting. As the review progresses, updates will be provided to Members.

Control Room Provision across England

7. Members will be aware that as part of a national programme, the Government provided grant funding in 2012 to support improvements to command and control rooms, in the light of the cancellation of the Regional Control Rooms project. A detailed update on progress being made in Kent was provided at the last meeting of

¹ The 'Grey Book' or the Scheme of Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services sets conditions of service, including remuneration levels, for wholtime and retained duty staff, and also control room uniformed staff who are subject to national negotiation.

² The 'Green Book' or National Joint Council for Local Government Services sets conditions of service for non-uniformed staff who support operational service.

³ The 'Gold Book' or National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service sets conditions of service for principal managers in the fire service and includes pay scale recommendations for local negotiations based around population bands and job role.

the Authority. The Kent project remains on course to go live at the end of 2014/15, and will be the only truly multi-agency command and control room in England.

8. The project has proved to be a complex one however, and therefore it has been decided to postpone the replacement of mobile data terminals and station end equipment until after a period of stability for the new command and control system. Existing mobile data technology has been refreshed, as has station end equipment, and both are able to communicate with the new system so this is low risk for the Authority. The Government has confirmed that it is comfortable with the approach being taken as it has no material impact on the benefits they want to see in return for the grant funding.
9. The Government publishes a quarterly progress report, and these indicate that nationally good progress is being made. Copies of the reports can be made available to Members on request.

National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities

10. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to lay a report before Parliament every two years on the extent to which fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) are acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The latest report was laid on 3 July 2014, and reports full compliance with the Framework by all 46 FRAs. The report confirms that all FRAs have:
 - Complied with the publication of their annual statement of assurance;
 - Complied with the publication of their updated Integrated Risk Management Plan;
 - Complied with the national resilience assurance elements.
11. The way that this Authority meets the requirements of the National Framework is set out in detail in the Governance Assurance Statement, which was presented to General Purposes Committee at its meeting held on 25 June 2014 (Minute 9).

South East Fire Improvement Partnership

12. The Chairman of the Authority continues to meet with the other eight FRAs in the south east to progress issues against the business plan of the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP). Longer-serving Members may recall that SEFIP was set up to take advantage of the capacity-building fund (latterly improvement and efficiency funding), and under this fund, a number of projects were successfully delivered across the south east. There were a number of notable successes within the region. One was the movement of all FRAs to level three of the equality standard (although Kent subsequently moved forward to the level of *excellent* under the revised standard in 2012). A number of large procurements were also successfully

undertaken involving breathing apparatus, personal protective equipment and workwear, and these generated savings overall.

13. The funding ended in 2012, as did the requirement to have a Regional Management Boards for FRAs but, as the largest region, it was felt important in the south east that Chairmen and Chief Officers continued to meet to discuss mutual issues, albeit with fewer projects to deliver. One of the reasons for this was to have a strong voice for the region at the Local Government Association, and also within the Chief Fire Officers' Association. It is notable that up until the last annual general meeting of CFOA, three of the four directors came from the south east, including Kent's Chief Executive as director of corporate services and sector improvement. The Chief Executive has now taken over the human resources directorate. Members may wish to know that the Chief Executive has drafted two national strategies which are currently out for consultation. These concern collaborative procurement, and fire and rescue service data.
14. The Minister visited the meeting of South East Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives on 25 September, and has also been invited to attend a future meeting of the SEFIP Board.

Implementation of the Authority's Primary Strategies

15. Members will recall that, at the meeting of the Authority held on 17 June 2014 (Minute 9), it was agreed that no Safety Plan should be issued this year. Often the Safety Plan is used to provide members of the community with a summary of the Authority's recent progress and achievements, with more detail contained in the Corporate Plan which is published alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan each February.
16. At the meeting of the Authority held on 16 October 2013 (Minute 18), Members approved a set of five 'primary strategies' covering personal safety, business safety, operational response, caring for the environment and workforce issues. As there will be no Safety Plan this year, and the strategies are now a year old, it is an appropriate time to update Members on the progress being made in implementing them.
17. Each strategy is formed of a number of individual but complementary projects. Each project has a project manager and a sponsor at the level of Assistant Director, Director, or Chief Executive. There are currently 52 projects arising from the primary strategies, and although this sounds a lot, there are significant differences in the scale and complexity of each within the overall programme. Some have not started yet, and are phased to start later in the year or next year. The comments provided in **Appendix 3** provide an overview of the current position, although more detail is contained in recent reports to Planning and Performance Committee and in Members' Information Bulletins.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

18. The review of Conditions of Service could have huge impacts on the Authority, although this will only become clearer as the review progresses. Members will be kept fully informed of any developments.
19. Current projects are intended to generate significant savings to enable the Authority to meet future financial projections. However, a proportion of the savings will need to be taken from more day to day budgets, and also reviews of establishment (other than Grey Book employees).

RECOMMENDATIONS

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