

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 10 February 2005.

Members present: Councillors Burgess, Dyason, Fitch, Gadd, Healy, Kemble, Mrs Leigh, Livings, Lock, Morgan, Murphy (Chairman), Neighbour, Paskins, Pidgeon, Reid, Scott, Skilton and Stevens.

1. MODERNISATION ISSUES

1.1 Regional Management Board Issues

- 1.1.1 The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive reported that good progress was being made by the Regional Management Board on the six strands for which it now had responsibility.
- 1.1.2 It was noted that the Chairman of East Sussex Fire Authority, who was currently Vice-Chairman of the Regional Management Board, would be chairing the Board with effect from 1 April 2005.

1.2 Regional Control Centres

- 1.2.1 At the meeting of the Fire Authority on 9 December 2004, Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer which advised of the consultation paper on FiReControl Finance and Governance.
- 1.2.2 The Urgency Panel at its meeting in January 2005, asked the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive to express the Fire Authority's reservations concerning the establishment of a regional control centre to cover such a large group of fire authorities and the lack of overall information regarding location, siting and staffing, as well as their concern about the effect on local tax payers in relation to the overall cost and associated funding arrangements.
- 1.2.3 The Panel discussed the issues raised in the consultation paper, in particular, the choice of how the Regional Control Centre should be managed. The Chairman advised that this had been considered by the Regional Management Board and that the preferred option was that of establishing a company limited by guarantee, or a Company Limited by Share, with clarification sought on taxation issues and how such taxation would be applied to the company models, where all nine participating fire and rescue authorities would be represented.

2. CPA UPDATE

- 2.1 The Audit Commission Review Team undertook the CPA Review of the Fire Authority in January 2005 which included discussions with Members, Staff and Partner organisations. At the end of the Review, the Review Team gave feedback as to their findings in the form of provisional strengths and weaknesses and a further two days were allowed to provide further supporting evidence to address their provisional findings.
- 2.2 Members were informed of the timetable leading up to August 2005 when the results from all the Fire and Rescue Authorities will be made public on the Audit Commission's website.

3. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2005/06 AND BEYOND**

- 3.1 The Fire Authority has considered joint reports of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer concerning the draft Fire Authority Service Planning and Revenue Budget processes for 2005/06 and beyond.
- 3.2 Mindful in particular of the national concerns about increases in Council Tax and various communications from the Government in relation to the use of its power to cap expenditure, amendments to the budget were proposed to bring the net increase in Council Tax Band D to below 5%. This resulted in a budget requirement of £34.698m, (an increase of 5.9% on the 2004/05 base budget of £32.752m).
- 3.3 The Fire Authority has approved the necessary detailed budget and service planning decisions and, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
- approved the amount calculated by the Fire Authority as its budget requirement for the year 2005/06 at £34.698m; a 5.9% increase on the 2004/05 base budget of £32.752m;
 - approved the amount calculated by the Fire Authority as the basic amount of its council tax (i.e. for a Band D property) for the year 2005/06 at £66.95 (based on final taxbase figures); (4.94% increase on the 2004/05 Council Tax Band D)
 - agreed that Brighton & Hove City Council and the borough and district councils of East Sussex (the billing authorities) be advised by the Treasurer of the relevant amounts payable and the council tax in the other bands.

COUNCILLOR MIKE MURPHY
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
11 February 2005