

### EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

#### Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 11.00 hours on Thursday 14 January 2010.

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

#### 1. **FIRE AUTHORITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 1.1 The Fire Authority considered a report on the current and proposed arrangements for consultation and engagement activities relating to the Service Planning and Community Risk Management proposals.
- 1.2 Consultations covering the key Service Planning prioritisation issues and their related implications on possible Council Tax levels were posed to key stakeholders, staff and members of the public and the results were reported to Members. An edited summary of the key public consultation results is set out in the attached Appendix. Members noted the latest available results and that the final results would be available at the Fire Authority meeting on 4 February 2010.
- 1.3 Consultation proposals as part of the 2009/10 to 2011/12 Community Risk Management Plan were considered. Key Stakeholders had been consulted to establish the level of involvement they wanted together with discussions on the best way to consult them in future. These arrangements would be further developed to support the Rural Cover review throughout 2010/11 and beyond.

#### 2. **RURAL COVER REVIEW UPDATE**

- 2.1 The Fire Authority received a report on the latest position of the Review of Fire Cover and Resilience in Rural areas. The review had enabled robust analysis and forecasting due to the large amount of intelligence and data obtained from the review. The findings had been reported to the Way Forward Working Group who had been satisfied with the progress. The findings were to be reported to Policy & Resources for approval by a special meeting of the Fire Authority to be arranged during May 2010. A twelve week consultation and engagement period would then follow which would involve the public, staff and stakeholders. This would take the form of fora, questionnaires and face to face meetings to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to respond to the Fire Authority on the proposals. Those responses would then be reported back to the Fire Authority during September 2010.

#### 3. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2010/11 AND BEYOND – DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2010/11 & CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11- 2014/15**

- 3.1 The Fire Authority considered the draft 2010/11 Fire Authority Service Planning issues for initial consideration. The main issue facing the Fire Authority was the continued

implementation of existing service commitments in addition to the approved Improvement Agenda, but within the context of a tight financial regime imposed by Government and now confirmed for the final year of the current three year spending review period 2008/09 – 2010/11.

3.2 Members also considered the draft Revenue Budget 2010/11 and Capital Programme 2010/11 to 2014/15 in the context of the agreed priorities for the Fire Authority:

- the continued achievement of existing service objectives and standards;
- the continued implementation of the Fire Authority's approved medium term investment programme to achieve a sustainable service;
- delivering further key service improvements over the medium term;
- delivering the modernisation agenda effectively within our community
- delivering Integrated Risk Management Plans in the medium term.

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

- a) the committed budget of £39.314m for 2010/11 (3.4% increase on last year) including provision for pay awards, price increases and net escapable commitments;
- b) the scale of fees and charges;
- c) the amended Capital Programme for 2009/10 totalling £2.420m and Capital Programme for 2010/11 totalling £8.41m (as set out in section 3 of the report) and the related revenue consequences;

3.4 Members were informed that the Authority were still awaiting confirmation from Councils' details of the Council Tax Base before setting the precept at the Fire Authority meeting on 4 February 2010.

#### **4. FIRE AUTHORITY ADOPTION OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION (CFOA) POLICY FOR THE REDUCTION OF FALSE ALARMS & UNWANTED CALLS**

4.1 The Fire Authority considered a report that sought approval for the adoption of the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) Policy for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals. The current policy for dealing with unwanted calls had been based upon previous CFOA Policy and attendance to domestic and commercial properties was as determined by the IRMP in 2006/07. During 2008/09, there were 5,202 calls from AFDs of which 4,898 (94.2%) were unwanted false alarms.

4.2 Under current arrangements, the Service has to respond to all calls received. The levels of unwanted signals from AFD systems placed a significant burden on East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service in terms of diverting essential services from emergencies, costs, risk to both the crews and public whilst responding, disruption to operational and day to day activities.

4.3 The revised CFOA Policy for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Signals was given detailing the framework for partnership between the responsible person of the protected premises, the fire alarm service provider and the fire and rescue authority. This would ensure the obligations, responsibilities and actions of all the parties were clear and understood. The partnership would then be utilised to reduce the occurrence of relevant false alarms and manage the appropriate response to unwanted calls

4.3 The Panel resolved to approve the adoption of the CFOA Policy by the Authority and that its implementation be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or Deputy Chief Fire Officer, in his absence.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS FOR 2010/11 BUDGET CONSULTATION SURVEY IN COMPARISON TO SIMILAR QUESTIONS POSED IN PREVIOUS YEARS**

		<b>PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS</b>		
		<b>2008/09 Results</b>	<b>2009/10 Results</b>	<b>2010/11 Results</b>
Q1.	Do you agree or disagree that the 2009/10 Council Tax bill of £80.08 per year (Band D property) to pay for your local Fire & Rescue Service was reasonable? (2008/09 at £77.06) [2007/08 at £73.70]			
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>90%</b>
Q2.	Taking everything into consideration, do you agree or disagree that this cost offers good value for money?			
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>93%</b>
Q3.	Do you agree or disagree with the decision to make savings on other budgets to further improve the range of services we offer to the public in order to prevent fires			
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>58%</b>
	Neither agree nor disagree	12%	11%	15%
	Disagree	22%	14%	27%
Q4.	Do you agree or disagree that, in future, we should consider continuing to invest in services to improve community safety which might result in a Council Tax increase of less than 4% (2008/09 at 5%) [2007/08 at 5%] rather than make savings to achieve a Council Tax increase of less than 3% (2008/09 at 4%) [2007/08 at 4%]?			
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>75%</b>
	Neither agree nor disagree	15%	16%	7%
	Disagree	13%	10%	18%
Q5.	Do you agree or disagree that, in future, we should consider reducing current levels of service to achieve a Council Tax of less than 2% (2008/09 at 4%) [2007/08 at 4%]?			
	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>85%</b>

