

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 10 December 2009.

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

1. Regional Management Board issues (South East Fire & Rescue Control Centre Limited (SEFRCC))

1.1 The Fire Authority considered a report on the business transacted at meetings of the SEFRCC Ltd held on 9 October and 13 November 2009.

1.2 A brief presentation had been given by Shona Dunn, Director of Fire and Resilience from Communities & Local Government (CLG) regarding the progress of the Regional Control Project. This included questions on the funding for out of scope activities and implications for the project as a result of any future change in Government. It was agreed that Shona Dunn would provide information on project costs and agreed that, if a Fire and Rescue Service had a problem with maintaining its mobilising arrangements, the CLG would work with that Fire & Rescue Service to look at a variety of options to ensure that it had effective arrangements in place in place up to cutover.

2. Draft 2010/11 Service Planning Strategy approaches

2.1 Members considered a report that presented a projection of the draft 2010/11 Fire Authority Service Planning and Resource Management issues for their initial consideration and for it to be finalised over the period from December 2009 – February 2010. Members were informed that the future financial context for Local Government beyond 2010/11 was likely to be severe and that the Authority should prepare itself for financial constraints for the foreseeable future.

2.2 The Deputy Treasurer informed Members that good progress had been made towards planning a balanced budget for 2010/11 including identification of necessary savings, whilst work for 2011/14 was still at an early stage and would present a greater challenge due to the level of savings required. Whilst a final decision on planned council tax increases for 2010/11 is not required until the Authority's February meeting, Members acknowledged that although current planning was based on a 3.5% rise, options near 3% may need to be considered in order to reflect affordability to council taxpayers and avoid the risk of capping.

2.3 Members noted that the Authority's aspirations were lower with regard to Service Investment Bids and only two temporary schemes had been put forward and resolved a number of detailed actions as set out in the report.

3. Progress review of Fire Safety Education Programme on schools

3.1 The Fire Authority considered a report that assessed the quality of the Service's fire safety education provisions to infant and junior schools.

3.2 A summary of the results obtained from the two Local Education Authorities, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council during the period September 2008 to July 2009 was presented to Members. 114 schools were visited in total, 90 schools in East Sussex of which 68 responses (76%) were received and 24 schools in the City of which 16 responses (66%) were received. (an extract of the outcomes from the East Sussex area along with the overall consultation is attached as an appendix to this report.)

3.3 The Chairman asked for thanks to the Schools Education Team to be passed on.

4. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment 2009 East Sussex Fire Authority

4.1 The Audit Commission had published the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's 2009 Organisational Assessment. Members considered the outcomes of this assessment and the possible way forward in meeting the Audit Commission's Improvement Agenda. Officers would be meeting with the Audit Commission team in order to gain feedback on areas of improvement in relation to the future achievement of a score of 3.

COUNCILLOR TED KEMBLE
Chairman of East Sussex Fire Authority

10 December 2009