

## Agenda No. 2

### AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

<b>Name of Committee</b>	<b>Community Protection Portfolio Holder Decision</b>	
<b>Date of Committee</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> April 2011</b>	
<b>Report Title</b>	<b>The Future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England Consultation - Response</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	<p>The Department for Communities and Local Government has published a consultation, 'The Future of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England' (January 2011). In the consultation Fire and Rescue Authorities are being asked their views on how control services should be structured following the announcement by the Government that the FiReControl project was to close. The consultation invites views from the fire and rescue sector on priorities to shape control services in the future and there views on lessons learned. Government is clear that no solution will be imposed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities, but that the principles of decentralisation and localism will apply. The paper details the response to the consultation by Warwickshire Fire Authority.</p>	
<b>For further information please contact:</b>	Gary Phillips Deputy Chief Fire Officer	01926 423231 ext 3204 <a href="mailto:garyphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk">garyphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?</b>	No	
<b>Background papers</b>	<p>The future of fire and rescue control services in England, consultation paper. <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1815528.pdf">http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1815528.pdf</a> The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004</p>	

## ***Appendices***

### ***CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-***

Details to be specified

Other Committees	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local Member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other Elected Members	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cllr Chattaway, Cllr Whitehouse, Cllr Williams, Cllr Boad
Cabinet Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cllr Hobbs
Chief Executive	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Legal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Greta Needham
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Helen Murphy
Other Chief Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
District Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other Bodies/Individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### ***FINAL DECISION***      Yes

### ***SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:***

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
To Cabinet	<input type="checkbox"/>
To an O and S Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
To an Area Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **Agenda No 2**

### **Lead Portfolio Holder for Community Safety Decision Making Session**

**5<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

### **The Future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England Consultation - Response**

#### **Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

##### **Recommendation**

That the Community Protection Portfolio Holder considers and approves the responses to the consultation paper.

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government has published a consultation, 'The Future of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England' (January 2011). In the consultation Fire and Rescue Authorities are being asked their views on how control services should be structured following the announcement by the Government that the FiReControl project was to close. The consultation invites views from the fire and rescue sector on priorities to shape control services in the future and there views on lessons learned. Government is clear that no solution will be imposed upon Fire and Rescue Authorities, but that the principles of decentralisation and localism will apply.
- 1.2 Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning resources and the Government believe the fire and rescue community is best placed to decide the future of their control services and no solution will be imposed. It is essential therefore that the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority makes a suitable response to the consultation.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010 the Fire Minister, Bob Neil MP, announced the closure of the FiReControl project – a project established to replace the 46 fire and rescue control rooms in England with 9 Regional Control Centres. The project commencing in 2004, would have seen the replacement of Warwickshire's control room in autumn 2008. Following the General Election in 2010, the Fire Minister set conditions upon the project to deliver the control rooms on time, within budget and to appropriate quality. The failure of the contracting company to meet these conditions resulted in the project closure.
- 2.2 The consultation invites views from the fire and rescue sector on whether resilience, technology and efficiency are the right priorities to shape control services in the future and presents a number of different approaches for delivering change based on the Coalition Governments decentralisation policy. The consultation is based around eight questions which require a response by the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

## 3.0 CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 3.1 **Q1:** Do you agree with the assessment of FiReControl set out in Section 3 (Lessons learned from FiReControl), what lessons do you think we can learn from FiReControl?
- 3.2 **Response:** In broad terms the Fire Authority agrees with the assessment. In terms of lessons learned the project was Government led and there were concerns in the fire sector in relation to the lack of openness and transparency. It was clear that the project had no knowledge of fire and rescue control functionality and complexity and had a very simplistic perception of what the role is. It is clear that one solution does not fit all and any future work needs to take account of different working practices and business rules locally rather than rely on a national wide solution. Any future work would need to take account of the level of incident management and support undertaken by fire control and not solely focus on calls to the Service. It should be borne in mind that in the view of the Fire Authority there is a requirement for mobilising fire resources to remain computer assisted and not computer reliant. There is requirement for control operators to deliver service by utilising risk assessment and discretion and an ability to override any computer system.
- 3.3 **Q2:** Are Resilience, enhanced technology and efficiency still as important today as they were when the FiReControl project was initiated? If not, why not, what has changed?

- 3.4 **Response:** The Authority believes they are all as important but need to be determined on a local basis with the use of new technologies. Greater resilience may be achieved by having robust fall back arrangements including sharing resources with a suitable partner locally. The development of 'buddy' systems which in essence is a partnership with a similar fire and rescue service at a geographical distance away who may be unaffected by a major local incident will also improve arrangements. Resilience may be achieved by greater collaboration with other Category 1 and 2 responders as detailed by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Sharing costs by sharing the same IT solutions with partners but on an independent basis may also effectively achieve greater resilience and efficiency.
- 3.5 **Q3:** Which aspects of resilience described in Section 4 are most important for control services? Are there other aspects which are not mentioned?
- 3.6 **Response:** The Fire Authority believes that technological enhancement (upgrading to existing Command and Control systems and Firelink) is most important. This will provide a resilient IT solution and increase the capacity and flexibility for control staff to deal with greater activity. This would also lead to better opportunities to increase collaboration with other services by adopting shared resources and services with effective back up arrangements.
- 3.7 **Q4:** Do you think that there is a role for Central Government in supporting Technical enhancements in fire and rescue control rooms- and if so, what should this be?
- 3.8 **Response:** The length of the project has meant that that no substantial investment has been made within the control room at WFRS. The Fire Authority believes that Government has a role to play in funding support for a technical enhancement providing it improves resilience and efficiency which will allow greater collaboration with suitable partners.
- 3.9 **Q5:** Do you think that there is a role for Central Government in helping Fire and Rescue Authorities to achieve greater efficiencies in the delivery of control services?
- 3.10 **Response:** The response to this question is a repeat to that in Q4 and in addition it must be recognised that individual services will be best placed to know where efficiencies could be made whilst delivering an effective service to the community.
- 3.11 **Q6:** Which approaches (or combination of approaches) for the delivery of control services set out in section 5 would provide the best outcome for the fire and rescue community and the public?

- 3.12 **Response:** The Fire Authority believes that a *localist* approach allowing the Service to develop robust partnership arrangements is the preferred approach allowing for some central support to enhance outdated IT systems. This will allow the Authority to make their own choice. For example, greater collaboration with other areas of the County Council, other fire and rescue services and other emergency services. The Fire Authority is currently evaluating the requirements of a shared control function balanced against delivering 'out of scope' work.
- 3.13 **Q7:** Do you agree that the right funding priorities are set out in section 6 and do you have any comments on the order in which these are presented?
- 3.14 **Response:** It is difficult to see why funding requirements for improvement to current systems should be affected by the FiReControl legacy as stated in the consultation document when this was imposed on Fire Services by the Government. The Fire Authority agree with the order of priorities as presented.
- 3.15 **Q8:** Which of the technical options for Firelink would best meet fire and rescue service needs?
- 3.16 **Response:** Option 2 - upgrade the existing solution to support data. This gives a data option which reduces traffic unit costs. It allows for the next nearest resource mobilisation by the use of Automatic Vehicle Locator and provides for a more robust method of Mobile Data Terminal information retrieval/update.

## **4.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 That the report is noted and agreed as a response to the consultation paper.

**Graeme Smith**  
**Chief Fire Officer**

March 2011