

FIRE CONTROL COLLABORATION UPDATE

REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**For Noting**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the status of the fire control collaboration project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Authority's position statement on collaboration was agreed on 20 August 2014. The position statement sets out the Authority's strategic intent in relation to collaboration and provides a commitment to identify opportunities for operational and organisational collaboration between fire and rescue authorities.
- 3.2 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on police, fire and rescue and emergency ambulance services to keep opportunities to collaborate under review, and further, to enter into collaboration agreements where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness. This sets a clear expectation that collaboration opportunities should be fully explored, where there is a benefit to doing so.
- 3.3 A review of Fire Control was undertaken in 2016 which evaluated staffing levels and revised staffing arrangements were established. This was subsequently incorporated into the Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22 and implemented in April 2019.
- 3.4 In relation to the Fire Control function, three potential collaboration opportunities have been identified, for the long-term future delivery of emergency call handling and mobilising services.

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Brigade operates its own call handling and mobilising services from the primary Fire Control Room at Queens Meadow in Hartlepool. For resilience purposes, secondary Fire Control Room facilities exist at Coulby Newham Fire Station in Middlesbrough and at Shropshire FRS headquarters in Shrewsbury.

- 4.2 A formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Brigade and Shropshire FRS was signed in April 2016 to make arrangements under Section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for Evacuation and Call Handling Assistance. The arrangements continue to work well and provide additional resilience for the control room in the event of an emergency evacuation, or a high volume of 999 calls. Whilst the arrangements operate effectively as a resilience provision, it is appropriate to explore collaborative opportunities for day-to-day operations within the regional footprint.
- 4.3 The opportunity to collaborate within the North East Region is recognised by our regional partners. In relation to Fire Control, discussions at the North East Regional Strategic Board have identified suitable partners, based on geographical boundaries and other practical considerations. County Durham and Darlington FRS (CDDFRS) have been identified as the most suitable partner to progress a collaborative approach with Cleveland Fire Brigade.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 On the basis of this opportunity to collaborate, initial scoping has identified three potential options:
- i. Strategic Alignment (new system and shared staffing remotely)
 - ii. Strategic Alignment (new system and shared staffing on-site)
 - iii. Strategic Partnering (joint provision of Fire Control on one site)
- 5.2 In order to progress this work within a mutually agreeable timescale, it is necessary to engage an independent consultant to develop an outline business case for each of the three options. This is based on internal capacity constraints and to provide an independent view of the three options.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 A specification of requirements document has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 1. Subject to normal procurement arrangements, it is expected that this work will commence during the Autumn 2021 period.
- 6.2 Further updates will be provided to the Fire Authority as the project develops.

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