

**MEETING: 28 July 2008**

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**SUBJECT: ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS – FUTURE POLICY AND STRATEGY**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY AND FINANCE OFFICER**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report outlines, for the consideration of the Committee, a proposal to adopt a comprehensive approach to dealing with Road Traffic Accident Collisions (RTC's) underpinned by a RTC policy and supporting strategies which will assist the Authority in achieving reductions in deaths and injuries resulting from road traffic collisions in its area.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Almost 3,000 people die each year on roads in England and it is estimated that road traffic incidents cost the English economy nearly £8 billion a year. During 2007/2008, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service attended 603 RTC's which have produced seven fatalities and 481 casualties and this is a higher number of deaths and injuries than those arising from fires within Tyne and Wear. Since the beginning of this financial year the service has already attended 57 RTC's which have included three fatalities and 32 casualties.
- 2.2 As the Committee will be aware, the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to road traffic collisions (RTC's), a duty which the old 1947 Act did not recognise. However, this duty does not extend to preventative work aimed at reducing the number of RTC incidents that occur although the Authority does have the power to undertake such work if this is deemed to be warranted.
- 2.3 Whilst a statutory duty may be absent from the 2004 Act there is a general acknowledgement that prevention work can be effective. This has been recognised within the latest version of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-2011, where the government's expectation for FRA's in relation to road safety states *"that the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads remain a significant social problem. It can only be successfully tackled using a multi-agency approach, bringing together Government departments and, at a local level, the key service delivery agencies and interest groups"*.
- 2.4 In addition, the 'Changing Lanes' report, published by the Audit Commission in February 2007, provides a clear recommendation for Fire and Rescue Services to become fully involved with the road safety agenda. The report provides a framework and supporting guidance for improving road safety and the development of local strategies for RTC reduction.
- 2.5 Finally, in March 2008, the Department for Community and Local Government (CLG) issued policy and planning guidance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in ***Creating the Safest Community***

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relation to road traffic collisions. This document stated that *“it is an important requirement that the Fire and Rescue Service become a part of national and local road safety partnerships and take benefit from the existing, knowledge, skills and links that are already in place”*

- 2.6 It is apparent therefore, that central government clearly recognises the benefit for relevant agencies to work together to produce solutions and that the Fire and Rescue Services have a contribution to make within that process, in addition to their operational role at road traffic collisions.
- 2.7 There are also significant local reasons why the Authority should adopt a broad RTC policy encompassing prevention as well as intervention measures. Arguably the key reason is that the vision of the Authority of ‘Creating the safest community’ is one which signifies that such work should be vigorously pursued for the benefit of the public that the Authority serves.
- 2.8 In addition, in practical terms, responding to large numbers of RTC’s requires the commitment of significant operational resource and significant time, which reduces substantially the opportunity for Prevention and Education work and firefighters are also exposed to risk every time they respond to such incidents.
- 2.9 Finally, the introduction and implementation of a comprehensive RTC policy is an action point within the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2008/2009.

### **3 FRAMEWORK FOR THE ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION POLICY**

- 3.1 Taking into account the above information it is proposed that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority, fulfils its duty and exercises its power in respect of RTC’s by adopting a RTC policy that encompasses a multi-agency approach to reducing the number of incidents and the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads through:
  - a) **Prevention** – by raising awareness of road safety issues through education.
  - b) **Protection** – by the creation of a safer environment on the road and in the vehicle.
  - c) **Response** – by developing the technical competence of extrication techniques through ongoing learning and development.
  - d) **Partnership** – by establishing and developing local, regional and national partnerships with organisations that have common goals for road safety.
- 3.2 The key to this will be partnership work at local, regional and national level, including work with highways officers and engineers as appropriate. Strong partnerships will underpin work within the Road Safety Agenda and support development of our contribution to the prevention of RTC’s through education with targeted projects and programmes in the Tyne and Wear area.
- 3.3 The Authority has for many years supported the provision of resources to enable an efficient and effective operational response to deal with the

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consequences of RTC's. It is proposed that this effective response is now reinforced through the introduction of preventative activities, examples of which are set out below.

### **4 PREVENTATIVE ACTIVITIES**

- 4.1 The Road Traffic Collision education strategy will be founded upon the development of programmes aimed at specific target groups, for example; Young Drivers Aged 17 – 25, via specialist training programmes at the Service Training Centre and other appropriate sites.
- 4.2 The Authority will seek to contribute to the development of 'Local Transport Plans' and seek to share data intelligence with partnership agencies.
- 4.3 The Road Traffic Collision Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will be the responsibility of the Prevention and Education Department.
- 4.5 Support for the Greater North East Fire and Rescue Services Road Safety Strategy which will provide an effective regional forum for the sharing of best practice and information relating to road safety.
- 4.6 The Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) Team will produce local data to inform our planning processes.

### **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 The Authority will be working to directly support the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the National Framework 2008-2011.
- 5.2 The reduction of deaths and injuries from Road Traffic Collisions will directly support achievement of the Authority's vision for 'Creating the Safety Community'.
- 5.3 The Authority's approach to the Road Traffic Collision policy would be measured and delivered to ensure that fire safety in the home remains the overriding priority.

### **6 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.1 There will be a requirement to enhance the knowledge of Prevention and Education staff and operational firefighters to enable them to deliver a proactive education strategy.
- 6.2 The programme will be co-ordinated by the WM (B) Education and Risk Reduction within the Prevention and Education Department, SHQ who will liaise with the Learning and Development Department as appropriate.
- 6.3 The strategies outlined above are considered to be the minimum level to discharge the Authorities responsibilities and should an enhanced level of service be necessary then additional resources would be required.

### **7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

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7.1 The policy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment prior to publication.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Costs will be contained within the existing Community Safety budget for 2008/2009.

## **9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no implications other than those previously covered.

## **10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 The Authority is requested to:

- a) Consider the content of this report
- b) Receive further reports as appropriate

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of this report;

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- National Framework Document 2008-2011
- CFOA 'Prevention Toolkit' – CFOA Circular 2007
- 'Changing Lanes' – Audit Commission 2007
- Department for Communities and Local Government – RTC Planning Policy Guidance March 2008