

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No 12

MEETING: 17 NOVEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: DCLG/CFOA URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE REVIEW

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to inform Members of a national review of the UK Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability which is being carried out by the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware that there are twenty USAR teams in the United Kingdom that provide resilience in the event of a major incident as detailed in the National Risk Assessment (NRA) and National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPA). TWFRS hosts one of these teams and receives funding from DCLG for doing so.
- 2.2 The strategic deployment of USAR teams was originally based on an assumption of three major simultaneous incidents lasting for up to 30 days (New Dimension Programme – Concept of Operations. Fire Service Circular 8/2008). The Cabinet Office have now revised this planning assumption to reflect the view that whilst the potential for multiple concurrent incidents cannot be overlooked, two major simultaneous incidents should now be considered as the proportionate risk to inform planning.
- 2.3 Members will also be aware that there is an expectation that within a period of austerity, savings will be made across all government departments.

3 DCLG POSITION

- 3.1 DCLG have informed the Strategic Resilience Board that they wish to maintain a capability sufficient to respond to the identified risks within the NRA and NRPA whilst delivering an estimated efficiency saving of £2m.

3.2 DCLG have indicated that as the risk has reduced by a third it is reasonable to expect some reduction in the current USAR capability and still maintain the relevant levels of resilience.

4 REVIEW UPDATE

4.1 The CFOA position at present is that the reduction in risk planning assumptions actually provides an opportunity to increase the number of responders available to each incident. DCLG's standpoint is that the reduction in the NPRA means that savings can be made whilst maintaining existing resilience.

4.2 Both parties are now in negotiation to identify how the USAR funding grant that host FRS receive will be affected by this review. CFOA have stressed to DCLG that this needs to be concluded in time to allow host FRS to complete their budgetary processes for 2015.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The financial implications of this report are not yet known. It is anticipated the Service will receive information on this in early 2015.

6 LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legislative implications of this report

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no health and safety implications of this report

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Note the contents of this report.
 - b. Receive further reports as appropriate.
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