

MEETING: 22ND FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT: PROVISION OF REINFORCEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report outlines for Members the proposed formalisation of arrangements for the provision of operational assistance between Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority and the Fire and Rescue Authority for Northumberland (Northumberland County Council).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Under Section 13 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Fire and Rescue Authorities are able to make mutual assistance arrangements with other such Authorities for the provision of operational reinforcements in the event of an emergency occurring in one or the other's geographical boundaries.
- 2.2 The arrangements can be entered into on a no-cost basis where it is determined that the level of assistance provided by one Authority to the other, and vice versa, is broadly similar, or on a cost basis when the assistance provided is exclusive to or of greater benefit to one Authority.

3. ARRANGEMENTS WITH NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

- 3.1 Arrangements have been made for Tyne and Wear to provide reinforcements to Northumberland in the event of an emergency in Northumberland's area with reciprocal arrangements applying in the case of an emergency within Tyne and Wear. In particular, each Authority is committed to supplying one pumping appliance (subject to reasonable availability) to supplement attendance by the "home" Authority at emergencies in the vicinity of Heddon, parts of Prudhoe and Crawcrook.
- 3.2 Tyne and Wear is also in a position to supply aerial and other specialist appliances (Operational Support Units and Urban Search and Rescue) upon request from Northumberland (again subject to reasonable availability) and to provide assistance in relation to swift water rescue and/or flooding incidents.

- 3.3 The provision of assistance is at no cost to the assisted party, save in the case of swift water rescue/flooding incidents where there is a discretion for Tyne and Wear to recover its reasonable costs.
- 3.4 It is intended that the above arrangements be formalised by the execution of an Agreement under Section 13 of the 2004 Act by the two Authorities and that these replace all previous arrangements that were previously in place.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 With regard to services other than swift water rescue/flooding, where a call is made on Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue resources, the mainstream costs associated with the incident will have been budgeted for. Whilst there may be marginal additional costs, for example, travelling a greater distance than would otherwise be the case to/from an incident, these are considered to be minimal taking account of the number of occasions when these cross boundary services are triggered and can be contained within existing budget. In other cases where cross boundary services are triggered there are no additional costs to be borne by the Authority.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the risk to the Authority has been minimised as far as practicable. The assessment has considered an appropriate balance between risk and control; the realisation of efficiencies; the most appropriate use of limited resources; and a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits. The risk to the authority has been assessed as low utilising the standard risk matrix based on control measures being in place. The complete risk assessment is available on request from the Chief Fire Officer.

6. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

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

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Members are requested to approve the execution of an agreement with Northumberland County Council under Section 13 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for the provision of mutual and specialist assistance as detailed in the above report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Fire Services Act 2004
- Draft Agreement between Tyne and Fire and Rescue Authority at Northumberland County Council

