

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**MEETING: 14 JUNE 2010**

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**SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMISSION COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report informs Members of the national decision to abolish Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and the impact of this on Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Authority.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 On the 15<sup>th</sup> April Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority received formal notification of the areas that the auditors intended to consider in 2010/2011 as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, namely progress in respect of Managing Performance and delivery of the objectives contained within the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services.

2.2 The cost of this work was set at £12,500, which was to have been funded centrally by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and it was anticipated that publication of the results of the audit work would be completed by December 2010.

**3 ABOLITION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK**

3.1 Further to the formal notification of the audit mention in paragraph 2.1 above, the new coalition government has stated that it intended to abolish the Comprehensive Area Assessment regime as part of its drive to reduce the national budget by £6.2 billion in the current financial year.

3.2 Accordingly, the Authority received formal notification from the Audit Commission on the 28<sup>th</sup> May that all work on the area assessment and the organisational assessment, which forms part of the CAA, will cease with immediate effect.

3.3 As a result, there will not be any new scores published for the Use of Resources, Managing Performance or Overall Organisation assessments. However, there may still be some work undertaken in relation to progress against the fire and rescue service National Framework and discussions on this matter are currently underway between the Audit Commission and CLG in this respect.

3.4 Finally, it should be noted that the abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework does not impact on audit work necessary under the statutory Code of Audit Practice under which the auditors are required to give a value for money conclusion in addition to their opinion on the financial statements.

3.5 The future nature of audit and inspection nationally is not yet clear and it is anticipated that there will be consultation on this at a future date.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment process may have an impact on the annual audit fee paid by the Authority for the statutory work undertaken by the Audit Commission.

4.2 In addition, depending on the outcome of the discussions between the Audit Commission and CLG in respect of possible audit work relating to the fire and rescue service National Framework document, some financial implications may arise in the coming months.

#### **5 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **6 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

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

#### **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Members are requested to:

- a) note the content of the report
- b) receive further reports and appropriate

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#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Letter from Audit Commission – dated 28 May 2010.