

COUNCIL APPOINTED COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVE - REPORT TO THE COUNCIL – COUNCILLORS JACKSON, MRS TAYLOR AND MRS DELVES

This report updates the Council on the work of the Combined Fire Authority. The Fire Authority is made up of 25 Councillors (19 representatives from Lancashire County Council three from Blackburn and Darwen Council and three from Blackpool Council).

Since the last report to Council, the Combined Fire Authority has met on two occasions, 8 September and 15 December 2014. The Combined Fire Authority has produced a summary of those meetings and the appointed representatives will update the Council on any issues.

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY (CFA) 8 SEPTEMBER 2014

CHAIRMAN'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chairman recognised the work of Area Manager Chris Waters and Area Manager Keith Marsh who were both retiring at the end of September and the Authority wished them well for the future.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

In June 2013, the Authority had considered a paper, which outlined the main findings from Sir Ken Knight's Review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England alongside the progress that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) had made against the key areas identified in the Review. At that time, it was anticipated the Government would give its views on the Review in the autumn.

A written Ministerial Statement had been issued on 15 July 2014, which was considered by Members. The Statement did little to change the direction of travel for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS), which remained around increasing efficiency and working collaboratively where appropriate. One new piece of information was that the Government was to commission an independent review of the conditions of service for all fire and rescue staff and the way in which they were negotiated and decided.

OPENNESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 came into force on 6 August 2014. These Regulations applied to the Authority. They made provision for any person attending one of the Authority's meetings (while that meeting is open to the public) to be permitted to report on the meeting. The Regulations define the term 'reporting' as:

- (a) Filming, photographing or making an audio recording of proceedings at a meeting;
- (b) Using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it took place or later; or
- (c) Reporting or providing commentary on the proceedings at such a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary was available as the meeting took place or later, to persons not present.

The Regulations do not require the Authority to permit oral reporting or oral commentary on a meeting as it takes place, if the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting. They allow any person who attends a public meeting for the purpose of reporting on it to use any communication method, including the internet, to publish, post or otherwise share the results of their reporting activities and the Authority must provide, so far as practicable, reasonable facilities.

Members considered the Government's plain English guide, which provides practical information to help the public and practitioners exercise the new rights to film, blog, tweet and use other social media to report meetings and access information about decisions taken by officers. Members considered and approved a draft 'Guidance for Reporting at Meetings' which set out some of the practical considerations and clarified the role of the meeting Chairman in order to support any person who wished to attend an Authority meeting.

Subject to the rules concerning the disclosure of confidential exempt information, the Regulations also required the Authority to make publicly available, as soon as reasonably practicable a 'written record' to be produced in a specified format of a decision delegated to an officer either:

- (a) Under a specific express authorisation; or
- (b) Under a general authorisation to officers to take such decisions and, the effect of the decision is to:
 - (i) grant a permission or licence;
 - (ii) affect the rights of an individual; or
 - (iii) award a contract or incur expenditure, which, in either case, materially affects that relevant local government body's financial position

The written record must be retained for a period of six years with any background papers for a period of four years. The Regulations also make it an offence for a person to intentionally obstruct, or refuse to make available for inspection by members of the public, documents relating to these decisions.

The Authority considered that it already complied with the principles of this. For example, in terms of delegated authority decisions were reported back through the urgent business process or through other reports to other Committees. Members considered and agreed that a full report be presented to the Authority meeting in December 2014 on the practical effects of the implementation of the Regulations.

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY (CFA) 15TH DECEMBER 2014

PERFORMANCE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN – OUTCOMES 2014

At the CFA Planning Committee meeting on 17 November 2014, Members considered the outcomes of the Performance Report and Action Plan 2014 consultation.

The Planning Committee considered the adequacy of the consultation exercise surrounding the proposals and the conclusions post-consultation and Members duly determined that the consultation had been adequate in scale and scope and endorsed the adoption of the revised Public Consultation Strategy. Members did however have opposing views regarding the proposal to vary the scale and structure of the Home Fire Safety Check Service according to an individual's fire risk and resolved to defer for final decision to the full Authority.

Preventing fires and casualties is an Authority priority and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) has provided a home fire safety check service to any resident in Lancashire, irrespective of the fire risk at the property. A comprehensive review of the service showed that although Lancashire was delivering one in eight of all Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC's) in England, the casualty rates (the

number of people killed or injured in fires) although they demonstrated significant reductions, was no better than many other Services who delivered far fewer HFSCs. The proposal was to vary the scale and structure of the HFSC service according to an individual's fire risk; targeting the most effort and resource toward those who were most vulnerable to fire risk (such as the elderly and homes of multiple occupancy). While those with lower risk would still receive a Home Fire Safety Check service, this would in some cases be delivered in a different way to the traditional visit, for example digitally on the website and by signposting people to product providers. The review also recommended the further development of partnerships with other agencies which had a direct responsibility or contact with vulnerable people, and in particular that LFRS should explore the potential for a much greater increase in the numbers of HFSC's that are delivered by other agencies. In addition, to streamline the processes, a Contact Centre would be adopted to provide a more efficient referral service and prioritisation of risk and administration of any arising visits.

The Authority considered the proposal in full and following a vote, the proposal to vary the scale and structure of the HFSC service was agreed.

CAPITAL BUDGET 2015/ 2016 – 2019/ 2020 AND REVENUE BUDGET 2015/ 2016 – 2018/ 2019

The Authority noted and endorsed the draft Capital Programme for 2015/ 2016 - 2019/ 2020 and Revenue Budget for 2015/ 2016 - 2018/ 2019.

The Authority also authorised consultation with representatives of non-domestic ratepayers and Trade Unions on the budget proposals and agreed to give further consideration to both at their Budget Fixing Meeting scheduled for 16 February 2015.