



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/08/23
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	23 OCTOBER 2008
SUBJECT OF REPORT	DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2009/10 TO 2011/12
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a) That, subject to incorporation of any amendments as agreed by the Authority at this meeting, the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 be approved for consultation purposes;</i></p> <p><i>(b) That the proposals for consultation on the Draft Plan as set out in Section 2 of this report be approved; and</i></p> <p><i>(c) That the results of the consultation and any recommended changes to the draft Corporate Plan be considered at the Fire and Rescue Authority budget meeting in 2009.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Enclosed with this agenda (attached and page numbered separately) is the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12.</p> <p>The draft Corporate Plan sets out how it is proposed to realise the ambitions of the Authority over the next three years by reference to organisational goals and priorities.</p> <p>This report also sets out the recommended approach to consultation on the draft Corporate Plan and precept consultation.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	Consultation costs will be met from the existing Service Planning and Review Department Budget.
APPENDICES	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 (Enclosed with agenda and page numbered separately).
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Enclosed with this agenda (page numbered separately) is the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12.

1.2 The Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 presents a new five year ambition for the service. It is considered that the time is now right following the first two years of combination to set a longer term ambition. The ambition has been set unequivocally high and reflects the quality of staff that provide the community with an emergency service of which they can be proud. The ambition is:

“By 2014 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service will be established as a modern, flexible and responsive fire and rescue service meeting local, regional and national needs. Our Mission of ‘Acting to Protect and Save’ will be achieved through a service that is adaptable in managing its resources and committed to working in partnership. Community safety will be improved by providing prevention, protection and emergency response arrangements that reflect the local community risk. Local communities will see this change through targeted prevention and protection activities and a change from traditional response arrangements. Our professional workforce, the backbone of the service, will be responding to the variations in community risk with an increased range of specialist skills and work with greater flexibility to increase support to local communities. By 2014 DSFRS will be amongst the highest performing fire and rescue services nationally.”

1.3 Following the need to make hard decisions during last years planning cycle, the content of the draft plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 looks towards stability for the forthcoming year. This stability is reflected in the scope of the new activities included in the plan, which do not include the implementation of significant changes to either service delivery or staff.

1.4 The targets included within the plan are the existing targets from the current corporate plan. These targets will be reviewed in January 2009 with the latest performance information available and consideration given as to whether they should be amended.

2. CONSULTATION

2.1 It is important to seek people’s views on our plans for the future and in particular the proposed changes. The need to consult is established in the Communities and Local Government’s (CLG) Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Guidance Note 2 and the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11. Guidance Note 2 requires fire and rescue services to consult on proposed changes to service delivery and significant changes to the working arrangements of staff. This guidance note offers the guiding principles in deciding how extensively to consult. It states: ‘...any person or organisation that might have legitimate interest in the proposals under consideration, or anyone who may be affected by the proposal, should have the opportunity to express their view’ and, ‘...the scope of the consultation you undertake will be proportionate to the nature and extent of any changes proposed.’

2.2 The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11 states that, ‘Each fire and rescue authority must produce a publicly available IRMP covering at least a three year time span which reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders.’

- 2.3 In addition to the above documents the HM Government Code of Practice released in July 2008 sets out the consultation code of practice for Central Government and suggest Local Authorities adopt the same standards. The code states, *'consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.'*
- 2.4 There are a number of different ways to undertake consultation, none of which are right or wrong, but some methods or a combination of them may be better than others in certain circumstances.
- 2.5 Allowing for the above guidance and considering the scope of the Draft Corporate Plan 2009/10 to 2011/12 content, it is proposed that the consultation strategy will be to invite comments from key stakeholders. This will include MPs, councils, other emergency services, the business community, staff and representative bodies. In addition to this the plan will be promoted to raise awareness amongst the general public. The opportunity to reply will be through our website, telephone, email, fax and by writing to the Consultation Officer at Service Headquarters. It is proposed that the focus of this year's consultation will be to further involve Hard to Reach groups as it is important that we listen to all members of our community. To do this we will focus on reaching and engaging with those groups with which it is historically hard to reach during the consultation process and we are actively determining the best method to do this. If the consultation proposals are agreed by the Authority on 23 October 2008, it is proposed to commence consultation on 27 October 2008 and finish on 12 January 2009. This will provide an 11 week consultation period.
- 2.8 It is essential that when considering the Draft Corporate Plan that there is full awareness of the finances available to deliver the Service. At this point in time the levels of revenue budget and council tax have still to be determined. The Authority will set these levels at the budget meeting to be held in February 2009. Results from the consultation on the draft plan will be available to inform the budget setting process.
- 2.9 In addition to this, as a precepting Authority we have a requirement to consult with business on the future level of council tax. Previously this has been undertaken via a telephone survey in mid January whereby the views of approximately 400 people from businesses are sought, stratified across the whole service area. It is proposed to adopt this methodology again this year at a cost of approximately £4,000. The results from this survey will also be presented at the budget setting meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority in February 2009.

PAUL YOUNG
Chief Fire Officer