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FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
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REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

REPORT NUMBER 469 - 2013

18th NOVEMBER, 2013

Report by Area Manager David Stapley, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

SUBJECT: FIRE AND RESCUE - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE UPDATE

Abstract :The report provides Members with an update of key developments within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service namely – Strategic Plan, Strategic Intent decision and Industrial Action by the Fire Brigades Union.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of recent developments within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended the Committee consider and note the information contained within this report and of any implications this may have for Dundee.
- 2.2 Provide suitable feedback to the Local Senior Officer that the Committee considers relevant.

3 STRATEGY DOCUMENT

3.1 The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2102 requires the SFRS to prepare a Strategic Plan. The plan must have regard to the Fire Framework document and have regard to comments received within the consultation period from local authorities, representative bodies and other persons the SFRS considers appropriate. The SFRS must then submit the Strategic Plan to Scottish Ministers for approval.

3.2 Report number 320-2013 was previously tabled at this committee highlighting the existence of the public consultation on this document. A meeting was held between the Local Senior Officer and Dundee City Council officials to

facilitate face to face feedback and to encourage a formal response from the council.

3.3 The responses from the consultation have been considered by the relevant sub committee of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Board. All responders to the consultation were provided with a formal acknowledgement and response to the points that they raised. The Board have taken cognisance of feedback received and this has been reflected within the final document.

3.4 The consultation period ended on 31 August 2013 and written or emailed responses were received from 52 organisations and individuals. The following link will take you to the Board paper which includes analysis of the response received to the consultation 2.

3.5 Following approval by the Board the Strategic Plan document has been forwarded the Scottish Government for final approval before implementation. The Scottish Parliament will undertake the necessary scrutiny of performance to ensure that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service meets the expectations detailed within the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2013.

3.6 The interim Local Fire and Rescue Plan will now be reviewed to ensure that service delivery provision across Dundee aligns with the direction articulated within the Strategic Plan. Drafting of the new document has commenced and initial work to develop a suitable engagement strategy is being progressed.

3.7 The revised Dundee Fire and Rescue Plan will have currency for three years and will be presented at a future meeting of this Committee for approval prior to implementation in April 2014.

4 STRATEGIC INTENT DOCUMENT

4.1 The SFRS Board, at its meeting in June 2013 agreed that a review of property asset requirements would be undertaken and a report tabled to a meeting scheduled in September, in relation to the following support functions:

- National Training Facilities,
- Control Rooms,
- Vehicle and Equipment Workshops,
- ICT Data Centres,
- Office Accommodation,
- National Headquarters.

4.2 The report recommended an approach which will rationalise properties to remove duplication in order to meet the financial challenges faced by the organisation. It is anticipated that resource budget savings of c£4.8 million per annum could be realised through property rationalisation with money invested to create a fit-for-purpose, cost effective support estate that is strategically located across Scotland's communities.

4.3 The Board subsequently met in Aberdeen on 26th September and agreed, by a vote of 6 to 5, the recommendations contained within the paper with one amendment, that there should be three Control rooms instead of the proposal of two.

4.3 The Board agreed that the Control room in Johnstone would be retained and the Control Rooms in Dumfries, Maddiston and Thornton will close.

4.4 They directed that further work should be undertaken to identify suitable strategic locations regarding the location of the second and third Control Rooms. The choice of two will be made from Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness or Edinburgh.

4.5 The Board will meet again at the end of November where they will reach a final decision relating to these critical elements of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service infrastructure.

4.6 In addition to Control Rooms the decision also has relevance locally in relation to the provision of Vehicle and Equipment Workshops for Scotland. The Board decision is that there will be four facilities located in Glasgow, Lanarkshire Newbridge (Edinburgh) and a further facility on the A90 corridor between Dundee and Aberdeen.

5 INDUSTRIAL ACTION

5.1 The current trade dispute between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Governments of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland centres around pension changes which impact as a consequence of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

5.2 The responsibility for Fire and Rescue is a devolved matter however around the matter of pensions the Scottish Government there are constraints in relation to pension arrangements. These constraints limit the opportunity for regional variances without attracting financial penalties from the UK Government.

5.3 Following discussions between Scottish Government officials, the Chair of the SFRS and FBU officials a proposal was made by the Scottish Government to extend the transitional protection, to match those proposed for the police. Additionally there has been a commitment that no firefighter dismissal in response to failing a fitness test.

5.4 A consultative ballot was held by the FBU in relation to these proposals which closed on the 8th of October. The outcome of the ballot was that the membership accepted the proposal was sufficient to prevent a strike at the current time.

5.5 Members of the Scottish FBU have stated that the proposals do not satisfy all parts of the trade dispute. However they recognise that significant improvements have been made so far on a range of issues including fitness capability, the threat of “no job no pension;” improved protection arrangements and improved actuarial reductions for retirements from age 55.

5.5 The dispute is still live in the other jurisdictions across the UK. Further talks are in progress with a view to gaining a negotiated settlement. Presently there is no resolution and further strike action is likely in England and Wales.

6 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Council / Community Planning Priorities

6.1.1 Dundee City Council's responsibilities with regards to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 are directly relevant to Community Planning and the Single Outcome Agreement.

6.2 POLICY AND LEGAL

6.2.1 This report is presented to the Policy and Resources Committee within its remit for local scrutiny of the Fire and Rescue Service.

6.3 FINANCIAL

6.3.1 There are no identified financial implications as a consequence of this report.

6.4 EQUALITY

6.4.1 Not applicable

6.5 ENVIRONMENTAL

6.5.1 Not applicable

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers are referred to within this report.

- 1 Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016 consultation by the Scottish Fire and Rescue service.
- 2 Scottish Fire and Rescue board papers of the 26th September, Item 9 – Strategic Plan 2013-2016.

Both of these documents are accessible from the website of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

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