

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
date	1 June 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the future arrangements for Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and their relationship with Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A Local Area Agreement is a three year agreement based on local sustainable community strategies that sets out priorities for a Local Area. The agreement is made between Central Government, represented by the Government Office and a Local Area represented by the Lead Authority and other key partners through local strategic partnerships.

2.2 The primary objective of an LAA is to deliver genuinely sustainable communities through better outcomes for local people. They are structured around four blocks:-

- Children and Young People
- Safer Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise

3. REPORT

3.1 NFRS is a key partner in the existing LAA with both Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Both were adopted as part of the round two LAAs and run for the period 2006 – 2009.

3.2 Key areas of focus fall within the Healthier Communities and Older People Block and the Safer Stronger Communities Block were target areas are Avoidable Injuries, Fire Deaths and Arson.

3.3 Whilst these activities will run through to 2009, the ambitions published within the Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” clearly set out fundamentally different arrangements for LAAs. These revised arrangements will change the way Central Government does business with Local Authorities and partners.

3.4 The new LAAs which will be negotiated and introduced in April 2008 will mean:-

- LAAs will be the only place where Central Government will agree targets with Local Authorities and their partners on outcomes delivered by Local Government on its own or in partnership;

- LAA will no longer be about specific funding for specific targets as they will now include all targets agreed with Central Government;
- There will be a new non-ringfenced area based grant with a presumption that all area based funding will go through this route. There will be no performance reporting or other conditions attached.
- There will be a duty on named partners to have regard to relevant targets within the LAA;
- There will be a duty on the Lead Authority to have regard to its Community Strategy when preparing the LAA.

3.5 LAAs will consist of:-

- Eighteen pre-existing statutory early years and educational targets;
- Up to 35 improvement targets from a new national indicator set for local government of 200 indicators for Services delivered by Local Authorities or in partnership;
- Optional locally agreed targets.

3.6 As yet it is uncertain that Fire & Rescue Services will have any specific targets within the National Indicator Set. However, Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority has fully embraced the wide impact that its Services could have on the community and as such the Service may well be best placed to deliver against other areas within the National Set if adopted locally.

3.7 What will be important for NFRS is that it plays its part in the development of Local Sustained Communities Strategies developed by both the City and County Councils. This will ensure that Fire Related Issues and these deemed important by Authority such as Avoidable Injuries and Intervention with young people remain areas of focus.

3.8 The White Paper specifically requires lead Local Authorities to consult and seek the participation of named partners in the production of its LAA. Fire & Rescue Services are identified as a named partner.

3.9 An indicative timetable has been issued by Communities and Local Government (CLG) which presents key milestones for the development of the new LAA, key areas are the consultation on Sustainable Community Strategies (October 2007), consultation on new LAA outcomes and frameworks (December) and the negotiation of improvement targets (January). The revised LAAs are due to be implemented from April 2008.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Funding to meet the national indicator set will be met from:-

- a) Council Tax, Fees and Changes
- b) Mainstream funding
- c) Formula Grant (RSG and NNDR)
- d) Area based Grant
- e) Ring fenced Grant
- f) Single LAA Capital Pot

* b-f above will be informed by Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2007

What is not clear is whether or not the formula grant or any other national funding will be adjusted to fund the Single Capital LAA pot.

- 4.2 The concept of "reward grant" that NFRS has used to prime and underpin some of its Community Safety initiatives will be replaced by the new non-ringfenced LAA grant with no performance or reporting conditions attached. The Services future aspirations could well be determined by access to elements of the LAA grant.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Although there are no direct personnel implications contained within this report the Services Community Safety Plan sets out how it is to deliver its Service and use its staff. The revised LAAs could have an impact on the Plan and its future direction.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has revealed no specific implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority have set a clear agenda for the reduction of avoidable deaths and injuries within its community. This relates to both fire and non-fire related incidents. This is critical in respect of Government thinking and has been measured through inspection by Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). If the Service is to continue to meet its wider objectives, and the aspirations of Central Government it is imperative that the Service remains a key player within the revised CPA process.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report and acknowledge the importance of the Services involvement within the revised LAA process.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

Developing the future arrangements for LAAs – CLG – February 2007
Stronger Prosperous Communities – White Paper - CLG
Local Area Agreements and Strategic Partnerships – CLG

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER