



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Fire & Rescue Service

Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Finance and Resources Committee

APPROVAL OF TEMPORARY VIREMENT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 09 December 2011

Purpose of Report:

To seek the approval of Members to the virement of budget to enable some elements of backlog maintenance to be recovered.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Director of Finance and Resources has delegated powers under financial regulations to authorise all virements within virement groups but only limited authority to authorise virements between virement groups of up to £25,000. A virement group is a convenient way of grouping budgets together such that all employee costs are within the employees' virement group and all elements of premises costs are within the premises virement group and so forth.
- 1.2 What is being proposed in this report is that a virement of £200,000 is made between the employees' virement group and the premises virement group for which the approval of the Finance and Resources Committee is required.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Two issues have arisen within the estates department that require to be addressed the first of these relating to Health and Safety and the second being a more general issue.
- 2.2 A comprehensive Health and Safety inspection of all sites has been carried out in order to comply with the Fire Authority's obligations to carry out fire risk assessments. These inspections have highlighted that many sites do not have fire alarm systems in place and those that do need to be overhauled. A decision was made some 15 years ago that fire alarms would not be fitted to wholtime stations as they were crewed on a 24/7 basis and therefore fire detection via smoke alarms was sufficient. Retained stations on the other hand require some form of alarm system as these are not permanently crewed.
- 2.3 Current methods of working mean that operational crews are more often away from the Fire Stations and therefore it is appropriate that some form of fire alarm system is fitted.
- 2.4 Health and Safety inspections have also revealed some safety concerns with electric gates fitted to most sites which need to be rectified.
- 2.5 In order to formulate a response to these issues discussions have taken place with the Estates and Procurement Manager to see how these items could be included within the maintenance programme and how the maintenance programme is performing in general.
- 2.6 It is clear that significant improvements have been made in the condition of the estate since the introduction of the Multi Agency contract and the improved reporting procedures however there is still an issue with backlog maintenance. This backlog is being steadily reduced as part of a general plan however it does not leave room within the budget to respond to issues such as those referred to above without the budget being overspent.
- 2.7 This raises the issue of backlog maintenance itself and to what extent the Authority should seek to reduce this when other areas of the budget are underspending. The fundamental point about backlog maintenance of course is that it will always require to be carried out and the longer it is left the more

expensive it becomes. It would seem to be appropriate to address this issue now when funds are available rather than wait until next year when they may be more stretched.

- 2.8 Underspends at the year end naturally roll up into general balances and there are always discussions about the level of balances to be held and how to remove any surplus balances. Best practice would not support any use of balances to simply defray revenue expenditure in a permanent way, such as employing staff or supporting anything with a long term commitment. This is not true however of the use of balances or underspendings to carry out “one off” initiatives designed to generate revenue savings in the future.
- 2.9 It is proposed therefore to make a virement from the employees budget which is currently showing an underspend of the order of £1.7m to the building maintenance budget to enable these works to be carried out. Quotations have not yet been received for this work as until it is authorised it would be imprudent to do so however the amount of the virement proposed is £200,000.
- 2.10 £200,000 will not solve the total backlog maintenance issue which is estimated to be worth approximately £450,000 however it is an amount which it is considered can be used within the current financial year.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are set out within the body of the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising directly from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are risk management implications associated with any Health and Safety issue and also with the matter of fire alarms. These issues will need to be

addressed no matter what the outcome of this virement request is however, it will simply push other building maintenance work of a lower priority into the backlog thus making that problem worse.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the virement of £200,000 from the employees virement group to the premise virement group to enable the above works to be carried out.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER