



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

COUNCIL TAX LEAFLET

2013/2014

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 11 January 2013

Purpose of Report:

To seek the approval of members to the production of online copies of the Council Tax leaflet.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that it is a statutory requirement to produce an annual leaflet for council taxpayers setting out the spending plans of the Authority and how those plans are to be funded. This leaflet accompanies the council tax bill and is sent to all council tax payers throughout the City and County area.
- 1.2 Government have recently announced that there will no longer be a requirement to send out copies of a leaflet to tax payers provided that the information is made available online and that hard copies can be made available on request.
- 1.3 This report sets out a proposal for a way forward on this issue for approval by Members.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Fire Authority has always produced an annual council tax leaflet to comply with legislation and this leaflet has been sent to all council tax payers. Over the years joint leaflets have been produced with the County Council the Police Authority, the City Council and various District Councils to try and keep costs to a minimum and also to produce a single understandable document for tax payers.
- 2.2 Government have recently changed the requirements for this leaflet to enable the information to be made available electronically provided that hard copies can be made available on request. With this in mind officers have been involved with discussions with the Treasurers of all the Authorities in the county and City to discuss how this might be taken forward.
- 2.3 The general feeling is that there is still some strength in having a single document that taxpayers can easily understand and that therefore a leaflet should still be produced although this should not be distributed with council tax bills as in previous years. Instead it will be made available across all authority websites for taxpayers to read and/or download. This will also mean that hard copies can be made available easily upon request
- 2.4 Most Authorities favour this option however the County Council have expressed a wish to continue with the printing and distribution of the leaflet as in previous years. The District Councils have agreed to this but have said that they will not contribute to either the printing costs or the costs of distribution. These costs can be significant, for example the print costs alone for the shared leaflet as at present are of the order of £25,000.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the Fire Authority wherever possible should join with the Police Authority, District and City Council colleagues to produce a joint leaflet available online through a number of websites to continue to provide a single point of reference for tax payers and reduce printing a distribution costs. The contents of the leaflet will be subject to the usual approvals.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of this proposal if accepted will be a reduction in costs of up to £25,000 per annum. It is unclear what the costs of continuing with the present arrangements will be as the full costs of distribution, printing etc. are unknown but would certainly be in excess of this.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report is seeking approval in principle, subject to a valid business case. However it is possible that there may be some implications for those members of our communities who do not have easy access to the internet or who do not have English as a first language. It is suggested therefore that additional efforts are made to signpost the availability of the leaflets, both on the face of the bill if possible, or by some targeted advertising.

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 no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the electronic publication of the annual Council Tax Leaflet as set out in the above report.

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

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER