

report

| | | |
|---------|---|--------------------|
| meeting | NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY | |
| | POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE | |
| date | 22 May 2006 | agenda item number |

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

POLICE FORCE MERGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the current position relating to the proposal to amalgamate Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire police forces, and to consider any potential implications for the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In September 2005, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published the findings of a review of the existing police force structure. It concluded that the current (43) force structure is "no longer fit for purpose".
- 2.2 In a statement to the House of Commons in March 2006, the then Home Secretary set out options for police force restructuring, including the East Midlands. The proposed East Midlands force would include approximately 9,500 officers and serve a population of over 4 million people. In accordance with Sections 32 and 33 of the Police Act 1996, the Home Secretary is currently receiving objections to the proposed mergers. The closing date for responses is 11 August 2006. The Authority is invited to comment.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 Key to the proposal for police force mergers is the ability of forces to robustly handle "protective services", whilst at the same time be able to deal with volume crime. Protective services are comprised of :

- Counter terrorism and extremism ;
- Serious organised and cross-border crime ;
- Civil contingencies and emergency planning ;
- Critical incident management ;
- Major crime ;
- Public order ;
- Strategic roads policing.

- 3.2 From that list, the Service has a readily identifiable, professional role and interest in issues associated with terrorism, civil contingencies and emergency planning, and critical incident management. In other aspects of Force-Service working, actions associated with Crime and Disorder Reduction (CDR), Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and further potential through Local Area Agreements (LAAs), are key components of service delivery.
- 3.3 Neighbourhood policing is identified as a major strand of successful force delivery, which is in keeping with the view of the partners within the LAAs, in terms of neighbourhood management and community focus. The Authority has already published plans centred on partnership working, closely aligned to community based risk.
- 3.4 Whichever police force structure is in place, it is vital that the inter-agency working arrangements that result satisfy both strategic and operational requirements.
- 3.5 In terms of the Authority's future strategy for service delivery, the Policy and Strategy Committee should consider two issues :
- 1) Whether or not the Authority should contribute to the current consultation process and ;
 - 2) The implications of any force structure put in place as proposed (an East Midlands regional force) on fire and rescue strategy and delivery in the future as a consequence.
- 3.6 In terms of the latter, whilst the outcome of the current consultation is a matter for the Home Office, it is appropriate to give the issue due consideration in advance. There is an expectation based on published documents by the Home Office that force mergers are intended to improve force delivery and not reduce it. There is undoubtedly going to be a lead-in time between the Home Office decision and implementation. It is reasonable to anticipate an opportunity for work to be completed by the Service post Home Office decision and prior to implementation.
- 3.7 The Home Office consultation process, as identified in 2.2, seeks objections to the proposed mergers. The Authority should consider whether or not there are grounds for objection or to raise strategic concerns relating to the outcome.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A initial impact assessment has revealed no specific equality issues arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risk management implications will be determined and addressed as and when the implications of the merger are clear.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 8.1 Consider whether or not the Authority should make submission to the consultation process ;
- 8.2 Based on the outcome of the Home Office consultation and any resultant move from the current force structure to a regional structure, Members task Officers to review potential Force-Service issues and report to the Committee.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

None.

Paul Woods
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

| CONTACT OFFICER | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Name : | Paul Woods Chief Fire Officer |
| Tel. No : | 0115 967 0880 |
| E-mail : | paul.woods@notts-fire.gov.uk |