

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
	POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE	
date	30 March 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER “STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES”

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To highlight to Members the main points of the Local Government White Paper ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’ and how these link into the Authority’s Community Safety Plan and existing interventions and activities.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In October 2006 the Local Government White Paper ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’ was presented to Parliament. Within this document the Government sets out how it will give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives. The paper presents an opportunity for individuals and families who want to make a difference, both to their own lives and to the communities in which they live.

2.2 The vision of the Government is of revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them. The Government point out that this will mean changing the way the Service works, to give citizens and communities a bigger say; to enable local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs; and to reduce the amount of top-down control from central government.

2.3 The White Paper is split into two volumes; the first contains eight key themes around promoting Strong and Prosperous Communities, the second volume looks at how the Government’s proposals will apply to major local public service areas and cross-cutting issues.

3. REPORT

Community Safety

3.1 The White Paper indicates the Government’s aspiration to put community safety at the heart of the place-shaping role of local authorities, reflecting the high priority that local communities place on these issues. This aspiration is shared by the Fire & Rescue Authority and its Officers and is highlighted throughout the ‘Community Safety Plan’ 2007 – 2010, with the aim of the Authority spelling out their intention: “A safer Nottinghamshire by putting safety at the heart of the Community”.

- 3.2 The challenge the Government sets in its White Paper is to address the lack of local authorities who do not see anti-social behaviour or improvement in community safety as their responsibility. The Authority have already identified their role in both; reducing anti-social behaviour and improving community safety within the Community Safety Plan, but also by their involvement with the Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City Local Area Agreements (LAA). The Service has a prominent role to play in delivering a number of key targets within both LAAs, especially with the Avoidable Injuries target, that is identified as such a high priority in Nottinghamshire and is classified as a stretch target in both Nottinghamshire County Council's and Nottingham City Council's LAAs. The Service also has a vital place in the Safer Stronger Communities block to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) will provide the forum for setting the strategic vision for an area, for capturing that vision in the sustainable community strategy, and for agreeing priorities for improvement in the LAA. The responsibility for driving delivery of community safety outcomes will be the role of the Crime & Drugs Reduction Partnerships (CDRP). The Service are already well represented on both the LSPs and CDRPs throughout the County and City and will continue to be represented by our functional station managers and other officers.
- 3.4 There will be a new duty placed on local authorities to co-operate with each other in agreeing the relevant targets in the LAA. Our membership on both the City and County LAA Management Boards will continue and with the signing of the partnership agreements, has already shown that the Authority is committed to working with local partners to agree relevant targets around all of the four LAA blocks and specifically on delivering the priorities for reducing re-offending, managing migration, youth justice and fire as well as other safety risks set out in the LAA.

Health and Well-Being

- 3.5 Along with our partners in the LAA, the Service have developed targets in both the City LAA, and County LAA around hospital admissions following an accident in the over 64 year and the under 15s to reduce the levels of incidence and impact of avoidable injuries with particular regard to those suffering disadvantage. This falls in line with the White Paper's ambition for local authorities to improve the health and well-being of every local community and ensuring that health and social care services reflect the needs and priorities of patients and their families.
- 3.6 The Service are also contributing to the Government's agenda for Health and Well-being by carrying out Home Safety Checks (HSCs) with an aspirational target of 25,000 HSCs being carried out in our communities by 2009. The Service, in partnership with numerous voluntary organisations, is providing these HSCs to all members of our community. The safety checks involve firefighters and other trained individuals carrying out a comprehensive risk assessment of an individual's home, which identifies potential hazards from not only fire, but from other avoidable injuries such as slips, trips and falls.

Vulnerable People

- 3.7 The White Paper looks at how local authorities can best tackle social exclusion and deprivation, promoting equality for all citizens and addressing the needs of vulnerable people. The Authority already has good links with hard to reach communities and is proactively seeking further opportunities to develop relationships with communities that suffer levels of deprivation that are unacceptable. The roll out of the Community Safety Advocates, the Community Safety Team and the purchase of a community outreach vehicle will all have a positive effect on our ability to reach these groups, and working with partners including the third sector address the areas of concern raised in the Government's White Paper.
- 3.8 The Government suggest that existing services for vulnerable people can be enhanced through better information-sharing, accessibility and geographical reach. The Authority has been a key partner in developing the data sharing web based application Jupiter in Nottinghamshire (JIN). The primary objective of JIN is to promote data sharing and use of geographical information to facilitate evidence based decisions, to improve the quality of life in Nottinghamshire. The Service will also shortly be a partner in the City and County's data sharing toolkit; the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which provides a universal assessment tool for all agencies to use to identify additional needs in children and young people. It aims to bring together practitioners from all agencies working with children, young people and their families to share information, undertake appropriate assessments and provide multi agency support.
- 3.9 Our community safety and community engagement interventions mean that we are strengthening the way we work with local agencies, and are seeking opportunities to give a voice to those who, until now, have not had the chance to speak out.

Children, Young People and Families

- 3.10 Central Government has identified that local government is uniquely placed to ensure that outcomes for all children and young people are improved. They suggest there is a major opportunity to intensify and sharpen efforts to improve outcomes for children and young people, by giving local authorities and their partners more space to take more responsibility, driving further change and improvement.
- 3.11 The service is ideally placed to continue and improve the work already carried out with children, young people and families, alone and in partnership with other agencies. We have a raft of innovative support, educational and community engagement initiatives, including:
- RiskWatch
 - Surestart
 - Firesetters
 - Seat Safe
 - Impact Road Show
 - Prince's Trust
 - Youth Offending Teams
 - Safety Zone
 - Prison Me No Way
 - Stop Programme
 - Bendigo Project

- 3.12 We were also an active partner in developing the City and County's LAA targets contained within the Children and Young Peoples block:- Reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured on the road; Rate of children <15 years old admitted to hospital as a consequence of accidental injury or poisoning. We will continue to be a key partner in the delivery of these targets, and with our level of activity with children and young people we are ready to meet the Government's reform programme for services to children, young people and families.

Conclusion

- 3.13 The White Paper sets out the Government's plan to create better services and better places, and presents a set of tools which will help all local areas tackle the challenges of the 21st Century, capture the strength and talents of their citizens and communities, and achieve their full potential. Our current Community Safety Plan and previous Integrated Risk Management Plans have set out the Authority's intentions on how to deliver: "A safer Nottinghamshire by putting safety at the heart of the Community". The actions contained within the plan, and initiatives and interventions that are already in place, have positioned us to be able to adopt the outcomes of the White Paper virtually seamlessly.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Authority commits itself to a wider agenda of public safety through its budget planning process. The potential for reward grants that can supplement this commitment ensures that the Authority can meet the expectations both now and in the future.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The Authority has already committed its personnel to a wider Community Safety agenda in line with the aspirations of the White Paper. Future recruitment at all levels of the organisation will continue to support this approach.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial impact assessment presents no specific issues arising from this report, however the long term aspirations of the Service must be supported through community engagement with all sections of society. Equalities will continue to be a core focus for the organisation.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Organisational performance will continue to be measured through external scrutiny processes such as Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Clearly the aspirations of the White Paper will be a key element of inspections in the future. By engaging early in the aspirations of the White Paper, good performance can be recognised and the threat of ministerial intervention reduced.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Members note the Government's plans within the White Paper and continue to support Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's direction with regard to meeting its expectations.

8.2 That Members continue to support Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's wider community safety agenda in future planning and policy decisions.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

None.

Frank Swann
DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER	
Name :	Frank Swann Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Tel. No :	0115 967 0880
E-mail :	frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk