



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy & Strategy Committee

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE CONSULTATION

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 1 February 2008

Purpose of Report:

To present to Policy & Strategy Committee the response from Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service to the consultation on the Centre of Excellence.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Historically the Fire and Rescue Service nationally has retained a range of central bodies that have supported its development. The Fire Research Group, Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire Services and the Fire Service Central Examinations Board are some examples.
- 1.2 Following the pay dispute of 2002/03, changes to national conditions of service, the scope and change of modernisation, and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, significant progress was brought about. Whilst it is recognised that significant improvement has been made, it is increasingly difficult to maintain this level of improvement given the continuing competition for resources and the challenges facing the Service.
- 1.3 In response to these issues and changes, Communities and Local Government (CLG) have been working with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) to examine whether the Fire and Rescue Service would benefit from having access to a central resource to support an agenda of improvement, innovation and service delivery.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 As the Fire and Rescue Service moves forward nationally and locally it will face a number of external considerations. Socio-economic changes, demographic profiles, the political landscape, technology, energy, environmental and ecological changes are all growing issues the Service has to face and address.
- 2.2 Climate change, for example, will undoubtedly lead to more volatile and unpredictable weather patterns, which will see the Fire and Rescue Service role evolve and enlarge. At the same time the Service is expanding its role with communities and is taking on a much wider civil protection and civil emergency role.
- 2.3 With such demands it is key to the future of the Service that some functions are delivered and co-ordinated nationally to ensure high standards and the sharing of best practice.
- 2.4 Existing institutions such as CFOA and Regional Management Boards do not have the remit or capacity to help in the delivery of such functions on a national basis. Therefore key partners, as well as CLG, have been working on the concept of a central resource which could support the work of the Fire and Rescue Service by providing operational and technical advice, guidance and innovative research.
- 2.5 The view of LGA, CFOA and CLG is that a Centre of Excellence could provide the following benefits:

- Allow the Fire and Rescue Service to take much greater responsibility and ownership for merging the present service and to take a central role in influencing the future direction of the service as a whole;
- Enable the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to new challenges quickly and to the highest standards ;
- Help streamline multiple impacts of the modernisation programme on Fire and Rescue Authorities;
- Promote cost effectiveness and efficiency in delivery and achieving economies of scale, by bringing together some activities undertaken in individual Fire and Rescue Authorities; and
- Facilitate collaborative working, dissemination of good practice and interoperability across the Fire and Rescue Service.

2.6 To establish whether or not there is an appetite from within the Fire and Rescue Service and its associated partners, CLG issued a consultation document on 26 October 2007. This document seeks views on:

- The need to establish a Centre of Excellence;
- The functions which a Centre of Excellence has the potential to support both in the short term and the long term, including training delivery and resilience;
- The governance arrangements which should underpin a Centre of Excellence ;
- The funding arrangements; and
- The name of a Centre of Excellence.

2.7 To assist Fire and Rescue Services in formatting their response, a number of key questions are posed within the consultation document. These questions, along with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's proposed response, are included at Appendix B of this report. The deadline for response is 31 January 2008 (extension agreed to allow presentation of the draft response to this Committee).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are two specific financial implications which arise from this report.

- I. Initially the proposal from CLG, CFOA and LGA is to set up a "Pathway Group" to examine how the Centre of Excellence, if agreed, can be moved forward. An indicative figure of £17k has been suggested, although no firm proposal has been received at this time.

II. The Centre of Excellence consultation document presents two funding options:

- § Equal shares for all Fire and Rescue Services;
- § By population.

In respect of equal shares the figure cited is circa £50k from 2009/10 onwards. In respect of population the figure of Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is given as £47,822k also from 2009/10.

3.2 The funding for the Pathway Group, if requested, can be met from existing contingencies. As part of its current financial planning, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service will build the potential costs of the Centre of Excellence into its budget predications for 2009/10 onwards.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The initial equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix A.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Not to contribute to the Centre of Excellence consultation could leave Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service with an outcome it would not be supportive of. It is important that Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service takes every opportunity to influence the future direction of the Service.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Policy & Strategy Committee consider and approve the response to CLG as part of the Centre of Excellence consultation.

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

- Fire Service Circular 45/2007 – A Centre of Excellence for the Fire & Rescue Service in England.
- A Centre of Excellence for the Fire & Rescue Service – Consultation – CLG.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<i>Section</i>	<i>Manager</i>	<i>Date of Assessment</i>	<i>New or Existing</i>
SMT	CFO SWANN	DECEMBER 2007	N/A
Name of Report to be assessed		RESPONSE OF CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE CONSULTATION	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.		To present to the Authority a response to the Centre of Excellence consultation being conducted nationally.	
2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes?		The Service nationally would benefit in a central body which would deliver and co-ordinate high standards within Equality & Diversity, Operational Doctrine, Health & Safety and Training & Development.	
3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?		CLG, CFOA, LGA and Fire & Rescue Services.	
4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?		CLG, CFOA, LGA and other stakeholder groups.	

5. Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

<i>STRAND</i>	Y	N	<i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
Race		X		
Gender		X		
Disability		X		
Religion or Belief		X		
Sexuality		X		
Age		X		

6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group?	Y	N	7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?	Y	N

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing person) CFO SWANN.....

Date ...DECEMBER 2007.....



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire & Rescue Authority

Response to Centre of Excellence Consultation

Report of the Chief Fire Officer, Frank Swann

Question 1

Do you agree that a Centre of Excellence should be established for the Fire & Rescue Service in England?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service supports the principle of the creation of a Centre of Excellence for the Fire & Rescue Service in England. It is accepted that a Centre of Excellence has the potential to support a wide range of functions; however we believe that such a body should not be stretched over such a wide remit as identified within the consultation document.

The requirement for the delivery of a single standard of Operational Doctrine through Technical Bulletins, Manuals, Health & Safety advice etc is well founded. These are all areas formerly delivered by the Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) and are all areas essential to the fundamentals of the Fire & Rescue Service. Whilst most, if not all, will require a level of localisation, there is a potential for genuine cost savings with regard to research and development in such areas. We are genuinely concerned however about the integration into the Centre of Excellence of such areas as Procurement & Contract Management.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would also like to see more clarity with regard to the interaction with the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit (CFRAU) and the funding approach. What will the Fire & Rescue Authorities role be with regard to the proposed Centre of Excellence and what will individual Fire & Rescue Services be "buying into" when/ if agreeing to meet a contribution.

There is also a lack or an absence of reference to the Centre of Excellence's potential role with regard to Improving Fire & Rescue Service performance and the relationship with the Audit Commission.

The Fire & Rescue Service is noticeably absent from the current Comprehensive Area Assessment consultation document. Although a key partner in this framework and referenced within the text as part of the process, the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit are not evidenced as a primary agency. Given the government expectations for a more joined up approach to communities, does this have the potential to leave the service marginalised in this area.

Additionally any Centre of Excellence principle would endorse the sharing and dissemination of "Best Practice". Is this something that should fall with the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit as an alternative. This does confuse the title "Centre of Excellence".

Question 2

What evidence can you provide that would support the case for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence?

During the transition of the Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate to the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit and the current work within the Fire Service College the Service nationally has suffered from something of a stalling in Operational Doctrine. Despite the efforts of existing staff, Fire Service Manuals are now dated and require amendments, Technical Bulletins require updating and with the transfer of the resilience vehicles synergy on maintenance schedule etc will be required.

The need for a greater synergy in staff development is also required. Recent tragic events in Fire & Rescue Services have led to localised amendments to the IPDS system. Whilst this may be seen as positive in respect of training and competence the service runs the risk of duplication of work and of differing standards and practices to a national solution. An early approach to such areas through a "Centre of Excellence" may well be advantageous in the longer term.

Financially for local Fire & Rescue Services it will not be viable to conduct research and development into issues such Fire Investigation trends, national statistics analysis and comparative data. The Centre of Excellence will give valuable support to this key element of work.

A central function which could perform this role on behalf of the Services nationally could allow for the sharing and identification of "Best Practice". It would also allow for a focal and central point of contact for external bodies who may wish to engage with the Service on national issues. It also allows the Service to work on emerging issues such as Climate Change, Health & Safety and European initiatives in a more joined up approach.

Question 3

What would be your preferred name for the new body?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is open to any terminology regarding the proposals but feels that because of the delays in its construct, and other uncertainties, the "Centre of Excellence" brand may require amendments. Communities and Local Government (CLG) and others should consider other options such as "Fire & Rescue Service Centre of Development" or "National Learning & Development Centre". This clearly sets out the principles of the service moving forward and excludes any references which may be drawn to elitism, a previous criticism. This is seen as an element that can be addressed by the pathway group or any other body formed to manage the Centre of Excellence transition.

Question 4

Which of these functions would you like for a Centre of Excellence to deliver and are there any others which should be included?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would support the functions as linked in table 3.9, page 10. It would express concerns regarding the inclusions of the resilience projects at this time and would resist and question the option to include procurement (FiReBuy) at any stage.

Issues arising from the projects such as FiReLink and FiReControl are quite rightly identified as issues the service must address in the future. Only once up and running will the service be able to address the best way in taking these forward. We support the proposed approach of waiting and measuring its impact.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service does not support the inclusion of FiReBuy, a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) at this or any other time.

In respect of these areas identified in 3.9, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service supports the principles in all cases. We raise concern regarding the issue of national performance and performance assessment. It is accepted that the Audit Commission are the key body involved but we would prefer to see where the relationships exist on a national level. If this is to be with the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit then this must be explicit within the consultation.

How and when the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit engages with the Centre of Excellence and/ or the Audit Commission will require further clarification. "A shared vision towards 2017" references "high performing and efficient services". Who will be the steer on this element and how will they engage with the Centre of Excellence.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service welcomes the current review of the Fire Service College and would want to see clarification on the financial model before it became part of the Centre of Excellence. Serious concerns exist around the current costs associated with sending delegates to the College and their equivalent external competition. The need to provide Value for Money, as well as the ability to procure similar, or identical courses from both within and outside the UK at more attractive rates is a key issue. The College has to become more cost effective to Fire & Rescue Authorities in the long term otherwise the migration to other providers will continue.

Our concerns would surround the potential to increase individual Fire & Rescue Service contribution to the Centre of Excellence when the College becomes part of the function. This would potentially see individual Fire & Rescue Authorities underwriting the course costs they would procure at a later date. This would be unacceptable.

Question 5

What do you think will be the impact on equality, highlighting any risks and opportunities?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service see's key positives with regard to the impact on equality within the Fire & Rescue Service nationally. The current Equality & Diversity Strategy, which is under consultation, requires action in five priority areas:

- Leadership & Promoting Inclusion ;
- Effective Service Delivery & Community Engagement ;
- Employment & Training ;
- Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice ; and
- Accountability.

A Centre of Excellence will have the opportunity to assist in the development of all of the above at a national level. In conjunction with the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit there should be the development of a framework which will ensure all objectives, support, targets, results, policies, plans and partnerships are identified and disseminated nationally. This will not remove local accountability but would ensure all Fire & Rescue Services are clear of the expectations placed upon them and that support and guidance, if required, is available.

There are potential risks in the Fire & Rescue Service's may seek to absolve responsibility to a central function however a robust performance framework with scrutiny through Comprehensive Performance Assessment or equivalent process should ensure national commitment to the key issue facing the service.

Question 6

Which model for training delivery do you prefer?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service believes that a full and detailed response to this question should be informed by the outcomes of the current review of the Fire Service College. However, it is recognised that the existing model has felt the College short of its original objectives. Therefore Nottinghamshire Fire & rescue Service endorses the point within the consultation that the Centre of Excellence would be exposed to significant risks if incorporated under current arrangements.

In respect of Option A Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service acknowledges the potential benefits of retaining the current training model. However history and the risk of having the Fire Service College outside of any Centre of Excellence, thus introducing potential conflict is not sustainable. The probability of Operational Doctrine being at odds with training delivery is not an option. A synergy must exist between the two elements and therefore, dependent on the findings of the review, a phase out of this option would be preferable.

Option C would present an ideal opportunity for the Service nationally and the College to move from its existing position to one of a long term sustainable one. By maintaining the major delivery support function under a single governing body the training delivery can be developed in conjunction with Operational Doctrine.

Although this is the preferred option for Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, concerns exist about the ability to deliver a sound financial model in time to include the function in the Centre of Excellence. Additionally Fire & Rescue Authorities who commit to the Centre of Excellence would be importing a financial risk, both short and long term, regarding the Fire Service College. Without the outcomes of the review and an analysis of these risks Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service could not support this model at this time.

Given the comments made above regarding Option A and C, in the short to medium term Option B provides the most sound business case for the Centre of Excellence. Issues such as the status of Chief Executives would require resolving however the strong links between the two should allow for greater synergy between the two functions. It is accepted that there is a risk in falling short of a full single entity but at the present time Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would support this as the best option.

Question 7

Which service delivery model do you prefer?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service agrees the principle that prior to a Centre of Excellence agreeing its delivery model, the business outcomes clearly need to be identified.

Whilst three options for identifying outputs are contained within the consultation document, the risks of having any work identified for the Centre of Excellence being externally driven creates concerns. It is accepted that some element of the business need will have to be identified by external partners, to have the Centre of Excellence not in control of where it delivers its service is too greater risk to its long term viability and resilience.

Likewise the cost of the Centre of Excellence driving its own agenda is something which is of great concern to Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. Here, any benefits achieved locally by the centralisation of the costs burden is likely to be undermined by increases in running costs and short term secondments.

In either case we feel there needs to be more work and dialogue in this area. Clearly Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, as a partner in any Centre of Excellence, would want to ensure that it is buying into a robust delivery model.

In respect of the delivery of the outputs once decided the consultation document presents three clear options:

- Direct Delivery
- Brokered Delivery
- Hybrid Delivery

In respect of the Direct Delivery option Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service recognises the benefits of a single entity delivering Fire & Rescue Service topic specific subjects. Consistency, quality and planning would clearly be the paramount drivers of this model. However, the ability to attract the expertise required could become problematic. Fire & Rescue Services nationally strive to support secondment applications recognising the benefits to both the Service locally and nationally. Recent efficiency requirements and budget constraints are now reducing these opportunities to an absolute minimum. This could leave the Centre of Excellence short of necessary resources.

Whilst Brokered Delivery seems to address the concerns regarding direct delivery it does present other issues. The ability of Fire & Rescue Authority's to provide work for the Centre of Excellence may be limited.

Whilst it is appreciated that this model would reduce the potential of work duplication and actually disseminate "best practice", consistency would be the main concern.

There are also issues around capacity where only the major Fire & Rescue Services will be in a position to support the Centre of Excellence. This may mean that limited bids are received for work, and hence, a polarised outcome being delivered. Clearly there are benefits as Fire & Rescue Service staff remain at the forefront of operational expertise and thus outcomes delivered are informed, timely and relevant. Although there is a potential to reduce costs, invariably these will be borne elsewhere so this does have the potential to present false economy.

Given the comments made, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's preference for a delivery option would be the Hybrid model. This should see the benefits of both approaches combined into what best services the Fire & Rescue Service nationally. We would want to see a more detailed breakdown of how this would work and would need to see a greater analysis of potential costs. However, the principle of a central point of delivery taking account for more local and regional centres already established seems to be the most beneficial direction.

Question 8

Which Governance option do you support?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service does not consider that the establishment of an Executive Agency is the direction the Centre of Excellence should take. Although it is recognised that it is quick to establish and can own/employ staff and assets, the lack of a role by Fire & Rescue Services in its governance could leave the Centre of Excellence polarised.

For the Centre of Excellence to be effective it has to engage and be accountable to its key stakeholders. It is accepted that a robust framework for delivery will need to be achieved. It is for this reason that the enhancement of the existing agency – The Fire Service College is not seen as an option Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service can support. Whilst there is an element of expediency around this option, the limited role of Fire & Rescue Services in its governance, as well as the restructuring issues, raise concerns for Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

It is also a consideration that it may be viewed as the Fire Service College extending its remit and influence, rather than the creation of a new and vibrant Centre of Excellence for the Fire & Rescue Service. If such a body is to be successful and benefit the long term future of the Fire & Rescue Service it has to be viewed by all stakeholders as a unique and energetic body.

It is accepted that CFOA, and its possible enhancement is not an option at this present time. Whilst the professional knowledge and skills exist within this body, there are some issues around structure and constitution that would need to be resolved.

Additionally CFOA should reserve its right to challenge and influence the direction of the Fire & Rescue Service in the guise of a critical partner. If it holds the sole responsibility for the Service's future by "owning" the Centre of Excellence, then this role may be undermined.

In assessing a joint committee of stakeholders Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service recognises the limitations that this may place on the Centre of Excellence. The lack of an organisational structure, staff and assets and the reliance on partners for delivery are serious issues which would affect the long term capability of the Centre of Excellence. It is considered essential that the Centre of Excellence is robust from the offset and that all of its structures, although immature will be robust enough to stand appropriate scrutiny. However the Service does recognise the advantage of a joint Committee in the short term. As the Service nationally moves towards a Centre of Excellence a stakeholder committee could ensure that the Governance arrangements would be legitimate and accountable. It also needs to be flexible to adapt to evolving expectations.

As a consequence of the above comments, and with due regard to the options presented within the consultation document, the preference on the Governance for Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would be the establishment of the Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). Obviously it is recognised that there are costs in establishing such a body, but given that the Fire & Rescue Service is already familiar with this process through the establishment of FiReBuy, it does present clear advantages. A lack of maturity may preclude this initially but the key path needs to be from stakeholder committee to Non-Departmental Public Body.

To be robust Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would need reassurance that appointments to any board were open and transparent and that the lead professional bodies were involved in any process to support the CLG. We would also recommend the involvement of the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisors Unit. Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would fully support the appointment of ex-Officers as board members, in particular those from CFOA, FPA and IFE.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would require reassurances on funding levels, levels of Grant Aid from government, establishment, board construct, articles of association etc before it would fully commit. There would also be a need to identify how training delivery, the Fire Service College and the new Non-Departmental Public Body would evolve and the overall financial plan.

It is accepted that in any of the options presented the right Chief Executive would be central to the success of any new body. Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would clearly support someone with a knowledge of the Fire & Rescue Service, a proven track record of achievement, respected by all stakeholder groups as well as holding those qualities listed in E13 of the consultation document.

In respect of the initial location of the Centre of Excellence, Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would like to offer its support to the existing facilities at Moreton-in-Marsh. Clearly there will need to be substantial investment in the site to bring accommodation and other infrastructure up to the requisite levels. However the site has the advantage of being central to England, known to the Fire & Rescue Service community and has the added advantage of already bringing together professional bodies such as the FPA and IFE.

In the longer term of the Centre of Excellence, once established would be the correct body for the determining of its long term location.

Question 9

Are there any other options you wish to propose?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has no specific alternative options to propose, however through the pathway group the 'Service' would like to see greater exploration regarding the advantages and disadvantages of these presented within the consultation paper.

For the Centre of Excellence to be successful the Service nationally has to have the confidence in its total operational from Chief Executive through board to point of delivery. A full and detailed analysis is absolutely necessary before any commitment can be made.

Question 10

Do you agree that the existing forums need to be reviewed? If so, how should they be restructured and interact with a Centre of Excellence?

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service recognises that for the Centre of Excellence to be successful it will have to work closely with all of its key stakeholders. How each of these forums operate and how they engage with the Centre of Excellence will need to be determined once the governance of the Centre of Excellence is established and confirmed.

Whether each group is working effectively in its own right is a matter for the present and should not be inextricably lined to the Centre of Excellence. What is essential however is that each group should have a clear remit through its terms of reference and medium term strategy of what its objectives are. If such detail is in place then the potential for duplication of work can be avoided and each body's relationship with the Centre of Excellence can be established.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service feels it important that the relationships and the participation of each stakeholder group will need to be clearly managed. Each individual group will need to recognise its relationship with the Centre of Excellence and each other. The potential damage and bureaucracy that this could present if not clear could damage the Centre of Excellence's potential to move the Service forward.

At this stage of the Centre of Excellence's development it would be clearly beneficial if the pathway group could liaise with the stakeholder groups and ensure that the requisite terms of reference, future plan and potential engagement with the Centre of Excellence we all established.

Question 11

Would your Authority be willing to contribute to funding of the Centre of Excellence?

In principle the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority fully support the development of a Centre of Excellence and recognise that it will be necessary to contribute to such a body. At the present time, before any commitment is given there are some details that the Authority would require.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service are encouraged by the commitment given by CLG to the funding of the Central Government responsibilities. We also support the recognition given to the funding of the preferred Governance option (in our preference the NDPB) as this would show the commitment to the Centre of Excellence and would clearly reduce any burden on the local taxpayer.

In respect of the finances cited in the summary of costs analysis there are clearly areas where Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would require greater clarity. For example the estimate given on Operational Doctrine is £100k/ annum, or 5 Area Managers plus 1 Station Manager. How has this been derived and on what basis has the workload and responsibility levels for the production of the information been assessed. Clearly an analysis of the work required nationally, including current backlog, ongoing maintenance and new product needs to be undertaken. Likewise similar costs are presented for Health & Safety and Fire Prevention support.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service would like to see a full detailed analysis of projected workloads and resource options before committing to the funding. Under the principles of Best Value and the provisions of Local Audit and CPA, the Authority would need to demonstrate that its contribution to the Centre of Excellence produced both efficient and net value to the organisation.

It is appreciated that the consultation document is outlining estimates on staffing levels but these would clearly need to be ratified at some stage. Additionally if the estimates are found to be incorrect then Fire & Rescue Service's would need to know what would be the funding impact both short and long term.

Question 12

Which of the options for allocating costs do you prefer? Is there another means of allocation which would be preferable?

The consultation document presents options on equal shares and by population in respect of funding. In either case Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's cost implications are very similar (£50k and £47k respectively). Therefore either option has the potential to be agreed.

In principle the population aspect provides the fairer approach however Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service do recognise the impact that this will have on larger Authorities.

What is important is that there is and continues to be a commitment from CLG to also offer long term financial support to the Centre of Excellence. A distinction can be drawn with the establishment of the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) and the government support given to that body in its establishment.

There is also a need for any funding to be linked to the deliverables and outcomes of the Centre of Excellence. This may require additional work in respect of the funding models proposed, and the basis by which individual services makes their contribution. This is work that CLG can support through the current pathway group project.

Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service recognises the contribution that CLG have made to the Fire & Rescue Service over recent years and accepts the funding pressures that all government departments are under. However, the benefits of the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in the long term will deliver tangible benefits to both Fire & Rescue Services and Government. In real terms these would far outweigh any financial commitment at this stage.

Councillor Darrell Pulk
Chair of Nottinghamshire and City of
Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

Chief Fire Officer Frank Swann
Nottingham Fire & Rescue Service
