



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

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

# **FIRE COVER REVIEW CONSULTATION PROCESS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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**Agenda Item No:**

**Date:** 07 October 2011

**Purpose of Report:**

To request that Policy and Strategy Committee approve a three week extension to the current consultation on Fire Cover Review.

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Fire Cover Review 2010 (FCR 2010) was delivered as part of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), referred to as the Service Plan 2010-13, which was previously agreed and consulted upon by the Fire Authority in 2009.
- 1.2 The final outcomes and conclusions of FCR 2010 were presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting of 25 February 2011. As a result, a cross-party Working Group was formed to consider the outcomes presented by the CFO with a view to determining if the FCR 2010 process was robust. The Chair of the Working Group reported its findings to the CFA meeting of 24 June, along with a further report from the CFO giving three options, including a preferred option, (option 2), as to how to address the findings. At the June meeting, the CFA also received a report from Nottingham Business School (NBS) covering the external scrutiny and validation of data processes.
- 1.3 As stated in 1.2 above, option 2 was highlighted in that report as the CFO's preferred option and was amended at the meeting to remove any implications relating to Station 15 Collingham. This received cross-party support in the Fire Authority and subsequently directed the CFO to arrange consultation on the remaining content of option 2.
- 1.4 A consultation document and programme was developed and this was presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee at its meeting of 29 July 2011.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 Consultation on the implementation of Option 2 of the Fire Cover Review commenced on Monday 1 August 2011, and was scheduled to run for a period of 12 weeks. In the report to Policy and Strategy Committee on 29 July 2011, Paragraph 2.3 did indicate that the potential for a small and limited extension did exist.
- 2.2 To date the following bullet point list gives a synopsis of some of the activities which have taken place:
  - Consultation on the original IRMP that contained FCR as a work stream;
  - The FCR 2010 documents are all loaded as PDF documents on the website and we have also provided presentations and briefing packs to Members, managers and the press;
  - It has been included in the Members' seminars over the last year and on agendas at most CFA committee meetings;
  - Reports that included FCR, either on our website or the City;

- Media interviews that took place before the formal consultation exercise that meant the subject was in a public arena;
- The creation of representative body websites that may not be in our plans but do still ask people to complete the consultation document;
- The formal CFA meetings that are open to the public to attend;
- The formal media briefings that we held at SHQ and SDC at the launch of the formal phase;
- The media / newspaper coverage that we have had and the Media Communications Team have been recording;
- We have distributed approximately 2000 copies of the consultation document and have it available on the website;
- The document can be completed online or by post in its current format or alternative formats can be requested;
- Copies have gone to the City and County councillors – we are checking borough/district circulation lists to see if we may have missed some;
- Employed an experienced market research company to assist in the whole process;
- Edwinstowe/Ollerton – combined forum and public focus group;
- Worksop – business breakfast / combined forum / public focus group;
- Retford - business breakfast / combined forum / public focus group;
- Mansfield - business breakfast / combined forum / public focus group;
- Greater Nottingham - business breakfast / combined forum;
- West Bridgford – 2 public focus groups;
- RDS employee forum – another one still to do at night time;
- WDS employee forum – another one planned to do;
- Support staff forum;
- Representative bodies – consultation meetings attended by the DCFO since April 2010;
- Parish council seminar / forums now being planned – this looks like it will be six meetings to cope with the numbers that may well attend;
- Chambers of Commerce and business club meetings that are now being planned – businesses are possibly the biggest weakness over what we have already done due to low attendance figures;

- We will be doing drop-in sessions at town halls / libraries etc. to hand out the document – targeting those areas where they consider to be losing resources eg: Mansfield, Retford;
  - Responding to letters via the Chair and CFO – eg: from local MPs;
  - FOI requests that we are dealing with ongoing;
  - Chief and Chair visits across the whole Service in recent months;
  - FCR 2010 is being placed on the agenda and discussed at LSPs / CDRPs via the Group Managers;
  - We are costing additional public focus groups;
  - We are costing out radio adds with key messages to highlight with the Communications and Media Team;
  - Liaising with ORS over the costs we have incurred to date and seeking what they feel are our weaknesses and how they would recommend we deal with them.
- 2.3 To date the Service has just passed the half way stage of the consultation. Support has been given by Opinion Research Services as part of the Fire Services Consultation Association (FSCA) contract. They have assisted primarily with the business breakfast forum and public focus group events, as well as giving guidance on other aspects such as media and publications.
- 2.4 Even though the Service is absolutely confident that the process will be robust and that the outcomes credible, where suggestions have been made these have tried to be accommodated. More latterly however, the timeframes will prove 'difficult' in accommodating much more.
- 2.5 Examples of such new requests are:
- Six events to Parish Councils;
  - Specific presentations to District Councils – eg: Bassetlaw;
  - Requests for additional information.
- 2.6 So that the Authority can have absolute confidence in the process, and so that it can be seen that as many views and opinions have been accessed as possible, it is proposed to extend the current consultation process by three weeks. This will make a total period of 15 weeks and see consultation formally end on Sunday 13 November 2011.
- 2.7 This extension period still ensures that the Service can meet its original timeframes of reporting back to the Fire Authority on the outcomes at its meeting of 16 December 2011.
- 2.8 It is proposed that if the extension is agreed, some of the additional activities are adopted by the in-house team dealing with the process, and some via the arrangement with ORS. The Service's Media and Communications Team will

also provide additional information to the media around the extension period and encourage more people to engage in the process.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 FCR 2010 now forms part of the Fire Authority plans to meet its budgetary requirements following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for the following 4 years and also forms part of the Fire Authorities decision-making in relation to future grant settlements.
- 3.2 The Fire Authority set aside a budget of £50k for the purposes of this consultation. A general provision of £30k is budgeted for annually, so a total amount of £80k is available if required. To date the process has cost £35k (exc. VAT) and the Corporate Team are seeking further costings from ORS in relation to the additional work required.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not introduce any new human resources or learning and development implications that are not already managed by NFRS within its current plans.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has not been completed on this report as the EIA process was conducted upon the Fire Cover Review.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

No additional crime and disorder implications are identified or introduced to the Fire Authority or NFRS as the result of this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Any amendment to fire cover arrangements that affects service provision to communities must be subject to a full, proportionate and meaningful consultation process. This will also apply to consultation with employees where changes have an impact on the workforce.
- 7.2 By implementing the highlighted programme the Fire Authority and NFRS will clearly discharge its responsibility to consult and follow local and central government good practice guidelines – eg: IRMP guidance notes.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 By engaging the approach to consultation detailed within this report reduces the risk to both the Fire Authority and NFRS from future challenge. These are the lessons gathered from around the UK FRS where such issues as '*Judicial Review*' have been lodged specifically into the process of consultation and not the content of consultation itself.
- 8.2 By taking an approach of extending the consultation at this stage following comments raised, this shows a pro-active approach by the Fire Authority to engage with as many persons as possible.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Policy and Strategy Committee note the progress to date and agree to an extension period of three weeks, with consultation concluding on 13 November 2011.

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

None.

Frank Swann  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**