

Update from the Chair of the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group

Report of the Chair of the Working Group

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or David Minnery, Chair of the Working Group.

1 Purpose of Report

Following the Grant and Budget announcements of late 2012 and March 2013 the Fire Authority asked its Strategy and Resources Committee to find a further £1.2 to £1.6 million per year budget reductions to be implemented to enable a balanced budget by 2020.

This short report updates Members on the work thus far. Normally a paper would come through the Strategy and Resources Committee but, because of election dates, this report comes directly from the Chair of the Fire Authority's Strategic Risk and Planning (StRaP) Working Group.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report.

3 Background

During the latter part of 2012 Members visited every station, Watch and Team to support the 2020 risk planning project and worked with staff to identify a range of risks, which the Authority and Service would need to face by 2020. In addition to this work officers have been compiling the local, regional and national risks, which the Service has to face as part of the work towards satisfying the requirements of the Fire Service Framework.

Following the Fire Authority meeting in February it was clear that the budget would be in a £1.2 to £1.6 million annual deficit by 2019/20. Members, therefore, tasked officers to produce plans for dealing with this budget imbalance.

4 Risk and Impact Assessment

During March officers compiled a larger list of options that, if implemented, could reduce annual running costs but with a wide range of impacts on frontline service delivery and impacts on the governance of the Authority. They presented a long list of these options to a meeting of StRaP, held in early April.

The next stage of this process is for officers to visit all teams to carry out a detailed impact assessment of these options, before reporting in detail to the Fire Authority in September 2013.

As expected, the front line can no longer be completely protected from the impacts of ongoing reductions to the budget, so there will be some very difficult and challenging decisions to make and projects to deliver.

The options include moving across the 'Red Lines', set for the Fire Authority's Public Value plan. They may well involve decisions about station closures, fire engine removals, redundancies and possibly merger with other services, even though, in previous consultations with the public, Members and officers have stated that these were options, which they did not wish to explore.

In this next stage, however, from April until September, no decisions will be made. Once officers have reported on the risks of each option Members will decide, in September 2013, which options need to be further discussed with the communities affected, leading to a full report to the Fire Authority early in 2014. From this date consultation with staff and the public will begin, before any cuts are implemented later in 2014/15.

5 Financial Implications

These plans are designed to take a further £1.2 to £1.6 million from the Fire Authority's annual budget, which will mean that, by 2019/20, over £5 million (25%) will have been cut from annual running costs.

6 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this paper, which provides comment on a Fire Authority working group meeting.

7 Impact Assessment

All changes to the Service will be subjected to detailed impact assessments, where required.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.