

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SAFETY

- 21ST SEPTEMBER 2021

THAMES VALLEY PRINCIPAL FIRE OFFICER SHARING AGREEMENT

Report by Corporate Director, Commercial Development, Assets and Investment

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. The Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety is RECOMMENDED to authorise the sealing of the legal agreement which will allow Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue to enter arrangements under section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for the discharge of the Statutory Functions of one FRA by another FRA through their respective cadres of Principal Officers acting as Level 4 Incident Commanders across the Thames Valley.**

Executive Summary

- 2. The Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) collaborate successfully in the operation of a single joint emergency call handling, mobilising and resource management function from a single location at Calcot in Berkshire and a fallback provision to a joint secondary control room in Kidlington in Oxfordshire (together the Thames Valley Fire Control Service).**

The FRAs have statutory responsibilities under sections 7(2)(a); 8(2)(a) and 9(3)(a) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to secure the provision of personnel to respond to fires, road traffic incidents, and other emergencies; have powers under section 11 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to respond to other emergencies; and have duties placed on them as Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and regulations made pursuant to it (the “Statutory Functions”).

The FRAs recognise that the Covid 19 Pandemic is a national crisis that continues to test the capacity of the Services to protect the public from the impacts of the Covid 19 Pandemic, and acknowledge the risk that its Principal Officers may themselves become incapacitated through illness or the requirements of Covid 19 self-isolation such that such scenarios could compromise the ability of an FRA to discharge its Statutory Functions.

The FRAs therefore wish to enter into arrangements under section 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for the discharge of the Statutory

Functions of one FRA by another FRA through their respective cadres of Principal Officer acting as Level 4 Incident Commanders on the terms set out in the legal agreement.

Financial Implications

3. Except as otherwise provided, each party shall bear its own costs and, any expenses incurred, in complying with the arrangements. be specifically stated and explained.

Legal Implications

4. The attached annex is the legal agreement between Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, Oxfordshire County Council and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Staff Implications

5. This agreement will see one Principal Officer released by the 'Assistor' to act, as a Level 4 Commander for the 'Recipient' by transferring the staff resource to another Fire and Rescue Service for a temporary period

Equality & Inclusion Implications

6. This agreement directly affects a small cohort of officers in the three fire and rescue services and has no significant Equality or Inclusion implications. All three organisations involved have stringent policies in place to ensure adherence to the relevant equality and inclusion legislation.

Sustainability Implications

7. Officers working in neighbouring counties could see an increase in travel distances, but this would be minimised through remote working and, in Oxfordshire's case, using electric vehicles.

Risk Management

8. This agreement is designed to mitigate the risk of absence of senior officers within Fire and Rescue and by preplanning the necessary arrangements reduce the risk of enacting this arrangement if required.

STEVE JORDEN

Corporate Director, Commercial Development, Assets and Investment

Annex: Legal Agreement between Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, Oxfordshire County Council and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

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