

ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT “CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY”

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces a consultation, this time by the Fire Authority, in connection with the restructuring of the Fire Service into smaller units called Community Commands.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The District Council has now received a copy of a consultation paper produced by the Fire Authority, titled “Closer to the Community”, relating to the restructuring of the Fire Service. The consultation exercise runs until 15th August, 2001. A copy of the consultation paper is attached.
- 2.2 Prior to receipt of the consultation, the Chief Executive informed the Chief Fire Officer of the Council’s comments in relation to the recent Best Value consultation on Essex Police’s proposed restructuring. In response, the Chief Fire Officer has advised that in order to get “closer to the community”, there needs to be a ‘critical mass’ of stations to benefit from the optimum use of support staff. Community commands cannot therefore be too small. There also needs to be sufficient premises in each community command to accommodate those support staff. Unfortunately, neither Rochford nor Castle Point has such suitable property belonging to the Brigade.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Many of the issues raised in connection with this restructuring are similar to those raised in relation to the Police Service. Hence, it is considered that the response to this exercise should be similar – 2 tier versus unitary system, differing characteristics of the Authorities, current partnership arrangements, details of consultation with the community, etc.
- 3.2 However, it is interesting to note that in this case the Fire Service do say they are intending to trial community commands in both

Chelmsford/Maldon and Southend/Rochford. Thus, in addition to the previous comments made, the Council should consider whether it wishes to participate in any trial that does take place.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The restructuring of the Fire Service is likely to impact on the current partnership arrangements relating to Crime & Disorder.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nothing specific at this stage.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nothing specific at this stage.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The restructuring proposals have District-wide implications.

8 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Council determines its views in respect of this consultation exercise from the Fire Authority concerning the restructuring of the Fire Service.

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