

## **CONTROL ROOM - SITE SHARING AGREEMENT WITH DYFED POWYS POLICE**

At the Fire Authority meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004, Members were presented with an update report regarding the proposed site sharing arrangement with Dyfed Powys Police whereby the Fire and Rescue Service Control Room would be relocated to the new joint Communications Centre then under construction at Police Headquarters, Llangunnor.

During the associated discussion, consideration was given to a recently received letter from the Assembly that detailed their broadly supportive position on the proposed move although at that time of course, the devolution of policy responsibility for the fire services in Wales to the Welsh Assembly Government had not been completed. Members were also advised that in addition to the initial project commitment of £45,000, approved by the Resources Committee during their April 2004 meeting, a further investment would eventually be required in order to ensure that the internal configuration of the new building met all of our operational requirements.

Following the September meeting wherein the Authority re-affirmed its previous policy decision to relocate the Control Room, officers from the Service, including Control Room representatives, have worked closely with design consultants, civil contractors and Dyfed Powys Police in order to develop an acceptable layout for the fire service specific areas within the new building. A preferred layout that is expected to fully meet our operational needs has been identified by an Officers' Working Group involving Control Room personnel following an evaluation of various design and financial options. A further capital investment of some £140,000 will now be required in order to undertake the necessary building works required to meet the Service's operational specifications. These comprise the following main components:

- Electrical Infrastructure
- Data cabling
- Internal partitioning
- Modification to Air Conditioning and mechanical Installations

In addition to the above, minor modifications may be required to the location and configuration of some facilities, including a small kitchen, interview and training areas. Detailed discussions on these remaining matters are almost complete, and it is anticipated that all costs will be contained within the investment limit of £140,000.

As the new communications centre building is still under warranty, the Fire Authority is itself inhibited from arranging these works or nominating a civil contractor of its choice following a competitive tendering exercise. Instead, Dyfed Powys Police, as owners of the building, will themselves have to arrange for the works to be undertaken on our behalf and by the original builders. That said, the costs analysis will be professionally scrutinised by an external third party assessor to ensure that the additional costs represent value for money for the Fire and Rescue Authority.

During a recent meeting with the Finance Director of Dyfed Powys Police, a tentative agreement was reached whereby the capital cost associated with these building works would be met in full by the Police Authority and absorbed within the rental/lease charges they would be levying upon the Fire and Rescue Service for use of the facility. It is anticipated that the additional costs will be offset by adopting a similar approach to recovering capital costs met by the Fire and Rescue Authority, on behalf of the Police, at the Crymych joint facility. The process of concluding these leases is ongoing and we are being supported in this regard by our legal consultants in Pembrokeshire County Council. At this stage, the Service's planning assumptions provide for an anticipated relocation date of late August or early September this year.

Since the Authority's latest decision to proceed with this joint venture, the transfer of fire service responsibilities to Cardiff has now taken place and the Welsh Assembly Government continues to support the principle of co-operation between the emergency services. This Authority's proposed relocation of the Control Room to the new Police Joint Communications Centre is referred to in the final National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales as a positive example in this regard. Committee will also recall a letter received from the Social Justice and Regeneration Department at the Assembly in August 2004 stating that the location of its control room was a matter for the Fire and Rescue Authority to determine. However, the National Framework states:

*"...Fire and Rescue Authorities should seek to agree with the Assembly Government the arrangements for managing and maintaining the control room in its area and comply with national protocols on staff roles and training and back-up and resilience requirements"*

Whilst the Authority has long since made its policy decision to relocate the control room to the Joint site at Llangunmor, a proposal endorsed within the National Framework as evidence of inter-service co-operation, Committee may consider it prudent to seek written confirmation that the Assembly remains supportive of the proposal, prior to formally signing the lease agreement.

## **Recommendation**

1. That the report be received and that Committee endorses the final commitment of approximately £140,000 to complete the internal configuration of the Service's Control Room within the Dyfed Powys Police Joint Communications Centre at Carmarthen;
2. That if possible, the costs be offset against the account due from the Police Authority for the capital expenditure incurred by the Fire and Rescue Authority on its behalf in relation to the joint scheme at Crymych, with repayment spread over an appropriate duration of the respective lease agreements, with the detailed terms being agreed by the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer;

3. That a letter be sent to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration at the Welsh Assembly Government seeking confirmation that the Authority's intentions to relocate its control room remains consistent with the Assembly's policy stance, and in particular the recently approved National Framework.