

Title: **THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007**

Date: 23 July 2009

Members Reporting: Councillor Bateson

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Wards Affected: All

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report includes:

- An update on the development of the proposal(s) by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for submission to the Local Government Association (The Selector) in accordance to requirements of Sustainable Communities Act 2007, to be put into effect by the Secretary of State.
- A Summary of two proposals as endorsed by Cross Party Panel to be developed into formal proposals (as detailed below) for submission to the Selector as required by Act by 31st July 2009.
 - a) The transfer of financial and operational responsibility for the local fire and rescue services to the control of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Unitary Authority from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (Appendix A)
 - b) The transfer of local Business Support Services provided by the Business Link and South East England Development Agency to the control of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Unitary Authority Appendix B)

Appendix A & B are attached.

2. **RECOMMENDATION:**

i) That the report be noted

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
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The Act will promote the sustainability of local communities by encouraging the improvement of economic, social and environmental well-being, increase the participation in civic activity by enabling communities to have a greater control in the delivery of local services currently delivered by regional agencies.
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3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background & Progress

- 3.1.1 The 26th February Cabinet meeting resolved that the key principles of the Sustainable Communities Act be noted and for the purposes of implementing the Act that 'Panels of Representatives', a Project Steering Group and a Cross Party Panel of five elected representative be established. These panels have been established with the Cross Party Panel having been convened on the 20th May, 17th June, 6th July and to be convened on the 20th & 27th July. The Panel of Local Representatives is to be convened on the 15th July with representatives from the agencies likely to be effected by the proposal together with representatives from community groups

Royal Borough Fire Service Provison Proposal update

- 3.1.2 A working party has been established to inform the development of the proposal. Membership of this working party includes local business representation from the Maidenhead and District Chambers of Commerce (Mr. Mike Miller) and has been advised by the former Fire Chief (Mr. Richard J Coates MIFireE; FCMI). The work of Group led to the development of the initial proposal.
- 3.1.2 To establish the level resident support for a locally controlled fire service across the Royal Borough, the market research firm BMG were commissioned to conduct local consultation. This concluded that 65% local residents would prefer the fire and rescue services to be managed directly by their local authority.

The Royal Borough's Head of Finance has met with the Treasurer at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to assess the existing financial and operational data available. In addition, an external consultancy firm (Atlantic Customer Solutions) has been commissioned to conduct a feasibility study using the data available to inform the development of the proposal.

- 3.1.3 The finding of the Royal Borough's own internal investigations of the budgetary implications of the proposal indicate that the transfer of responsibility would be broadly cost neutral. However it is important to note that a process of formal due diligence will be required to establish full costs and grant income and this will need to take place once the proposal has been submitted.
- 3.1.4 A draft proposal will be presented at the Panel of Local Representatives (15th of July) where the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, other stakeholders, community groups and residents will be given the opportunity to comment.

Royal Borough Business Services Proposal

- 3.1.5 A working party has been established to inform the development of the proposal. Membership of this working party includes local business representation from the Maidenhead and District Chambers of Commerce (Mr. John Cheeter) and supported by the Federation of Small Businesses (Ms. Asa Cunniff). The Windsor and Eton Chambers of Commerce have provided a verbal commitment to supporting the proposal. The work of this Group has lead to the development of an initial draft.

3.1.6 Formal consultation has taken between the Royal Borough and representatives from both Business Link Berkshire (Mr.Ganesh Selvarajah) and SEEDA, (Mr Nigel Horton Baker) during a meeting convened on 26th June.

3.1.7 SEEDA is unable to provide a budget figure for the business support procured specifically across in the Royal Borough. Initial indications however suggest that based on the current arrangements (a sub regional delivery model) this approaches £400k pa. It is important to note that from 2010 SEEDA plan to change the current arrangements for the delivery of Business Link services to a south East region wide contract. This may have an impact on the assessment made by the proposal, however the details of the new arrangements have yet to be released by SEEDA.

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	Do nothing	Report for Information only	Revenue: None Capital: None
2.	Note details within the report.	(as above)	Revenue: None Capital: None Revenue

4.2 Risk assessment

4.2.1 Formal process of formal due diligence will be required to establish full costs and grant income for both proposal if endorsed for submission.

5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1 With key agencies involved as detailed within the report, BMG residents survey, to be presented to a panel of local representative on the 15th July 2009

6. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

To be circulated for comment to the Chairs of all Overview and Scrutiny Panels

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Background Papers:

- Report to Cabinet 23 October 2008
- Report to Cabinet 26 February 2009
- Report to Cabinet Briefing 2009