

**ARSON TASK FORCE: SUCCESSFUL BID FOR FUNDING****Joint Report of the Chief Constable, Clerk and Treasurer**

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**1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the successful bids for funding for Arson Task Forces to be set up from 1 April 2004 in each of the Force's six new Area Commands.

**2 BACKGROUND**

The Arson Control Forum was set up in April 2001 to provide strategic direction to the Government led strategy to address problems of arson. The Forum has implemented a programme to reduce the incidence of deliberately set fires by 10% by 2010 in support of the target published in the White Paper, 'Our Fire and Rescue Service'.

The first phase of the programme included the New Projects Initiative under which partnerships in England and Wales received grants totalling over £2.25 million during the past two years to invest in local arson reduction schemes.

At the Police Authority meetings held on 25 July 2001 (minute 84 - 2001/02), and 25 September 2002 (minute 105 - 2002/03) members were advised of successful bids, made to the Arson Control Forum, to partly fund the provision of a constable to the Arson Task Force covering the Gateshead and South Tyneside areas. The funding covered a two year period and the Chief Constable used his discretion under the policy agreed by the Police Authority with regard to the Provision of Additional Police Resources (minute 210 - 1996/97) to meet 50% of the salary costs.

**3 CURRENT POSITION**

The Forum programme has now moved into its second phase, and in order to help to achieve the arson reduction target, the Forum has set aside £4 million to invest in local arson reduction initiatives, and partnerships were invited to bid for funding for arson control work in their areas.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has identified dedicated Arson Task Forces as effective in addressing the underlying causes of arson by co-ordinating local efforts to reduce deliberately set fires, monitoring trends and raising the profile of arson as a community issue.

As a result, bids were submitted by both the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire Services, on behalf of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, for Arson Task Forces to be set up from 1 April 2004 in each Local Authority area. It was intended that one constable in each Area Command would form part of a multi agency Arson Task Force in each of the Force's six new Area Commands.

#### **4 OUTCOME OF THE BIDS**

Total funding of £303,000 in 2004/05 and £324,000 in 2005/06 was secured in respect of the joint bid, of which £109,750 in 2004/05 and £112,743 in 2005/06 has been allocated to Northumbria Police to fund 50% of the cost of six constables. The Chief Constable used his discretion under the policy agreed by the Police Authority with regard to the Provision of Additional Police Resources (minute 210 - 1996/97) to meet 50% of the salary costs.

#### **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

Nil.

#### **6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

Although there are no direct human rights implications arising from this report, the provision of an Arson Task Force does have human rights implications in that the force has a duty to promote human rights. The work of the Arson Task Force may be considered as promoting the right to life and the peaceful enjoyment of property.

#### **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Treasurer has confirmed that this cost can be accommodated from within the revenue budget and that there are no other financial implications arising from this report.

In order to ensure there will be no costs to the Authority beyond the expiry of the funding an appropriate exit strategy will be devised.

#### **8 RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.