

1 INTRODUCTION

The UK Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), along with all public service organisations, finds itself in a competitive and commercial environment in all parts of its organisation. Limited public funding means that the FRS needs to investigate other ways of supporting its finances, potentially through generating income by providing professional services on a commercial basis.

In line with many other UK FRS, we recognise that there are opportunities for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to use the expertise that it already possesses in order to diversify the services it offers and, in doing so, generate much needed income that can be used to enhance the safety of our communities.

Historically, NFRS has undertaken a limited number of activities that have created financial income on a cost-recovery basis, in line with the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970. These activities have included the recovery of costs for:

- Operational 'special services' (an Authority may recover its costs for special service work that does not involve the protection of life or the environment);
- Fire safety work, including fire extinguisher training, fire warden and industrial fire team training; and
- Operational training, including specialist tactical firefighting training using the Cobra cold-cutting lance

We now need to develop this further and identify additional opportunities for increasing income to help support the delivery of the NFRS strategic objectives of keeping our staff and our communities' safe and well, whilst making the best use of our resources. This includes consideration of the use of commercial trading powers as detailed in the Local Government Act 2003.

2 AIM OF THE STRATEGY

This is a high level three-year strategy (2017 – 2020) identifying the direction that the NFRS is intending to take in generating income that will be used to help support the Service in protecting the Northamptonshire community. The strategy will be underpinned by annual action plans in order to deliver agreed outcomes.

3 MECHANISM TO TRADE

In keeping with the NFRS paradigm of providing benefit to the community, the Service recognises the need to trade with a social purpose with any profit being directed back into improving community safety. There are several legal mechanisms that allow the FRS to offer its services on a commercial basis i.e. to make a surplus, although this can only be exercised through a company.

- We will carry out analysis of the legal mechanisms to identify the most appropriate model for NFRS to commercially trade its various services; this will include consideration of a collaborative approach with partners
- We will research and present a costed business case that identifies the resources required to implement the recommended commercial trading model

4 INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITIES AND FUNDING STREAMS

In addition to the current activities being undertaken on a cost-recovery basis, there are numerous other activities that the Service might wish to consider as part of an income generation model. This includes not only the selling of our services, but also the effective identification and subsequent access to other funding streams such as grants, levies, etc.

- We will carry out research to identify the services we might potentially offer on a commercial basis, and undertake in-depth market research and feasibility studies on those services with the potential to generate healthy and sustained income
- We will investigate the availability of funding through all income streams such as grants, levies, etc., and put arrangements in place to maximise income generation opportunities

Following this initial scoping work, it is our aim to introduce sustainable arrangements that allow us to develop and deliver a portfolio of activities and services, which we will offer to customers on a commercial basis - the income from which will be used to support the safety of our firefighters and our communities.