

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Periodic Report of the Vice Chairman on Authority Matters

Appointment of Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

1. The Authority has appointed the UK's first-ever female Chief Fire Officer to have risen through the ranks. Becci Bryant is the only woman in the UK to have achieved this prestigious position after beginning her career as an operational firefighter. She will relinquish her current role as Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service on 18 April when she will officially replace the outgoing Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Peter Dartford.

Ms Bryant has had a long and varied career since she joined the fire brigade in 1992. At the time, she was one of the first three female firefighters to enrol at Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service. Whilst there, she took on the role of Leading Firefighter and then of Sub Officer. After 10 years of dedicated service, Ms Bryant moved to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, where she worked within the Central Training Unit. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service was the next promotion and in 2005 she joined as an Assistant Area Commander at Newcastle Fire Station before taking on the role of Area Commander at Tamworth. In 2010, Ms Bryant took on the challenge of leading the Business Transformation Team at Headquarters where she implemented a host of innovative ideas to ensure that taxpayers continue to receive a first-class response, prevent and protect service that is excellent value for money, despite the economic climate. Ms Bryant was then appointed as Director of Organisational Development where she led the joint fire control project between Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and West Midlands Fire Service. She became the first woman in the country to have started her career as an operational firefighter to achieve the role of Deputy Chief Executive/Executive Director in January 2014.

2016/2017 Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting

2. The Authority has set a Revenue requirement for 2016/17 of £40,516,344, which incorporates the Settlement Funding of £16,766,901 and the Council Tax requirement of £22,749,443.

The budget has been set based upon a four year Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement ("draft settlement") issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 17 December 2015; the Settlement Funding for the Authority incorporates a reduction of £4.0m (22%) by 2019/20.

The annual savings target of £1.2m for 2016/17, to be delivered through a programme of savings will be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

The Authority agreed an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% which would increase the annual Band D Council Tax by £1.37 to £70.33 (an increase of 2.64p per week) and generate an additional £452,000.

Overall, the settlement was broadly in line with the assumptions contained in the Authority's approved Medium Term Financial Strategy. However cuts for 2017/18 are

£0.9m more than predicted with lower reductions in 2018/19 and 2019/20. The approved plan to save £5.7m between 2015/16 and 2019/20 therefore remains sound.

The budget process for 2016/17 involved full consultation with all budget holders with requirements calculated from a zero base. Where possible all recurring efficiencies and savings achieved to date have been incorporated into the base budget. This includes the approved Community Safety Options that will deliver the full £1.1m of savings in year.

The Director of Finance, Assets and Resources assured the Authority in respect of the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the budget.

Mr C L Wanger
Vice Chairman