

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

7. Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 – Consultation Responses

Purpose of report

1. To seek approval of the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and consider recommendations for the implementation of the Fire and Emergency Cover Review taking account of the responses to public consultation.

Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) following detailed consideration of the responses to the consultation on the draft Community Risk Management Plan, there is no reason in principle why the proposals in options 1, 2 and 3 of the Fire and Emergency Cover Review could not be implemented in full if considered necessary;*
- (ii) in light of the Authority's updated financial position, the following arrangements in respect of fire and emergency cover be implemented:-*

In relation to Option 1:

- (a) the second whole-time crewed fire engines at both Worcester and Hereford be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;*
- (b) the second on-call crewed fire engine at Redditch be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;*

In relation to Option 2:

- (c) the second on-call crewed fire engines at both Tenbury Wells and Ledbury be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;*
- (d) the second on-call crewed fire engine at Bromyard be retained;*

In relation to Option 3

- (e) the existing fire engines at Bewdley, Broadway, Whitchurch and Kingsland be retained; and*
- (f) the second appliances at Kidderminster, Evesham, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye each be retained;*

- (iii) the arrangements detailed at (ii) above be implemented in a timescale and manner at the discretion of the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Fire Authority;***
- (iv) the arrangements for the reduction of the number of staff to be employed as a result of recommendations in (ii) above be considered by the Chief Fire Officer and a report be brought back to the Authority as necessary;***
- (v) the Community Risk Management Plan be amended to reflect the changes at (ii) above and the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to publish the document with any further minor amendments as may be necessary.***

Introduction and Background

2. All Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan setting out how they identify, assess and mitigate fire and rescue related risks. This follows guidance set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012.
3. The Authority's previous plan covered 2009-2012. On 3 October 2013 the Authority gave approval for a new draft plan (the Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020) to be published for consultation. The draft CRMP incorporated a review of fire and emergency cover arrangements and also included an overview of the financial issues facing the Authority.
4. The review was designed to assist the Authority to make decisions about how future savings can be achieved, whilst minimising the impact on frontline services and on local communities as far as reasonably possible.
5. The financial background to the Fire and Emergency Cover Review consultation was the Medium Term Financial Plan which was updated in July/August 2013. Based on the best information then available this identified a cumulative year-on-year budget gap of £4.7m by 2016/17.
6. The approach to closing this budget gap was to identify savings away from front line response, assess the scale of prudent variables and then seek the remainder of the savings from the only avenue available, front line response. This resulted in the following split in addressing the budget gap:
 - a. £2.0m away from front-line response (support services and management roles).
 - b. £2.0m from front-line response (CRMP- Fire and Emergency Cover Review).
 - c. £0.7m variables to be identified from such areas as improved tax-bases, and possible lower pay awards over the period
7. As the basis of local government grant funding had changed from April 2013, there was a certain amount of caution in some of the estimates in the draft

CRMP as the financial climate was uncertain at the time. There is now more certainty about some of these figures, most notably a significant increase in the council tax-base and a recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee for a marginal increase in the Band D council tax.

8. The effect of these changes is to reduce the budget gap to £4.0m, and therefore reducing the split to:
 - a. £2.0m away from front-line response (support services and management roles).
 - b. £1.7m from front-line response (CRMP-Fire and Emergency Cover Review).
 - c. £0.3m variables to be identified from such areas as improved tax-bases, and possible lower pay awards over the period
9. The total savings identified between 2010/11 and 2016/17 will be £6.4m of which £4.7m (73%) is away from front-line response. These £4.7m of savings have already, and will continue to have, a significant impact on the “back-office” functions and infrastructure of the organisation. Members have previously received information regarding these areas of cuts which include senior managers, middle managers and all support services and departments. There is obviously a level of infrastructure and support that is required to keep the frontline operationally effective and efficient and it should be noted that the continuing removal of support and infrastructure does have a significant impact.

The Consultation Process

10. The consultation period ran for 14 weeks from 3 October 2013 until 10 January 2014. Throughout this period many different methods of consultation were used to encourage individuals and organisations to complete and submit a consultation questionnaire in order to obtain a wide representation of views. Copies of the draft CRMP and questionnaire were circulated widely, including individual communications to all other Fire Authorities in the country, strategic partners and other stakeholders, and they were also placed in libraries across the two counties. Notice of the Fire Authority meeting and this item specifically was also reported widely in the broadcasting media, including television and radio news reports, newspaper articles and through the Service website and its associated social media, Facebook and Twitter. The draft CRMP and consultation was also widely publicised within the Service itself, through internal Bulletin articles and links on the Service’s Intranet site.
11. The consultation generated considerable interest. Many people completed the questionnaire, whilst others took the opportunity to use other ways of communicating their views, including letters and emails, comments on social media and through submitted petitions.
12. An extensive programme of briefing meetings with Fire and Rescue Service staff ensured that every employee had the opportunity to listen to

presentations about the draft CRMP and Fire and Emergency Cover proposals and to provide feedback at the meetings.

13. Meetings and briefings have also been held with the eight Members of Parliament representing Herefordshire and Worcestershire as well as two visits to the Fire Minister to discuss the Fire Authority's funding situation and the potential implications of historic and predicted poor settlements.
14. The Chief Fire Officer and other members of the Service's Senior Management Board have attended a number of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings at local councils, as well as several public meetings. Members will also recall that the draft CRMP was considered in scrutiny mode by the Policy and Resources Committee on 19 November 2013. All Town and Parish Councils were invited through the County Association of Local Councils (Worcestershire) and the Parish Liaison and Rural Service Officer (Herefordshire). Only representatives from Bewdley, Evesham, Ledbury, Ross-on-Wye and Tenbury Wells Town Councils attended and their representations were included for consideration in the consultation process.
15. A full report of the consultation programme is included at Appendix 1 to this report (included as a spate enclosure).

Response to the Consultation

16. Written responses to the consultation were received through completed questionnaires, individual letters and emails. There were also seven petitions; one objecting to any cuts to the Service's budget and six objecting to one or more of the three sets of proposals to change existing fire and emergency cover in local areas. Added together, the received responses give a figure of 927, and a summary breakdown is shown in the table below.

| Consultation responses received | Number of responses |
|---|---------------------|
| Questionnaires | 603 |
| Letters and emails | 317 |
| Petitions (no. of petitions/no. of signatories) | 7/9656 |
| Total | 927/10,576 |

Consultation with Trade Unions

17. Immediately following the briefing session for all Service managers held on 23 September 2013, local officials of firefighter and non-uniformed trade unions were invited to meet directly with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer which ensured that the consultation was formally opened with trade unions. Officials from trade unions were also present at several of the briefing sessions for personnel at the Service's fire stations. The Service has since

received formal consultation responses from the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) and the Retained Firefighters' Union (RFU). Copies of these and the Service's response are attached at Appendix 2.

Themes Emerging from the Responses

18. While the responses are many and varied, there are several themes which stand out. As might be expected with the numbers of signatures to the petitions, the majority of respondents objected to budget cuts and one or more of the Fire and Emergency Cover Review proposals. Those respondents who replied by using the questionnaire, or by letter and email, also presented objections to budget cuts, fire station closures and the removal of fire engines and firefighters. Many expressed strong concerns that risks in the community would rise as a result of the proposed changes. Many responses were well thought through, often arguing passionately against one or more aspect of the draft CRMP and the Fire and Emergency Cover Review proposals. Some responses were of an emotional nature, usually objecting on the basis of increasing risk or challenging how the draft CRMP had assessed risk or the consequential impact of the proposed changes. Some responses offered alternative courses of action to achieve the savings required away from the frontline; most, if not all of which have either been implemented or will be part of the "other" required savings.
19. A number of responses questioned the accuracy of the data used to prepare the Fire and Emergency Cover Review proposals. However, as Members are aware data was taken from a range of sources to ensure the most comprehensive picture possible of the Service's activity and the processes used to analyse this data were independently audited. All analysis was reviewed internally, using uniformed staff with data processing knowledge; and validated externally, using independent consultants who specialise in working with emergency services world-wide.
20. A broad summary of the main concerns from the responses is set out in paragraph 21 to give an indication of the views and concerns raised. With such a wide range of comments received, it should not be seen as a definitive list of responses, and Members are reminded that full details of all responses are publicly available on the Service's website and there is a more detailed analysis in Appendix 1.
21. While some respondents accepted the need to implement one or more of the proposals, the great majority of responses presented objections to one or more of the proposed changes to fire and emergency cover. There were several concerns common to most of the responses, including:
 - that there would be an adverse and increased risk to the community;
 - that response times to incidents would be longer meaning that people, property and commercial premises would be in more danger;
 - that the impact would be greatest in the more remote and hard to reach areas of the two counties;

- that there would be an increased demand on remaining firefighters, potentially compromising their safety;
 - that there would be an increased demand on on-call firefighters, who are not always available, and a further impact on their main employers;
 - concern that fire and emergency cover is being reduced at the same time as the population is increasing and ageing, housing numbers are rising, traffic is increasing and there is more flooding;
 - concerns about the loss of local knowledge and skills as well as the loss of the valuable additional benefits that local firefighters bring to local communities; and
 - that the savings achieved by the proposals were out of proportion to the level of increased risk, and that other ways of making savings should be sought away from frontline services.
22. The Service's responses to these points and others are set out in Section 5 of the consultation report (Appendix 1).

Analysis and Proposals

23. As emphasised in the draft CRMP document, the reality of the situation is that savings have to be made across the whole of the Fire and Rescue Service. This is not the Authority's doing but is due to continued reductions in government grant and restrictions placed on the raising of council tax locally. Some 73% of the overall required cuts between 2010/11 and 2016/17 have, and are likely to have, to come from further reductions in back office and management roles and through a range of internal service improvements. Having taken as much as is reasonably possible from non-frontline response services it still means that to achieve a balanced budget frontline services, firefighters and fire engines, have to also bear a proportion of the savings required.
24. The draft CRMP accepted, and was quite clear, that in making savings from frontline services it may take longer to reach a very small number of incidents when considered against the total number of incidents attended. The proposals to achieve the required savings are designed to ensure that the impact will be as little as possible, but accepted that there may be an impact in some areas. Though some have questioned the data and the risk analysis that underlies the proposals, officers are confident that these stand up to scrutiny, and have indeed already stood up to independent expert scrutiny.
25. It is important to recognise and welcome the fact that many respondents highlighted other areas in which savings could be made away from the frontline response services and many of these savings have happened or will do so in the future. Members can be assured that officers continue to

seek to make efficiency improvements throughout the Service and continue to strive to protect frontline services.

26. The proposals in the draft CRMP (Fire and Emergency Cover Review), were based on a need to save approximately £2m and were :-
- i) Option 1 – Removal of the third fire engine from Hereford, Worcester and Redditch (whole time crewed at Hereford and Worcester and on-call crewed at Redditch).
 - ii) Option 2 - Removal of second on-call crewed fire engine at Ledbury, Tenbury Wells and Bromyard.
 - iii) Option 3 - Removal of :-
 - a. Bewdley's only fire engine or second fire engine at Kidderminster (on-call crewed).
 - b. Broadway's only fire engine or second fire engine at Evesham (on-call crewed).
 - c. Whitchurch's only fire engine or second fire engine at Ross-on-Wye (on-call crewed).
 - d. Kingsland's only fire engine or second fire engine from Leominster (on-call crewed).
27. As has been stated very clearly previously in this report, there was no evidence found or presented during the consultation period that should prevent any or all of the options being agreed and implemented. However, what has changed is the available resources. The most up to date information indicates the savings levels required from frontline response have reduced by approximately £0.3m which allows the Authority greater consideration in any changes it decides to make.
28. The draft CRMP was clear that ten fire engines could be removed from the Service's frontline fleet but it is also true that for every fire engine that is removed, the Service's overall resilience is reduced. The improved financial situation allows the Authority to retain more resilience in the operational fleet than would be the case if the original level of savings was required. Taking this fact into consideration the original three options need examination.

Option 1

29. It is still considered appropriate to remove one of the three fire engines that are stationed at each of Worcester, Hereford and Redditch. This means that these three stations will retain two fire engines (one wholetime and one on-call) . **Savings £1.575m.**

Option 2

30. A number of the Service's on-call stations have two fire engines and this option proposes the removal of the second on-call fire engines at each of Tenbury Wells, Ledbury and Bromyard. In seeking the required additional savings it is still considered appropriate to remove the second fire engines at Tenbury Wells and Ledbury but retain the second fire engine at Bromyard. The proposal to retain Bromyard's fire engine, now that a choice can be made, is based on two main reasons: Bromyard Fire Station is geographically the most remote from any other station, and secondly Bromyard has one of two specialist animal rescue crews in the Service. The remote nature of Bromyard lends itself to hosting a fire engine that can be considered as additional resilience to the fleet as it sits in the centre of North Herefordshire which is the most remote and sparse area of the Service. Should a large incident or multiple simultaneous incidents happen in this area it is the most difficult to reach and therefore an additional resource would be beneficial. In addition Bromyard's crew respond across the whole of Herefordshire and large parts of Worcestershire as one of only two animal rescue crews (Pershore hosts the other) which with the one fire engine mobilised would leave a geographically large area without a fire engine unless cover moves are made. The retention of the second fire engine at Bromyard therefore increases resilience and retains fire cover in a large part of North Herefordshire. **Savings £0.090m.**
31. Should the Authority accept the removal of the second fire engine at Ledbury the Chief Fire Officer will investigate the relocation of the water carrier (bulk water supply) from Ross-on-Wye to Ledbury. This is an operational decision which, if implemented, will continue to spread specialist skills across the Service to ensure the impacts of training are spread as widely as possible across operational staff.

Option 3

32. The additional resources that are now available means that there is not currently a financial need to implement any of the proposals in option 3. This will mean that even though the call levels and potential impact were considered low for these proposals, the fire engines can remain within the fleet. Therefore the stations at Bewdley, Broadway, Whitchurch and Kingsland can now retain their fire stations and the second appliances at Kidderminster, Evesham, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye can also be retained.
33. When taking into consideration the above three amended options it is now proposed to remove five fire engines from the operational fleet rather than the ten originally proposed; this retains additional resilience within the fleet than would have otherwise been the case.
34. Therefore, when considering the changes to the funding, the responses to the consultation, the contents of the draft CRMP and the explanation in paragraphs 29-33 the following proposals are recommended:

- a. the second whole-time crewed fire engine at Worcester be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;
 - b. the second whole-time crewed fire engine at Hereford be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;
 - c. the second on-call crewed fire engine at Redditch be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles;
 - d. the second on-call crewed fire engine at Tenbury Wells be removed from the Service's fleet of operational vehicles; and
 - e. the second on-call crewed fire engine at Ledbury be removed from the Services fleet of operational vehicles.
35. Subject to Fire Authority changes as a result of this report, the draft CRMP will be revised to reflect the decisions made. It is proposed that the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to make the required drafting changes in readiness for publication of the final CRMP 2014-2020 in April 2014.
36. It is recognised that this report proposes the reduction of operational posts within the Service but does not deal with the consequential removal of people from the structure. The reduction of employees within the relevant posts will be considered by the Chief Fire Officer and any necessary reports brought back to the Authority in due course.

Conclusion

37. This report gives the background to the draft CRMP, the proposals made and the subsequent consultation responses received. It also recognises the change in resources that are now available to the Authority and makes recommendations to change fire and emergency cover within the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The draft CRMP document and this report recognise the potential impact of changes to fire and emergency cover arrangements, both real and perceived, but suggests a way forward that has the least impact on the communities we serve whilst giving the necessary savings to ensure the Authority can set balanced budgets in the medium term. Whilst this is not ideal, officers believe that, having considered the objections and fears of an increased risk in the community, the proposals still represent the most effective way to address the financial situation we face whilst ensuring the least impact on the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Corporate Considerations

| Resource (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues) | Implications |
|--|---|
| | The financial information available in July/August 2013 identified a cumulative year-on-year budget gap of £4.7m by 2016/17. The approach to closing this budget gap included savings of £2.0m from frontline response services. The most up to date information indicates the savings levels |

| | |
|--|--|
| | required from frontline response have reduced by approximately £0.3m. This change in resources allows recommended changes to fire and emergency cover that have less of an impact on communities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. |
| Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications). | The CRMP will represent the Authority's overall strategic plan for delivering its core purpose, priorities and policies up to 2020, and will guide all service functions. |
| Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores). | The CRMP sets out the Authority's overall approach to risk management. |
| Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter) | Preparation of the draft CRMP included a workshop and presentation to Members. An extensive programme of meetings with staff, key groups, including local councils and representatives bodies was undertaken over the fourteen week consultation period. Responses to the consultation were submitted via completed questionnaires, letters, emails, verbally at meetings and through submitted petitions. |
| Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?) | An Equalities Impact Assessment form has been completed and is attached at Appendix 3. |

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 Consultation Report (separate enclosure).

Appendix 2 - FBU and RFU Formal Consultation Responses.

Appendix 3 – Full Business Impact Assessment (incorporating Equality Impact Assessment).

Background Papers

Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 consultation document – DRAFT, 1 October 2013, plus Addendum to Community Risk Management Plan.

Fire and Emergency Cover 2007-12 dataset.

Financial Analysis – costing methodology and spreadsheets.

Fire Station Profiles for all 27 fire stations.

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