

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

3 December 2013

Report of the Chief Executive

DERBYSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONSULTATION (Strategic Policy and Budget)

Purpose of the report

To enable Cabinet to respond to the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) consultation "Fit to Respond to 2022" which sets out proposals for the creation of a new emergency response model and changes to the support and community safety services it currently provides. The item is urgent to enable Cabinet to respond within the consultation period.

Information and Analysis

DFRS have produced a consultation document setting out their proposals to shape the future of the service to be implemented by 2022. Stakeholders and the public have been invited to comment on the document and a number of public consultation events are taking place. The consultation closes on 23rd December. The consultation can be found at:

<http://www.derbys-fire.gov.uk/have-your-say/transforming-service-delivery-for-2022-and-beyond-fit-to-respond-consultation>

The consultation sets out the proposals within the context of a series of funding reductions for DFRS since 2010. In response to the financial challenges, DFRS established in 2010 the "Effectiveness Programme" to deliver sustainable savings. This programme will have delivered £7.5 million by the end of 2013/14 and has included:

- Cost reductions – by challenging all budgets, reducing spend with external suppliers and providers and a complete internal service restructure;
- Managing workforce numbers – leading to a reduction of 145 posts (15% of the workforce) of which 14% were management positions.

Whilst DFRS has made good progress to date, funding reductions in 2015/15 are estimated to be in the region of 10% (£1.5million) and further cuts are anticipated in 2016/17 and in 2017/18 which would leave a budget deficit of between £4.4million and £5.1million by 2016/17 – a reduction of more than 40%. The consultation paper states that this level of cut, together with a 50% reduction in the number of incidents requiring their attendance over the last

decade, requires a complete transformation of the way services are delivered and how the service operates.

Emergency response model

A number of different models have been examined and DFRS prefer a hybrid model of Whole-time Duty System (WDS) and Retained Duty System (RDS) emergency response resources in strategic locations across Derbyshire. This model would consist of five whole time fire stations and fifteen on-call stations. The net costs of the required building programme are estimated at £9.1m which includes £27.1m new build offset by receipt of sales of £18m.

The proposal includes a move from the current 41 fire engines to a fleet of 25 full fire engines and 15 smaller response vehicles (SRVs). It is argued that this would provide a more flexible solution, enabling a more targeted and cost-efficient response as well as potentially greater safety for response in rural areas. The model would enable a potential net saving on vehicle leasing of approximately £119k per year. The appliances would be situated as follows:

- Two fire engines at each of the following fire stations (Derby and Chesterfield). All four fire engines would be staffed by wholetime firefighters.
- Two fire engines at each of the following fire stations (Ripley, Buxton and Cromford). Three of these fire engines would be staffed by whole-time employees and three would be staffed by retained duty system (on-call) employees.
- One fire engine, plus one Smaller Response Vehicle (SRV) at each of the fifteen retained duty system (on-call) stations

The impact on staff of these proposals would be an increase of 6 RDS (on-call) firefighters which would leave 17 RDS posts on each site. The new model would reduce wholetime posts on stations from 308 to 200 posts. However 30 of these deleted posts would be converted to Operational Community Safety Officers working in the community, carrying out fire safety and response activities. The indicative savings of the changes are around £3.8m which takes into the account the cost of the new posts.

Impact on local stations

The new emergency response model would have a significant impact on local infrastructure. The following table sets out these proposed changes.

Merger of New Mills, Whaley Bridge and Chapel-en-le Frith stations	Glossop station-change from day crewing to RDS
Buxton station-relocation in Buxton	Merger of Bradwell and Hathersage

	stations
Merger of Wirksworth and Matlock stations (new build at Cromford) and addition of an SRV at Bakewell station	Ashbourne station –replacement of one fire engine with an SRV
Merger of Derby stations-Notts road, Kingsway and Ascot Drive	Merger of Duffield and Belper stations
Merger of Ripley,Heanor, Crich and Alfreton stations. Relocation of Ripley station in Ripley	Close Melbourne station. New station at Hilton. Swadlincote change from WDS to RDS
Long Eaton relocation to Breaston area and change from WDS to RDS. Ilkeston change from WDS to RDS	Relocation and increase of WDS posts at Chesterfield station. Closure of Staveley station.
Close Dronfield station. New station at Eckington. Replacement of fire engine at Clay Cross with an SRV	Bolsover, Clowne and Shirebrook stations. Addition of an SRV at each of the three stations.

Support services

A number of opportunities have been identified for further savings to support services which would total around £1.8m. These include reducing levels of assurance and reporting, ICT system integration and development and exploring income generation from sponsorship. DFRS also intend to review whether they could charge for incidents that are not part of their statutory duties and when responding to false alarms.

Community safety activity

There are a number of proposals in relation to the community safety activities that the DFRS currently provide. These include:

- **Home Fire Safety Checks** – increase the level of resources to undertake checks through the introduction of the 30 operational community safety officers. These checks will be focused on those groups at high risk.
- **Diversionary activities** – propose to remove youth engagement schemes from mainstream funding. Plan to continue the five current fire cadet schemes.
- **Fire protection** – propose an alternative method of delivering the Service's Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) of premises. This involves a 3 year re-inspection frequency of all premises that fall into high risk categories. The current risk assessment frequency varies from 24 to 48 months.
- **Sprinkler campaign** – the intention is to actively continue to encourage all housing providers, landlords and partners with a duty of care for those considered vulnerable to fire, to fit domestic sprinklers for all new builds and as a retrofit.

The consultation paper invites views on:

- Proposed station closures
- Station relocations
- Building of new stations
- Plans for firefighter levels at the proposed stations
- Plans for the number of fire engines and smaller response vehicles
- Impact on overall county wide resilience
- Any other information which should be taken into account.

Comments

DFRS is facing significant cuts and it is recognised that the Fire Authority has not levied a precept since 2010/11. The proposals being consulted upon to reshape the service and match reduced resources to risk are radical.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is mounting a campaign against the proposals which it believes is more than a re-organisation, given that the proposals would lead to:

- A reduction from 31 to 20 Fire Stations overall
- A reduction from 12 to 5 Full-Time Fire Stations
- The closure and merger of 19 Retained Fire Stations
- The loss of 16 Fire Engines
- A reduction of 78 operational posts
- The closure a number of recently built Stations to be relocated, requiring new build nearby
- Reduced response targets

The FBU is concerned that the major changes to the location of fire stations, the proposed reductions in staff and the way that the fire service responds to incidents will impact on the safety of the public and the staff.

Clearly the County Council empathises with the difficult financial position facing public sector organisations. Partners across Derbyshire need to work better together to ensure that scarce resources are best deployed to meet local need. It is suggested that DFRS should adopt the Derbyshire Challenge approach and work closely with partners, including cross-border partners, within an “invest to save” community budgeting framework. This would facilitate the Fire Service more fully exploring opportunities for sharing staff and rationalising premises. The approach to align and share resources makes services more viable across the board and helps to ensure that local people continue to receive good local provision.

The Consultation Paper proposes the closure of some relatively new Fire Stations and their rebuilding on nearby sites, for example at Chesterfield. This is unlikely to be perceived by the public as best value. The proposed closure of the Station at Staveley, which is also relatively new, should not be done in

isolation. This is considered to be an example where closer working with partners may result in shared space provision which may make the Station more viable and local services more responsive.

One of the County Council's five pledges is for a Safer Derbyshire. Although the number of calls for fire emergency services continues to fall, there have been a number of tragic fires in the county recently which have heightened public fears. Reducing response times is likely to further fuel fear. Whilst it is recognised that DFRS has to meet its budget cuts, there are concerns that public safety is being compromised and that the Fire Service will be not be able to respond effectively to life threatening situations.

Despite the significant efforts of the County Council and partners to educate road users and make Derbyshire's roads safer, some of our roads in the rural west of the county are dangerous for motor cyclists who are attracted from across the country. This puts a unique pressure on our emergency services which can be challenged to respond effectively across Derbyshire, given the largely rural nature of the county, alongside a city and the M1 corridor.

DFRS, in line with other partners, has already reduced staff numbers to meet budgetary reductions to date. Given the scale of further reductions, it will be essential to retain the necessary skill mix and specialist expertise. There are concerns that the level of operational staff cuts could undermine the service with an over reliance on retained staff.

It is recognised that that DFRS carried out an extensive consultation in 2011 which it called "the most comprehensive and informed Emergency Cover Review that has been undertaken". However, only two years later, DFRS is embarking on a radical review following the outcome of that consultation, which left the service with the current provision fully supported by analysis of risk, activity levels, surrounding support and resilience requirements.

The County Council fully appreciates the difficult financial position faced by DFRS but given the concerns, it is recommended that the County Council opposes the proposals and invites DFRS to work with the County Council and other public sector bodies to develop joint working and shared services to achieve the savings.

Considerations

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has been considered – prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity, financial, legal and human rights, health, personnel and property considerations.

Key decision - No

Call in – is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? - No

Background papers

“Fit to Respond to 2022” Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Consultation Paper

OFFICER’S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To oppose the proposals set out in the Consultation Paper “Fit to Respond to 2022” for the reasons set out in the report.
2. That DFRS be encouraged to adopt the Derbyshire Challenge model to make better use of existing resources.
3. That DFRS be invited to work with the County Council and other public sector bodies to develop joint working and shared services to achieve the savings.

Ian Stephenson
Chief Executive