

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C J T H BREWIS (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors L Wootten (Vice-Chairman), K J Clarke, C R Oxby, S L W Palmer, Mrs N J Smith and R Wootten.

Councillors R G Fairman, N H Pepper (Executive Support Councillor for Fire & Rescue and Emergency Planning), Mrs J M Renshaw, R A Renshaw and C N Worth (Executive Councillor for Culture and Emergency Services) were also in attendance.

Officers in attendance:-

Nick Borrill (Acting Chief Fire Officer), John Cook (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Cheryl Hall (Democratic Services Officer), Pete Moore (Executive Director, Finance and Community Safety) and Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT COUNCILLORS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D C Morgan, R J Phillips and Mrs A Reynolds.

2 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this stage in the meeting.

3 FIRE AND RESCUE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION 2016/2017

Consideration was given to a report by Nick Borrill (Acting Chief Fire Officer), which invited the Committee to consider information on the Fire and Rescue Integrated Risk Management Planning – Results of Consultation 2016/17, which was due to be considered by the Executive on 6 September 2016.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer presented the report to the Committee, which outlined the results of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue's Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) consultation for 2016/17. This year the Service had consulted on the following proposals:

- A new IRMP Baseline Document for 2016 – 2020;
- A potential savings option based on crewing changes at Lincoln South;
- A reduction in the number of Rescue Service Units;
- The permanent relocation of an Aerial Ladder Platform to Boston;
- Further development of the Joint Ambulance Conveyance Project;

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- The introduction of a cost recovery process for attendance to Unwanted Fire Signals;
- Service Priorities for 2016/17.

Members were advised that the consultation had lasted for a period of eleven weeks and was made available, predominantly electronically, to a wide range of stakeholders including staff, partners, representative bodies and members of the community. A total of 322 feedback forms had been received along with 22 separate written responses. In addition, a 5,337 signature petition against cuts to the fire service had been submitted to the County Council along with an e-petition containing 417 names and 38 comments. The service received one alternative savings option proposal from the Fire Bridges Union (FBU) for consideration.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer presented information on each of the above proposals and Members were provided with an opportunity to ask questions under each proposal, where the following points were noted: -

Proposal 1 - Agree the IRMP Baseline Document 2016 – 2020

- The Committee expressed concerns that the response to the proposal had been overshadowed by the concerns in relation to the proposed changes to Lincoln South. This was apparent from the comments received. Officers confirmed that the Baseline Document was a strategic document covering key risks and the Service's general approach to reducing those risks.

Proposal 2 – Identify Potential Savings Options.

- Officers confirmed that there was no time limit to the agreement and the proposals had been approved by the FBU. However, endorsement would still be needed at a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee. Officers also confirmed that the agreement could be terminated with six months' notice which was in line with other local agreements currently in place;
- The Committee queried the impact of the proposal with respect to wholetime crews responding to incidents with four rather than five crew members on the majority of occasions, and whether this would reduce operational flexibility and impact on safety. Officers confirmed that currently a crew of four respond to incidents in around 50% of cases, and that while flexibility could be limited the incident commander would risk manage the incident to operate a safe system of work until a follow up engine could attend. It was noted that this approach was in use in a number of other fire and rescue services across the country;
- A member of the Committee questioned the purpose for the reductions in Fire Fighters given the savings proposed as part of the Blue Light Collaboration Project. Officers confirmed that the proposed reduction in firefighter posts was aimed at meeting savings targets for the next three years. The Blue Light Project investment of £2m would be from the development capital budget, and not from the day to day revenue budget. Funding for the programme would be capital investment in the short to medium term, which would allow longer term revenue savings to be achieved;

- A member of the Committee queried whether the possibility to use reserves to protect Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service by ring fencing future budgets had been considered. The Executive Councillor confirmed that LFR was considered a high priority service and had been protected more than others, however, given the current financial climate further savings could not be ruled out. The consultation report had highlighted that the Council's financial volatility reserve had already been drawn on to support the Council' budget. Officers confirmed that LFR would continue to review options for service provision and future budget saving;
- Members were assured that the County Council continued to lobby government over its budget allocation;
- It was noted that the percentage of fire and rescue calls nationally had reduced by approximately 45%. However, in Lincolnshire overall call numbers had remained fairly static in recent years the main reason being the increase in calls to medical emergencies;
- Members were assured that any changes made at Lincoln South would not negatively impact upon Lincoln North.

Proposal 3 – Reduce the number of Rescue Support Units

- The Committee supported the recommendation not to reduce the number of Rescue Support Units until a clearer national picture was available at which point this would be reviewed.

Proposal 4 – Aerial Ladder Platform Permanently Stationed at Boston

- The Committee queried how often the two aerial ladder platforms had been used in the last year. Officers confirmed that there had been 112 incidents in the last year across the two units and highlighted that perceived greater risk in the Skegness area would be balanced against the potential improvement in geographic cover;
- The Committee supported the recommendation for one aerial ladder platform to be permanently stationed at Boston and highlighted the need to ensure that both whole time and retained crew remained well trained in the use of the aerial ladder platforms.

Proposal 5 – Further Develop the Joint Ambulance Conveyance Project

- The Committee highlighted the positive impact of the Joint Ambulance Conveyance Project (JACP) and strongly supported the continuation of co-responding services in Lincolnshire, as well as a desire to see wider adoption across the Country;
- The Committee queried the current cost of the JACP to the County Council, as well as the chance of retaining and expanding the service going forward. Officers confirmed that funding for the project to date had been through the Government Transformation Grant with clinical commissioning groups having agreed to fund three stations this year;

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- The Committee supported that the JACP initiative should continue and suggested that it should be funded through the appropriate health channels and not from existing fire budgets.

Proposal 6 – Introduce a cost recovery process for attendance to Unwanted Fire Signals

- The Committee highlighted the impact of automatic fire alarm repeat offenders and queried whether these calls were challenged before mobilising a full crew to respond. Officers confirmed that the call was challenged before dispatching a crew, however the crew would still be ready to respond if required;
- The Committee queried whether it was possible to consider cost recovery options for attendance to unwanted fire signals at residential premises. Officers confirmed that current legislation only allowed for cost recovery on commercial properties;
- The Committee supported the introduction of a £250 (+VAT) charge to act as a deterrent for unwanted fire signals from commercial properties and not to generate income to offset cuts.

The Chairman invited a Councillor, who was not a Member of the Committee to speak at this stage in the meeting, where it was requested that all Councillors received information on the causes for any road traffic collision which took place within their respective electoral division. Further to this, it was requested that the Road Safety Partnership was invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss this topic. The Chairman agreed to raise this at the next available pre-meeting.

Proposal 7 – Service Priorities for 2016/17

- The Committee stressed the need for Fire and Rescue to continue to promote a strong prevention message to minimise the impact of fires and their consequences;
- The Committee queried how the reduction in wholetime duty system firefighter posts would be managed and highlighted the desire to see this managed through natural staff turnover.

RESOLVED

(1) That the Community and Public Safety Scrutiny Committee support the recommendations as set out in Appendix A to the report.

(2) That the comments made be forwarded onto the Executive at its meeting on 6 September 2016.

The meeting closed at 3.42 pm