

REPORT OF THE CABINET

D. LEICESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONSULTATION - INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016-2020

Introduction

1. This report is to advise the Council of the views of the Cabinet on the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service consultation on its Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Background

2. At its meeting on 24th September 2015, the CFA launched a consultation on its 2016 -2020 Integrated Risk Management Plan. The decision of the Authority was taken in the context of difficult financial situation which would mean a budget deficit of approximately £1million in 2017/18 rising to £2.5million in 2019/20 and the service having seen a reduction of 42% in emergency incident rates during the last 10 years.
3. The County Council at an extraordinary meeting on 8th October agreed inter-alia:-

“...That the consultation proposals should be considered by the Scrutiny Commission in the first instance with a view to the Commission submitting its comments to the Cabinet meeting on 18th November so that a properly considered response can be debated at the County Council meeting on 2nd December.”
4. The proposals put forward by the CFA can be accessed via the following link (<http://ow.ly/UQixl>). An all-member briefing was arranged for 2nd November when the Chief Fire Officer and colleagues provided a detailed briefing for members.

Consideration by the Scrutiny Commission

5. The Scrutiny Commission considered this matter at its meeting held on 4th and 9th November 2015. A report setting out the draft minute and documents considered at that meeting is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The decision of the Commission is set out below:-

‘That the Cabinet be advised as follows:-

- a) That the Commission has noted the concerns expressed by the Fire Brigades Union, the Retained Firefighters Union, retired members of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and others about the potential impact of these proposals;
- b) That the members of the Council and the Scrutiny Commission having received a detailed presentation from the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and his

colleagues on the consultation proposal and would wish to draw the following matters to the Cabinet:-

- i) That there are significant financial pressures on the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and the consultation proposals should be seen in that context;
- ii) That the consultation proposals should be seen in the context of a 42% reduction in emergency incident rates in the last 10 years;
- iii) That the proposals now outlined by the CFO represent his and his management team's professional assessment of the best use of reduced resources to deal with risk;
- iv) That whilst the CFA has disestablished 101 operational posts financial provision continues to be made for these posts in the absence of an agreement with the trade unions as to a way forward, a situation which cannot be allowed to continue;
- v) That the CFA is pressing ahead with proposals for reducing its costs by engaging in shared service agreements and exploring a range of uses by other organisations of office space at its Headquarters.'

6. The following motion was also considered at the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission but was not carried:-

'That the Cabinet be advised as follows:-

- a) That the Commission finds that the scale of cuts outlined in the proposals present an unnecessary and unacceptable risk to the operational performance of the Combined Fire Authority and that this view is based on evidence that points to:-
 - i) A lack of clarity or confidence in the CFA's ability to remove surplus staff that is contributing to over half of its projected deficit with no plausible plan in place to tackle this as a matter of urgency thereby inflating the problem and creating a real risk that further cost savings attributable to redundancies would not come to fruition;
 - ii) Opportunities that exist to explore alternative cost reduction proposals that might alleviate the need for the scale of cuts proposed, including but not limited to:
 - Greater use of retained firefighters;
 - Extending the 'life' of existing vehicles;
 - Greater collaborative working with local and regional emergency services;
 - Various 'cheaper' staff proposals;
 - The sale or lease of the Birstall Headquarters and to decamp to Central Fire Station or another existing building;
 - More appropriate use of Tactical Response Vehicles;
 - Weaknesses and lack of openness in the modelling of response times which provides real concern at the

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's ability to respond in a timely manner with the weight of response required;

- The process of putting together the IRMP being very exclusive, relying heavily on senior officers and failing to draw on the wide experience within the LFRS;
- The consultation being too narrow in its content, having failed to properly contact key stakeholders within and immediately outside the area, being inadequately signposted to the public thereby restricting access to those without internet access and as such not being undertaken in accordance with the 'Gunning principles.'

b) The Commission therefore urges the Cabinet to:-

- i) Oppose the proposals and seek an urgent review of alternative cost reduction options to reduce the scale of cuts required from frontline services and for this review to be more inclusive of officers within the CFA;
- ii) Seek from the CFA a clear plan for the early delivery of the resource reduction required to deliver the £1.3million overdue savings;
- iii) Request the CFA to carry out a full and transparent audit of its incident response times including the measurement of appropriate 'weight of response times';
- iv) Request the CFA to commission an external audit of future proposals;
- v) Note that the lack of a scrutiny process within the CFA has impacted negatively on the quality of debate and to recommend that the CFA reviews its scrutiny process.'

7. A minority report submitted by the Labour and Liberal Democrat members of the Scrutiny Commission is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Consideration by the Cabinet

8. The Cabinet at its meeting on 18th November had regard to the decision of the Commission, the representation and comments made at the meeting and the minority report submitted in arriving at the response to be forwarded to the County Council for consideration. That response is set out in the motion below.

(Motion to be moved:-

a) That this Council notes:-

- i) That there are significant financial pressures on the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and the consultation proposals should be seen in that context;**

- ii) That the consultation proposals should be seen in the context of a 42% reduction in emergency incident rates in the last 10 years;
 - iii) That the proposals now outlined by the CFO represent his and his management team's professional assessment of the best use of reduced resources to deal with risk;
 - iv) That the CFA is required by law to set a balanced budget.
- b) That this Council notes the concerns expressed by the Fire Brigades Union, the Retained Firefighters Union, retired members of the Leicestershire and Fire and Rescue Service and others about the potential impact of these proposals but expresses its disappointment at the lack of factual evidence presented to support their concerns;
- c) That this Council notes that the consultation undertaken has been extensive, well publicised and enabled all those wishing to comment to do so;
- d) That this Council notes that in seeking to address the difficult financial the CFA has already:-
 - i) disestablished 101 operational posts but has had to make financial provision to be made for these posts in the absence of an agreement with the trade unions as to a way forward, a situation which cannot be allowed to continue;
 - ii) pressed ahead with proposals for reducing its costs by engaging in shared service agreements and exploring a range of uses by other organisations of office space at its Headquarters.
- e) That this Council whilst recognising that the proposals as now outlined are in the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer the best option going forward, requests the CFO and CFA to consider further the impact the proposals would have on provision to Leicester City Centre and consider any further mitigation that would address the concerns expressed regarding the response times and cover for significant buildings within the City Centre;
- f) That this Council calls upon the FBU and others to engage with the CFO and CFA in a constructive manner in dealing with the significant financial challenges and in particular address how the necessary changes in operational staffing and practices including the 101 disestablished posts can be addressed by local arrangements outside the provisions of the grey book thereby avoiding compulsory redundancies and provide the additional resources required for any mitigating actions proposed as a result of (e) above.

18th November 2015

Mr N. J. Rushton CC
Chairman

Background Papers

- Minutes of the County Council Extraordinary Meeting held on 8th October 2015.
<http://ow.ly/UQkLQ>
- Report of the Scrutiny Commission held on 4th and 9th November (attached to this report).
<http://ow.ly/UShkk>

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Report of the Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 4th and 9th November, 2015
- Appendix 2 - Minority report submitted by Labour and Liberal Democrat members of the Scrutiny Commission