

APPENDIX 2

Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service Consultation: IRMP 2015-2020

Minority Report from members of the Scrutiny Commission

The Scrutiny Commission met to consider over six hours of evidence in relation to the proposed changes to the Fire Service and at its conclusion failed to agree upon its findings. The formal report submitted to Cabinet received support of only the six Conservative members in attendance and failed to achieve any support beyond the Conservative Group.

This Minority report reflects the cross party views of Liberal Democrat and Labour members of the Scrutiny Commission.

What has the evidence shown that supports the proposals?

1. There is a clear need for financial savings to be made and/or additional income generated.
2. The level of demand upon the Fire Service is reducing and there is no clear correlation between the number of incidents and growth in population.
3. The use of Tactical Response Vehicles (TRV's) to improve the efficiency of the service is accepted although we fear that current proposals put too great an emphasis on their usage.
4. Initial response times are broadly expected to meet the 10 minute target, although it will be a challenge for an engine to reach the centre of Leicester from fire stations located on the outskirts of the city during rush hour, or for the target to be met when attending a house fire in the Billesdon area.

What concerns have been highlighted by the evidence?

1. Even where the initial response meets the 10 minute target, serious incidents require more than one vehicle at the scene in order to perform life-saving action (the appropriate 'weight of attack'.) A reduction of the number of fire engines in operation will weaken the resilience of the local service and in particular heighten the risk of delays in response times of second and subsequent vehicles. The lack of modelled evidence to assess the impact on second vehicle (and more) attendance times is of real concern.
2. There is a lack of clarity or urgency in the CFA's ability to remove existing surplus staff that is contributing to half of the projected deficit. This is leading to the unnecessary removal of number of engines manned by cost-efficient retained crews.
3. Opportunities exist to explore alternate cost reduction proposals that are likely to alleviate the need for the scale of cuts proposed but may not exclude the need for some front line service reductions. The CFA does not appear to have sufficiently investigated these alternatives.

4. The combined impact of any proposed changes in scale of Fire Services in neighbouring localities has not been properly assessed as part of the overall resilience of the local service.

We therefore urge Cabinet to:

1. Oppose the proposals and seek an urgent review of alternate cost reduction options to reduce the scale of front line service cuts.
2. Seek from the CFA a clear plan for early delivery of the resource reductions required to deliver the £1.3m overdue savings.
3. Request the CFA carry out a full and transparent audit of its incident response times including the measurement of appropriate 'weight of response' times.

In conclusion, some of the changes included in the proposals have real merit but we find the overall scale of cuts outlined present an unnecessary and unacceptable risk to the operational performance of the Combined Fire Authority.

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