

GUIDE TO COMPLETING THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The below is designed to give some information and idea's for answering the official document. The Chief Fire Officer has said that the Service will consider any letter sent in- particularly those offering other solutions or local context. It is advised that the consultation document be completed with comments AND send a separate letter. The more documentation supporting Bidford fire station the better!

Please add your own idea's and write in your own style and words bearing in mind the comments below.

Overview Page

An unfair page – you can't give reasons here to these loaded questions. It is recommended to cross through this and write something like 'see my answers'.

DUTY SYSTEM ANSWERS

Do you know what a fifth watch system is? The documentation fails to state exactly what it is, how it would work and what the cost benefits/implications are. They can't tell fire-fighters either because they don't know!

Therefore you can only DISAGREE and BE CONCERNED

Comments:

You have not provided detail in how this system will actually work or make things better in practice. The introduction of this system will NOT make things better for me living within Bidford fire station's area. I do not support the closure of Bidford fire station as a means to introduce this proposal. Alcester fire station should remain retained providing a 5 minute response to that community – same as Bidford provide a 5 minute response to our community –that's FAIR, cost effective and strategic fire & rescue cover.

RESOURCES ANSWER

This is about fire station CLOSURE's. Little detail is provided in the document – particularly on the Small Fires/Road Traffic Collision units. The proposals, however dressed up, mean 100 retained fire-fighters, 7 fire stations and 9 fire & rescue appliances less. Alcester would get a full time crew (max 5 on duty). For this YOU in Bidford will suffer extended attendance times. The Alcester full time appliance will undoubtedly end up being deployed across the County due to stretched fire cover. Who will run our Young Fire-fighter unit when the crew is gone? They can't answer that question.

In Bidford we can only STRONGLY DISAGREE and be VERY CONCERNED.

Comments:

Currently I receive a 5 minute response from Bidford fire station. This station offers excellent value for money at \$105,000 (fire service budget £24m) and the dedicated crew offer 98/99% availability – that is cost effective and provides resilience.

The Alcester appliance, that may be able to attend Bidford in 8-10 minutes, cannot be guaranteed to be there. It will cover a far larger area and will undoubtedly be called to support other areas of Warwickshire. For this the cost in the Bidford/Studley/Alcester area of fire cover goes from £305,000 for 3 fire appliances to 2 costing £1.1m? That is madness. It can only increase the risk to people currently covered by Bidford and I cannot support the closure of Bidford fire station

Why not take up good practice from other Authorities and recruit the retained stations in this area to full establishment. A 5 minute response into each of the urban area's of Bidford, Alcester and Studley provides a fair, cost effective, resilient and truly strategic response to the area.

FALSE ALARM CALLS ANSWERS

Seems a reasonable proposition. However WFRS already operate a system for reducing fire alarm attendance? The worry has to be that this will be a blanket 'no attendance' policy to fire alarms without a back-up telephone call.

It can be AGREED (if you want to) that reducing nuisance and unwanted calls from unreliable alarm systems is of benefit. But we must be CONCERNED that the fire service may well ignore every fire alarm call.

Comments:

I am very concerned that genuine fire calls will be missed until a fire physically breaks out of a building – increasing risk to fire-fighters and others. Also the resources then required from the fire service will be much greater.

In asking occupants to physically check out a fire alarm to enable a back-up call the fire service will be deliberately asking people to increase their personal risk rather than evacuating the building as the current advice is. You will be offering mixed messages and causing confusion.

Automatic Fire Alarm's are designed (and do) give early warning of fire. By ignoring these you will be defeating the object of having them and wasting the valuable time that they have bought. It is like an occupant of a house fitting a smoke detector and then ignoring it until a neighbour confirms the fire!

SMOKE DETECTOR OWNERSHIP

WFRS already run Home Fire Safety campaigns – including the free provision of smoke detectors. This can be accessed by ANY resident NOW. Do we really need to close fire stations to increase this service? There will be a saturation point eventually where everybody who wants them (and WFRS cant force people to have them!) has them. Also remember that all houses built in the past 12 years or so have hard wired smoke alarms as do houses having had conversions/extensions. Then what? We will have closed the fire stations. What would resources allocated then be used for or will it just be an ‘efficiency saving’ for the future? Consultation documents have said that only full time fire-fighters carry out this service – this is NOT TRUE. Bidford’s part-time staff carried out 250 such checks in recent years.

While we can AGREE that more smoke detectors would be beneficial – we must be CONCERNED that cuts to fire cover are proposed to fund this.

Comments:

My local community fire station at Bidford carry out this service already (if you have had one then say so!).

I do not agree that Bidford fire station should close to fund more smoke detectors – just maintain the current service provided. The smoke detector will give warning – but we still need Bidford fire station to respond promptly to fire calls.

I cannot support the closure of Bidford community fire station to provide £5 smoke alarms – the local fire & rescue response available to attend a multitude of incident types is just too vital to lose. People can buy their own detectors if you run a powerful campaign.

HOT FIRE TRAINING

Hard to disagree with increased realistic practical training. However the Fire & Rescue service run all types of courses including an ever expanding array of ‘management’ type courses – business English, diversity, report writing, etc Perhaps a re-directing of funding from these and a review of the management and support structure could release finance for additional training. Bits of paper won’t kill fire-fighters – but real fires will.

While we can AGREE to more hot fire training –we must be VERY CONCERNED by how they propose to achieve this.

Comments:

Training is vitally important – particularly realistic training. But it should NOT be funded by fire station closures. Giving this extra training increases fire-fighter safety by making them more aware, BUT reducing the number of fire-fighters, stations and appliances increases the risk due to longer attendance times and less responding fire-fighters. Therefore the benefits of extra training are outweighed by the increased risk.

A review of all training should be carried out to re-focus on critical training, removing any ‘fluffy’ courses that exist. These can be delivered to fire-fighters via computer based training modules rather than paying external lecturers.

Also look at the management and civilian support structures to gain efficiencies that can be re-directed into safety critical training. **CUTTING FRONTLINE FIRE COVER IS NOT THE ANSWER!**

SICKNESS MANAGEMENT

Why is this in a public consultation?

AGREE & CONCERNED is reasonable? (concerned as to why it is here!)

Comments:

Sickness management is an internal management issue – if senior managers cannot manage staff then replace them! Replace them with ones who do not propose the whole-scale closure of fire stations – in particular high performing Bidford! You cannot stop people being sick, unless you are accusing fire-fighters of taking sick leave when they are not sick?

FLOOD RESPONSE

No details are given as to location, although public meetings appear to show Stratford is favourite. At a staff meeting in June Chief Officer Fuller said money was available for boats from Government Agencies. This was brought up at a public meeting – the reply was ‘we want one now’. So it is proposed to close fire stations to release finance for a boat that could well be funded by the Government anyway!

Given this it is reasonable to AGREE and be VERY CONCERNED.

Comments:

Bidford area became an island in 2007. Fire appliances from Alcester etc could not get into Bidford due to flooded roads (Salford Rd, Wixford Bridge, Honeybourne Rd, Stratford Rd). There MUST be a fire & rescue response maintained in Bidford to serve the population. Bidford station has space to expand to accommodate a rescue boat or other such vehicle. Being actually on 'the Avon' it would ideally be placed at Bidford. In 2007 Alcester could NOT provide an adequate response to Bidford. Bidford's fire & rescue appliance responds to over 260 emergency calls per year – the rescue boat may be used 20 times a year. We would rather keep what we have given the choice!

ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION UNITS

No details are given in the documentation on location or crew numbers of this unit. The documents omitted road traffic collisions (RTC) from station statistics as they would be dealt with by this new unit. Subsequent answers at public meetings have revealed that one RTC unit is planned with just 2 fire-fighter crew members running from Leamington. It was also confirmed that 'normal' fire appliances would be required to attend RTC's as well. So what is changing exactly? Currently ALL fire & rescue appliances, such as the one at Bidford, carries a full range of road rescue equipment. This is supported by 2 Incident Support Units (ISU's at Coleshill and Leamington) that carry additional heavy rescue equipment for Large Good's Vehicles. Beyond this Urban Search and Rescue Units with heavy rescue equipment can be called in from Bickenhill (NEC site) and Droitwich.

In effect this is a bit of a red-herring – our 2 ISU's would be replaced by 1 RTC unit? The need to have fast responding fire & rescue appliances is not removed – minutes count!

We must **STRONGLY DISAGREE** and be **VERY CONCERNED** by this.

Comments:

Living in Bidford I can expect a 5 minute response to RTC's in this area. Minutes count in RTC's where often the simple act of securing an airway quickly can save a life. Government guidance indicates that a minute extra in attending can contribute to over 60 extra road deaths' nationally per year.

I fail to see how a RTC unit remotely located will improve matters for my area around Bidford. Please maintain the current RTC provision from Bidford fire station which is cost effective, has high availability and quickly responds – THAT will save lives at RTC's!

SMALL FIRE UNITS

These can be effective in areas with problem youths who create a large number of calls to nuisance rubbish, bin and grass fires etc. This is not the case in south Warwickshire. While these units would be useful in addition to normal Fire & Rescue appliances they should not replace them. These units can ONLY deal with small fires - they cannot respond to anything else. A normal Fire & Rescue appliance can respond to anything. No detail as to location or crewing is given in the literature. Public questions have revealed 2 units will be provided located at Nuneaton and Leamington crewed by just 2 fire-fighters. The literature disregarded small fire calls from Bidford station ground saying that small fires units would deal with them. From Leamington??? Trouble is small fires, say hedgerows, have a habit of becoming big fires if not dealt with quickly.

We can DISAGREE with this because the unit won't 'increase the safety of fire-fighters' as claimed. We can be CONCERNED as these 'one trick pony's' are only capable of dealing with small fires, whereas normal Fire & Rescue appliances can respond to any incident.

Comments:

A small fires unit located remotely from Bidford will not improve matters here. Waiting for one to attend a small fire from Leamington as claimed at public meetings will increase risk to the public. Small fires in fields/hedgerow etc quickly spread if not dealt with promptly. Bidford's fire & rescue appliances can respond to ALL emergencies quickly and in a cost effective manner. Rushing from Leamington will increase public risk and the carbon emissions that you seem so concerned about!

The point about small fires units undertaking community fire safety will probably not apply to Bidford as the unit will be busy elsewhere. Bidford fire-fighters already provide community fire safety services and voluntarily engage with youths via the Young Fire-fighters – will your small fires unit run Bidford's Young Fire-fire-fighters when you've sacked our cost effective local fire-fighters?