

Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service – Public Consultation Meeting Alcester

Wednesday 30th September 2009

Meeting Notes

Panel: Councillor Izzy Seccombe – Chair
Councillor Richard Hobbs – Portfolio Holder (RH)
Deputy Chief Fire Office Glen Ranger (GR)
Ken Probin Station Manager Alcester

Attendance: 36 (200 chairs put out)

Introductions were made by Cllr. Sercombe who stated that review of the Fire & Rescue Service was a WCC cabinet decision therefore all meetings would be chaired by a member of the cabinet.

Post Meeting Note: The meeting at Bidford on the 19th of October will be chaired by Cllr. Chris Saint.

GR gave a presentation on the proposals; he stated that the consultation process was only as good as the responses that they got back.

There was a need for change a fitter & stronger service to invest in preventative activity, better fire appliances to lessen the risk to fire fighters and the public, for the service to become more efficient but not by proposing a cut in the F&R budget.

The proposals have been based on the Fire Service Emergency Cover Model & Good Practice from other services, there would be an increase in training, the fitting of more smoke detectors, training for fire crews to deal with flooding and increased involvement with a specialist bespoke tender for road traffic accidents.

The county need to target Arson, introduce Small Fires Safety Units, carry out more Home Fire Safety Checks.

Introduce a Global Duty System providing more availability across the county, the service has looked at operations in Manchester and had taken these and adapted them for Warwickshire.

For inland waterways & flooding incidents a rescue boat would be placed in the south of the county this could be at Stratford or Alcester.

A new policy on Automated Fire Alarm Systems will be introduced, in the majority of alarm calls the service will only respond to incidents reported by a member of the public currently false alarms amount to 35% of calls received.

There are proposals to fit an additional 30,000 smoke detectors across Warwickshire.

A better trained service - £250,000 investment in Hot Fire Training / Incident Control Sick & Absent Management. Water Training currently crews have very limited training.

Small Fires Unit – Anti Social Fire Intervention Unit permanently crewed by 2 Fire Fighters & 1 CPSO (1 North & 1 South) since their introduction as a trial, arson incidents have reduced by 57% in the trial area.

Where stations are closed the buildings will be used for community use following discussions with the local community.

RH County Council has a duty to prevent Fires – Fire Deaths 50% occur before attendance by a fire crew the target for Warwickshire is zero.

GR - PowerPoint presentation was given on the Have Your Say Booklet

Questions & Answers

Q1. The consultation document shows all the advantages and no disadvantages there must be some?

A1. (GR) No disadvantages this proposal has been put forward by professional officers, it will improve the service no officer would propose something to make things worse. The proposals have been assessed by independent audit.

Q2. Assurance that these radical changes will not affect the excellent service given by Alcester?

A2. (GR) Certainly it will improve cover with a whole time crew 24/7 365 days a year.

Q3. What about the wider community aspect Bidford & Studley housing density has this been taken into account?

A3. (GR) We have taken into account the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy we will guarantee 19 Fire Appliances & 2 Small Fire Units will be available at present with 26 units we may only have 12 or 13 units available sometimes only 8 have been available.

We have made timed runs to many areas and we have also used the Fire Service Emergency Cover Module.

Q4. There are many Grade 2 properties removing response to Automated Fire Alarm Systems will put property and lives at risk.

A4. (GR) Data does not support the view of keeping Automated Fire Alarm Systems take my previous brigade Oxfordshire they stopped responding some years ago.

Q5. Will there be a night watch at Alcester?

A5. (GR) Yes

Q6. What is the knock on effect how much of this plan / document is serious what will you dispense with?

A6. (GR) All of it, this will give Warwickshire more resilience more available fire appliances at all times I repeat what I said earlier 21 appliances available. All, proposals will go through giving better attendance times, better coverage.

Q7. If you raised council tax by 14 pence you would not need to make changes to save £700,000 a year?

A7. (RH) We have to deliver improvements £700k is right however the budget will not be cut we need to improve training and equipment the County Council has difficult decisions to make, this is not a plan to save money at this time WFRS does not have to make savings however WFRS has to stand on its own right.

Council Tax will most certainly be capped whatever party wins the next election.

The Audit Commission shows that WFRS is one of the highest spenders in the country population per capita.

We are compared with Devon, Somerset & Wiltshire

Q8. By making £700k savings what will be used to finance the proposals before you make station closures?

A8. (GR) This would be subject to a number of project plans – project teams will deal with the priorities detail where and when proposals are implemented, it's too early in the consultation to have this detail.

(RH) We will borrow for the future against our capital programme.

Q9. What are the annual running costs for Alcester now and if it goes full time.

A9. (GR) Current costs £120k As a full time station £1 million

Q10. When are these proposals going to be implemented?

A10. (RH) A decision will be made in January, however some improvements are being implemented now like extra training, mobile data terminals. This is a local decision & will be made locally. A future general election will make no difference, this government has devolved more decision making to local authorities and a future Conservative government would do the same, I have regular contact with the Fire Minister and the shadow minister.

Q11. Why not engage more retained fire fighters?

A11. (GR) There is a national issues with RDS personnel its getting harder & harder in the medium to long term there will be no increase in RDS availability, training is a problem.

Q12. Will there be any ancillary employment at Alcester?

A12. (GR) RDS will continue as at present, the whole time posts will be migration from full time service, full time fire fighters will be given first choose as for support staff we will be replicating Stratford.

Q13. How can you base proposals around Manchester it's entirely different?

A13. (GR) We are basing it on a 5 watch system we are entirely confident that we can tailor the Manchester System to fit a rural community.

Q14. How will you maintain full time stations when you can't do it now?

A14. (GR) We are employing a global crewing system as I said earlier 19 appliances with 2 Fire Safety units. We will use deployment measures to fill gaps in provision where necessary, cover moves into key areas.

Q15. How will it fit Alcester the station has problems now with parking access the logistics how will it operate?

A15. (GR) There are some issues with access, we will make some alterations the building lends itself to be converted, we don't know the costs at this stage this will be done by one of the project teams.

Q16. With less retained fire fighters Bidford Studley, won't Alcester crews be busier and this will cause problems with retained staff and their employment?

A16. (GR) With implementing the Automated Fire Alarm Systems policy this will lead to a 35% reduction in calls.

Q17. What's going to happen to Young Fire-fighters Associations?

A17. (RH) No intension to close down the groups we will continue to run them from closed down stations we will provide fire fighters and of course there are the lay instructors, we have a commitment to the YFA.

Q18. How long have these plans been in the making?

A18. (RH) The CFO Paul Fuller was appointed in February I had some preliminary early discussions however the CFO was tasked into looking at the service he had concluded his investigations by early June I was informed by mid June and the cabinet by early July.

Q19. Home Fire Checks how can operational crews carry this work out?

A19. (GR) They do now we will also utilise the crews on the Small fire Safety Units and partner organisations for installing smoke detectors in the voluntary sector Age Concern.

Q20. What are the plans for the buildings at Bidford & Studley?

A20. (RH) It is the intention that they remain community buildings there are no definite plans until we have held negotiations with the local community.

Concerns were made about the venue, the publicity of the meeting and holding it on a station drill night.

Kim James
02nd October 2009