

Communities Overview and Scrutiny 13th June 2012

Fire and Rescue Position Paper

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Recommendation

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the report and resolves to support the following:

- Bring forward the commissioning of wholetime crewing at Alcester Fire Station to 1st October 2012; and
- Bring forward the decommissioning of Studley Fire Station and the RDS provision at Alcester Fire Station to 1st October 2012.

The Committee to also note and comment as appropriate on the arrangements for the Strategic Commissioning Review and development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Warwickshire County Council is committed to providing the best possible Fire and Rescue Service for its communities, delivering value for money and ensuring firefighter safety. The Improvement Plan is helping increase the pace of change in delivering a fitter, stronger Fire and Rescue Service. The Service has also commenced a Strategic Commissioning Review to challenge how best the Council can meet the Fire and Rescue needs of Warwickshire citizens, communities and businesses, and deliver the Council's ambitions and aims for safety and protection.

1.2 This report provides an update on progress made by the Service since the last report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th April 2011.

2.0 Governance Arrangements

2.1 Governance arrangements continue to be applied in line with PRINCE 2 principles. Project teams are delivering positive outcomes and progress is reported monthly to the Fire and Rescue Brigade Command Team and Area Command Team.

3.0 Improvement Plan Programme

3.1 The Fire and Rescue Service is making good progress on its Improvement Plan. Benefits delivered to date include:

- Capacity released from changing the response to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) – attendances reduced by 73 per cent;
- Helping local people be safer in their homes and reducing accidental dwelling fires through our prevention work;
- Increased operational training to improve firefighter safety;
- Reduced days lost to sickness absence; and
- Improving firefighter availability through new duty systems.

3.2 Over half the projects in the Improvement Plan have been delivered so far. A summary of the current programme is shown below.

Table 1: Progress on the Improvement Plan

Project	When
Step 1: Duty systems and Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Duty System to improve Firefighter availability • Managerial and Support Function Rationalisation • Decommission Warwick and Brinklow stations • Convert Alcester to a Wholetime station • Decommission Studley 	January 2012 <u>Delivered</u> September 2011 <u>Delivered</u> September 2011 <u>Delivered</u> By March 2013 By March 2013
Step 2: New false alarm policy	March 2011 <u>Delivered</u>
Step 3: Increase Community Fire Safety and Fire Protection	10,000 by 31/3/11 <u>Delivered</u>
Step 4: Additional firefighter training	Annually <u>Delivered</u>
Step 5: Improved performance management Phase 1: Sickness Absence Management Phase 2: Fitness Policy	March 2011 <u>Phase 1 Delivered</u> July 2012 Phase 2 Commence Rollout
Step 6: Enhanced Flood Response Phase 1: Rescue Poles, Water Rescue Vehicle and Precautionary Mobilising Phase 2: Enhanced Water Rescue Capability (Specialist Training)	March 2012 <u>Phase 1 Delivered</u> Phase 2 by April 2013
Step 7: Road Traffic Collision Unit/Specialist Rescue	March 2013 On track
Step 8: Deploy Small Fires Unit at Bedworth	March 2012 <u>Delivered</u>

4.0 Progress on the Improvement Plan Projects

4.1 Step 1 - Duty Systems and Resources:

A new duty system came into operation on 2nd January 2012. The system has resulted in increased flexibility and efficiency leading to improved staffing levels on stations, improved availability of fire engines, reduced cover moves and more time for training. It has also given us the opportunity to direct more resources to the south of the county in line with the Improvement Plan. Alongside this, the Service has introduced an availability management system for retained stations which has increased availability by nearly 10 per cent compared with last year.

Strong progress has been made on realigning resources. Warwick and Brinklow fire stations have been decommissioned, Bedworth station's cover has been changed from two fire appliances to one appliance and a small fires unit, and managerial and support functions have been restructured.

4.1.1 Why Convert Alcester to Wholetime Earlier?

Building work to convert Alcester to a wholetime station is now fully complete. As there are currently difficulties with maintaining RDS cover in the area, supplementary crewing is being increasingly used which is applying pressure to existing resources. Bringing forward the permanent wholetime crewing at Alcester to October 2012 would deliver the following benefits earlier for the Service and our communities:

- A faster guaranteed response to Alcester and the surrounding area from an additional wholetime pump in the south of the county;
- Increased gathering of premises risk and community safety information in Alcester, Studley, Bidford and Henley;
- Reduced cover moves, which would allow more training for firefighters and risk reduction work;
- More wholetime firefighters in the area to assist with RDS training; and
- The opportunity for RDS staff at Alcester and Studley to transfer to wholetime vacancies which are currently available in the Service.

No additional funding is required to open Alcester early as the savings from decommissioning the RDS at Alcester and Studley would net off the cost, as shown in the following table:

- 4.1.2 Formal statutory consultation and notice will take place prior to the 1st October 2012 and consultation has been carried out by officers with the relevant representative bodies.

Table 2: Costs of Introducing Wholetime Crewing at Alcester (01/10/2012 to 31/03/2013)

	£
Costs	
Alcester – funding for additional firefighters over current budget	68,962
Estimated redundancy cost for RDS at Alcester and Studley	19,000
	<u>87,962</u>
Savings	
Alcester RDS Crew	34,665
Studley RDS Crew	50,599
Studley - Premises Costs	7,330
	<u>92,593</u>
Total Cost / (Saving)	<u>(4,631)</u>

Progress in Other Areas of the Improvement Plan:**4.2 Step 2 - False Alarm Policy:**

The new automatic fire alarm (AFA) policy has resulted in 73 per cent fewer attendances to AFAs. This policy is releasing capacity for more firefighter training and risk reduction work. It also reduces unnecessary journeys which lessens our impact on the environment and potential road accidents.

4.3 Step 3: Community Fire Safety and Fire Prevention:

We met the target of delivering 10,000 home fire safety checks (HFSCs) in 2011, an increase of 33 per cent on the previous year. The approach has now been reviewed and we are targeting the most vulnerable members of our communities to reduce the risk of fire in the home. We plan to use the County Council's Front Office system to improve our processes for dealing with HFSCs and provide a better service to our customers. We have also redirected resources for Fire Protection work, including training wholetime firefighters to carry out inspections of commercial properties in line with the Regulatory Reform Order.

4.4 Step 4: Hot Fire Training:

Phase 1 of the project is complete and all operational personnel have received hot fire training to ensure they have a realistic awareness of the heat and smoke that is experienced in fires. Phase 2, which includes experience of fire in high rise buildings, is 50 per cent complete. Planning is underway to tender for Phase 3 which will comprise of a combination of entering a basement and tackling a large compartment fire.

4.5 Step 5: Performance Management:

Our improved approach to managing sickness absence continues and we are helping people return to work. We also have a new Fitness Service Order to help improve fitness levels across the Service. To date 38 firefighters have been trained as Fitness Instructors to help implement the Service Order and fitness testing will commence in July 2012.

4.6 Step 6: Water Rescue:

We have strengthened our bank side rescue capability by introducing water rescue poles on fire appliances. A new water rescue vehicle is being provided at Rugby to improve our speed of response to flooding incidents. We are currently reviewing plans on water rescue training as part of the Strategic Commissioning Review.

4.7 Step 7: Road Traffic Collision Unit:

We are improving our response to road traffic collisions (RTCs) by providing a specialist pod with cutting gear at Coleshill Fire Station, more equipment on appliances and firefighter training. This project was paused due to organisational pressures and will be delivered by the end of 2012/13.

4.8 Step 8: Small Fires Unit (SFU):

A dedicated vehicle for dealing with small fires went live in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area on the 2nd April 2012. A PCSO, an Outreach worker from the Leisure Trust and a Drugs Worker have also been going out on the SFU, and in the first two weeks of operation it engaged with over 80 young people and dealt with five small fire incidents. Early results are positive with a 52 per cent reduction in small fires compared with the same time last year (down from 109 to 57).

5.0 Strategic Commissioning Review

5.1 The Fire and Rescue Service is undertaking a Strategic Commissioning Review as part of the County Council's programme. The purpose of the review is to consider how best the Council can meet the current and future Fire and Rescue needs of Warwickshire citizens, communities and businesses, and deliver the Council's ambitions for safety and protection to reduce fire related deaths and injuries, and reduce the economic cost of fire.

5.2 **The Scope of the review** includes all elements of the Fire and Rescue Service and will propose sustainable business and financial models for the medium term. The review will follow the County Council's approach for strategic commissioning and include evidence based recommendations and a record of decisions taken. Equality Impact Assessments will be produced, developed and updated throughout the review process.

5.3 **Governance arrangements** are in place including a Lead Strategic Director (Chief Fire Officer Graeme Smith), Critical Friend Director (Strategic Director for Communities, Monica Fogarty), Lead Head of Service (Deputy Chief Fire Officer Gary Phillips) and Review Manager (Area Commander Rob Moyney). The Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO) is providing support and challenge for the review. A Communications plan has been produced to engage and inform customers, staff, partners and wider stakeholders.

5.4 Areas to be addressed by the review:

Following discussions with stakeholders, including the Communities O&S Spokespersons, the following areas for review have been agreed by Corporate Board:

- In the context of the Council's overall financial position, to clarify the extent to which the Council may require the Fire Service to deliver savings;
- Review the Strategic Alliance proposals with Northamptonshire and identify what benefits will be delivered for citizens, communities, partners and businesses;
- Whilst recognising the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is a statutory requirement, consider whether it sufficiently describes improved service outcomes for Warwickshire citizens and businesses including how they will be delivered and to act effectively as the Fire and Rescue Service's Improvement focus;
- Ensure that any Council issues arising from the legal consideration of the Atherstone-on-Stour fire are included in future service improvement plans, (including any implications for the wider council); and
- Provide transparency around the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service coupled with an increased level of awareness across the County Council as a whole.

The review has three overarching prerequisites to provide clarity and shape the options considered in the review:

- Clarify the level of savings / funding for improvements that are likely to be required;
- Understand the legal position for collaborative opportunities for Warwickshire with other Fire Authorities / councils; and
- Articulate the key outcomes and benefits the Fire Service delivers, gain a consensus about their priority and consider how the current resources could be deployed to deliver those outcomes and benefits.

5.5 Leadership Expectations:

- Alignment of the work to update the IRMP and future consideration of the strategic alliance with Northamptonshire with the strategic commissioning service review, based upon "Do once and share" principles. This will include aspirations to complete the full business case for the strategic commissioning service review within the Programme's standard 16 week timeframe;
- Provide analysis of how current resources are allocated to service functions across the Service and evaluate whether the current allocation will continue to best meet the needs of Warwickshire and priorities for the service;

- Test whether the partnership approach is best served through development of a single partnership with another Fire and Rescue Service or whether a broader arrangement, partnering with a number of Fire Authorities to address particular priority areas of need / risk would better service the citizens and businesses of Warwickshire;
- Ensure future requirements, based on Going for Growth across Warwickshire and potential developments such as HS2 are built into the analysis of needs;
- Understand the changes that are needed to improve strategic commissioning for the Fire and Rescue Service against the strategic commissioning framework of principles;
- The review will use learning from best practice elsewhere to deliver improved outcomes;
- The process will identify opportunities for savings and include costs of delivering change as the options are developed; and
- Those involved in leading and undertaking the review will communicate in an open and transparent way and stakeholders will be kept informed about the progress being made and the key findings from the review as they emerge.

5.6 Approach and Timescales:

A Strategic Project Team has been set up to ensure the development and delivery of the outcomes associated with the Strategic Commissioning Review and Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP). The team is led by Area Commander Rob Moyney to complete a whole service review that will provide the evidence base for the following work:

- Review and analysis of customer demand, need and expectation;
- Review of community risk profile, operational risk profile and business risk profile;
- Review of the costs to deliver all service outcomes;
- Identification of best value partners; and
- Present an Initial assessment, options appraisal and full business case.

The Review has been divided into three phases (with indicative dates):

1. Phase One – Assessment of Service – (April 23rd - 4th July);
2. Phase Two – Options Appraisal (4th July - 13th August); and
3. Phase Three – Business Case – Six Weeks (13th August- 24th September).

6.0 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

- 6.1** The Strategic Commissioning Review underpins the IRMP and is driving, influencing and informing its development. The Service recognises that the Strategic Commissioning Review gives an opportunity to conduct a complete review of the way its services are delivered to the public. The timing of this review fits well with the review of risks and activity that would be conducted to prepare for the development and publication of the 2013-2016 IRMP, therefore both these areas of work run simultaneously with each other. As the IRMP is a Fire Authority Plan, a cross-party group of Members under the chairmanship of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety will develop proposals.
- 6.2** The activity to align strategic outcomes with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service will be reviewed as part of the commissioning review and this provides an opportunity to ensure that any expected benefits are assessed. A draft IRMP is due to go to Corporate Board in September 2012 with the final plan going for public consultation in December 2012. Following this consultation the plan will be published in April 2013.

Background Papers

Cabinet Paper 20th July 2010 'Improving Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service'

Communities Overview & Scrutiny Report 3rd November 2010 'Implementing the Fire and Rescue Service Improvement Plan'

Communities Overview & Scrutiny Report 28th April 2011 'Implementing the Fire and Rescue Service Improvement Plan'

Integrated Risk Management Plan (2010-2013) [Link to IRMP](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/irmp)
(www.warwickshire.gov.uk/irmp)

	Name	Contact details
Report Author	Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer	garyphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 423231 Ext. 3326
Head of Service	Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer	garyphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 423231
Strategic Director	Graeme Smith, Chief Fire Officer	graemesmith@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 423231
Portfolio Holder	Councillor R Hobbs	cllrhobbs@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01789 730331