

## **APPENDIX- Consultation Response**

### **Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Emergency Cover Review 2013**

#### **Background**

The Emergency Cover Review (ECR) is a strategic assessment of emergency cover of fire stations, fire engines and associated staffing requirements which aims to make sure that these resources continue to be sufficient for the risk and activity levels they will have to deal with.

An ECR provides regular assurance that emergency service delivery is appropriate to community risk as well as providing council tax payers with value for money. A twelve-week period of public consultation follows the announcement of the proposals contained in the ECR, culminating in a meeting of the Lancashire Fire Authority at which a decision will be made on which of the proposed changes are to be implemented. Prior to the current ECR, the most recent review of emergency cover was undertaken in 2009.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer, Chris Kenny, says,

“Underpinning this ECR is a 25% cut in the grant we receive from Government since 2011 – 12 that means we must save at least £10 million by April 2016 and we have already identified savings of half that amount as a result of economies made in administration and specialist support.”

“However, the scale of the savings we have to make are only possible if we also reduce the resources allocated to emergency cover and the ECR is a well tried-and-tested process that offers the opportunity to achieve those savings without compromising public or firefighter safety.”

“It isn't just because of the need to make savings that a review of our emergency cover provision is necessary. There has been a massive reduction of 60% in the number of emergency incidents we attended over the past ten years, attributable to the fire prevention work we have done in part, but also to improvements in building design and fire alarm systems and the introduction of fire-retardant furnishings and fittings in the home.”

“It would be irresponsible of us not to take account of this significant down-turn in emergency activity when we decide exactly how much taxpayers' money we must allocate to emergency cover appropriate to the demands placed on it.”

## **Risk and activity levels – establishing what’s needed and where it’s needed**

Fire Officers examined emergency response activity, broken down by incident type and for each fire station since the 2009 ECR. This gave a detailed picture of changes in risk and activity levels, which were used to determine whether, and where, there are options to change the distribution and extent of resources to provide.

Experienced fire officers used their professional judgement to identify initial options and their proposals for change have been tested using specialist computer software to model the impact of the proposed changes compared with current provision.

The proposals

The final package of changes approved by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority following public consultation will be implemented over four years from 2014 – 2017 and the proposals outlined below relate to Years 1 – 4 over that timescale.

### **Year 1 proposals – 2014/15**

In the first year of the Emergency Cover Review, it is proposed to remove one of Hyndburn’s Wholetime fire engines. Currently the station has two Wholetime fire engines and one Retained fire engine making it the only fire station in the North West of England with three fire engines. The second Wholetime fire engine is now among the least busy in Lancashire and its current activity can be met by the Retained fire engine. Research indicates that the service will continue to meet its response standard of eight minutes.

The service is also proposing to remove one of the two Retained fire engines at Padiham fire station in line with reducing activity and risk levels. The readiness of the first fire engine to incidents has been good but there have been long term difficulties recruiting enough Retained firefighters to crew the second fire engine, particularly during the day when availability of a crew has been as low as 25% for a number of years. The risk in the station area is categorised as “low” and last year there were only 20 property fires in Padiham.

Year 1 changes will save the Service just over £1 million and the County will only lose two fire engines.

### **Year 2 – 2015/16**

In the second year the service is proposing to move Bamber Bridge’s Wholetime fire engine to Chorley leaving the station with a Retained duty system fire engine. Over the

last three years, activity levels in Bamber Bridge have dropped significantly and last year there was less than one property fire a week in the station area. The Retained fire engine at Bamber Bridge will continue to serve the area and our research has indicated that we would still be able to meet our current response standard of eight minutes. Prior to 1995 Bamber Bridge was serviced by one Retained Duty System fire engine with higher activity levels than now.

Chorley Community Fire Station, which has recently moved to the Training Centre in Euxton, currently houses one Wholetime fire engine and one Retained fire engine. The proposal is to change the crewing system at the station from the traditional crewing arrangements to Day Crewing Plus, with no change in attendance times. The service will also remove the Retained fire engine but the fire engine moving across from Bamber Bridge will ensure that the station continues to accommodate two fire engines.

Finally in the same year, it is proposed to create a specialist rescue hub at the new fire station in Chorley. This hub will house the Urban Search and Rescue vehicles which are currently based in costly rented accommodation in Leyland and will be operated by the firefighters based at Chorley Fire Station 24 hours a day. This will improve the search and rescue service as vehicles are only immediately available during the day and in the evenings there can be a delay of up to 45 minutes. This change will make them immediately available at all times.

Year 2 changes will save the Service nearly £1.7 million but will only reduce the number of fire engines by one.

### **Year 3 – 2016/17**

A proposal in the 2012 Performance Report and Action Plan was to extend the Day Crewing Plus duty system of working to additional fire stations this was subsequently agreed by the Fire Authority, with Skelmersdale and South Shore stations identified as suitable for its introduction there.

At Skelmersdale the station currently accommodates one wholetime and one retained fire engine. During Year 3 it is proposed to move the wholetime fire engine to the Day Crewing Plus duty system and the retained fire engine will remain.

At South Shore there is currently a wholetime fire engine and in Year 3 it is proposed to move over to the Day Crewing Plus System there instead.

The Day Crewing Plus shift system enables great flexibility in working as well as offering salary benefits. It offers considerable savings and helps tailor services better to cover local risk. Because it works best in locations where there is a pattern of reduced activity overnight compared with elsewhere in Lancashire it is not possible to make even more savings by implementing it at all Lancashire fire stations.

Year 3 changes will save the Service nearly £800,000 and it will not result in the loss of any fire engines but will maintain the same response times.

#### **Year 4 – 2017/18**

The current provision for emergency cover at Blackpool fire station is two Wholetime fire engines and crews. It is proposed to reduce this to one fire engine. The Fylde coast, from Bispham to Lytham, has the biggest concentration of fire engines in the county. This reduction offers an opportunity to save £1 million by withdrawing a fire engine whilst being confident that response times can be maintained and risk levels protected.

Lancaster fire station currently accommodates two Wholetime fire engines and it is proposed to remove the second fire engine. The intention is to explore the option of replacing it with a fire engine crewed by Retained Duty System firefighters but this will be dependent on recruiting sufficient staff. As the second fire engine at Lancaster is one of the least active Wholetime fire engines in the county and with incident numbers decreasing each year in the area, this proposal will save £1 million pound whilst maintaining the risk levels.

Year 4 changes will save the Service nearly £1.9 million and result in the loss of just two fire engines.

#### **Public Open Meetings**

Public open meetings have been arranged at the following times and locations and they can be attended by any interested member of the public. A senior officer will be present at the meetings to present the proposals and answer any questions. The meetings will begin at 6:30pm and conclude around 8:30pm, for this District it will take place:

16th September – **Lancaster** – Ashton Hall, Lancaster Town Hall, Dalton Square, Lancaster, LA1 1TX

## **Suggested Consultation Response from Lancaster City Council**

Lancaster City Council recognises the situation faced by the Fire and Rescue service driven by reductions in Government funding.

The proposals put forward demonstrate that the need to make savings is going to have a very real impact on the delivery of this emergency service across the whole of the County.

The Council welcomes the fact that experienced fire officers have been involved in developing the proposals and notes that a risk based approach has been taken.

With regards to the specific proposal for the Lancaster fire station. Clearly you will be aware of the current risks within the District.

What also needs to be taken into account is that the District has ambitious plans for development and would expect an increase in both the number of houses and the population over the coming years.

The Council notes that incident numbers have decreased each year. This is in part due to the efforts of the partners of the Community Safety Partnership who have focused on strategies and actions that have had a positive impact on reduction in incident numbers.

Some of the actions have been funded via the Community Safety Partnership and directly by partners such as the City Council.

Due to reduction in government spend going forward the funding that was available for these joint initiatives will no longer be.

There is a real danger that a combination of a growing population and a lack of funding to focus on joint efforts will start to see an increase in fire incidents in the area.

The Council would also want to avoid a situation where unintended consequences of this proposal are then borne by other parts of the public sector.

The Council would want to be assured that these wider factors have been taken into account before a decision to remove 50% of Lancaster's fire fighting capacity is taken.

Lancaster City Council does not support the proposal to remove the second fire engine. However, the option of keeping the second engine but with retained firefighters would seem a reasonable one, assuming that assurances were given that the wider factors had been taken into account.