

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 6th February 2018

Report of: Councillor Margaret Simon, Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject/Title: Second Pump Crewe Fire Station

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Janet Clowes, Adult Social Care and Integration

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report summarises the deliberations of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to a proposal by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to reduce the utilisation of the second pump (fire engine) at Crewe Fire station from whole time to “on-call” status, and recommends that Cabinet consider whether support the resolution of Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting held on 11 January 2018.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to support the resolution 2 of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in bold in paragraph 5.12 below.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 In order to respond to the resolution of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Police and Justice Act 2006, requires local authorities to designate one of its Overview and Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise crime and disorder functions. The Council’s Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been designated as the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee which gives it a remit to review Community Safety matters.

- 5.2 On the 7th September 2017, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee invited Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to make a presentation relating to a proposal to change the utilisation of the second pump at Crewe Fire Station from 'whole time' to 'on call' utilisation: a proposal which was contained in the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018. The proposal had first appeared as one of fourteen proposals across Cheshire in Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013. In the intervening years, all of the proposals have been implemented except those relating to Crewe and Ellesmere Port.
- 5.3 At the 7 September 2017 meeting, it was resolved that the Members of the Committee who were also Members of Cheshire Fire Authority should be requested to continue to monitor the situation regarding the second pump and feedback to the Committee prior to any decision being made by the fire authority.
- 5.4. On the 11 January 2018, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was invited back to allow the Committee to consider the matter again with a view to a formal response being submitted ahead of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority on 14 February 2018, at which it was expected that a final decision would be made on the second pump at Crewe. On this occasion, the Committee also invited the Fire Brigade's Union's representative to address the Committee with a short presentation to establish the view of the union on the proposal.
- 5.5. There are currently two fire engines with whole time crews (24/7) housed at Crewe Fire Station at a cost of in the region of £800k each per annum. Fire pumps are not 'owned' by a fire station or town, they are housed there and can be drafted to neighbouring fires (across county borders if necessary) to wherever an incident occurs. Cheshire Fire and Rescue have cited the Bosley Wood Flour Mill incident as an example of how pumps were drafted from across Cheshire to deal with a major incident.
- 5.6. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is proposing to change the status of the second pump from whole-time utilisation to on-call utilisation. This would mean that firefighters on the second pump would not be present at the fire station 24 hours a day, but when on call would be required to arrive at the station within a defined period of time. On call pumps cost in the region of £150k per annum; this change represents in the region of a £650k a year saving to the Fire Service.
- 5.7. The following section summarises the main issues raised at the meeting on 11 January 2018. Of necessity this report cannot illustrate all of the evidence considered over two lengthy meetings that took place on 7 September 2017 and 11 January 2018, rather, it presents a summary of the views expressed by the representatives of the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Fire Brigade's Union and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These have been expressed as succinctly as possible but should not be regarded as exhaustive.

5.8 Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS):

The following is a brief non-exhaustive summary of issues raised by CFRS:

- At Crewe Fire Station, 69% of call-outs are listed as 'one pump' incidents and 31% as 'two pump' incidents.
- If the Fire Authority approves the proposal to reduce the facility at Crewe, the earliest it could be implemented would be 2020.
- Every year 40,000 visits are made to properties throughout Cheshire by the Fire and Rescue Service in respect of fire prevention measures. This equates to 110 a day. This has had a direct impact by reducing fire incidents.
- When an incident is reported to the control centre (which is located in Warrington and is responsible for the whole of the North West of England) the nearest available fire pump to the incident is deployed irrespective of county boundaries. The mobilisation system selects the pump that will arrive on scene the quickest.
- The level of economic growth (e.g. an increase in housing), does not correlate to increased risk of fire. For instance, new building regulations require all new builds to have hard wired fire alarms.
- Recruitment to date shows that 7 fire fighters are currently in training and 2 pending, but recruitment has been on-hold since February 2017.
- CFRS recognises that since 2013, the population in Crewe has increased by 2%, dwellings have increased by 4% and business units have increased by 23%. However, the annual demand based on a five-year average shows that fires (that include: dwelling, non-domestic, primary vehicle, road traffic collisions, false alarms) are all down by 29%

5.9 Cheshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU):

The following is a brief non-exhaustive summary of issues raised by the FBU:

- Over the past 2 years several recruitment initiatives have failed to provide the service with the sufficient numbers of personnel required to staff these fire engines. In addition, of the few personnel that have been recruited, many have left. The FBU contend that they have consistently highlighted the difficulties they anticipated the fire service would face in recruiting sufficient numbers of suitable recruits to enable the proposal to regarding the second pump to be realised.
- The current proposal to staff the second appliance in a new shift system Monday-Friday daytime only is a reduction in the existing standard of fire cover which currently includes evenings and at weekends. The FBU

previously opposed plans to downgrade the second appliances at each of the six whole-time stations across Cheshire, and it re-iterated that opposition.

- Crewe fire station will provide the only appliance that has a guaranteed response to cover the entire Cheshire East area at night. This leaves an area of over 1,116km² and a population of over 370,000 residents at risk from shortages in the level of guaranteed response.

5.10 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Based upon the information presented to at the meeting on 11 January 2018, the main issues raised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 January were:

- It appears that the north and north west side of Cheshire, which includes Ellesmere Port and Warrington, has a large proportion of whole time and on call pumps, yet if the current proposal goes ahead, Cheshire East would be left with just one full-time pump in Crewe. However, the Committee did accept that wider issue of the distribution of appliances across Cheshire was beyond the scope of its review but was something that should be considered by the Fire Authority as part of the overall strategic view.
- CFRS does not seem to have taken into account future development resulting from the Cheshire East Local Plan. The Committee acknowledged the evidence provided by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Officers, but Committee Members questioned the suitability of current proposals taking into consideration an expected increase of 36,000 houses in the area, the arrival of HS2, the town centre redevelopment plans and the changes to the M6 motorway network.
- The Committee questioned, whether due to level of traffic congestion and general accessibility, the location of current Fire Station had contributed to the failure to recruit from the surrounding area because the expected turn out time for on-call could not be met.
- The Committee was made aware that the CFRS and the FBU currently disagree on the figures on mobilisation times.
- CFRS is funded through two main sources of income: a grant from central government and precept. The precept provides the majority of funding - approximately 65% with government grant comprising the other 35%. The precept from Cheshire East residents for Fire and Rescue services is the highest of all the local authorities in Cheshire, yet Cheshire East appears to have dis-proportionately fewer appliances compared to other parts of Cheshire, for instance, there would be only one full time pump in the south of the region and eight in the north. However, it is important to note that a fire pump is not allocated on a cost per person basis, but where there is a high density of fire incidents.
- The Committee indicated that it would like to see how the response times to fire incidents in Crewe compares to those of neighbouring forces.

5.12 The Committee subsequently requested that Cabinet support the Committee's position on the second pump as follows:

- 1) That the Committee recommend that the Adult Care and Integration Portfolio Holder request that the proposals for Crewe's 2nd pump to become 'On-Call', be dropped for the foreseeable future.
- 2) **That the Leader of the Council and Cabinet be requested to advise Cheshire Fire and Rescue and Cheshire Service and Fire Authority that the Leader of the Council and Cabinet cannot support a proposal for the 2nd pump to become On-Call.**
- 3) That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee cannot support the proposal to change the 2nd pump to become On-Call.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1. All Wards

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

7.1.1. N/A

7.2. Legal Implications

7.2.1 There are no legal implications for the Council.

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. None directly for the Council

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. The implications remain with Cheshire Fire Authority as the body responsible.

7.5. Rural Community Implications

7.6. The implications remain with Cheshire Fire Authority as the body responsible.

7.7. Human Resources Implications

7.7.1 The implications remain with Cheshire Fire Authority as the body responsible.

7.8. Health and Wellbeing Implications

7.9. The implications remain with Cheshire Fire Authority as the body responsible.

7.10. Implications for Children and Young People

7.10.1 The implications remain with Cheshire Fire Authority as the body responsible.

7.11. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Implications

7.11.1. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny considered this matter on 11 January 2018 and through the Chairman of the Committee forwarded its recommendation to the Fire Authority on 16 January 2018.

7.12. Other Implications

7.12.1 N/A

8. Risk Management

8.1. Consideration of risk issues is integral to this matter. It is ultimately for the Fire Authority to evaluate that risk and act accordingly.

9. Access to Information

9.1 Presentation for the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to Corporate Scrutiny Committee 11 January 2018 and FBU response to the CFRS Integrated Risk management Plan 2018 to Corporate Scrutiny Committee 11 January 2018.

9.2 The audio recording for the Corporate Scrutiny Meeting from 11 January 2018 can be found [here](#).

10 Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:

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