

Cabinet

24 April 2019



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| Title | Surrey Fire & Rescue Service – ‘Making Surrey Safer plan 2020-2023’ – proposed response to consultation | | |
| Purpose of the report | To make a decision | | |
| Report Author | Lee O’Neil – Deputy Chief Executive | | |
| Cabinet Member | Councillor Ian Harvey | Confidential | No |
| Corporate Priority | Clean and Safe Environment | | |
| Recommendations | Cabinet is asked to agree the proposed response to Surrey County Council’s consultation on the draft ‘Making Surrey Safer plan 2020 – 2023’ as outlined in Appendix B of this report. | | |
| Reason for Recommendation | None | | |

1. Key issues

- 1.1 Surrey County Council are consulting on proposed changes to the way Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) provides fire services across the county.
- 1.2 SFRS’s *‘Making Surrey Safer Plan 2020 – 2023’* (‘the plan’) is a document that Surrey County Council (SCC) is required to produce and sets out the Service’s priorities to keep people safe in Surrey, improve how they deliver services to ensure Surrey’s communities are safer, preventing and protecting people from fire and other risks and responding swiftly and effectively to the emergencies that occur.
- 1.3 SCC have indicated that they want to:
 - (a) Provide the best service they can to all residents in Surrey and continue to prioritise responding quickly to emergencies;
 - (b) Ensure that they adapt to meet the needs of the Surrey community, government legislation and changing risks; and
 - (c) Improve the service to respond to the outcomes from their recent Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection.
- 1.4 Their proposals outlined in the plan are based on SCC’s Community Risk Profile, which is designed to help them *‘understand where the risks associated with places in the county are, where ‘the most vulnerable people are and when and where the risks are greater’*.

- 1.5 A number of the proposed changes are in response to outcomes from a recent inspection of SFRS by HMICFRS. The HMICFRS inspector reported that they were concerned that the SFRS did not have a robust and sustainable operating model to manage their fire and rescue resources, including use of staff, and that resources were not being used effectively to manage risk. They were also concerned about how their finances were managed. They made seven recommendations to address these concerns, advising that SFRS needed to:
- i) Put in place a response plan based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community;
 - ii) Ensure the Service has the appropriate resources (people and equipment) to respond to risk in line with its Integrated Risk Management Plan;
 - iii) Ensure the Service understands and actively manages the resources and capabilities available for deployment;
 - iv) Tell the people of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them;
 - v) Ensure that the resourcing model meets their risk demand sustainably;
 - vi) Ensure the Service workforce model supports the operational model to manage risk efficiently and sustainably;
 - vii) Ensure that the Service uses the available budget prudently to support its risk management activities.
- 1.6 SCC have indicated that their proposal means:
- (a) More prevention work to keep communities safe;
 - (b) More resilience and firefighter training;
 - (c) More on-call firefighters;
 - (d) More investment in community safety.
- 1.7 One of the main changes affecting Spelthorne under the plan is that the number of crews at the new fire station in Ashford (described as 'Fordbridge' in the plan) will reduce from two whole-time (full-time) crews to one whole-time crew and one daytime only crew, therefore reducing night-time cover in the borough to one whole-time crew. SFRS have indicated that their risk analysis has indicated that they have more resources at night than they need.
- 1.8 Spelthorne has for some time expressed significant concern about proposed cuts to fire services in the borough, which would result in reduced night-time cover. From when it was announced in 2017 that Staines and Sunbury fire stations were to be closed and replaced with a single station in Ashford, the Council has argued for the current arrangement of two whole-time crews to be retained to protect our residents and businesses, particularly those most vulnerable in our community.
- 1.9 The consultation questionnaire has nine questions, five of which (questions 4 - 8) seek views on specific proposals, and one 'open-field' question (question 9) seeking any other comments. The specific questions outlined in 4 – 8 cover:

- (a) Question 4 - Whether SFRS should adopt a risk-based approach and focus resources where they are needed and when they are needed?
- (b) Question 5 - Whether SFRS should spend more time on business safety to help prevent incidents occurring in the first place?
- (c) Question 6 - Whether SFRS should maintain the number of fire stations and fire engines in Surrey but change how a number of stations are crewed (including the new station in Ashford)?
- (d) Question 7 - Whether the catchment area for on-call firefighters should be extended to aid recruitment?
- (e) Question 8 - Whether SFRS should recover its costs from some non-emergencies to re-invest in the Service?

2. Options analysis and proposal

2.1 The Council's proposed response to the consultation is outlined in **Appendix C**. The main points made in our response include:

- (a) Question 4 - Although Spelthorne strongly agrees that SFRS should adopt a risk based approach and focus resources where they are needed, and when they are needed, the Council is concerned that SFRS have not applied their risk based approach appropriately by cutting night-time cover in our borough which, compared to other Boroughs and Districts in Surrey, has:
 - i) The highest proportion of its population classed as vulnerable to house fires;
 - ii) The highest proportion of its population having a long-term illness or disability;
 - iii) The highest level of smoking prevalence in adults (aged 18+) in the county.

- (b) Question 5 - Although Spelthorne strongly agrees that SFRS should spend more time on community and business safety to prevent future incidents from occurring, this work should not be at the expense of the Service's ability to respond effectively to critical incidents. The Council is particularly concerned over the use of night-shifts for this work as they would already have reduced resources under the plan.

The recent HMICFRS inspection highlighted that SFRS were significantly behind in their engagement on community and business safety, and the Service therefore faces a significant challenge to meet their future targets to address this issue. The Council believes that SFRS should not make any cuts to night-time cover in Surrey until the results of the proposed increase in preventative work are shown to be having the desired reduction in critical incident call-outs.

- (c) Question 6 - The Council strongly disagrees with SFRS's proposals to change how the fire station in Ashford (Fordbridge) is crewed at night for the reasons outlined in our response to questions 4 and 5. These proposals would result in reduced response times to critical incidents, particularly at night. This runs contrary to the risk characteristics for Spelthorne outlined in SFRS's Equality Impact Assessment. The Council is particularly concerned about SFRS's ability to tackle large-

scale incidents and fires in high-rise blocks under the proposed plan. It is unclear from the proposed plan and the documents accompanying the consultation as to any changes to response times for subsequent appliances arriving on site or whether there will be any changes to the availability and location of special appliances.

- (d) Question 7 – Spelthorne neither agrees nor disagrees with the proposal to increase the catchment area for on-call firefighters to aid recruitment as there is no indication as to the extent to which any catchment area would be increased and what effect this would potentially have on response times. The Council is, however, clear that any such changes must not have any significant adverse effect on response times and is concerned that any increased use of on-call firefighters will cause increased pressure and fatigue to on-call crews, which could adversely affect the ability to recruit people to this role.
- (e) Question 8 – The Council supports the proposal to recover costs from the type of non-emergencies listed provided that this money is reinvested in SFRS.
- (f) General comments – the Council has also submitted a range of general comments about the consultation document and supporting information.

2.2 The Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed response to the '*Making Surrey Safer plan 2020 – 2023*' consultation questionnaire (**Preferred option**).

2.3 Alternatively the Cabinet may propose alternative responses to this consultation.

3. Financial implications

3.1 None.

4. Other considerations

4.1 The Council has taken into consideration the needs of all sections of our community in formulating the proposed responses to the consultation questionnaire.

5. Timetable for implementation

5.1 The Council's response to the consultation questionnaire must be received by SCC by 26 May 2019.

Background papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A - Making Surrey Safer Plan 2020 – 2023

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/190154/CS4015-Fire-Community-Safety-Plan_v5.pdf

Appendix B – Consultation questionnaire

<https://www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/surrey-fire-and-rescue-service-making-surrey-safer/consultation/intro/>

Appendix C - Draft responses to consultation questionnaire on SCC's 'Making

Surrey Safer plan 2020 – 2023'