

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)

Date: 22nd October 2012

Subject: West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority – consultation on proposed changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire.

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. In acknowledging the consultation being undertaken by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority on proposed changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire, the Scrutiny Board agreed to consider these proposals at today's meeting.
2. The attached consultation document outlines the proposals of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, which aim to address the challenges of a reducing budget and the realignment of resources following a dramatic reduction in risk and demand over the past 10 years.
3. Representatives from the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be attending today's meeting to present an overview of the proposed changes and discuss how these will affect services within the Leeds area in particular.

Recommendations

4. The Board is requested to consider and comment on the proposals set out within the attached consultation document.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 At its September meeting, the Scrutiny Board acknowledged the start of a 12-week consultation exercise being undertaken by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority on proposed changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire. The Scrutiny Board agreed to consider these proposals at its next meeting and respond to the consultation.
- 1.2 A copy of the consultation document is therefore attached as appendix 1 for Members' consideration. Also attached is a summary analysis of the predicted impact on emergency response times by wards in West Yorkshire (appendix 2).

2 Background information

- 2.1 The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) serves a population of 2.2 million people across the five districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield (an area of 800 square miles).
- 2.2 The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is dependent upon central government to provide over 60% of its funding and consequently will see significant cuts as part of the government's austerity measures. In total, fire service funding nationally will be cut by 25% over the current four year period with 6.5% being cut in the first two years ending 31 March 2013 and the balance of 18.5% in the following two years. However, such cuts have not been shared evenly across all fire and rescue authorities, with West Yorkshire losing over 10% of its funding in the first two years whilst some authorities received a funding increase.
- 2.3 Significant and sustained improvements in community safety over the past few years have also led to a reduction in risk and demand for the fire and rescue service.
- 2.4 The attached consultation document therefore outlines proposals for addressing the challenges of a reducing budget and the realignment of resources following a dramatic reduction in risk and demand over the past 10 years.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The attached consultation document covers a number of key aspects for the Board's consideration:
 - The context and methodology of the approach adopted;
 - An explanation of the services delivered by the Authority and some of the changes made already;
 - The proposals for future changes to emergency cover;
 - The communication and engagement process.
- 3.2 Representatives from the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be attending today's meeting to present an overview of the proposed changes and discuss how these will affect services within the Leeds area in particular.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 A 12-week formal public consultation exercise was launched on 7th September 2012 and is due to finish on 30th November 2012. The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority will have sight of the consultation responses at their meeting in December 2012 before it makes any decisions on the proposals.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The consultation document states that in order to ensure that none of the proposals disadvantage any group disproportionately, a detailed Equality Impact Assessment of each proposal individually and of the package of proposals collectively has been completed.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Within the Safer and Stronger Communities portfolio, the Scrutiny Board is required to review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with any council or executive function of any matter which affects the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area, including matters pertaining to outside bodies and partnerships to which the authority has made appointments.

4.3.2 In accordance with the Leeds City Council Constitution and the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution, eight Elected Members of the Council are appointed onto the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 The Government introduced Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) in 2004 to replace National Standards of Fire Cover. This change moved the focus of emergency cover from buildings to people. The aim of IRMP is to improve community safety, reduce emergencies and provide value for money, with the continuous process of aligning the available resources to risk and demand.

4.4.2 Extensive research underpins each IRMP proposal and information comes from various sources, some of which include:

- Operational incident data (empirical evidence)
- Predictions of future demand and risk
- Fire engine turnout data (activity and demand at certain times of the day, week, year and seasonal variations)
- Changes in profiles of communities (new houses, commercial buildings etc.)

4.4.3 This information is used, along with professional judgement and experience to support the changes, to ensure they have minimal impact upon local communities.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The consultation document acknowledges that when developing these proposals, future performance is predicted based on plans for emergency cover already approved for implementation, including the five new fire stations approved as part of the 2012/13 IRMP Action Plan. The community safety activity that will continue to be provided to reduce risk in all communities is also taken into account and this focuses on areas affected by these proposals.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The attached consultation document outlines the proposals of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority for changes to emergency cover in West Yorkshire. Such proposals aim to address the challenges of a reducing budget and the realignment of resources following a dramatic reduction in risk and demand over the past 10 years.
- 5.2 Representatives from the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service will be attending today's meeting to present an overview of the proposed changes and discuss how these will affect services within the Leeds area in particular.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Board is requested to consider and comment on the proposals set out within the attached consultation document.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.