

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MEETING: 23rd February 2009

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE CONSULTATION REGARDING RELOCATION OF FULWELL FIRE STATION

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE FINANCE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the proposal to relocate Fulwell fire station to a new site, west of the existing site.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the June 2008 meeting of the Fire Authority Members approved, in principle, the relocation of Fulwell fire station to a new site in order to provide an enhanced operational and community service to the area, subject to the outcome of a formal consultation exercise with the public, representative bodies and other relevant stakeholders (Minute No.15/2008 refers).
- 2.2 Further to this approval a comprehensive consultation exercise was undertaken using the contents of the Fire Authority report '*Fulwell Community Fire Station*' to the meeting of 16th June 2008, as the basis for all discussions and communications.

3 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- 3.1 The following table lists the main actions that comprised the communications framework for the consultation period.

	Action
August 2008	Presentation and informal discussions with Fulwell Councillors
	Presentation and informal discussions to Sunderland LSP
	Presentation and informal discussions with residents living within the station 'yard' area
September 2008	Open press release, information onto the www.twfire.gov website which includes questionnaire.
	News item on ITV news and Sun FM radio
	Article in the Sunderland Echo series
October 2008	Adverts and articles in the Sunderland Echo series
	Open consultation events at Station Mike
	Discussion with the Fire Brigades Union
	Presentation and discussion with Sunderland North Area Committee
December 2008	Consultation closed

3.2 As can be seen from the above table, throughout the consultation process a wide range of stakeholders were sought out in order to seek their views on the proposals. Details of the responses are outlined below for consideration by Members.

4 COMMENTS RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

4.1 The comments received during the consultation process can be split into four groups,

- A. Comments arising from presentations to partners/LSP/local councillors
- B. Comments arising from presentations to the public/residents
- C. Comments from discussion with the Fire Brigades Union
- D. From feedback sheets submitted

4.2 Comments arising from presentations to partners/LSP/local councillors

- 4.2.1 Three presentations were delivered overall.
- 4.2.2 On each occasion a discussion took place regarding the merits of a move and the impact upon the service to the community.
- 4.2.3 As the consultation was looking at moving the station and not replacing it, the comments were generally positive and supportive although a small number did voice some concerns that the level of cover provided to Fulwell would be diminished as a consequence of the proposed move.
- 4.2.4 Attendees at the meeting also had the opportunity to provide any comments direct to TWFRS after the presentation (minuted at the LSP meeting). No further comments were received.

4.3 Comments arising from presentations to the public/residents

- 4.3.1 Four presentations were delivered overall, one specifically for the residents of the houses within the station boundary (which was well attended) and three open sessions for the community (at which seven members of the public attended overall).
- 4.3.2 Comments made at these sessions were documented, The main comments were regarding the future use of the existing location and questions asking why the station should be moved away from the Fulwell area. Detailed discussions took place around these points and the presentation overall.
- 4.3.3 At the end of the public sessions all attendees were encouraged to complete the feedback sheets and given a booklet containing the presentation and feedback sheet.

4.4 Comments arising from discussion with the Fire Brigades Union

- 4.4.1 Comments from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) indicated that the Union understood the rationale for the proposed move. FBU concerns were related to the potential impact on vehicle and crewing levels.
- 4.4.2 It was clarified that this move does not include plans for reductions to either.

4.5 Comments arising from the feedback sheets that were submitted:

- 4.5.1 Overall the consultation process had a total of twelve formal questionnaires submitted which is disappointing considering the engagement opportunities. The results therefore need to be treated as indicative rather than as statistically representative of the views of the community as a whole.
- 4.5.2 The following is a summary of the key comments contained in the questionnaires and from open consultation events:
- 77% agreed that the information provided was helpful
 - 85% stated that they understood the reasons behind our plans
 - 54% agreed with those plans.
- 4.5.3 Some of the actual comments included the following:
- I think it is excellent that you are spending money on bringing a first class facility to the area and it seems that a lot of thought has gone into the location in relation to where the fires in our areas are.
 - If you can provide evidence that a relocation would improve services, it is hard to argue against the move
 - What will replace the existing building and could TWFRS not retain it and use it for something else? (X6 comments)
 - Where exactly is the proposed site?
 - A degraded service to the Fulwell, Seaburn and South Bents areas.
- 4.5.4 The Chief Fire Officer can make available the full list of comments received if Members so require.

5 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific Health and Safety implications associated with this report.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The costs of the consultation event were met from the existing budget.
- 6.2 A Development Reserve has been established in order to provide future funding for the Fulwell community fire station project.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The consultation process was designed to be open and varied to support equality and fairness issues.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no risks associated with this specific report.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The consultation process undertaken in respect of replacing Fulwell fire station was not a mandatory requirement. However, given the importance of the matter it was deemed appropriate to carry out the consultation to enable all stakeholders to comment.

- 9.2 A varied communications plan was put in place over the consultation period and in general the presentations to partners and local councillors were well received.

- 9.3 Overall attendance at public events and the number of feedback forms received were low.

- 9.3.1 The main comments were regarding the future use of the existing location and questions asking why the station should be moved away from the Fulwell area.

- 9.3.2 At all presentations discussion took place regarding the merits of a move and the impact upon the service to the community.

- 9.3.3 Even with the low levels of response, the majority of people agreed with the plans to move the station.

- 9.4 The report to members 16th June 2008, detailed the Operational benefits of the relocation, it can now be confirmed that on conclusion of the consultation process, those benefits are still valid as no new unforeseen issues were raised during consultation.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Authority is recommended to:
- a) Consider the content of this report.
 - b) Approve, in principle, the relocation of Fulwell fire station to a new site in order to provide an enhanced operational and community service to the area

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Fulwell Community Fire Station - June 2008