

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No 5

MEETING: 11 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: DRAFT IRMP 2021-2024 PROPOSAL 3; BIRTLEY FIRE STATION

JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY), THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Fire Authority meeting of 13 September 2021, the outcomes of the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 and four proposals put to public consultation was presented [minutes not yet available but will be presented for approval at the October meeting].
- 1.2 Three of the four proposals were approved by the Fire Authority and are now being implemented.
- 1.3 IRMP Proposal 3; *to introduce a day crewing working pattern at Birtley fire station*, was not approved. The Chief Fire Officer was requested to revisit the proposal of introducing a day crewing provision and present a further paper to Fire Authority where the fire cover proposals including during the hours of 2000 hrs through to 0800 hrs was reconsidered.
- 1.4 This paper returns IRMP 2021-2024, proposal 3 back to the Fire Authority following completion of the action requested in paragraph 1.3 above.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Full details of the analysis carried out on the consultation responses was provided within the appendices to the paper submitted at the Fire Authority meeting of 13 March 2021 along with the actual responses received from respondents to the consultation. IRMP proposal 3 within the 13 March 2021 meeting papers represents the most efficient and operationally effective proposal that the evidence and data as well as the operational experience supports.
- 2.2 During the public consultation on the IRMP proposals 2021-2024 there was strong public support for proposals 1, 2 and 4 and less public support for proposal 3. The analysis of the public consultation returns did not produce any data or matters that undermined proposal 3, to move Birtley fire station to day crewing.

- 2.3 Of the total 648 responses received to the IRMP 2021- 2024 proposals via the online survey tool;
- 517 people answered the questions in relation to the Birtley proposals;
 - 131 people chose not to answer this question;
 - 141 people offered positive support for the proposal;
 - 245 people who answered this question 47% opposed the proposal.
- 2.4 The IRMP 2021-2024 proposals are based on empirical incident data and evidence over a three year period as well as the community risk profile for the Tyne and Wear area and operational experience of officers. The proposals seek to align emergency resources to most effectively match the risk profile across the whole area and ensure a highly effective, proportionate speed and weight of response to emergencies.
The IRMP proposal in respect of Birtley crewing arrangements was part of a wider IRMP plan that considers the spread of assets and resources across the whole of Tyne and Wear.
- 2.5 There is a requirement to change the current Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) working pattern as a result of a High Court ruling where the duty pattern was deemed to be unlawful in another Fire and Rescue Service and subsequent enforcement through the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Following discussions with the HSE they have agreed with the services proposal to have removed the DCCC by the end of the financial year 2021/2022 at the very latest.

3 CONSIDERATIONS OF PROPOSAL 3; DAY CREWING AT BIRTLEY STN

- 3.1 Having been requested by the Fire Authority to revisit the IRMP proposal in relation to Birtley fire station, the Chief Fire Officer instructed a review of the proposal so that this could be brought forward to inform any alternative options for Fire Authority consideration at the October 2021 meeting.
- 3.2 Consideration has been given to alternative options that the Fire Authority may wish to consider. The options considered included those set out within the initial paper to the Fire Authority meeting on 15 March 2021 on the IRMP, page 121 of 306 of the pack. Appendix 1 outlines these options.
- 3.3 The reconsideration of options included;
- A. Remain with the original proposal for day crewing at Birtley station (0800 hrs-2000 hrs);
 - B. Consider day crewing with an on call/ recall to duty element from 2000 hrs – 0800 hrs;

4 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

4.1 Option A: This option is as set out in within the paper and proposal to Fire Authority at the September 2021 meeting. It is included within the set of IRMP 2021-24 proposals and presented here as a viable option.

4.2 Option B: This option includes the original day crewing proposal between 0800 hrs and 2000 hrs each day with an on call provision between 2000 hrs and 0800 hrs each day.

An on call provision could be based on one of a number of models, some examples of which are set out below:

- i) To seek volunteers from the staff working at Birtley fire station and engage them on a secondary contract to provide an on call provision. This would require additional payment of a retainer and possibly a training fee. Alternatively, an on call additional payment of between 5% – 10% of their substantive whole time salary may be considered and put to employee representatives for negotiation.
- ii) To seek volunteers from the existing TWFRS firefighter workforce across the whole service and engage them on a secondary contract of employment as on call Firefighters. This may also include a requirement to pay a retainer and training costs as per option i above.

Note to options A and B. Both options provide the same level of emergency fire cover to the communities of Birtley and surrounding area.

4.3 If the current staff working at Birtley were asked to undertake an on call roll at the station, many do not live in the immediate vicinity of Birtley station and travel time to the station if alerted could be beyond what is normally considered for immediate on call Firefighters. Therefore, if chosen it may need to be an extended on call arrangement with neighbouring stations responding until the on call team arrive.

5 DISCUSSION ON OPTIONS

5.1 Should the Fire Authority instruct that an on call aspect of fire cover is provided for the Birtley station area in the evenings, the Officers will need to carry out work to detail the costs and establish whom may be interested in engaging in this from the existing workforce or station and work to put this in place by 31 March 2022 at the latest. This is the last date that the Health and Safety Executive have permitted for removal of the DCCC working pattern.

5.2 The on call options were included within the IRMP paper to the Fire Authority meeting of 15 March 2021 with indicative costs (Appendix 1). They were ruled out at that meeting by the Fire Authority in favour of the proposals that went to public consultation but are returned to this meeting for the Fire Authority

reconsideration. The associated costs would require to be refreshed to reflect the July 2021 pay award if this option is to be progressed.

- 5.3 Implementing an on call element at Birtley fire station would not see a physical presence of firefighters on the station between 2000hrs and 0800 hrs. However, as outlined within the previous IRMP papers, there is emergency cover across every part of Tyne and Wear even when any village or town does not have a fire appliance located at those locations. The spread and provision of fire appliances is informed by incident data analysis and the community risk profile.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Risks associated with options presented within this paper have been fully considered within the original data analysis and are considered as low risk in terms of organisational, operational and community risk.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The implementation cost associated with option A is provided for within the current revenue budget and, as indicated in the table at Appendix A, would at the end of the pay protection period generate an ongoing revenue budget saving.
- 7.2 Should option B be implemented, there would be an increase in salary costs over option A in relation to the on call element of the fire cover proposal. The table in Appendix 1 showing options W2 and W3 give the implementation costs and ongoing costs / savings associated with the two staffing models explored in the March 2021 report. As with option A, the implementation costs can be met from the current revenue budget, and at the end of the pay protection period, the options would generate an ongoing revenue cost which can be accommodated within the base revenue budget.
- 7.3 The provisional costs / savings associated with these options were previously provided to the Fire Authority as part of the paper it considered at its March meeting and have been added as an appendix to this paper for information.
- 7.4 The costs outlined in section 7.3 and in the attached appendix are based on the Grey Book pay scales in place when the original analysis was carried out, and will be refreshed to reflect the pay award agreed with effect from July 2021. The additional costs resulting from this refresh can be met from the current revenue budget.

8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Any new duty system will be subject to an initial and ongoing assessment where if it is not part of a nationally recognised working pattern. This will be progressed alongside any proposal agreed by the Fire Authority.

9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no additional or significant health and safety implications in respect of this report.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Fire Authority is recommended to;
- 1 Consider the information and options presented in the paper;
 - 2 Instruct the Chief Fire Officer which option the Fire Authority wish to be implemented;
 - 3 Should the Fire Authority not reach a decision on the options presented, they should instruct the Chief Fire Officer on what actions, under the IRMP, they wish to implement in relation to Birtley fire station crewing arrangements.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix 1: Alternative proposals and options in relation to Birtley Fire Station crewing model.

Station	Option description	Change to FTE	*Annual Ongoing Cost / - saving	*Cost / - saving - year 1
		Number	£	£
H1	Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station to go to a 2-2-4 shift duty system	Detail removed as not relevant for this discussion		
W1	Birtley Community Fire Stations to go Day Crewed only	1	-65,475	55,869
W2	Birtley Community Fire Stations to go Day Crewed with additional 5% on-call element	1	-28,318	66,646
W3	Birtley Community Fire Stations to go Day Crewed with additional 10% on-call element	1	586	69,172

***Note to table**

- The costs noted were as of March 2021 and will require a recalculation to take account of the changes to salaries and amended implementation timescales if the options are to be implemented.