



South Tyneside Council

Chris Lowther, Chief Fire Officer
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Service Headquarters
Nissan Way
Barmston Mere
Sunderland
SR5 3QY

11th August 2021

Dear Chris

Stakeholder consultation on proposed changes to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Services

We hope you are well.

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the above and its impact on the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24 and for the opportunity to comment.

South Tyneside Council welcomes the general move of reinvestment in your services and acknowledge that some of the changes are as a result of a direction from the Health and Safety Executive.

We have set out below our comments to the key areas of change you have proposed;

1. To introduce an additional fire engine

You highlight that the additional engine will be based at West Denton and that this additional requirement is based on data and demand information which highlights that this is an area of risk.

The Council is supportive of this change to introduce an additional fire engine. This will assist a current pressure point on your services and in addition may reduce the need for engines to attend from other areas.

2. To primary staff the Services Aerial Ladder Platforms

It is recognised as a result of previous financial pressures that the number of Aerial Ladder Platforms were reduced from 3 to 2. In addition, further changes were required in circumstances when the Aerial Ladder Platforms are required, that the primary fire engine at that location becomes unavailable to attend other emergency incidents. Following national tragic events and local demand data it is proposed to crew both Aerial ladder Platforms.

The South Tyneside area has benefitted from the use of Aerial Ladder platforms on a number of occasions. The Council is aware when using this unit that the availability of fire engines from our local Fire Stations can be compromised. As such this change is welcomed to boost local resources.

3. To change the current shift arrangements at Birtley Community Fire Station

As part of these changes you highlight that the Birtley Station arrangements will change to a Day Crewed shift system for 12 hours during the day with cover provided by neighbouring stations at night. This change has been brought about by the previous shift arrangements being declared unlawful through the High Court.

This change would appear to put the Fire Service on a lawful footing whilst still providing suitable fire cover arrangements. It is noted that this change has not been agreed with the Fire Brigade Unions at this time.

4. To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station

The changes highlighted reflect the current Day Crewing and Close Call arrangement will be replaced by a 2-2-4 shift arrangement i.e. 2 day shifts, 2 night shifts, 4 days off duty. This change has been brought about by the previous shift arrangements being declared unlawful through the High Court.

This change would appear to put the Fire Service on a lawful footing whilst still providing suitable fire cover arrangements.

In the rapidly changing circumstances we find ourselves, it is important that we review and reorganise resources to mirror demand for Fire Services. It is positive to see that the TWFRS are seeking some reinvestment in these services which better reflect public needs, and to ensure high quality services are maintained into the future.

We appreciate that these comments will be fed into the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority meetings in the Autumn and again thank you for sharing this.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tracey Dixon
Leader of the Council



Jonathan Tew
Chief Executive

Cc
Cllr Wilf Flynn
Cllr Norman Dick