

**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 8**

**MEETING: 13 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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**SUBJECT: DRAFT IRMP 2021-2024 PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES**

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

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview and highlight of the outcomes of the public consultation carried out on the Services draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 and seeks Fire Authority approval to commence implementation of the IRMP proposals.
- 1.2 Full details of the analysis carried out on the consultation responses is provided within the appendices to this paper along with the actual responses received from respondents to the consultation. This paper draws out key outcomes and information for Fire Authority member's consideration.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Fire Authority is required, as set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 to produce an IRMP covering at least a three year period and must ensure that the IRMP;
- Reflects up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
  - Demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
  - Outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
  - Set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat;
  - Cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;
  - Reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
  - Be easily accessible and publicly available.

- 2.2 The IRMP 2021-2024 consultation was carried out in accordance with the HM Government's 2018 consultation guidance.
- 2.3 At the March 2021 meeting of the Fire Authority, the four IRMP 2021-2024 proposals were approved to progress these to full public consultation [FA minute 61/21 refers].
- 2.4 At the July 2021 meeting of the Fire Authority, the proposed public consultation questions and plan was approved and authorised to commence and remain open for a period of eight weeks [at the time of writing this report the draft minute has not been approved by the FA and is therefore unavailable to reference]. The findings from the consultation was to be returned to the Fire Authority meeting in September 2021 for consideration and decision.
- 2.5 To support the decisions taken by the Fire Authority on the IRMP proposals, the Chief Fire Officer provides professional and expert advice and recommendations based on data and analysis of incidents and risk as well as operational experience. The proposals put forward to the Fire Authority in March 2021 and the outcomes from the public consultation reflect the professional advice of the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 The four IRMP 2021-2024 proposals that were consulted on are;  
**Proposal 1:** To introduce an additional fire appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station.  
**Proposal 2:** To primary staff the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs).  
**Proposal 3:** To change the current shift arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station to day crewing.  
**Proposal 4:** To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station to a 2, 2, 4 working pattern.
- 2.8 The four proposals will, if approved, result in the creation of 54 new Firefighter jobs within the Service representing a significant investment by the Fire Authority to public and firefighter safety as well as contributing to the economy and jobs market of the North East.
- 2.9 The primary consultation method employed an online survey questionnaire with additional options for people to submit written returns, comments and feedback.

### 3 CONSULTATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND RESULTS

- 3.1 The full IRMP 2021-2024 consultation report setting out the detailed analysis is enclosed as part of the papers as Appendix A. The following provides a highlight of key outcomes, responses and information as an introduction and summary of the main consultation report.
- 3.2 Consultation methodology: Section 3.4 of the main consultation report sets out the ways in which the consultation was conducted both internally with staff and in the public domain. Given the limitations and guidance from local Authorities to avoid face to face public meetings, most of the consultation was done online and remotely. It is clear from section 3 of the main report that an extensive engagement campaign was delivered using a variety of methods and engaging widely across society.
- 3.3 Response to the survey: Section 4 of the main consultation report records that a total of 32 hard copy survey responses and 648 responses to the online survey were received of which 266 identified as members of the public, 162 identifying as a member of TWFRS staff, 5 identified as TWFRS volunteers and 215 people chose not to answer the question.
- 3.4 Overall, there was a high positive response to the IRMP proposals with proposal 3, relating to Birtley fire station attracting the least amount of positive comment although it did receive many positive responses.
- 3.5 In addition to the consultation responses, the Service also received a petition that was submitted anonymously to Service headquarters as indicated at section 4.8 of the main report. The petition contained over 900 names and details of which 130 had been scored out when it was received. The headline of the petition is '*Save our Fire Station*' even although the fire station is not under threat.  
The service has included the reference to the petition for openness however, there are strict governance and guidance for commissioning and recognising a petition and the service has no way of knowing or assuring that any of the necessary governance was undertaken, permission of those whose names are on it to share their information or integrity of the process was in place. For these reasons, the service has taken note of it and is raising and including reference to it for consideration but will not publish the actual petition that lists names and details of individuals as we have no way of knowing if permissions have been given by all the names listed or how it was conducted.
- 3.6 Analysis of responses: Section 5 of the main report sets out how analysis of the responses was carried out. The analysis included both quantitative and qualitative data and employed a grounded theory approach which considers the words and phrases that people used in their responses and identify themes and then codify these to enable analysis to be undertaken. Proposals 1 and 2 required in the main, a simple choice of responses from participants with the opportunity to offer additional comments. Proposals 3 and 4 required participants to write why they agreed or disagreed with the proposals to enable

an understanding of these questions to be better understood to inform the information provided in support of a decision on the proposals.

- 3.7 Section 6 of the main report sets out a number of responses by letter or email from stakeholders. Of all the letters and emails received, most offered strong support for all proposals with three responses (two from one organisation) expressing either a negative view or suggesting the Service revisit specifically proposal 3 (relating to Birtley).

One of the above letters was received from Liz Twist, MP who expressed a strong objection to the proposal for Birtley fire station (full letter included in the appendices). The Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority subsequently met with Liz Twist, MP at her request to discuss the matter. Liz Twist, MP also participated in an online, live public consultation arranged at the request of local Birtley and Lamesley councillors.

The other two letters received as part of the consultation and which asked about Birtley fire station were received from the FBU regional representative and the FBU local, Brigade Secretary. Both letters offered support for the proposals but did suggest that the service consider the crewing proposal relating to Birtley.

## 4 KEY CONSULTATION SURVEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 Section 7 of the main consultation report sets out the results and findings from the IRMP 2021-24 consultation survey. The following section simply lists and identifies the main findings extracted from the main report. The consultation asked five questions, four relating to the specific IRMP proposals and a final question asking for views on how reasonable participants thought our overall proposals were.
- 4.2 The table below summarises the responses to the questions asked in the consultation with full details within the main report.

Question/ proposal	Actual number of responses from total (648) of all responses	Outline of Findings	Comment
Additional appliance at West Denton	648 (100%)	<u>592 (91%)</u> felt the proposal was fairly or very reasonable	NA
Primary crew ALPs	618 (95%)	579 (94%) felt the proposal was fairly or very reasonable	30 people did not comment on this.
Birtley Fire Station	517 (80%)	141 (27%) positive comments. Remaining responses are themed and did not support the proposal or asked a different question or made	131 (20%) did not comment on this.

		a unrelated comment.	
Rainton Bridge Fire Station	494 (76%)	252 (51%) positive comments. 117 (24%) stated, 'no comment'  All responses are themed within the main report.	154 (24%) did not comment on this.
Overall view on the IRMP proposals	491 (76%)	415 (85%) felt the overall proposals were fairly or very reasonable. 107 (21%) also offered supporting comments in addition to their response choice.	157 (24%) did not comment on this.

- 4.3 It is evident from the survey responses to the IRMP consultation that proposals 1, 2 and 4 received a significant positive response from the public, stakeholders and staff. Proposal 3 received the most negative or unsupportive comments although it is noted that 27% of respondents did make specific positive support for the proposal. The remaining 376 (73%) did not make positive comments or did not support proposal 3, with 131 people choosing not to respond to this proposal.

## 5 SUMMARY

- 5.1 The IRMP 2021 – 2024 proposals were consulted on widely across the whole of Tyne and Wear and the five local authority areas. The Service specifically focussed on the communities of Birtley and Lamesley areas to ensure that local people were aware of the proposals and this may account for the proportionally larger response from those communities than from other areas of the region.
- 5.2 From the wide consultation and questions received during the survey and rationale underpinning them as well as those arising from stakeholders, no new information or matters that had not previously been considered by the Service in developing the proposals was identified. In this respect, the evidence underpinning the proposals is robust, and has withstood public scrutiny as representing the most appropriate proposals to balance risk, resources and demonstrate value for money to the public and professional advice from the Chief Fire Officer on the operational considerations.
- 5.3 Pre consultation discussions took place between the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the six local councillors for Birtley and Lamesley areas to advise of the proposals with a subsequent opportunity to engage directly via an online public consultation event. The event did not attract a large attendance with 5 members of the public dialling in along with a number of local councillors, the MP for the area and two Gateshead councillors who are members of the Fire Authority.
- 5.4 During the consultation the Chief Fire officer and Chair of the Fire Authority met with Liz Twist, MP at her request following a letter from the MP expressing strong opposition to the proposals as they related to Birtley fire station. In addition to the survey consultation a number of other stakeholders wrote or

emailed a response offering support for the proposals with only two from trade unions offering support for the proposals but asking questions regarding any opportunity to revisit the evening fire cover at Birtley.

- 5.5 There was opposition amongst a number of consultation respondents to the proposal for Birtley and in the main these were received, as far as can be identified from local residents, local ward councillors and the MP for the area. The opposition presented offered no new or significant information that would suggest that the proposal required a reconsideration as the evidence has withstood the matters raised.

It is recognised that local residents whom may not be as familiar with the data and analysis used in this this and previous IRMPs as the Officers carrying out the analysis may be concerned however, the evidence underpinning the proposal is robust and reliable.

- 5.6 The proposed IRMP 2021-24 proposals if accepted by the Fire Authority would result in 54 new firefighter jobs being introduced to the Service and demonstrate a strong investment in local communities, staff and the North East more generally.

This is all funded from within the Fire Authority's existing financial provisions and is sustainable due to the decisions and actions taken over many years by the Fire Authority in balancing risk, resources and budget.

- 5.7 Following the public consultation, the proposals within the IRMP 2021-24 remain robust and highly credible. No evidenced based risk or resource matters have been identified during the consultation although there has been a number of emotional responses and other views expressed from some survey respondents specifically relating to the Birtley, proposal 3 option. However, nothing that has been raised has undermined the evidence and professional judgement used in developing the proposals. All data and information used to develop the proposals was and remains available to the public.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 All risk considerations have been incorporated in the proposals and consultation. No new significant risks or issues have emerged as part of these proposals. All risk mitigation and control measures are in place across the Service as part of the effective and efficient management of services and departments.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 If the proposals are approved there is a significant financial investment in salaries and on costs associated with the proposals as set out in the paper to the Fire Authority in March 2021 [minute 6/21 refers].

- 7.2 The financial implications of these proposals has been assessed by the Fire Authority's Director of Finance / sec. 151 officer and are considered affordable, sustainable.
- 7.3 For the staff currently working at Rainton Bridge and Birtley Fire Stations, should the proposals be approved, the service would propose a period of pay protection as the staff would see the 23% additional salary allowance they currently receive for working on the Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) stopping as it would no longer be worked. This will enable them to adjust to the revised salary.

## **8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 If the proposals are approved, there is a significant opportunity to support the Fire Authority's goal of continuing to diversify the workforce. The proposal relating to Birtley (day crewing) also offers a working pattern/ shift that adds to the range of working patterns available to staff to balance work with private life.

## **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 support and approve the four IRMP 2021-24 proposals to;
- Proposal 1: To introduce an additional fire appliance at West Denton Community Fire Station.
- Proposal 2: To primary staff the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs).
- Proposal 3: To change the current shift arrangement at Birtley Community Fire Station to day crewing.
- Proposal 4: To change the current shift arrangement at Rainton Bridge Community Fire Station to a 2, 2, 4 working pattern.

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- Proposed IRMP 2021-2024 Consultation Report;
- All survey responses and stakeholder feedback.

