

County Council 19 July 2019

Item 7(c) - Notice of Motion by Mr Jones on Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Rating

Amendment by Mrs Russell

(see second sheet for version with amendments incorporated)

This Council **accepts** ~~notes with dismay~~ the findings of the recently published Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection report on the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) with a rating of 'needs improvement' for Efficiency, a rating of 'needs improvement' for Effectiveness and a rating of 'inadequate' for People. ~~It is also the only service in the country not to get a 'good' rating in any category.~~

This Council recognises that staff in WSFRS do an excellent job in protecting people in West Sussex ~~but that they have been let down by a failure of political leadership at the County Council, which has allowed cost-cutting and budget pressures to take priority over the maintenance of what HMICFS considers acceptable standards.~~

~~This has been exacerbated by decisions from the Cabinet that have seen fire stations closed, and second and third fire engines being removed from some remaining stations. Reports from the former Chief Fire Officer confirm they were major reasons for increased response times. Despite the Council's extended response standard for most of the county of 14 minutes, the service has been unable to meet it, as the inspectorate notes, since 2014.~~

~~This Council also recognises that this is the second inspection in recent months that has seen a vital service, important to the welfare and safety of all West Sussex residents, being judged as insufficient to meet the required standard and it has become unsustainable for this council to have confidence in a Leader and Cabinet who have presided over such an outcome. This Council therefore expresses that it has no confidence in the Leader and Cabinet.~~

This Council therefore calls on the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities, **through the Improvement Plan recently adopted after being fully scrutinised by members, and the investment it brings** (or their successors, if and when they are appointed) to:

- (1) **Maintain the commitment to no budget savings** ~~Completely withdraw the cuts to WSFRS proposed for 2019/20 that were put on hold for one year, and~~ **continue to** prioritise the recruitment of additional firefighters ~~to replace those cut since 2010.~~
- (2) ~~Stop prevaricating on the clearly unfair funding that WSFRS is receiving compared to other surrounding fire authorities and~~ **Continue** to finally press the Government for urgent additional funding to properly resource ~~these~~ very **important** stretched services, ~~something which the Leader and the Cabinet Member have failed to do, despite being mandated over six months ago by a full meeting of this council dated 14 December 2018.~~

- (3) **Complete the well-advanced plans to renew** Urgently progress the updating of outdated software and communication equipment in the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that there is a clearer picture of operational staffing levels and gaps.
- (4) **Endorse the Cabinet Member's commitment to** Ensure as soon as possible that the Fire and Rescue Service launches an anti-bullying campaign to stamp out any instances of bullying and harassment, which will finally carry out advice that was given to WSFRS following the results of a staff stress survey as long ago as 2017.
- (5) **Continue to t**Take steps to **maintain the** increase **in** the diversity of the workforce, particularly in respect of more female firefighters and more from the BAME communities, and to work with councillors and other bodies across the county to reach out to local people from these minority groups to encourage them to consider becoming both wholetime and on-call firefighters.
- (6) **Continue with the plans** Do more to tackle shortages of on-call firefighters and the need to **address** finally accept some of the deep rooted problems with recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters will need more than marginal changes, but a whole new approach that recognising**es** that:
- (a) **we need a study to consider whether** more wholetime firefighters are needed to guarantee availability in certain areas of the county; and
 - (b) recruiting and retaining On Call Firefighters crews can be easier in larger settlements within West Sussex, and the first step should be restoring the third fire engine and on-call firefighter crew at Crawley Fire Station.
- (7) **Support the** Launch a review **of governance, member involvement and scrutiny which the Council's Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee recommended to the Governance Committee**, led by an independent person external to this Council, to determine whether alternative governance arrangements for WSFRS may be necessary **within the County Council**, given the findings of the inspection report. The review would investigate whether it is still in the best interests of the service for current governance to continue if the County Council, squeezed by continuing Conservative national government cuts, concludes that it cannot afford to meet its duty to resource the service to the level required to protect the residents of West Sussex with acceptable levels of service and performance. The terms of reference for this review to be drawn up with all relevant parties in WSFRS, and to include their employees' trade union representatives.