

Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee

14 January 2019

Proposed Savings for Fire Service Operations and Public Protection for 2019/20

Report by Executive Director Communities and Public Protection and Director of Operations and Director of Public Protection

Summary

It is proposed to save £600,000 from Fire Service Operations budget in 2019/20 and £100,000 from the Public Protection budget to contribute to the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) savings requirements £145m by 2021.

The proposals will be subject to staff consultation from 13th December 2018. Following the close of consultation on 25th January 2019 a final decision will be made by the Executive Director of Communities and Public Protection on the impacts, outcomes and whether to proceed with the current or modified proposals following consultation with staff and representative bodies.

If approved any service changes would be implemented by June 2019.

Focus for Scrutiny

- (1) The Committee is asked to consider the proposals and their potential impact, in the light of the evidence, and the other options considered.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

In order to achieve the savings required by the County Council each of the Directorates has been asked to review their spending and identify areas where potential savings can be made. The Operations and Public Protection directorate has reviewed the services that are delivered and the supporting functions and have developed a set of proposals to deliver savings in 2019/20.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Proposed reduction in Intervention and Prevention activities saving £400,000. Details are in paragraph 4 below.
- 2.2 Proposed review and restructure of the Technical Rescue Unit saving £200,000. Details are in paragraph 4 below.
- 2.3 Restructure of Resilience and Emergencies Team saving £100,000

3. Resources

- 3.1 The savings will require resources to plan, coordinate and deliver the action plans through an agreed period and will be managed through the Fire and Rescue Service savings board which is part of the Customer Centred Value for Money Board. This is one of the four boards that support the delivery of the Fire & Rescue Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 The Committees views on the possible outcomes from the proposals:

Operations

The Intervention and Prevention team deliver a wide range of preventative and educational activity in addition to supporting emergency response crews in the delivery of prevention activity. Whilst the team members have specialisms, almost all contribute to most of the activities. This means that the removal of even a small number of posts impacts on a number of the items delivered.

- Restructure of Intervention and Prevention team:
- An assessment of the team's delivery has focused on maintaining the key elements that contribute to the Fire Prevention agenda. These include Safe and Well checks to those most vulnerable, ensuring that Safeguarding is managed appropriately and delivering the Firewise scheme that undertakes interventions that address fire-setting behaviours amongst children and young people.

This would result in the following reduction in delivery:

- Cessation of FireBreak courses
 - Cessation of Safe Drive Stay Alive courses
 - Reduction in Schools education visits
 - Cessation of working with local cadets
 - Cessation of working with National Citizens Service
 - Cessation of electric blanket testing
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- The Technical Rescue Unit is a team of 12 firefighters who provide a specialist rescue capability for West Sussex. The team are funded in part by central government as part of the national Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability. West Sussex supplements the grant to ensure that the team are able to respond to incidents in West Sussex even if a deployment out of county is required. In addition to the USAR capability the time provide additional skills and equipment for rescue from height, water rescue and animal rescue.

- Restructure of Technical Rescue Unit:
- The terms, conditions and operational model of the team will be reviewed to ensure. This may result in a reduction in the delivery of some specialist capability.

Public Protection

The Resilience and Emergencies Team deliver a range of preventative activity to support our communities. Whilst the team members have specialisms in business continuity and emergency planning all contribute to the prevention activities. This means that the removal of even a small number of posts impacts on a number of the items that can be delivered.

This would result in the following reduction in delivery:

- Reduction in the number of posts in the Resilience and Emergencies Team. This would result in the following reduction in delivery:
- Removal of 'Duke of Cornwall' courses
- Removal of 'What If' community resilience training to parishes
- Reduction in assistance to WSCC Directorates in terms of business continuity plan preparations
- Reduction in assistance to the Sussex Resilience Forum

A reduction in posts will mean a reduction in activity and therefore a reduction in the revenue spending budget which with areas of efficiencies in training and information technology goes towards the proposal saving of £100k.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Initial communications with staff and representative bodies has taken place. Informal staff consultation has begun 13th December and formal will commence on 7th January. Consultation to close 25th January 2019.
- 5.2 Debate and discussion at Environment, Communities and Fire Services Select Committee 6th December 2018. The meeting will be webcast.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Reduction of discretionary services to residents. Following risk analysis we will remain able to deliver our statutory duties to a reasonable and safe level.

7 Other Options Considered

- 7.1 The decision to propose these savings was based upon an assessment of the Fire & Rescue portfolio and the planned reviews within the Integrated Risk Management Plan. This considered the following functions and ruled them out for any reductions in this round:

- a. Emergency response: There is a planned review of the emergency response standard commencing early 2019. This will enable the Fire Authority to articulate any proposed change to the current standard with the associated assessment of the resources required to deliver that standard.
- b. Business Fire Safety: Following the Grenfell Tower disaster there has been a significant additional workload placed on the Fire Safety enforcement team and it is not appropriate to consider any reduction in the team at this time.
- c. Collaboration/Partnerships: The improvement of existing and development of new collaborative opportunities will continue and is expected to yield efficiencies. To date the efficiencies gained have already been accounted for and there are none available to consider for this period.

Prevention and Intervention

- d. Alternative funding/Sponsorship: The Service is aware that other Fire Services have achieved significant levels of sponsorship for prevention activities such as Safe Drive, Stay Alive. This is being actively pursued by the County Council commercial team.

Technical Rescue Unit

Alternative funding: Discussions are ongoing with a number of partners to assess the potential to sell the technical expertise of the TRU in order to generate income. This may necessitate maintaining the team numbers to reflect the increased demand.

8 Equality Duty

- 8.1 The equality impact risk assessment has been carried out for each area, there are no negative impacts indicated.

9 Social Value

- 9.1 In terms of environmental sustainability the reduction of activity will mean a reduction in the environmental impact of operations.

10 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 10.1 There are no implications identified.

11. Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 There are no implications identified

Nicola Bulbeck
Executive Director
Communities and Public Protection

Gavin Watts

Director of Operations and Chief Fire Officer

Neil Stocker

Director of Public Protection and Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Contact: Neil Stocker: 07734126786

Appendices:

Appendix A: Responses to Questions Arising from the Proposals

Background Papers: None