

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report Title	Response to the Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the consultation on the draft Fifth London safety Plan.		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Services		
Class	Part 1	Date:	19 June 2013

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report presents Lewisham's response to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority's consultation on the draft fifth London Safety Plan. The consultation response includes the issues raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which they referred to the Mayor on 1 May 2013.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the consultation response which was submitted as part of the London Fire Brigade's consultation exercise on the draft fifth London Safety Plan, and which included the issues referred to the Mayor by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following their meeting on 30 April 2013. (The response forms Appendix 1 to this report.)
- 2.2 Agree that this report should be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The draft fifth London Safety Plan 2013 - 2016 sets out the aims and objectives of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) in relation to:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Resources
- People
- Principles

- 3.2 The plan includes a number of proposals regarding reviews of and changes to provision and services in London.
- 3.3 The overall vision for Lewisham is established in the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Safer Lewisham Partnership contribute to the achievement of the Safer strand – where people feel safe and live free from crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse and works together with partners to:
- Reduce the overall level of crime to below the London average.
 - Tackle antisocial behaviour and ensure that people feel confident and safe throughout the borough.
 - Keep our children and young people safe from harm, abuse and criminal activity.
 - A reduction in the rates of crime that impact most upon Lewisham, such as serious violent crime, serious acquisitive crime and repeat incidents of domestic violence.
 - A reduction in the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System.
 - A reduction in reoffending and substance misuse among Lewisham’s adults and young people.
 - A reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on Lewisham’s roads.
- 3.4 The work of the Partnership also supports the Council priority - ‘safety, security and a visible presence’ which details the Council’s partnership working with the Police and others to combat anti social behaviour.

4. Referral

- 4.1 On the 30 April 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update report on the progress of the ongoing scrutiny review of emergency services in Lewisham. The Committee also discussed the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) consultation on the Draft fifth London Safety Plan.
- 4.2 As part of their discussions the Committee resolved to call upon the Mayor to respond to the consultation and express support for the retention of the fire stations at Downham and New Cross and to also express concern regarding the proposals in Southwark, given their potential impact on the people of Lewisham.
- 4.3 At the Mayor and Cabinet meeting on 1 May 2013 the Executive Director for Community Services was tasked with responding to this referral, and as a result has ensured that the comments and issues raised are central to the consultation response.

5. Response

- 5.1 There has been wide spread communications with key stakeholders, partners and all Cllrs to advise of the consultation event which took place in the borough on 22 May. Additionally all appropriate agencies and individuals were asked to respond as they felt appropriate. The Consultation will also be discussed at June's Safer Lewisham Partnership.
- 5.2 As with all possible closures of emergency service buildings, officers will ensure detailed responses are put through the formal routes to register Lewisham's views.
- 5.3 In responding to the consultation officers specifically expressed concern for the proposals to close the two fire stations and the Mayor and Council's support for the retention of the fire stations at Downham and New Cross.
- 5.4 Additionally the response expressed concern regarding the proposals in Southwark and made clear the Council's belief that these would have a significant negative impact on the people of Lewisham.
- 5.5 Both key issues have been supported with a range of evidence and data, to ensure that the reasons for the strength of feeling were robustly evidenced.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this response.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this response, save for noting that the Council's Constitution provides that the Executive may respond to reports and or recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this response.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 The Safer Lewisham Partnership priorities impact on large sections of the community, including the most vulnerable. The focus on effective interventions in the Criminal Justice System ensures that Human Rights remain essential to the strategy's vision, strategic themes and monitoring processes.

9.2 One of the Partnership's key outcomes is to ensure equity in representation and that equality and diversity issues are followed in the work of the partnership.

10 Environmental Implications

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this response.

Background Papers

1. Draft Fifth London Safety Plan

For further information please contact Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People on 020 8314 9569.

Consultation Response - Fifth London Safety Plan – 2013-2016	
Authority	London Borough of Lewisham
Author	Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People, Community Services Directorate

1. Summary

- 1.1 Lewisham Council is concerned by the proposals contained within the Draft Fifth London Safety Plan.
- 1.2 We believe that the proposals to close New Cross and Downham Fire Stations will have a disproportionate impact on the Borough, losing two of the five fire stations and a third of all appliances.
- 1.3 We are concerned that borough-wide average response times hides significant increases at a ward level. While attendance in some areas will continue at the same rate, others may see an increase ranging from 4 to 10 minutes longer.
- 1.4 Many of the fire stations outside the Borough under threat from closure also respond to incidents in the Lewisham area and we are concerned about the impact this will have on responding to incidents in the locality.
- 1.5 We are also concerned that Lewisham will lose a disproportionate number of officers to redundancy. Lewisham's total officer numbers currently are 212, a loss of 64 officers based at Downham and New Cross Fire Stations would represent a 30% reduction. We believe this is likely to have a disproportionate impact on the borough.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This is Lewisham Council's response to the Draft Fifth London Safety Plan Consultation. It incorporates the views of The Mayor of Lewisham, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, relevant Council services and the Safer Lewisham Partnership.
- 2.2 Lewisham has an excellent Safer Partnership which has for many years worked positively, together, towards a safer Lewisham and will continue to do so. Whilst the London Safety Plan is a step towards identifying priorities for London, it is imperative that local arrangements and the improvements and developments our Safer Partnership have undertaken to date are supported to continue.

- 2.3 The work undertaken in Lewisham to date has led to a significant positive impact on a majority of local fire and crime statistics. This includes less victims of crime, and also a much broader approach to working with all key stakeholders in the criminal justice system.
- 2.4 The Mayor and Cabinet, Select Committees and the Safer Lewisham Partnership feel very strongly about the plan's proposals and do not feel that sufficient consideration has been given to the real and significant impact, particularly the closure of stations, will have on Lewisham residents.
- 2.5 This response focuses on the key issues for Lewisham and highlights the strength of feeling with regard to specific proposals in particular in relation to fire station closures.

3. Fire Stations

- 3.1 The London Fire Brigade's budget envelope necessitates large savings to be made there. There is real concern in Lewisham about the impact the savings will have in relation to locality and access and deployment to local areas in a timely manner. Lewisham residents and their elected representatives additionally believe that the closure of public service buildings as a whole is symbolic of disinvestment and would be a detrimental social loss.
- 3.2 We feel that the cumulative impact has not been considered in the modelling that has taken place. Stations in other boroughs can and will assist in fires within Lewisham, but there is little recognition that some stations may not be functional due to refurbishments, whilst other stations will experience reductions in units which will mean there will not be a fully modelled service in practice.
- 3.3 Lewisham has five stations: Deptford, Downham, Forest Hill, Lewisham and New Cross. All except Forest Hill, have 1 appliance. Forest Hill has 2.
- 3.4 Last year, there were a total of 2,151 incidents in Lewisham.

Lewisham		
Total Number of Incidents (excluding false alarms)	2,151	
Fires Attended	874	15th most in London
Special Services (flooding, road traffic collisions etc.) attended	1,277	7th most in London

- 3.5 Both Downham and New Cross Fire Stations are proposed for closure. According to the LFB, the impact of these closures will be an increase in the arrival of both the first and second fire engines at an incident in the Lewisham area. The average attendance time for first appliances arriving at emergency incidents for Lewisham is 04.47mins. If the proposed cuts are implemented, it will increase to 05.18mins. This means the first fire engine will arrive, on average, 31 seconds later while the second fire engine will arrive 12 seconds later, on average.
- 3.6 These statistics are borough wide averages. At a more local level, the attendance times will differ dramatically. While attendance in some areas will continue at the same rate, others may see an increase ranging from 4 to 10 minutes longer.
- 3.7 Furthermore we understand the increases in times for arrival of engines are much more significant than initially suggested and vary considerably between wards. Catford will see a 44 second increase to 6.13 minutes, Telegraph Hill will increase from 5.15 to 7.24 minutes and whilst in Whitefoot response times will increase by 2 minutes and 49 seconds to almost 8 minutes. This is important, as seconds are critical - a domestic fire can quadruple in intensity in just 2 minutes.
- 3.8 We understand that the clock starts ticking to record attendance times NOT from when the 999 call is received, but from when the job is allocated to a fire station and the clock stops when the appliance arrives at the scene and the fire fighters press a button to say they have arrived. The published response times therefore do not necessarily give a true picture of:
- a) the total time it takes from when the fire is reported to when the appliance arrives, and
 - b) the time it may take from when the engine stops at the location to when the fire-fighters are actually in a position to start tackling the fire/emergency
- 3.9 We also understand that the LFB policy is that no fire fighter would enter a building until the second appliance has arrived, making the arrival of the second appliance crucial in fighting fires and saving lives. Therefore it is the time taken for the second appliance to arrive on scene which is the critical not the time for the first. We do not feel this is clear in the report and has significant implications and heightens the impact of proposed closures.

4. Incidents

- 4.1 New Cross fire station responded to 553 incidents in the last 6 months. Of these, 283 occurred within Southwark (51.2% of the total number of incidents), while 261 (47.2%) occurred within Lewisham.
- 4.2 Downham fire station responded to 413 incidents in the last 6 months. Of these, 284 occurred within Lewisham (68.8% of the total number of incidents).

- 4.3 Many of the fire stations outside the Borough under threat from closure also respond to incidents in the Lewisham area. The chart below sets out how many incidents in Lewisham fire stations from outside the Borough under threat of closure responded to in the last 6 months:

Stations facing Closure/Loss of Pump	Borough	Incidents responded to in Lewisham
Peckham	Southwark	29
Whitechapel	Tower Hamlets	4
Silvertown	Newham	2
Clapham	Lambeth	1
Westminster	Westminster	1
		37

- 4.4 Overall 582 incidents were responded to in Lewisham by stations under threat of closure in the last 6 months.

New Cross fire station	261
Downham fire station	284
Other potentially cut stations	37
Total incidents responded to in Lewisham by stations under threat of closure in the last 6 months	582

- 4.5 In February this year, fire crews were called to a house fire in Culverly Road in Catford. Fortunately a family of four escaped before fire-fighters arrived. Four fire engines attended the scene from Downham, New Cross, Beckenham and Lee Green fire stations; 2 of which are proposed to close. Future responses to similar fires could be seriously affected by these plans.
- 4.6 In April 2010, there was a fire in a school on Monson Road, New Cross. Ten fire engines and around 50 fire-fighters responded to the call. The stations who responded, which didn't include New Cross, included a number proposed to close or lose an appliance. Lewisham, Greenwich, Peckham, Forest Hill, Brixton, Southwark, Old Kent Road and Deptford. If the planned cuts go ahead, those fire engines would not have been able to respond to this fire in Lewisham.

5. Impact on other Boroughs

- 5.1 The loss of New Cross and Downham fire stations will not just affect residents of Lewisham. In the last 6-months, both have responded to incidents outside the borough for a significant amount of their calls. New Cross for 52.8% of their calls, Downham for 31.2% of theirs:

New Cross

Borough of incident location	Mobilisations from New Cross fire station	Percentage of mobilisations from New Cross fire station
Southwark	283	51.2%
Greenwich	6	1.1%
Tower Hamlets	1	0.2%
Lambeth	1	0.2%
NULL*	1	0.2%
Grand Total	292	52.8%

*Incident records incomplete

Downham

Borough of incident location	Mobilisations from Downham fire station	Percentage of mobilisations from Downham fire station
Bromley	99	24.0%
Greenwich	21	5.1%
Croydon	4	1.0%
Lambeth	3	0.7%
Bexley	1	0.2%
NULL*	1	0.2%
Grand Total	129	31.2%

5.2 The impact of the potential fire station closures, both within Lewisham and in surrounding areas, reaches far beyond their physical locality. London Fire Brigade responds to incidents in an integrated way, with responses coming from across boroughs.

5.4 It is of concern that under the proposals, stations will have a greater area to cover (in terms of emergency and preventative work) but with 12% less staff.

6. Reduction in Staff

6.1 Whilst we recognise that budget reductions will undoubtedly mean reductions in staffing, the consultation document comments on reductions in senior staff. We understand that there is likely to be a reduction of 520 officers across London, however with the 2 fire stations proposed to close in Lewisham we see a reduction of 64 officers; a 12.3% loss for a single borough. Lewisham's total officer numbers currently are 212, a loss of 64 officers would be a 30.1% reduction. We believe this is a disproportionate impact on the borough of Lewisham.

7. Crime Prevention

7.1 We are pleased to see a focus on crime prevention and have already done a lot of work across a number of areas; developing a hoarders protocol, developing joint work in Priority areas (P1 areas), and working with local social housing providers in relation to lift releases. The report focuses on fires in care homes and sheltered housing, and the Young Educated People, which we feel is important. However, there may be further vulnerable groups that require some focus such as alcohol and drug users. We are keen to share work we have undertaken in this area locally, and feel this could be an important cross London area of focus.

7.2 LFB note that there is no link to increased population and increased fire risk, but acknowledge that deprivation and age are two factors that increase the risks of fire and that lifestyle factors are the main causes of fire. This is of importance to a borough like Lewisham. We understand that more people are opening up old fire places and having real fires in part due to benefit cuts and austerity. This could be seen as a potential increase in risk that has not been taken account of thus far.

8. Emergency Planning

8.1 We are pleased to see the continued support and priority placed on emergency planning arrangements, and have always found the Fire Brigade to be a valuable partner in this area of work. It is important in times of staff reductions across all public services that arrangements for these exceptional incidents are maintained to provide both intervention and reassurance to local communities.

9. Youth Work

- 9.1 We commend the work of the LIFE programme and have supported this for many years. It is important that development of any youth work is done in conjunction with Local Authorities and appropriate voluntary and community groups to ensure that greatest impact and variety of provision is available whilst supporting all agencies trying to do valuable work in the local community.

10. Checking for Fire Risks

- 10.1 We see this area of anti social behaviour as significant and important. Local Authorities should be able to work closely with the Fire Brigade to help identify and review empty properties, and work closely with environmental services to support removal of fly-tipping / discarded items etc. which are a fire risk.

11 London Building Act

- 11.1 The withdrawal of the Fire Safety and Property Protection aspects of the London Building Act is a concern. The London Building Act required enhanced property protection measures and particularly sprinkler protection for any significant building (i.e. one in excess of 7,000 m³) in the capital and enhanced fire resistance and compartmentalisation requirements for many others. The withdrawal of these requirements and the fact that buildings originally designed with these requirements in place need no longer comply, could significantly deteriorate the protection levels of building stock in the Capital. The FPA have already evidenced building owners choosing to decommission or rip out sprinkler systems in buildings undergoing refurbishment or renewal and this is likely to become more of a feature over time. The loss of this type of inherent protection will invariably affect fire and rescue tactics and response.

- 11.2 As a consequence of the need for greater thermo efficiency and the introduction of more combustible materials into the building process we feel consideration needs to be given as how this will affect building structures on fire. In London we have already seen the consequences of increased radiated heat from timber framed construction site fires; modern buildings generally use more combustible materials and as we have already witnessed do perform differently in fire and this will affect intervention times and fire-fighting strategies in the future.

12 Sprinklers

- 12.1 Whilst we understand the rational and benefits of this in new and old properties, further work needs to be done with local areas and developers in relation to the possibility of adding these to properties both new and old. Perhaps discussions can be had at a regional level to assist with the costs and implementation of this possibility.

12.2 Lewisham will be working closely with LFB colleagues to deliver on the outcomes indicated, whilst continuing to undertake annual strategic assessments to better understand our issues and set local priorities which meet the needs of all our citizens.