

MAYOR AND CABINET			
Report title	Response to the Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the London Fire Brigade		
Contributors	Executive Director for Community Service, Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration, Head of Law	Item No.	
Class	Part 1	Date	17 February 2016

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a response following a referral to Mayor and Cabinet of the comments and views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 October 2015.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny is recommended to note the responses.

3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee views

- 3.1 That Lewisham Council should carefully consider any proposals to permanently, or further, reduce fire cover within the London Borough of Lewisham.

Response:

The proposals outlined by the Fire and Emergency Planning Authority have been carefully considered with a motion being accepted at Council in January 2016 and further discussions at Safer Stronger Select Committee in January 2016. Please see Appendix A for details of the consultation and considerations given.

- 3.2 The Lewisham Council should make representations for full public consultation on any such proposals

Response:

A formal response has been made via the on-line consultation porthole by the Executive Cabinet Member for Community Safety as well as a direct letter from Lewisham's Mayor and Cllr Janet Daby to the Fire Commissioner.

- 3.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and agrees the following recommendations made by the Public Spending in Lewisham Working Group:

In 2014/15 and in 2015/16 (to date) the six minute target for getting a first appliance to an incident has not been met in the Bellingham, Downham and Grove Park wards of Lewisham. The LFB should focus its attention on understanding and addressing the reasons behind this failure. This should include considering any impact caused by the removal of Forest Hill's second appliance and the closure of Downham Fire Station; and considering what mitigating action might be taken to improve attendance times in these areas. The findings should be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Response:

Such a review would be welcomed and anything that is identified will be considered by the Safer Lewisham Partnership and directly with the Borough's Fire Commander.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The changes outlined above are in relation to reduced resources within the Fire Service.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Constitution provides for Select Committees to make recommendations to the Executive or appropriate committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.

6. Further Implications

6.1 At this stage there are no specific environmental, equalities or crime and disorder implications to consider, but any reductions in resources may impact on these areas and an assessment of impact will need to be considered.

Background papers

[Response from Cabinet to matters referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – London Fire Brigade](#) – report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 26 October 2015

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People on 020 8314 9569.

Appendix A

Overview

The Mayor of London is proposing to provide funding of £382.4m for the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority in 2016/17, subject to the grant provided by central government for the fire service for next year which is still unknown. £382.4m funding will require savings of £11.5m to be made. The current consultation seeks views on two different options that have been put forward to help inform the decision on how those budget savings will be made.

In 2013, London Fire Brigade consulted on the Draft Fifth London Safety Plan (LSP5) which set out how the fire and rescue service in London could be delivered. Following the consultation, changes were made to the draft plan and the Fifth London Safety Plan, as amended, was approved by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority in September 2013. While the Brigade has not previously consulted on meeting the budget, it is doing so on this occasion as the options propose operational changes to the service.

There will be a full public consultation on the Sixth London Safety Plan (LSP6) in 2016 in order to seek views on how the fire and rescue service could be delivered in the years ahead.

Balancing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority budget for 2016/17 There is a requirement for savings of £11.5m to be made to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority budget in 2016/17.

Over a third of the savings required (£5.1m) will come through departmental and efficiency savings which have already been agreed. There are five voluntary redundancies from non-uniformed staff arising from these savings and four operational posts will be replaced with four new non-operational posts, although no operational staff will be made redundant. For the remaining £6.4m, there are two options set out in this consultation document on which views are being sought.

Neither of the options include closing fire stations or require compulsory redundancies for operational staff. Both options result in a reduction in the number of operational staff which would be achieved by not replacing staff who have retired or left the service for other reasons.

Background – fire and other incidents in London

Although the number of fires is at its lowest level since records began.

The number of fire deaths in London has been falling steadily since the late 1980s. In 1987, there were 28.5 fire deaths per million of the resident population compared to just 3.4 per million in 2014. In 2014/15, the number of calls received by the Brigade and incidents attended has continued to fall. Comparing 2011/12 and 2014/15:

- emergency calls received – down by 18 per cent or 38,300 fewer
- all incidents attended – down by 18 per cent or 20,800 fewer
- primary (more serious) fires – down by 15 per cent or 2,000 fewer
- secondary (smaller) fires – down by 37 per cent or 5,300 fewer
- shut in lift releases – down by 37 per cent or 2,800 fewer
- false alarms due to automatic fire alarm – down by 15 per cent or 6,100 fewer

Background – the 13 fire engines

There are currently 13 fire engines which have been held back from day-to-day deployment since August 2013. They were part of a contingency service of 27 fire engines ready in the event of strike action arising from the FBU's national dispute on fire service pensions. All 27 were removed from stations that had two fire engines, so no fire stations were closed as a result.

As a result of changes made last year, there are 13 fire stations that continue to have one of their two fire engines removed. They are: Chelsea, Ealing, Erith, **Forest Hill**, Holloway, Old Kent Road, Plaistow, Poplar, Romford, Shoreditch, Stratford, Wandsworth and Willesden.

The main difference between the two options put forward in this consultation is around these engines. For both options, it is noted that no borough where average fire engine attendance performance is currently within the London-wide target will go out of target and no borough where performance is currently outside of the London-wide target will get worse.

Option A

Option A is the option preferred by the majority of the members of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. It recommends putting the 13 fire engines back into service but making savings by establishing alternate crewing at stations with some special appliances. Alternate crewing means that in stations where there is a fire engine and a special appliance there would be one crew for both appliances. This option would see two fire rescue units (FRUs), five aerial appliances and two operational support units (OSUs) being alternate crewed.

Decisions about which special appliances to alternate crew have been based on those which deliver the greatest volume of alternate crewing possible in the shortest period of time. There would be some differences in the vehicles chosen, depending on whether the aim were to optimise the attendance times of fire engines or optimise the attendance times of the special appliances. The difference in the impact on fire engine response times is minimal – no more than a one second increase on London-wide average first and second fire engine attendance times. The differences in the impacts on the London-wide attendance times of the special appliances is no more than 41 seconds in each case. Optimisation of alternate crewing could be considered in 2016 as part of the Sixth London Safety Plan. The detail can be seen at [Appendix 3 of the Supplementary report to the Budget Update for Authority \(FEP2520A\)](#).

Impact on posts

The option would not result in station closures.

The option would not result in compulsory redundancies for operational staff. There would be a reduction of 124 operational posts which would be managed through the natural turnover of staff.

This option is likely to result in a reduction in a small number of posts which may result in redundancies of non-operational staff. For more information see the [Equality Analysis](#).

Impact on balancing the budget

This option would achieve a balanced budget with a requirement for a one-off draw on the general reserve of £1.24m in 2016/17.

Impact on attendance times (see appendix A)

The Brigade has continued to meet its London-wide average attendance time target of six minutes for a first fire engine and eight minutes for a second while the 13 fire engines have been out of service. If the 13 fire engines were returned to service, it is believed (based on modelled results) that this would improve average London-wide attendance times by around four seconds for the first

fire engine (from 5mins 27secs to 5min 23secs) and by around 18 seconds for the second fire engine (from 6mins 45secs to 6mins 27secs).

By its nature, alternate crewing can impact attendance times for fire engines and for special appliances. Officers have used modelling to look at those impacts. This showed that:

- There are minimal impacts on London-wide average first and second fire engine attendance times – no more than a one second increase in any case. The detail can be seen at [appendix 2 of the Appointments and Urgency Committee report on budget consultation \(FEP2548\)](#).
- There are more significant impacts on the attendance times of the special appliances – with London-wide average increases of between five seconds and one minute ten seconds for the different sorts of special appliances. The detail can be seen at [appendix 2 of the Appointments and Urgency Committee report on budget consultation \(FEP2548\)](#)

Option B

Option B is the option recommended by the Commissioner of London Fire Brigade. It recommends the permanent removal of the 13 fire engines and reinvesting some of the savings from that into increasing the number of staff available to crew fire rescue units by adding a Watch Manager (A) role on each watch at each station with a fire rescue unit. The detail can be seen at [paragraph 45 - 47 of Budget Update for the Resources Committee \(FEP2520\)](#).

Decisions about which fire stations the 13 fire engines came from were based on modelling carried out in 2013 which showed where their removal would have the least impact on emergency response targets. Current incident distribution and demand means the modelling would now give a different list of fire engines which could be removed. The difference in the impact on response times between the two lists is minimal – no more than a one second increase on London-wide average first and second fire engine attendance times. Optimisation of the distribution of all the fire engines in London will be considered in 2016 as part of the Sixth London Safety Plan. The detail can be seen at [Appendix 9 of Budget Update for the Resources Committee \(FEP2520\)](#).

Impact on posts

The option would not result in station closures.

The option would not result in compulsory redundancies. This would mean an overall reduction of 188 operational posts which would be managed through the natural turnover of staff. For more information see the [Equality Analysis](#).

Impact on balancing the budget

If the 13 engines were to be removed on a permanent basis, £11.8m in savings would be made – £3.5m would be reinvested in increasing the establishment at fire rescue unit stations by adding a watch manager (A) role on each watch.

This option would result in a balanced budget with a budget surplus of £1.7m in 2016/17. Decisions about how this surplus is used would be made once the grant provided by central government for the fire service for next year is known.

Impact on attendance times (see Appendix A)

The Brigade has continued to meet its London-wide average attendance time target of six minutes for a first fire engine and eight minutes for a second while the 13 fire engines have been out of service. If the 13 fire engines were returned to service, it is believed (based on modelled results)

that this would improve average London-wide attendance times by around four seconds for the first fire engine (from 5mins 27secs to 5min 23secs) and by around 18 seconds for the second fire engine (from 6mins 45secs to 6mins 27secs).

There would be no impact on attendance times of special appliances.

The detailed impacts can be seen at [Annex 3A, 3B and Annex 5 to Appendix 9 of the Resources Committee report \(FEP2520\)](#).