

Report to Overview and Scrutiny

Date of meeting: 23 February 2016

Subject: Essex County Fire & Rescue Options for Change consultation



Officer contact for further information:

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Committee Secretary: A Hendry (ext. 4246)

Recommendation:

That a report be made to Council recommending:

- (1) That officers respond to the Essex Fire Authority consultation supporting Option 3.**
- (2) That officers explore innovative collaborative opportunities to improve Community Safety.**

Report

1. On Wednesday 27th January, Acting Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley gave Members a preview of the second stage of its public consultation, "Leading the way to a Safer Essex – Options for change 2016-2020". The consultation was subsequently published on Monday 1st February and runs for 12 weeks until 25th April 2016.
2. The consultation document proposes three options for organisational changes to the Essex County Fire & Rescue Services against a background of changing risk, reduced funding and a greater emphasis on partnership working.
3. In essence, the Essex Fire Authority strategy is to restructure response arrangements (in line with reduced risk) to make savings and generate £3m extra annual funding to support prevention and protection activities.

What it means for Epping Forest District

Fire Stations

- In each of the three options, Loughton Fire Station remains a wholetime crewed station *but the number of appliances is reduced from two to one.*
- Again, in each of the three options, the station at Waltham Abbey would convert from a day crewed arrangement *to an on call arrangement.*

Response Times

- Evidence provided in the consultation document shows that for all three options, the impact of these changes on response times would be minimal.

Impact on Council Tax

- Options 1 and 2 require increases in Council Tax of 0.8% and 2% respectively in order to achieve the savings and the prevention and protection budget.
- Option 3 can achieve the savings and the protection and prevention fund goals with no increase in Council Tax.

Greater Partnership Opportunities

- The Council already works closely with the Fire Service particularly in the areas of Community Safety and Contingency Planning. The establishment of a protection and prevention fund as well as the potential for Fire Service staff to take a greater role in prevention activities could provide opportunities for wider ranging collaborative work.

Further Information

The Fire Authority are inviting residents to attend a number of drop-in sessions across the County during the consultation period. The following may be of interest to EFDC Members;

- Harlow Library – Monday 29th February 2016, 2pm – 7pm
- Loughton Library – Thursday 3rd March 2016, 12pm – 5pm
- Waltham Abbey Library – Tuesday 8th March 2016, 12.30pm – 5.30pm