



Communities Select Committee
15th January 2014

Changes to fire engine deployment in the borough of Spelthorne

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Policy Development and Review

Cabinet is due to make a decision about changes to the emergency response cover in the borough of Spelthorne on 4th February 2014.

The Communities Select Committee is asked to note and review the proposal which is in support of Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority's (SFRA) Public Safety Plan (PSP).

Introduction:

1. This report details how SFRA intends to change the deployment of fire engines in order to maintain an effective, efficient and equitable level of emergency response in accordance with the Public Safety Plan both for the communities of Spelthorne and Surrey.
2. Following an extensive period of public consultation which ran for 13 weeks from August to November local leaders and the communities in Spelthorne voiced an overwhelming opposition to the proposal which was to close Sunbury and Staines fire stations and to locate to a new optimum location with one whole-time crewed fire engine. Having due regard to the concerns raised SFRA propose a refinement to the original proposal while still delivering the majority of the savings as required within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Background

3. The Public Safety Plan (PSP) contains 12 outcomes to be achieved by 2020. Outcome 3 concerns improving the balance of service provision across Surrey while outcome 11 seeks to improve the provision and use of property.

4. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) currently base one 24 hour whole-time fire engine at both Sunbury and Staines Fire Stations, which provide most of the initial response cover for the Borough of Spelthorne, whilst at the same time providing support to other parts of the county. This proposal seeks to support the provision of a more balanced service provision across the county in order to be better positioned to achieve the Surrey Response standard. To secure that objective the Service has reviewed emergency response cover across the county and has identified an area where the provision of a new location would facilitate a more effective strategic use of resources.
5. The PSP established a potential model for emergency response cover in Surrey based upon existing fire station locations. This was termed Phase 1 and included changes to crewing systems at Staines fire station. Phase 2 sought to establish new locations for a number of fire stations to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response across the county. The areas highlighted for this change included Spelthorne, Surrey Heath and Tandridge. Furthermore the revenue savings of £2.3 million required by Fire and Rescue, which are contained within the Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP), necessitated an alternative service delivery model to that which has been historically provided in Surrey.
6. Spelthorne was identified as an area for consideration in part due to the following factors:
 - Securing a positive impact on the Surrey Response Standard across the county,
 - Changing incident demand in the Spelthorne area over the past decade,
 - Changes already implemented or planned within Surrey,
 - Proximity of fire engines, both from Surrey and from neighbouring fire and rescue services.
7. This led to an options analysis which is outlined below:
 - Option 1: Do nothing and secure no improvements in terms of service provision across the county or the savings as required by the Medium Term Financial Plan.
 - Option 2: Implement the PSP Phase 1 deployment (24 hour cover at Sunbury, 12 hour cover at Staines)
 - Option 3 (a): Close Sunbury and maintain Staines
 - Option 3 (b): Close Staines and maintain Sunbury
 - Option 4: Implement the proposal for a new station at an optimised location within the borough with one 24 hour whole-time (immediately crewed) fire engine.
8. The modelling for all of these scenarios was conducted on behalf of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service by ORH.
9. Each option was considered in relation to its impact on emergency response performance, cost and achievability against the available timescales, resource constraints and conformity with the principles agreed within the PSP. This options analysis, linked with our understanding of community vulnerabilities, hazards and risks and from

our experience of providing a fire and rescue service, helped to shape our professional opinion on the most appropriate course of action. Consideration has also been given to the prevailing community vulnerabilities and risk profile in adjacent boroughs and any known potential developments in the area. An Equality Impact Assessment was also carried out.

10. Our preferred choice was Option 4 - to create a new 24 whole-time single fire engine fire station in the borough of Spelthorne. Importantly for the communities of Spelthorne they would continue to receive one fire engine attending incidents on average in less than seven minutes and in many cases that would prove to be sufficient resources to deal with the emergency safely and effectively. The Surrey Response standard is as follows;

- One fire engine in 10 and 2 in 15 for 80% of incidents, and
- All other emergencies - one fire engine in 16 minutes on 95% of occasions.

Option 4 would deliver a reduction in the number of fire fighter posts required and would secure the full associated revenue savings for the MTFP.

11. To support the decision making process and to ensure that any comparisons could be validated we used the same emergency cover modelling process as for the PSP. The impact of Option 4 on Spelthorne, based on the predicted performance, was an increase of 58 seconds to the first attendance. The predicted average of 6 minutes and 42 seconds (see table 1) remains well within the Surrey Response Standard of a first attendance within 10 minutes (80% of occasions).

Table 1 - Predicted response times to emergency incidents under Option 4:

Response standard		1st response to all 2+ fire engine incidents		2nd response to all 2+ fire engine incidents		1st response to other emergencies
		Average	% in 10mins	Average	% in 10mins	% in 16 mins
Current situation	Surrey	07:28s	80.8	10:27s	86.7	96.8
	Spelthorne	05:44s	97.0	09:13s	98.2	99.8
	Elmbridge	06:45s	89.5	11:01s	95.0	99.5
	Runnymede	08:36s	69.2	10:21s	90.1	97.5
Proposal	Surrey	07:33s	82.5	10:27s	90.5	98.3
	Spelthorne	06:42s	91.4	10:24s	94.5	98.9
	Elmbridge	06:48s	88.6	11:14s	93.0	99.3
	Runnymede	07:18s	82.7	10:35s	92.5	98.8

12. During the public consultation a wide variety of stakeholders in Spelthorne expressed considerable resistance to Option 4. It became clear, as the consultation period progressed, that there was a high degree of concern and opposition with regard to the removal of one fire appliance. Indeed comments and feedback received indicated that while one fire station could be acceptable, the provision of only one fire

appliance, not two, was not. This has led to the consideration of a new option which is:

Option 5: Implement the proposal for a new station at an optimised location within the borough with one fire appliance immediately crewed 24/7 and one 24 hour “On-call” fire appliance.

13. The provision of a second “On-call” fire engine compared to one whole-time fire engine improves the average first response time by 8 seconds compared to Option 4 and the second response times by just over 1 minute (see table 1a below).

Table 1a Predicted response times to emergency incidents under Option 5

Response standard		1st response to all 2+ fire engine incidents		2nd response to all 2+ fire engine incidents		1st response to other emergencies
		Average	% in 10mins	Average	% in 10mins	% in 16 mins
Current situation	Surrey	07:28s	80.8	10:27s	86.7	96.8
	Spelthorne	05:44s	97.0	09:13s	98.2	99.8
	Elmbridge	06:45s	89.5	11:01s	95.0	99.5
	Runnymede	08:36s	69.2	10:21s	90.1	97.5
Proposal	Surrey	07:33s	82.5	10:27s	90.5	98.3
	Spelthorne	6.34s	93.2	9.13s	97.5	99.7
	Elmbridge	06:47s	88.7	11.13s	93.1	99.4
	Runnymede	06.34s	88.7	11.13s	93.1	99.4

14. The second appliance would respond to 200 incidents per year, which is more than any of the existing “On-call” appliances in Surrey (Oxted is the next busiest, with 20 fewer responses per year). The provision of a second fire engine crewed by part-time, On-call staff is dependent on a number of critical factors including the availability of suitable candidates within a 5 minute response time/distance. In order for this option to succeed there has to be a collaborative approach between Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, local leaders and the community in the Staines and Ashford (Fordbridge) locality. This would be a new service delivery model for more urbanised communities, where in the past the provision of fire cover has been solely reliant on whole-time staff.
15. Sir Ken Knight’s recent report into the Fire and Rescue Service in England, “Facing the future”, stated that all fire and rescue authorities must consider whether “On-call” fire-fighters could meet their operational requirements. Modelling suggests that, in Spelthorne they could provide an invaluable, cost-effective service in the reduced demand environment.
16. In other parts of the County “On-call” is an established but increasingly complimentary part of the workforce which through the introduction of a more diverse range of employment practices is creating a more agile workforce. “On-call” staff are used to support the delivery of training, the

provision of Telecare and also work at whole-time stations when crewing levels necessitate.

17. The continued front-line service provision utilising a different delivery model in Spelthorne would still encompass our activities that lead to a reduction in incidents, casualties and injuries and will continue to include a major focus on community fire prevention and community fire protection activities and wider associated societal risks. This will also provide assurance that while crewing level's change, risks in the area do not increase.
18. Looking ahead, "On-call" staff crewing a second fire engine in stations located in urban areas could provide not only an additional weight of attack but would provide resilience for subsequent calls both in Spelthorne and the rest of Surrey. Both of these points were raised as concerns during the consultation by public and staff groups. The transformation of the staff profile towards more "On-call" will retain the focus on protecting front-line services and supports the County Council's Corporate Strategy. Option 5 when applied to Spelthorne could act as a path finding exercise for locally delivered services for other locations where this type of coverage could be effective, for example, Woking, Camberley, Elmbridge and other locations. In the longer term this will provide efficiencies through better service configuration, having the right people in the right place, at the right time and providing the right level of response cover.
19. There are additional business benefits. Through consolidating public sector assets at one location and by continuing to work collaboratively with our Blue Light partners we will be able to generate opportunities for growing and sustaining our own services and creating efficiencies by working with others. In that sense it will be more than "just" a fire station. Surrey Police and South East Coast Ambulance Service have indicated that they would wish to locate to the new premises. This approach which fits with Surrey's Public Service Transformation programme will deliver much better value for money, with changes providing significant benefits for Surrey residents. The Emergency Services Collaboration strand will aim to transform the way the emergency services in Surrey work together, with the joint aims of improving performance and responding to the changing pattern of demand and reducing costs by removing overlaps between the three blue light services. It will focus on six key areas: the potential for a single control and dispatch function across the emergency services; developing a combined Civil Contingencies Unit; combined operational response for certain incident types and in specific areas; joint operational support and back office functions; a joint prevention programme and shared governance.
20. SFRS has had long-standing informal mutual assistance arrangements with its neighbouring fire and rescue services, including London Fire Brigade. Since the introduction of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 discussions have take place with neighbouring fire and rescue services to enter into formal agreements under Sections 13 and 16. Going forward there is the potential for closer collaboration in terms of cross border mobilisation as more services, including Surrey and London Fire

Brigade, consider adopting a system of dynamic mobilising where assets (appliances and officers) are mobilised to incidents using global positioning system (GPS) software installed on vehicles. This system could allow resources to be mobilised by their proximity to an incident rather than by their location within individual station areas which will allow for a more effective and efficient use of operational resources, possibly across administrative boundaries. Associated with the adoption of this type of technology will be increasing interoperability as fire services begin to see “over the border” into other fire authorities areas in order to be request the mobilisation of the “nearest” fire appliance.

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21. Option 5 facilitates a “One County, One Team” approach to the design of future services where residents will have more influence and responsibility over how services are designed and provided. This move to greater localism has generated the development of an alternative vision for Spelthorne. It is crucial that we now develop new relationships with the local communities that stimulate changes to deliver an “On-Call” crew into Spelthorne. Given that we have recognised that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate in this situation we will need to now secure the public’s and local leaders’ commitment to making it work, and quickly. Option 5 demonstrates our commitment to finding better ways of working and delivering services in ways that are right for our communities.

Consultation

22. The consultation period was conducted over a 13 week period from August to November 2013 to ensure all local residents’ and Elected Members’ views were heard and considered. A Surrey County Council Equalities and Diversity Policy officer has been involved in ensuring that the consultation plan has been fully inclusive.
23. Consultation activities included a widely publicised on-line survey, postal questionnaires (including Easy Read version), presentations at public meetings, letters and emails to stakeholders from the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector, relevant Local Committees and partner agencies, as well as Surrey Fire and Rescue staff. We used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as a wide range of communication channels (print, on-line and direct contact) to gather the views of our stakeholders. The consultation was publicised in local GP practices, schools, churches, Post Offices, libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux, community centres, through local media, Spelthorne Borough Council media and social media. The full consultation report can be found in Annex 1, Appendix 1 of this paper.
24. The consultation received feedback from over 1460 individuals and groups, through 556 returned surveys, 271 attendees at staff workshops and public meetings, 122 items of feedback through emails, letters and calls, 518 signatures from two petitions and formal responses from Committees, SFRS staff and Resident Associations. Nearly 1200 responses came from members of the public, which represents around 1% of the Spelthorne population (however, the analysis cannot exclude

the possibility of individuals using numerous channels to submit their views, thus being counted multiple times).

25. After collating and analysing the pieces of feedback, the results were as follows:

Table 2 – Consultation results: overall attitude to proposal

	Total items of feedback	Yes	Not sure	No	No opinion
Residents / businesses	1171	4.1%	2.9%	92.7%	0.3%
Councillors	42	4.8%	4.8%	90.5%	0.0%
Community groups	33	6.1%	9.1%	81.8%	3.0%
SFRS Staff	182	21.4%	1.6%	76.4%	0.5%
Partners	5	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%
Other	14	14.3%	0.0%	78.6%	7.1%
TOTAL*	1447	6.5%	2.9%	90.2%	0.4%
TOTAL respondents	1467				

**excludes survey respondents that did not leave an answer at Q5a*

26. The greatest opposition came from Spelthorne residents and businesses. Also, the majority of local Councillors and community group representatives opposed the plans, which reflects the feedback we received at public meetings and Local Committee meetings. The strongest support for the proposal derived from SFRS staff and SCC staff, probably more aware of the internal pressures on the service that drive this proposal. The key concerns that were raised most frequently were:
- General opposition to the plans and a view that one engine is not enough for Spelthorne (22% of received comments mentioned that point)
 - Increase in response times will risk lives and property (22%)
 - Spelthorne's profile makes it a high risk area (high density population, high level of deprivation, urban built, dangerous stretch of the river Thames, motorways) (18%)
 - Heathrow - the airport might need support for major incidents; the expansion of the airport will add to the risk; timing of consultation could have been better coordinated to coincide with consultation about the expansion (10%)
 - Traffic as a main barrier to moving the engine around or getting support into the area (Sunbury Cross, Thames bridges, level crossing) (10%)
 - Reduced resilience in case of a major incident and / or when crew is busy otherwise (9%)
 - Praise and recognition for SFRS (8%)
 - During the consultation process, alternative suggestions were received from the public and other stakeholders. The most often suggested alternative was to keep two fire engines at one location (5% of received comments mentioned that suggestion).

27. Both the Local Committee and Borough Council of Spelthorne rejected the proposal at their formal meetings in September and October 2013. A formal response was submitted by the Local Committee Chairman on behalf of the Local Committee opposing the proposal and raising concerns, which besides the overall reservations about the demographics and urban makeup of Spelthorne, congested roads and future developments (Eco-Park, Heathrow expansion) also included the lack of financial information presented to the Local Committee.
28. Overall, the feedback to the consultation was negative (90% of feedback items opposed the proposal), with major resistance from the residents (and their associations) and councillors of Spelthorne. The high level of opposition is in line with what other consultations on reduction in fire cover in other parts of the country have produced (see consultation report, Annex 1). It also suggests that residents attach value to the Council's services and reductions will cause dissatisfaction. This echoes the findings of Surrey County Councils 2012-13 public budget survey using SIMALTO modelling, where 96% of respondents indicated they would complain to the council, should service levels be scaled back to the most basic level.
29. Their concerns have been fully considered and taken into account when finalising the proposals recommended in the Cabinet report.

Risk management and implications

30. Only options 3a, 3b and 4 provide the full savings under the MTFP. However, options 3a and 3b provide sub optimal locations for one fire appliance in Spelthorne with a detrimental impact on the Surrey standard county wide.
31. Option 5 delivers most of the savings required in the MTFP.
32. It also provides an opportunity for a new way of delivering service into Spelthorne and other parts of the county. Option 5 secures two fire engines in Spelthorne providing that the response from the local communities and leaders generates sufficient support and there are enough prospective candidates with the right skill sets and attributes to meet the Fire Service entry criteria. It would also allow the Service to market, advertise, recruit and train new On-call staff well before deployment into the new station. By sharing the responsibility for the future arrangements with the community and their elected representatives we would seek to ensure that we have endeavoured to meet their requirements and that of the Fire Authority but the back-up plan will still need to be the adoption of Option 4 if an "On-call" team cannot be established.
33. By closing Staines and Sunbury the service will be able to consolidate its staff and resources into one, lightweight new premises that is fit for purpose and efficient to operate and allow the Council to consider disposing two premises that are in poor condition each of which has high maintenance costs. This will be further supported by lessons learned

from the relocation into the new premises at Salfords to reduce build costs and speed up completion. This location will include the boat that is currently located at Sunbury and will continue to not only provide a first response but, along with the water rescue capability at Walton, will ensure that resilience maintained.

34. Option 4 reduces the required annual crewing costs for SFRS by £1.05m, and this cost saving has been factored into the MTFP. In addition there will also be future revenue cost reductions from the associated reductions in personal protective equipment and training. The reduction from two to one fire appliance would reduce future capital replacement costs, and a reduced fleet size has been factored into the long term vehicle and equipment replacement programme.
35. Option 5 provides a second appliance crewed by an 'On-call' unit at an estimated annual cost of £0.17m. This gives a lower annual reduction in crewing costs of £0.88m and therefore a shortfall against the planned MTFP savings. There are initial start up costs of creating a new 18 fire fighter "On-call" crew in Spelthorne of around £80,000.
36. Option 5 will also require a review of the Vehicle and Equipment replacement programme to allow for the continued provision of a second appliance in Spelthorne.
37. It will further support the collaborative/co-location work which is ongoing with Surrey Police and South-East Coast Ambulance Service and other partners.

Conclusions:

38. There is a requirement on the FRSA to deliver the savings in the MTFP. The PSP provides options to do that whilst maintaining an effective, efficient and equitable level of fire cover across the county. By way of the extensive consultation with the local leaders and communities in Spelthorne and neighbouring boroughs the Fire and Rescue Service have considered their views and expanded on the options available to address the concerns that were raised.
39. The inclusion of option 5 provides a new service delivery model in Spelthorne.
40. It is clear that having considered the views of local leaders and communities and by adjusting the proposed service delivery model in Spelthorne there is an associated risk. While it does secure the majority of the savings required in this area it does provide a future model for service delivery provision using a different segment of the workforce which affords a reduction in the cost base while still providing an effective response arrangement. The risk of not adopting this model is that cost reductions that are required as part of the MTFP in Elmbridge, for example, may not be secured. This allows the service to move to an increasingly flexible workforce, geographically, temporally and contractually.

Recommendations:

41. The Select Committee is asked to consider the content of this report and note the progress being made against the Public Safety Plan and MTFP.
42. The Select Committee continue to support the implementation of the Public Safety Plan with particular reference to the proposed changes in Spelthorne.
43. Select Committee support the inclusion of option 5 for the Cabinet report for 4th February 2013.

Next steps:

A report will be submitted to Cabinet for their decision on 4th February 2014.

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Sources/background papers:

- Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority Public Safety Plan 2011-20
- Sir Ken Knight, (2013), "Facing the future; findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England", Department for Communities and Local Government.