

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 10 SEPTEMBER 2013  
title: LANCASHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: BILL ALKER

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Members of the content of the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) Emergency Cover Review and its possible impact on the residents of Ribble Valley.
- 1.2 To formulate a response to these proposals as part of the consultation process.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
  - Community Objectives – } Close partnership working with relevant agencies has
  - Corporate Priorities – } always helped to make Ribble Valley's residents lives
  - Other Considerations – } safer and healthier and this consultation process is yetanother part of that process.

### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service have issued a consultation document entitled 'Performance Report and Action Plan 2013 – Incorporating Emergency Cover Review'.
- 2.2 The document does the following:
  - Outline LFRS performance over the past year
  - Provides an updated risk profile for Lancashire
  - Details progress in respect of key projects
  - Reports the outcome of the LFRS emergency cover 2013 outlining proposed changes to the way they deliver some frontline services.
- 2.3 LFRS, like a number of other public sector organisations, is under considerable financial pressure to reduce its budgets over the next four years by £10 million pounds.
- 2.4 In an attempt to reduce its expenditure, LFRS is proposing a four year emergency cover review covering the years 2014/2015 to 2017/2018.
- 2.5 Our views are being sought. The deadline for responses is 20 September 2013.

### 3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The proposals being consulted upon do not immediately affect our area. As you will see from the attached Appendix A, the proposals are for larger urban areas which have full time fire crews.
- 3.2 These areas are neighbouring authorities covering Hyndburn, Padiham, Bamber Bridge and Chorley amongst others.
- 3.3 The planned reductions are phased over four years starting from 2014/2015 in Hyndburn and Padiham; Bamber Bridge and Chorley in 2015/2016; Skelmersdale in 2016/2017; and finally Blackpool and Lancaster in 2017/2018.
- 3.4 The savings made over that four year period amount to £5.4 million pounds.
- 3.5 LFRS also point out that the emergency cover review is not just a finance driven initiative. The service has seen a massive reduction of 60% in the number of emergency incidents over the past 10 years.
- 3.6 Whilst there are no proposals to reduce the service in Ribble Valley with its two retained fire services in Clitheroe and Longridge, clarification has been sought on the likely impact of changes with Lancaster, Padiham and Hyndburn.
- 3.7 I attach below the comments from Station Manager Phil Jones, who is in charge of Clitheroe and Longridge.

District	Headline Performance Impact			
	In Target	% Change	Response Time (mm:ss)	
			Average	Change
Ribble Valley	-2	-0.5%	10:28	00:04

Appliance 1 Performance Impact			
In Target	% Change	Response Time (mm:ss)	
		Average	Change
-1	-0.2%	09:50	00:01

Appliance 2 Performance Impact			
In Target	% Change	Response Time (mm:ss)	
		Average	Change
-1	-2.5%	12:17	00:14

The main impact on the Ribble Valley in relation to the proposed cuts is the removal of 1 fire appliance from Padiham and one from Lancaster. As you know Padiham cover some wards in the Ribble Valley around the Sabden and Read area, and Lancaster will cover the area at the north side of the trough of Bowland.

As Padiham still have a fire appliance to respond from their base there is very little impact on appliance 1 performance. There is a slight delay on the second appliance performance but this is negligible.

As we have very few incidents to the north of the Trough of Bowland, the reduction in appliances in Lancaster will have little or no effect on the Ribble Valley.

The table above shows the headline performance once all of the proposed changes have been inputted into the modelling software.

As you can see there will be an average change overall of 4 seconds to attendance times across the Ribble Valley

The first appliance attendance will have negligible impact with an increase in attendance times of 1 second. The second appliance attendance times will have a greater increase, but this is only an average of 14 seconds.

The reason for these minimal effects on attendance times is due to there being no reductions in the appliances or stations in the Ribble Valley, coupled with no station closures in neighbouring areas (only appliance reductions).

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – No implications identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – No implications identified.
- Political – No implications identified.
- Reputation – The reputation that Ribble Valley Borough Council has as one of the safest places to live in the country will not be greatly impacted by these proposals.
- Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

#### 5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Note the contents of this report.

5.2 Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Head of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service offering no objections to these proposals.

BILL ALKER  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

#### BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Emergency Cover Review.

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF: BA/EL/100913/POLICY&FINANCE

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## The Proposals

The final package of changes approved by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority following public consultation will be implemented over four years from 2014 – 2017 and the proposals outlined below relate to Years 1 – 4 over that timescale.

### Year 1 proposals – 2014/15

In the first year of the Emergency Cover Review, we are proposing to remove one of Hyndburn's Wholetime fire engines. Currently the station has two Wholetime fire engines and one Retained fire engine making it the only fire station in the North West of England with three fire engines. The second Wholetime fire engine is now among the least busy in Lancashire and its current activity can be met by the Retained fire engine. Research indicates that we will continue to meet our response standard of eight minutes.

We are also proposing to remove one of the two Retained fire engines at Padiham fire station in line with reducing activity and risk levels. The readiness of the first fire engine to incidents has been good but there have been long term difficulties recruiting enough Retained firefighters to crew the second fire engine, particularly during the day when availability of a crew has been as low as 25% for a number of years. The risk in the station area is categorised as 'low' and last year there were only 20 property fires in Padiham.

Year 1 changes will save the Service just over £1 million and the County will only lose two fire engines.

### Year 2 – 2015/16

In the second year we are proposing to move Bamber Bridge's Wholetime fire engine to Chorley leaving the station with a Retained duty system fire engine. Over the last three years, activity levels in Bamber Bridge have dropped significantly and last year there was less than one property fire a week in the station area. The Retained fire engine at Bamber Bridge will continue to serve the area and our research has indicated that we would still be able to meet our current response standard of eight minutes. Prior to 1995 Bamber Bridge was serviced by one Retained Duty System fire engine with higher activity levels than now.

Chorley Community Fire Station, which has recently moved to our Training Centre in Euxton, currently houses one Wholetime fire engine and one Retained fire engine. Our proposal is to change the crewing system at the station from the traditional crewing arrangements to Day Crewing Plus, with no change in attendance times. We will also remove the Retained fire engine but the fire engine moving across from Bamber Bridge will ensure that the station continues to accommodate two fire engines.

Finally in the same year, we propose to create a specialist rescue hub at the new fire station in Chorley. This hub will house the Urban Search and Rescue vehicles which are currently based in costly rented accommodation in Leyland and will be operated by the firefighters based at Chorley Fire Station 24 hours a day. This will improve the search and rescue service as vehicles are only immediately available during the day and in the evenings there can be a delay of up to 45 minutes. This change will make them immediately available at all times.

Year 2 changes will save the Service nearly £1.7 million but will only reduce the number of fire engines by one.

### Year 3 – 2016/17

A proposal in our 2012 Performance Report and Action Plan to extend the Day Crewing Plus duty system of working to additional fire stations was subsequently agreed by the Fire Authority, with Skelmersdale and South Shore stations identified as suitable for its introduction there.

At Skelmersdale the station currently accommodates one wholetime and one retained fire engine. During Year 3 we propose to move the wholetime fire engine to the Day Crewing Plus duty system and the retained fire engine will remain.

At South Shore there is currently a wholetime fire engine and in Year 3 we propose to move over to the Day Crewing Plus System there instead.

The Day Crewing Plus shift system enables great flexibility in working as well as offering salary benefits. It offers considerable savings and helps us tailor our services better to cover local risk. Because it works best in locations where there is a pattern of reduced activity overnight compared with elsewhere in Lancashire it is not possible to make even more savings by implementing it at all Lancashire fire stations.

Year 3 changes will save the Service nearly £800,000 and it will not result in the loss of any fire engines but will maintain the same response times.

### Year 4 – 2017/18

The current provision for emergency cover at Blackpool fire station is two Wholetime fire engines and crews. We propose to reduce this to one fire engine. The Fylde coast, from Bispham to Lytham, has the biggest concentration of fire engines in the county. This reduction offers us an opportunity to save £1 million by withdrawing a fire engine whilst being confident that response times can be maintained and risk levels protected.

Lancaster fire station currently accommodates two Wholetime fire engines and we propose to remove the second fire engine. We intend to explore the option of replacing it with a fire engine crewed by Retained Duty System firefighters but this will be dependent on recruiting sufficient staff. As the second fire engine at Lancaster is one of the least active Wholetime fire engines in the county and with incident numbers decreasing each year in the area, this proposal will save us £1 million pound whilst maintaining the risk levels.

Year 4 changes will save the Service nearly £1.9 million and result in the loss of just two fire engines.