

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY		
DATE:	16 DECEMBER 2014	REPORT NO:	CFO/126/14
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DCFO PHIL GARRIGAN	REPORT AUTHOR:	DEB APPLETON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT GROUP		
TITLE OF REPORT:	WIRRAL AND LIVERPOOL CONSULTATION UPDATE		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A	WIRRAL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT 2
	APPENDIX B	LIVERPOOL CONSULTATION DOCUMENT 2

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of progress and developments in relation to the Wirral and Liverpool operational response consultation process.
2. A final report on the consultation outcomes on the Wirral consultation will be presented to a full Authority meeting on 29th January if the recommendation below is approved. A final report on the consultation outcomes on the Liverpool consultation will be presented to the Authority Budget meeting on 26th February 2015.

Recommendation

3. That Members;
 - a) Note that the land at Frankby Rd, Greasby has been withdrawn from consideration by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC)
 - b) Note that a potential site on Saughall Massie Road has been identified by WMBC
 - c) Note the progress in relation to the consultation process in Liverpool and Wirral
 - d) Approve a proposal to re-designate the Audit Sub Committee on 29th January 2015 as a full Authority meeting to consider the outcome of the Wirral consultation which closes on 5th January 2015.

Introduction and Background

Wirral Consultation

4. Members will recall that the Authority approved the following recommendation at its meeting on 2nd October 2014 (report CFO/101/14)

“That Members approve a proposal to merge Upton and West Kirby fire stations at a new station on Frankby Road, Greasby as an alternative to an outright closure of West Kirby fire station. This is subject to a 12 week period of public consultation to commence with effect from 3rd October 2014.

Following the conclusion of the consultation a further report will be submitted to Authority detailing the outcomes and any operational implications. At that point Members will determine which proposal to implement.”

5. On 3rd October an initial consultation newsletter and on-line survey were published on the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service website. Facebook, Twitter and a press release were used to launch the consultation. The consultation launch was reported on by the Wirral Globe and Liverpool Echo.
6. Throughout the period since 3rd October, the Wirral Globe and Liverpool Echo have reported on developments relating to the consultation process and the Chief Fire Officer was interviewed on Radio Merseyside to promote the consultation process and the public meetings in particular. Social media continues to be used regularly during the consultation period to encourage participation.
7. Consultation documentation has been printed and distributed in the areas affected.
8. Two public meetings have taken place in Greasby (the second due to high demand), one in West Kirby and one in Upton. Approximately 800 people attended the two Greasby meetings (with some people attending both), with 30 to 40 people attending the Upton and West Kirby meetings. There was significant opposition expressed at the Greasby meetings to the proposal to build on the Frankby Road site. At each public meeting, the Chief Fire Officer made it clear that the site was being considered as it was not subject to any planning restrictions unlike the other sites in the area suitable from an operational response perspective, all of which were in the Green Belt or designated as Urban Green Space. The Chief Fire Officer also made it clear that should a suitable alternative site be identified, where the special circumstances required to achieve planning consent for building on Green Belt or Urban Green Space land could be met then he would recommend that the Authority reconsider its draft proposal.
9. Many of those opposing the site made it clear that they had little concern for attendance times to West Kirby, preferring to retain the station at Upton to ensure that a new station wasn't built in Greasby. It is very clear that some

people were unable to distinguish between the Authority's duty to provide fire cover and the Council's duties in relation to planning and land use, and this will be considered in any future consultation process. Others understood the logic of building a new station in a central location to equalise attendance times between Upton and West Kirby, but objected to the use of the Frankby Road site.

10. In addition to public meetings; focus groups, a stakeholder meeting, a forum meeting and a number of meetings with individual stakeholder groups such as the Greasby Community Centre, Friends of Greasby Library, Wirral Older People's Parliament and Wirral Heartbeat have taken place.
11. The Chief Fire Officer has also met with local and national politicians to brief them on the proposals which are the subject of the consultation process.
12. Numerous individual letters and e-mails from interested members of the public and politicians have been responded to by the Chief Fire Officer and other MFRA officers.
13. As a result of the public and political opposition and following discussions with the Chief Fire Officer, the leader of Wirral MBC instructed Wirral MBC officers to remove the Frankby Road site from consideration on 23rd November 2014. As a potential alternative to the Frankby Road site Wirral MBC made the Chief Fire Officer aware of a site in Council ownership on Saughall Massie Road.
14. To date, over 900 responses to the survey have been received on line and in hard copy. These are currently being analysed.
15. A second consultation document was published on 2nd December 2015 specifically to address some of the frequently asked questions arising from the consultation so far and providing detailed information on the other options considered by the Authority. A copy of this consultation document is attached at Appendix A.
16. Despite the withdrawal of the Frankby Road site from consideration, the primary aim of the consultation process is to gauge the public's views on the principle of the merger proposal from an operational response perspective and to consult on the communities potentially adversely affected about the impact on them.
17. It is therefore appropriate that the consultation process remains open, transparent, comprehensive and robust and that it continues until the agreed end date of 5th January 2015. It should be noted that the average attendance times being quoted in the consultation documentation relate to the Greasby site, as the Authority has not agreed any alternative site. Those figures still give a reasonable indication of potential attendance times for a centrally located station.
18. Originally it was proposed that the results of the consultation would be reported back to the Authority budget meeting on the 26th of February 2015. After

reviewing Authority business it is now proposed to re-designate the Audit Sub Committee on 29th January 2015 as a full Authority meeting and to take the outcomes of the Wirral public consultation to that meeting instead.

19. If the Authority is minded to accept the Recommendations of this report, following the closure of the consultation on the 5th January 2015, a full report on the consultation process and outcomes will be presented to the Authority on 29th January 2015.
20. Members will recall that the proposals under consultation form part of their balanced budget for 2015/16,

Liverpool Consultation

21. Members will recall that the Authority approved the following recommendation at its meeting on 2nd October 2014 (report CFO/102/14)

“That Members approve a 12 week public consultation on the proposed closure of Allerton fire station and the relocation of the Allerton fire appliance to Old Swan to be crewed on a wholetime retained basis.”

22. On 1st November an initial consultation newsletter and on-line survey were published on the Merseyfire website. Facebook, Twitter and a press release were used to launch the consultation and Liverpool Echo reported on this. Use of social media continues throughout the consultation period.
23. On 15th November officers from the Service attended Allerton Farmers’ Market to offer information regarding the consultation proposal.
24. Consultation documents have been printed and distributed in the area.
25. A public meeting was held on 9th December, with a second meeting planned for 15th January. A focus group, forum and stakeholder meeting have also taken place.
26. A second consultation document was published on 2nd December specifically to address some of the frequently asked questions arising from the consultation so far and providing detailed information on the other options considered by the Authority. A copy of this consultation document is attached at Appendix B.
27. Some queries have been received from members of the public and have been responded to by the Chief Fire Officer and other MFRA officers.
28. The consultation is due to conclude on 26th January 2015, following which At the conclusion of the consultation process a full report will be prepared that analyses all of the consultation responses to assist the Authority make further decisions on the draft proposals. This report will be presented to the Authority at the Budget meeting on 26th February.

Equality and Diversity Implications

29. An EIA for the whole mergers and closures programme has been produced and will be revised once the outcomes from consultation are known.

Staff Implications

30. There are no staff implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

31. The Authority is consulting on its proposals to ensure it meets its legal obligations.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

32. There are no financial implications arising from this report. Full details of the costs associated with the consultation process will be reported back to the Authority at the conclusion of the consultation.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

33. There are no risk, health & safety or environmental implications arising from this report. Any such implications will be addressed in future reports.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

34. Consulting on operational response proposals ensures that the public of Merseyside have an opportunity to influence MFRA policy.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
