



Introduction

This 'LJC Briefing Note' has been prepared as an update for members of the Local Joint Committees to provide an overview of future changes and priorities of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). The changes predominately arise as a consequence of austerity measures (budget cuts) introduced through the Coalition Government's comprehensive spending review (CSR) 2010.

What has been the impact of the CSR on SFRS's budget?

SFRS has not fared well through the CSR. Of the 46 Fire and Rescue Service's in England, only one other has received budget cuts greater than SFRS. In brief, the Service is likely to sustain cuts of approximately £4million over the next four years. The Service's current annual budget is £21m. Local Members of Parliament, councillors of the Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer are lobbying Government to review the CSR budget settlement.

What has SFRS done to offset the budget cuts?

Early in 2010 the Service commenced a wide-ranging review to explore opportunities to reduce its budget whilst endeavouring at the same time to protect frontline services to the community. The review has identified future savings in the region of £3m.

Will my local Fire Station close?

The Service operates 23 fire stations across Shropshire, Telford and the Wrekin. At this time, there are no plans to close any fire stations for the foreseeable future. The identified savings (£3m) should secure frontline services for at least the next three years. From 2014/15 this position may change.

What changes are likely to take place as a result of the cuts?

A four-year programme of controlled measures to reduce the Service's budget has been developed. During the programme it is anticipated that the Service's workforce will reduce by 60 posts (approximately 10 percent of the total staff), management structures will be shrunk, the life of fire engines will increase (12 to 15 years), buildings will receive less routine maintenance and alternative methods of crewing some types of fire engine will be introduced.

Most of these changes will be 'invisible' to the local community. Where the community will witness a change of approach will be in the provision of fire safety guidance. Whilst the Service will endeavour to manage the expectations of all sections of the community, in reality a more precision-focused, needs-based, community safety strategy will be implemented.

What is a 'precision-focused, needs-based, community safety strategy?'

In brief, as the Service begins to operate within a shrinking budget, it is essential to ensure that those services offered are directed at the most vulnerable and those at risk in society. In effect, whereas in the past the Service has set about visiting every household and supplied free smoke alarms, in future, the issue of smoke alarms will curtailed to a needs-based approach (e.g. to elderly and vulnerable).

Notwithstanding the latter, the emergency response element of the Service will remain unchanged, with a commitment that a fire engine, with an appropriately equipped and trained crew, will arrive at

any emergency incident, anywhere in Shropshire, Telford and the Wrekin, within 15 minutes on 85 percent of occasions.

What are the priorities of SFRS?

The principal aims of the Service, and moreover Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, will be to secure a:

- A Safe Community
- A Prosperous Community
- A Sustainable Place

The Fire Authority considers the following succinct vision representative of its message it wishes to express to the communities of Shropshire, Telford and The Wrekin:

‘Working with Communities we will support a safe, prosperous and sustainable Shropshire’

The Fire Authority’s priorities for the Service are:

- A Service whose primary function is rescue from fire
- A local Service available to the local community 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- A local Service with a local Fire Control function delivering local needs
- A professional response to the extinguishing of fires
- A professional response, in partnership with other agencies, to road traffic collisions
- The delivery of an effective community safety strategy that integrates with the philosophy of *Big Society*, encouraging citizens to take greater ownership for their and their neighbours’ safety
- Provision of a competent and professional workforce

What can the LJC do to support SFRS?

Over the coming months the Service wants to secure a new *deal* with the community. The new *deal* is articulated as:

We ask you

- To take more responsibility for your, your family’s, your neighbour’s and community’s safety
- If you are able, to support us to deliver our prevention functions for the most vulnerable in society
- That you actively support your local fire-fighters in their public duty

In return we will

- Continue to support the most vulnerable
- Deliver the critical service you need
- Improve the way we involve and communicate with you
- Deliver a cost effective service

SFRS seek the support of LJC’s in promoting and fostering this new *deal*, a deal that captures the essence of Government’s new *Big Society*.

Want to know more or have your say?

For further details regarding the Service’s plans to address the budget deficit and an opportunity to respond, please visit:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/about-sfrs/business-consultation-2011>



**Putting Shropshire’s
Safety First**