

Annex to minutes of Cheshire Fire Authority 13th February 2019

1F Questions from Members of the Public

Question 1

Michael Jones:

I note that the Officers of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service have recently updated the Community Risk Register on behalf of the Cheshire Resilience Forum. For serious incidents at COMAH Sites in Ellesmere Port the new updated risk register foresees a predicted risk impact of 'endangerment to life'.

The previous edition of the Community Risk Register gave more detailed examples associated with the COMAH risks in Ellesmere Port such as 'the possibility of significant fatalities and multiple injuries up to a distance of 10 km Off-Site'. Whilst COMAH risk levels in Ellesmere Port remain broadly unchanged, the presentation of this risk has changed significantly.

'Endangerment to life' is not as explicit as 'the possibility of significant fatalities and multiple injuries up to a distance of 10 km Off-Site' so can the Chair please re-assure Local Communities in Ellesmere Port that the Fire Authority will fully consider the potential for 'significant fatalities and multiple injuries up to a distance of 10km Off-Site' when the Fire Authority make their decision on the future of Ellesmere Port's Second Fire Engine?

Response:

The Authority, alongside other agencies, contribute to the Community Risk Register which is produced by the Cheshire Resilience Forum. In line with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, the Fire Authority will assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the community, and will have regard to Community Risk Registers and any other local risk analyses and feedback as appropriate. The Authority will do this through its Community Risk Management (CRM) model, which will also consider other sources of intelligence such as site-specific risk information.

In accordance with the Constitution the questioner asked supplemental questions. The Chair stated that he did not propose to provide a response at the meeting. He confirmed that a written response would be provided in due course.

The supplemental questions and response is summarised below:-

Supplemental Question 1

"As part of the Fire Authority IRMP Consultations on the Fire Authority's proposals to have just one fire engine in Ellesmere Port can the Chairman please inform us whether the local communities surrounding Ellesmere Port

who reside within the 10 km COMAH off-site risk areas were alerted, to the possibility of ‘multiple injuries and significant fatalities’ should an industrial accident occur, and if so, what were the levels, type and details of that engagement?”

Response:

The proposal to introduce an on-call duty system for the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port is outlined within the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013-14. Full details of the consultation programme is available to view at www.cheshirefire.gov.uk This consultation process was independently assessed by the Consultation Institute under its Compliance Assessment Scheme. Such a specific reference was not included as part of the consultation process.

Supplemental Question 2

“Furthermore could the Chairman please confirm that today is the first collective gathering of the 23 Fire Authority Members since the consultation closed and therefore the first opportunity for all members to openly study, absorb and debate all matters contained in the IRMP before the voting takes place today.”

Response:

The consultation period exceeds 12 weeks and Members are provided with updates during the consultation period. However, this is the first time that Members have met as the Fire Authority since the consultation closed. Members have access to the reports a week before the meeting so that they have time to consider them.

Supplemental Question 3

“I suspect the answer to be yes and this in it’s self would possibility indicate why the issues concerning fire cover in Chester have not even made it onto todays agenda despite there having been almost forty written responses and comments including those from MPs and Council Leaders; all of which are specific to Chester!”

Response:

Fire cover in Chester has not been specifically referenced in the draft IRMP 2019/2020. However, Members are well aware that this is an issue that the Fire Authority will be encouraged to consider in due course. As you know the Fire Authority is expected to receive the outcomes from a Whole Service Review later this year.

Question 2

Victoria Allman:

Unite Community in Chester notes that Cheshire has 0.5 firefighters per 1000 of population compared to a national average of 0.6. With a population of just over

1 million, this in effect means we therefore have a shortfall of 100 firefighters in Cheshire based on the per capita national average.

In Ellesmere Port, which has major industrial risks and the potential for serious off-site threat to life, we are extremely concerned at plans to scrap the second fire engine.

Will the Chair, on behalf of the Fire Authority, please provide some re-assurance to those who live and work in the Ellesmere Port risk areas that everything will be done to look at increasing the number of firefighters to bring the staffing level more in line with the national per capita average in order to keep the second fire engine in Ellesmere Port and allow our local community to sleep safely at night?

Response:

The original proposal (to alter the crewing of the second fire appliance in Ellesmere Port from wholetime to on-call) was reviewed during 2017/18 and at its meeting on 14th February 2018, Members of the Fire Authority instructed officers to undertake a further review to determine the optimum location for this resource for the benefit of Cheshire as a whole. This review has been subsumed into a larger Whole Service Review which will culminate in a set of proposals that will be subject to consultation in Autumn/Winter 2019/20.

Representations have been made to the Government on behalf of the Fire Authority to highlight Members' concerns over the reduction in central funding.

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The supplemental questions and response is summarised below:-

Supplemental Question 1

"I note that later in the meeting you will be dealing with the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2019/20 – agenda item 7 Appendix 1 p218 paragraphs 1, 2 and 3. You will be voting on providing 3 new cars for 3 Brigade Managers. Please can you kindly give thought to whether this money would be better spent towards the cost of keeping the second fire engine in Ellesmere Port. Before voting please could you be aware exactly how much public money this involves and let me know how much this will be. As you will be voting today on this, I presume the figure is readily available."

Response:

The wording in the Pay Policy Statement could be more precise. However, I am able to confirm that the remuneration package for the two newly created Assistant Chief Fire Officer posts will not include a provided car. In other words they will not have a car that is funded by the Fire Authority. The postholders will be able to access the leased car scheme that is open to other officers. However, the Fire Authority does not subsidise the scheme.