

Motion – No to three person crewing

Council is alarmed at the recent announcement by the Staffordshire Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Ben Adams, and Chief Fire Officer Rob Barber, that our communities will see a reduced initial attendance to incidents of just three fire fighters.

The Government report in to attendance standards for the Fire and Rescue Service (The Fire and Emergency Cover (Pathfinder) Review) is clear that the recommended crewing response is five fire fighters on a fire engine, with the minimum safe standard for interventions at incidents being four firefighters.

Council also notes that this new practice of just three fire fighters does not feature in the services Corporate Safety Plan and that no public consultation has taken place – as required under the statutory framework.

Each fire and rescue authority must produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) or Corporate Safety Plan, which is available to the public.

The guidance notes from Government, alongside The Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) Act 2004, The Crime & Disorder Act 1998, The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Local Government Act 2000 make clear that;

Government thinks that a modern and effective Fire and Rescue Service should serve all sections of our society fairly and equitably by.

- a. reducing the number of fires and other emergency incidents occurring;
- b. reducing loss of life in fires and accidents;
- c. reducing the number and severity of injuries in fires and other emergency incidents;

The Service has in place ‘Standard Operating Procedures – procedures that detail how fire fighters will safely deal with the range of incidents they face, to save and support the public – these procedures are based on a minimum of four fighters on an appliance.

Standard Operating Procedures are constructed with the aim of ensuring that the requirements placed on Firefighters, and their actions at emergency incidents, do not exceed accepted minimum standards of health & safety. In simple terms they are designed to minimise the risks which Firefighters routinely face in situations which are in themselves inherently risky. SOPs have developed over the years not only to match the complexity of incidents attended by the service, but also in an attempt to maintain compliance with a raft of legislative health & safety requirements placed on local authority employers

Yet here in Staffordshire, under Mr Adams and Mr Barber we are already experiencing;

- The 5th Slowest attendance times in England (Government statistics – Home office Fire Statistics data tables last updated 11 May 2023)
- 50% cuts to workforce - the largest reduction of fire fighters in any Fire and Rescue Service in England (Freedom of information request to all services, provisional head count 2010-2021)
- Fire engines now responding with just three firefighters.

- Staffordshire Fire Service placed in 'Requires Improvement' in a number of areas (latest 'His Majesty's Inspectorate Inspection 2022')

Council has not been consulted over these changes, nor informed how the Lag times of other appliances will impact on the safety of residents and fire fighters, especially given the poor availability of on call appliances across the county. Determining what is an acceptable phased arrival – or LAG – in fire appliance attendance times i.e. the time between the arrival of the first fire appliance and the second fire appliance sent as part of the initial emergency response to an incident, is critical.

Given the alarming picture of our Fire and Rescue Service here in Staffordshire, Council resolves that;

- 1) A request that any initial incident mobilisation within our borough meets the minimum recommended safe crewing level of four fighters
- 2) That the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner and Chief Officer be required to a special meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny meeting, to provide council with details and reassurance of how the service will keep our communities safe.

Proposer Cllr Dave Jones

Seconder Cllr Mike Stubbs