

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WHITEHAVEN FIRE STATION IMPROVEMENT GROUP

LEAD MEMBER(S): Councillors G Garrity

REPORT AUTHOR: Jessica Hall, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer

Summary: The report asks Members to note the current position in relation to the Improvement Group

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the current position in relation to the work of the Improvement Group

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Improvement Group (IG) was established following a referral from full Council on 24 June 2010. The referral was made following an article in the Whitehaven News dated 19 May 2010 in which an FBU (Fire Brigade Union) Official referred to plans to reduce 24 hour cover at Whitehaven Fire Station. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the External OSC agreed to investigate any proposals.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.2 The IG membership following expressions of interest is: Councillors G Garrity (Chair), C Whiteside, E Eastwood, M Woodburn, J Jackson and A Jacob. J Hall, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer is providing support to the IG.

3. INITIAL MEETING

3.1 The IG held an initial meeting on Friday 16 July 2010, Chaired by Councillor Garrity and facilitated by the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer.

3.2 Prior to the meeting taking place the Chair had written to the Chief Fire Officer asking for his comments on the article. In his response, the Chief Fire Officer advised that any proposed amendments within the fire and rescue service would be outlined in Cumbria County Council's budget proposals in October and at that time he or a senior officer would be happy to come and address Members and any queries they may have.

3.3 Members felt that more information was required before they could properly scope the work of the Improvement Group.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Members identified a number of points where further details could inform the future scope of the IG. These included:

- What future proposals are
- What would be driving the proposals
- What the current operation at Whitehaven Fire Station is
- Which stations in Copeland are covered full time
- The level of retained cover across stations in Copeland
- The knock on effect of reduced cover at Whitehaven station on retained cover in Copeland
- Crews operating in Copeland at any one time
- Whether there is data available showing how often incidents requiring fire vehicle attendance have taken place at the same time
- Whether there is data available showing the difference in response times between full time and retained crews.

5. OTHER DISCUSSION POINTS

5.1 Members also identified other information which could be useful to their scoping exercise. These included crew numbers, recruitment and home safety visits. The Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee is currently covering these topics and the Chief Fire Officer is due to report again to a future JSC on these issues.

5.2 Councillor G Garrity and Councillor Y Clarkson are the Council's representatives on the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

6. INFORMATION GATHERING

6.1 The group identified a number of sources of information including:

- Chief Fire Officer or other senior County Council officer
- The work of the Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee
- The Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2011/14
- The FBU who featured in the article.

7. SCOPING

7.1 The IG is currently gathering the relevant information and will determine its scope and most appropriate course of action once it has determined what information is available. The IG will keep the External OSC informed.

Background papers:

Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee – Report from the Chief Fire Officer, 29 April 2010
Minutes of the Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 29 April 2010 at South Lakeland House, Kendal
Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2011/14
“Cuts ‘May put lives at risk’ – Firefighters” Whitehaven News 19 May 2010