Justice Committee

Fire and rescue service reform

Written submission from Dundee City Council

Impact at a local level of the single fire service

We are not aware of any significant impact. The Fire and Rescue Service have stated that their aim is to safeguard frontline services while reducing costs and we have no evidence to date of any diminution of the services to the public. Officers from the Fire and Rescue Service continue to play an active part in community planning at a city-wide and local level and to work very closely with our Community Safety Hub. They have been enthusiastic partners in the development of a ‘Healthy Homes Check’ which aims to ensure that a range of agencies who visit people in their homes share information about people at risk.

Consultation process for local fire plans

The Council has been fully consulted on the development of the Local Plan for Dundee and elected members have had a number of opportunities to influence and contribute to the plan, including direct emails and surveys, informal briefings and seminars, and formal submission of the draft plan to the Policy and Resources (Police, Fire and Community Safety) Committee. Our elected members have embraced the opportunity to engage with and scrutinise the work of the Fire and Rescue Service. The Service has also taken steps to consult other stakeholders in the city.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan

The Council was given the opportunity to comment on the Service’s Strategic Plan, both at Committee and in less formal meetings. The Council was supportive of the vision, values and aims set out in the plan and particularly welcomed the emphasis on prevention and targeting activities at people who are particularly at risk.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service’s proposals on its estate

The Council welcomes the decision that one of the three control rooms for Scotland is to be located in Dundee. Obviously there will be disappointment in those areas which will no longer have a control room located locally, but it was inevitable that there would be a reduction in the number of control rooms following establishment of the national service and we feel the Board did take the decision based on reasonable criteria and professional option appraisal.

Other issues arising from fire reform

Throughout the process of establishing a national Fire and Rescue Service, from the first consultation on options for reform, Dundee City Council has consistently emphasised the importance of fire prevention. The extremely strong emphasis which Tayside Fire and Rescue Service placed on preventative work was highlighted in the
best value audit report on the service, which noted that casualty rates in Tayside had declined at double the rate across Scotland and said there appeared to be a correlation between the significant drop in casualties and the significant increase which the Tayside service had made in the number of home safety visits. Our main concern about reform was to ensure that there was no diminution of this crucial preventative work when the national service was established, and instead that the strengths of Tayside’s approach should be retained and become a model for the Scottish service. We will continue to look for a high emphasis on prevention in all national and local plans, including ambitious targets for home safety visits and educational work in communities.

Dundee City Council
4 March 2014