Justice Committee

Fire and rescue service reform

Written submission from Renfrewshire Council

Please find below the submission by Renfrewshire Council in relation to the call for evidence. Should you have any question or require any clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

What impact there has been at a local level of the single fire service

There remains a high level of interaction with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Local Senior Officer, and the strong and visible community partnership approach adopted previously by the predecessor service, continues.

Since the establishment of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) in April 2013, the governance arrangements have been developing and within Renfrewshire scrutiny is carried out through the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board. Arrangements have been made for the Local Senior Officer to attend all future Policy Board meetings as part of the local scrutiny arrangements and report on local performance.

The Safer and Stronger section of the Community Plan was developed in partnership with all community partners, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. At a community planning level, a Safer & Stronger Thematic Board has been established in Renfrewshire with strategic responsibility for delivery of the community plan objectives and outcomes for community safety and public protection. The Fire and Rescue Service is represented here and fully participates. The SFRS has ensured the attendance of senior officers at all relevant Community Planning events, meetings and Thematic Boards, and ensured participation and service during the transition from the predecessor service to SFRS and during the development of our Community Plan.

The consultation process for local fire plans

The Local Fire & Rescue Plan for Renfrewshire 2014 - 2017, has been widely consulted on and is nearing completion. The draft Local Plan for the service was presented to the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board by the Local Senior Officer in January 2014. Effective consultation on the local Fire plan has since taken place. We have had recent and in depth consultation with SFRS and they have taken account of our views wherever possible. The latest draft plan is being reported to the March 2014 HACS Policy Board meeting. A foreword from the Leader of the Council will be included in the final version.

The SFRS's strategic plan

The structure of the strategic plan 'Working together for a Safer Scotland', and the national vision and aims accord very well with the Renfrewshire Community Plan and
there were no adverse comments about it. There is a clear vision and strategic aim for the new organisation.

**The SFRS's proposals on its estate**

The decision by Scottish Fire and Rescue regarding national control rooms has maintained the Johnstone Central Control Room within Renfrewshire, although the concern of other local authorities directly affected by closures in respect of the impact on their communities, is noted. We do not have any adverse impacts arising from changes to the overall estate within Renfrewshire at this time. We would expect to be fully consulted on any proposed changes which may arise, reflecting the strong partnership approach within the area.

**Any other issues arising from fire reform**

General liaison with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Board has taken place and we do have a Board member acting as a point of contact. A recent meeting with the Local Senior Officer and the chair of SFRS took place with Members and relevant senior officers of Renfrewshire Council. Although the service has only been in existence for less than a year, and it is early to draw conclusive opinions, the relationship between the Council and the new service has been positive so far.

The Fire and Rescue Service continue to be strong and willing supporters of the intelligence led approach to joint tasking which takes place here, working closely with the Council and other partners through the Community Safety Hub, and attend daily and monthly tasking meetings when required. They are very active, not only in respect of direct fire and safety issues, but also in respect of their support of diversionary and educational activities, in particular their lead role in the local 'Fire Reach' programme and support of the 'Safe Kids' initiative.

The joint multi agency approach of the SFRS has been demonstrated locally in response to issues arising from a major incident at a waste plant which occurred before the new service was formed. This included improving the subsequent site operation and ensuring ongoing monitoring of the site by all relevant enforcement agencies, including a secondary site, also in Renfrewshire.

Andrew Jamieson
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