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Have your say on the proposed changes to Fire and Rescue services in North Yorkshire and York

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Zoë Metcalfe, has today launched a three-month consultation to listen to the public's views on proposed changes to fire and rescue services ahead of making her final decisions.

Commissioner Zoë is considering proposals for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's new Risk and Resource Model 2022-2025, which sets out how the Service would seek to deploy its people, equipment, and resources. These proposals are based on an extensive risk assessment across North Yorkshire and York, which has identified the likelihood and severity of fires, road traffic collisions, water related incidents, and other emergencies.

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has a balanced budget, so the proposed changes are not a way to cut costs, but instead are an opportunity to invest in vital areas identified by the public as priorities – such as improving the availability of on-call fire engines in our rural areas, and increasing prevention and protection work across the county and city.

With fire-related incidents making up a smaller proportion of what the Service responds to overall, the proposals include significantly increasing and improving prevention and protection work relating to fire, road and water safety to stop harm happening in the first place, managing response to low-risk automatic fire alarms, introducing a new specialist water rescue capability in Craven, and introducing emergency response principles that make it clearer what the public can expect when making an emergency call.

There are also three proposed changes specifically relating to Harrogate, Scarborough, and the York area.

In the Harrogate and Scarborough areas, there is higher demand for services during daytime hours than at night, and the proposed change of fire engine would offer increased ability to respond during daytime hours, as well as boost resilience more widely.

In York, there is currently more emergency response resource than the risk or demand requires. Huntington fire station is the least used in the area and so the proposal is to change the crewing at this station from full-time to On-call. This proposal would offer appropriate and safe cover for the community, while retaining capacity to carry out important prevention and protection work.

To gather the views of the public, Commissioner Zoë and her team are holding 12 events across North Yorkshire and the city to discuss the proposals, including in Huntington, Harrogate, and Scarborough where specific changes are being proposed. An online questionnaire will also be available to complete throughout the consultation period.

Commissioner Zoë said:

“It’s my job to set the direction of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service and therefore consider these proposals and make a decision. Before I do that, I want to know what the public think and I therefore encourage people to come along to one of my consultation events this summer to speak with myself or a member of my team, and to complete the online questionnaire.

“The role of a Fire and Rescue Service has changed and continues to change, with only 26% of our incidents last year relating to a fire emergency. We want to ensure we are addressing our current and future challenges and that we have the capacity to prevent and protect to stop incidents happening in the first place and prevent harm before it can take place, while also having the capacity to respond to emergencies when they do take place. We are confident these proposals would do that.

“Inevitably, there are some areas where the setup of the Service would change but I’m confident the right people, right equipment and the right support would continue to be available to everyone.”

Fire and Rescue personnel across North Yorkshire and York have been engaged by the Service on these proposals over the last two weeks and have been reassured that whilst some roles may be redeployed, everyone would remain employed and continue to fulfil what is needed to keep their community safe and feeling safe.

Jon Foster, Chief Fire Officer said:

“The Risk & Resource Model would support the transformation of our Fire and Rescue Service and enable a greater focus on prevention that is underlined by our assessment of community risk. It would also facilitate increased investment in our on-call service.”

Implementing these proposals would mean Commissioner Zoë could deliver another of the public’s key priorities from her Fire and Rescue Plan consultation – improving the availability of On-call fire engines. The proposals outlined would allow investment of over £1.5 million per year from 2025 to improve North Yorkshire and York On-call station availability.

Further information on the proposals, details on local consultation events and a link to complete the questionnaire can be found on the Commissioner’s website:

www.tellcommissionerzoe.co.uk

Commissioner Zoë also explains the proposals in this video: <https://youtu.be/1j5RgB9vbcg>

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Notes to editors

- Risk and Resource Model 2022-2025 is a statutory document fulfilling the role of an Integrated Risk Management Plan under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.
- No firefighters would be made redundant by these proposals as they would be redeployed to other stations or roles, including prevention and protection roles, that support reducing the risk of harm in the community. Overtime firefighter numbers would reduce in line with the retirement profile and we would use that money to recruit specific prevention and protection personnel and invest in the On-call service model.
- In the York area, the risk assessment has shown that there is currently more emergency response resource than is needed for the risk and demand. The proposal is to change Huntington fire station from a full-time to an On-call fire station, keeping the On-call fire engine and removing the full-time engine and redeploying the full-time firefighters to other stations or roles, including prevention roles. The On-call fire engine plus the full-time fire engines at Acomb and York would continue to provide the emergency response cover the area needs.
- In Harrogate and Scarborough, the proposal is to increase the Fire Service's ability to respond to any emergency during the time when emergencies are most likely to happen. Alongside the full-time fire engine, which would continue to respond 24 hours per day, the Tactical Response fire engines at each station, which are available day and night but can only respond to certain emergencies, would be swapped with Emergency Rescue fire engines which can respond to all emergencies. These would be crewed during the day only, which is when most emergencies happen, and a small number of full-time firefighters from each station that would have crewed the Tactical Response fire engine overnight would be redeployed to other stations or roles, including prevention roles.