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East Lothian Council

Additional information:

This letter is a response to a call by the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee for evidence about experience of the Fire and Rescue Service since it became a single service on 1 April 2013.

Authorised By	Angela Leitch
Designation	Chief Executive
Date	25/02/14

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By email: justice.committee@scottish.parliament.uk
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Dear Justice Committee

RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON REFORM OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

I am writing on behalf of East Lothian Council in response to the Committee's call for evidence on the reform of the fire and rescue service.

General

The Council recognises the financial background to the reform of the fire and rescue services and believe that greater efficiency is possible under a single force. We have good relations locally with the Fire and Rescue Service and are generally content with the level of consultation on the local Fire and Rescue plan.

Engagement

Through our community planning framework in East Lothian, we seek to work in partnership with other parts of the public sector. The Council was therefore very disappointed at the lack of engagement last year when the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service decided to close the Scottish Fire Service College at Gullane in East Lothian. I wrote to the Chief Fire Officer when the decision was announced, expressing my dismay at the lack of consultation and asking that the Council be regarded as partners rather than simply stakeholders.

The decision was also the subject of a report to Council; please follow the link:
http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/14898/15_proposed_closure_of_the_scottish_fire_service_college_in_gullane

and a link to a note of the discussion in the minutes of that meeting:
http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/15080/east_lothian_council_min_ute_22_10_13

I would be grateful if you would treat those documents as part of the Council's evidence.

Call response

The Council provides a call response service to many elderly and vulnerable residents within East Lothian and Midlothian Council areas, who have community alarms or a telecare service. Contact with the Fire and Rescue Service is vitally important. We have not noticed any change to the service we receive currently from the Fire and Rescue Service since it became a single Fire Service. However, we would wish to maintain the same level of response to calls to the Fire and Rescue Service that we currently receive, regardless of the number of Control rooms proposed operating within Scotland.

Timescale for this exercise

This is an officer response. I hope that in the future the Justice Committee will be able in its calls for evidence to allow sufficient time for officers to present a draft response to an appropriate Council committee for approval.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your thinking on the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Leitch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

ANGELA LEITCH
Chief Executive