



# NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

**P Whild**

Group Manager

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters

Thurston Road

NORTHALLERTON, DL6 2ND

Email: phil.whild@northyorksfire.gov.uk

19<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Ms Bolland,

## **Alternative Fire Engine Types and Improvements to On-call Availability**

Thank you for your letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 which has been passed to me from Watch Manager Sleightholme of Kirkbymoorside fire station, informing him of Kirkbymoorside Town Council's concerns regarding the introduction of an alternative type of fire engine at Helmsley fire station.

We reviewed the type of fire engine we have based in Helmsley to increase its availability, and therefore improve the fire cover in this community. Despite extensive recruitment campaigns, we continue to have difficulty recruiting and retaining enough On-call firefighters in Helmsley and other locations across the county. With this point in mind, I would welcome your support in urging members of your community to become On-call firefighters, and for local employers to release their staff in support of this, which in turn will increase the availability of the local fire engine.

As a result of these recruitment issues, while the fire engine may be in the fire station, we do not always have enough crew available for it to be able to respond to emergencies, meaning a fire engine needs to come from further away. This is because the current fire engine must be deployed with a minimum of four firefighters, while the alternative type can be deployed with three. We fully intend that whenever possible, the engine will continue to be crewed with four or five firefighters, however, the possibility of deploying it with three will increase the availability. This means that we are able to provide a better level of fire cover to the people and businesses of Helmsley and its surrounding area.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services inspection report for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has recently been published. One of the inspection areas is efficiency, and the report clearly states that an area for improvement is how the Service uses its resources. One of the ways in which we are planning to address this is through the use of alternative vehicle types and crewing models, as is the case with the use of Tactical Response Vehicles at On-call stations of which we now have three operating.

I would like to reassure the Council that the new fire engine responds in the same way as the previous one, with a crew of four or five. I would also like to offer reassurance that the new fire engine carries sufficient equipment to enable the crew to undertake appropriate actions in the event of an emergency situation. Furthermore, the new fire engine carries some additional equipment such as immediate firefighting foam capability and battery powered road traffic collision equipment, which requires fewer people to operate it and therefore enhances its capabilities in some areas. Some examples of incidents which we didn't respond to with a crew of three, but do now, include: road traffic collisions, vehicle fires, chimney fires, fires in agricultural buildings and moor fires, to name a few.

The Service is committed to reviewing the availability performance across all On-call stations and, should the circumstances change at any station, we will ensure that these types of fire engine are placed at locations where the maximum benefit and value to the public can be achieved.

We did not undertake consultation regarding the change at Helmsley as we were not proposing a negative change to fire cover, just a change of fire engine type which is in the interests of improving fire engine availability and emergency response. However, we are required to review our Risk and Resource Model on a regular basis, and we will undertake full consultation during our next review which will be undertaken in 2020. This review will include a full assessment of risk across the county of North Yorkshire with a view to ensuring that we provide suitable levels and types of resources to mitigate these risks as far as possible.

I hope that this response assists with your understanding of the changes and provides reassurance to the Town Council.

Yours sincerely,



**PHIL WHILD**  
Group Manager