

# CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

**MEETING OF:** CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY  
**DATE:** 9 FEBRUARY 2022  
**REPORT OF:** CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
**AUTHOR:** GRAEME WORRALL

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**SUBJECT:** 2022-2023 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

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## Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with details of the feedback received as a result of the consultation activity concerned with the draft 2022-23 Annual Action Plan and to seek approval of the 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan (Appendix 1).

## Recommended: That Members

- [1] Note the contents of the report and appendices;
- [2] Approve the 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan (attached as Appendix 1); and
- [3] Authorise the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive to make any final changes to the 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan prior to publication.

## Background

2. Members approved the publication of the draft 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan (the draft Plan) at the meeting of the Authority on 29 September 2021. A 13-week consultation programme was then launched on 4 October 2021 and this concluded on 7 January 2022.
3. Members received an initial update about the consultation at the Authority meeting on 8 December 2021. A further update was provided at the Planning Day on 14 January 2022.

## Information

4. The draft Plan was developed to serve as a mid-point review of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which was approved by the Authority in July 2020. It contains information on the progress of the plans within the IRMP and highlights new risks that have emerged since the publication of the IRMP, along with proposals to address them. Projects and proposals within

the draft Plan could be categorised as follows: completed; in progress; revised approach; and new.

5. Extensive consultation had already been carried out on projects that were either completed, or in progress, during the development of the IRMP. Therefore for the draft Plan, consultation was focused on those projects that could be delivered with a revised approach and those that were new projects.
6. Public consultation on the draft Plan was primarily conducted through online methods, with an online survey that was accessible via the homepage of the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website. This was supplemented by targeted advertising on social media, use of online newsletters and a postal survey distributed to 12,000 properties across Cheshire. Staff consultation was directed through a mix of an online survey and visits to teams, while stakeholders were contacted directly and encouraged to provide a written response.
7. A total of 170 online public survey responses, five staff survey responses and four stakeholder responses were received. This is a lower response rate than has been achieved through previous consultations, which have traditionally witnessed a larger number of returns from face to face engagement methods. It should also be noted that staff feedback has been captured on a wide range of issues through the 2021 staff survey, which ran in parallel with this year's consultation.
8. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the feedback provided. Further detail can be found in the consultation report, Appendix 2 to this report. The consultation report contains all responses received during the course of the consultation. However Members are encouraged to consider the feedback which is relevant to the proposals within the draft Annual Action Plan.

## **Consultation Feedback**

### **Overall Satisfaction**

9. The consultation asked some broader questions to gauge respondents overall satisfaction with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. The overwhelming majority of survey respondents, 91.1%, valued the Service as a local service provider, while 81.2% stated that they were satisfied with the overall performance of the Service. A total of 69.2% felt that the Authority's current precept (£80.87 for a Band D equivalent property) represented value for money, compared to 12.4% who did not.
10. As with previous consultations this feedback is largely drawn from perception, with over half of respondents, 61.8%, having had no contact with the Service in the past three years. Of those who did, the most common method of contact was through a station open day, safe and well visit or a meeting/event in the community. Only 11% of respondents had come into contact with the Service through an emergency incident.

11. Regarding the proposed 1.99% increase in the Authority's precept for 2022-2023, 62.5% of respondents supported an increase compared to 23% who opposed, with 14.5% of respondents stating they neither supported nor opposed the proposal, or did not know.

### **New Proposals**

12. The consultation asked for feedback from residents regarding smoke alarm ownership and accidental activation of smoke alarms. This information can be used to help inform future campaigns to reduce false alarms in domestic properties.
13. The vast majority of respondents (90.4%) identified as owning their own home and 97.1% of all respondents, regardless of tenure, stated that they had at least one working smoke alarm on each floor of their property. Over half (55.6%) indicated that they had previously accidentally activated their smoke alarm. The most common cause for accidentally activating an alarm was through cooking, particularly burning toast or use of a dirty oven or grill.
14. The consultation survey asked for qualitative feedback on the proposal to develop prevention activity around water safety. The most frequently raised feedback was that a priority of this activity should be on school age children in order to instil awareness at an early age, as well as focusing on teaching children the ability to swim. Other feedback suggested more visible signage around waterways and open water, as well as more readily accessible equipment such as life rings.
15. Respondents were also asked to identify any particular local sites where they considered that people were known to enter open water. There were a small number of locations that were highlighted such as the River Dee in locations around Chester, the River Weaver at Frodsham and Nantwich; and the River Bollin at the Carrs Park in Wilmslow.

### **Revised Approach**

16. The draft Plan contained a revised approach to the delivery of a Day Crewing duty system at Wilmslow Fire Station, involving the purchase of nine houses in the vicinity of the fire station for occupation by operational staff working the new duty system. A total of 46.7% of survey respondents supported the revised approach, against 15.1% who opposed it. A further 38.2% stated they neither supported nor opposed it, or did not know.
17. The feedback from the consultation on the 2020-2024 IRMP is a helpful reference to provide additional context regarding Wilmslow. Of 1,070 public responses, 69% supported the proposed introduction of a Day Crewing duty system at Wilmslow with 5% opposing; indicating a majority of support for a change to the crewing arrangements at the station.

18. The draft Plan reaffirmed the Authority's wish to introduce a cardiac response capability, which has been referenced in previous Integrated Risk Management Plans. It acknowledged that a local solution would need to be found given the impasse in pursuing a national arrangement. In relation to this, 69.3% of survey respondents supported the introduction of a cardiac response compared to 16.7% who opposed. A further 14% stated they did not know, or neither supported nor opposed this.

### **Overall Opinion**

19. Overall, 61.1% of respondents stated their support for the package of proposals set out in the draft Plan compared to 13.4% who opposed and 25.5% who either did not know or stated they neither supported nor opposed the proposals.

### **The 2022-2023 Annual Action Plan**

20. The 2022-23 Annual Action Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

### **Financial Implications**

21. The Plan provides details of financial matters relating to the Authority. Costs associated with the consultation have been met through existing budgets.
22. If Members approve the proposal to introduce the Day Crewing duty system in Wilmslow a significant capital investment will be required. The draft Capital Programme currently contains £4.5m for this, with the majority, or potentially all of this sum being funded by borrowing. The new duty system is expected to see a reduction in staffing costs that will be sufficient to cover the cost of borrowing.

### **Legal Implications**

23. There are no legal implications associated with the approval of the Annual Action Plan. There are activities that will require legal input, e.g. if approved, the purchase of houses in Wilmslow.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

24. The consultation process has been undertaken with the aim of securing responses from a diverse range of respondents.

### **Environmental Implications**

25. Some proposals within the Plan concern environmental matters. The Plan will be published primarily as an online document in order to reduce the use of paper.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PLANNING  
MANAGER  
TEL [01606] 868804  
BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE**