

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 6 DECEMBER 2023
REPORT OF: HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
AUTHOR: GRAEME WORRALL

SUBJECT: DRAFT 2024-28 COMMUNITY RISK
MANAGEMENT PLAN – CONSULTATION
UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update on progress with the programme of consultation on the draft 2024-2028 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Recommended:

That Members note the report.

Background

2. The Authority is required to produce a CRMP (previously called an Integrated Risk Management Plan or IRMP) at least every three years. This sets out foreseeable fire-related risks in the community and how the Authority intends to mitigate those risks.
3. The CRMP must satisfy the requirements laid out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. One such requirement is that the CRMP is produced through consultation with the local community.
4. A report was presented to the September 2023 meeting of the Fire Authority regarding the development of the draft CRMP and Members approved the launch of a 13 week programme of consultation, which began on 2 October 2023 and concludes on 2 January 2024.

The Consultation Programme

5. The consultation process was launched on Monday 2 October and runs for a total of 13 weeks, concluding on 2 January 2024. As with previous consultations, the programme covers three main strands of public, staff and partner consultation.
6. To-date, a total of 18 public roadshows have been held at a range of venues across Cheshire. This has resulted in engagement with over 2,500 people

who were provided with a copy of a summary draft CRMP and paper survey to complete.

7. A dedicated consultation page has been created on the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service website. This page contains information including copies of the full and summary draft CRMP, supporting documents and explanatory videos on the proposals being consulted on.
8. The consultation programme has been supported by advertisement on social media, including a paid-for, targeted advertising campaign. In addition, a radio campaign was launched on Silk FM and ran for two weeks where a short advert was broadcast to the stations' listeners to encourage them to respond to the consultation.
9. The Authority has also been able to make use of the participation panels in the areas of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, who have distributed consultation material on the Service's behalf to over 3,000 residents.
10. Staff consultation has involved a range of visits by senior officers to various teams across Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, providing a standard presentation and seeking views on the proposals within the CRMP. Visits are scheduled for the remainder of the consultation programme.
11. This activity has also been supported by regular articles in staff newsletters, a holding page on the Service's intranet which directs staff to the website and consultation material, and all user emails. In addition, a management conference was held on 12 October in which the proposals within the draft CRMP were explained to managers and their feedback sought.
12. Partner consultation has focused on briefings for key stakeholders such as unitary and town/parish councils, and MPs; as well as direct emails/letters. A briefing has been provided to three of the four unitary authorities in Cheshire (with Warrington Council booked in), as well as several town and parish councils and five Members of Parliament.
13. Direct emails have been sent to all councillors and town and parish councils in Cheshire, as well as statutory and sub-regional partners, neighbouring fire and rescue services and partner agencies within the Cheshire Resilience Forum.

Initial Results

14. Initial results detailed below are based on online survey responses submitted as of 16 November, by which point a total of 195 responses had been received.

Identifying Risk

15. A total of 77.4% of respondents consider that the draft CRMP either completely or mostly identifies the key fire and rescue risks facing Cheshire, compared to 10.8% who think the draft CRMP either identifies few or no key risks.
16. When considering if the proposals in the draft CRMP address the key fire and rescue risks, 74.4% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that it does. A total of 11.8% of respondents felt that the draft CRMP either addresses few or none of the key risks identified.
17. To help inform future safety advice regarding lithium-ion battery products, respondents were asked what type of such items they possessed. Most (94.4%) own a small appliance such as a smartphone, laptop etc, while 71.2% said they own a personal product such as rechargeable toothbrush.
18. There was a range of preferences regarding what battery related issue respondents would prefer advice on, including safe disposal (63.9% of respondents), charging safely (54.9%), everyday use (49.2%) and ensuring products have the correct safety certification (35.3%).

Fire Cover Review

19. Regarding the proposed change to how the Service measures and reports its response times, 76% of respondents support this change compared to 10.9% who oppose it.
20. Respondents were then asked to what extent they support the proposed package of changes to the provision of emergency response across Cheshire. In total, 75.4% of respondents support the proposed package of changes, compared to 16.4% who oppose them and a further 8.6% who neither supported nor opposed, or did not know.

Reviewing the on-call duty system

21. Finally, respondents were asked to provide any suggestions to help shape a review into the on-call duty system to make it more effective and sustainable. A limited number of responses have been received to-date, with comments suggesting that on-call staff should be involved in the review and that the Service should consider making on-call roles more attractive to prospective candidates through increasing pay and providing additional benefits such as discounted or free gym memberships.

Working with The Consultation Institute

22. The Consultation Institute, a recognised independent provider of consultation assurance, training and guidance, has been contracted to provide advice and about quality assurance of the consultation programme. This has included advice on the pre-consultation activity as well as formal assurance for the consultation itself.
23. The work undertaken as part of pre-consultation was found to be sufficient for the Institute to issue a Certificate of Consultation Readiness ahead of the commencement of formal assurance.
24. An interim review with the Institute was held on 14 November and following this, confirmation was received that the consultation programme, to-date had passed the mid-point review. Work is continuing to ensure that the programme adheres to recognised standards of practice and a final review is scheduled for late December before the Institute makes a formal decision on the certification of quality assurance.

Financial Implications

25. The consultation and communications costs associated with the development of the CRMP will be met from one-off growth of £30,000, approved as part of the 2023/24 budget process, as well as from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

26. Publication of the CRMP 2024-28 will fulfil the Authority's statutory responsibility.
27. The Consultation Institute has been engaged to provide external assurance that the draft CRMP has been developed and consulted on in line with recognised best practice.

Equality and Diversity Implications

28. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been carried out on proposals within the draft CRMP and are publicly accessible via the Service website. In addition, there are specific methods of consultation which are being pursued to engage and consult with a diverse range of groups within Cheshire, covering a range of backgrounds and characteristics.

Environmental Implications

29. Opportunities to respond online will reduce the need for printed materials. Where they are required to support the consultation, they will be printed on recycled paper where possible.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE