

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 29 SEPTEMBER 2021
REPORT OF: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AUTHOR: GRAEME WORRALL

SUBJECT: 2022-2023 DRAFT ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to publish the 2022-2023 draft Annual Action Plan (the draft Plan) and begin a period of consultation on the proposals within the draft Plan.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] note the report; and
- [2] approve the publication of the 2022-2023 draft Annual Action Plan and launch of the consultation process.

Background

2. Members approved the 2020-2024 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) on 1 July 2020. The IRMP contains a range of proposals covering the period to 2024 that will improve fire and rescue provision across Cheshire and address existing and emerging risks that the Authority may face.
3. Given the upheaval of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current point in the middle of the IRMP cycle, it was felt prudent to undertake a review of progress and to consider how to address any potential new risks that have emerged since the approval of the IRMP. The draft Plan deals with these matters.

2022-2023 Draft Annual Action Plan

4. The draft Plan, included as an appendix to this report, serves as a mid-point review and addendum to the current IRMP, and is intended to be read in conjunction with the IRMP.
5. The draft Plan contains an overview of the Authority's work to support the community response to the Covid-19 pandemic and an update on progress with the plans outlined in the IRMP. The draft Plan then outlines a change to two projects and provides details of some new proposals. A summary appears below:

Completed

6. In spite of the challenges caused by Covid-19 a number of projects have been completed:
 - Moving the second fire engine from Ellesmere Port to Powey Lane and moving the fire engine from Powey Lane to Chester;
 - The review of firefighting water provision and response to water incidents;
 - The review of the Risk Based Inspection Programme;
 - Expansion of the 'Sprinklers Save Lives' campaign; and
 - The change to how heritage risks are managed.

In Progress

7. Other projects are in progress:
 - The high reach fire engine to be based at Macclesfield has been delivered for commissioning;
 - Some Rapid Response Rescue Units will shortly be delivered (but there are supply chain issues);
 - The reviews into new equipment and specialist resources are beginning to report to Service Management Team;
 - Safe and Well visits are now increasing to allow a broader range of vulnerable people to be engaged with;
 - Development of a strategic road safety plan.

Revised Approach

8. Two projects are highlighted as requiring a revised approach to delivery - crewing arrangements at Wilmslow Fire Station; and emergency cardiac response:
9. As it has not been possible to agree arrangements to create an emergency services hub in Wilmslow (intending to free-up land to build service houses for firefighters) it has been necessary to have a re-think. It is now proposed to purchase houses near to the fire station. The draft Plan provides details of the difference between delivery of day crewing in this way compared to the original proposal.
10. Given the fact that there seems little prospect of a national level resolution which would allow emergency cardiac response it seems appropriate to seek

to deliver a local solution. The proposal will only be possible through working with North West Ambulance Service, staff and trade unions.

New proposals

11. Some new proposals have been included.
12. Reducing the number of false alarms from domestic premises. In recent years the Authority has taken measures to significantly reduce the number of automatic false alarm calls from non-domestic premises. However, in general false alarms still account for nearly 40% of the operational incidents attended. This proposal will develop work aimed at reducing the number of false alarms from domestic premises.
13. Developing prevention activity aimed at raising awareness of water safety and preventing water incidents. In recent years firefighters have been called to incidents where people have entered open water and sadly died or been seriously injured. This proposal would see the Authority work to develop its prevention advice to raise awareness of water safety and prevent deaths and injury in the water.
14. Reviewing the Service's fire safety education programmes. The Authority delivers several fire safety education programmes that are aimed at a number of different audiences. It is proposed to review and where necessary update these to ensure content is consistent, engaging and relevant to the particular intervention.

Finally

15. The IRMP mentions the fact that plans and procedures will be reviewed in the light of Covid-19 to ensure the safety of staff and the wider community. Given the need to also begin to consider the next IRMP a review of fire cover across Cheshire will also be undertaken. This is intended to ensure that the optimum balance of resources is available to match risk and demand.
16. It is proposed that consultation activity should focus on the new proposals and those in the IRMP that need a revised approach. Therefore consultation activity will centre on proposals regarding water safety; fire safety education programmes; false alarms in domestic premises; Wilmslow Fire Station; and emergency cardiac response.

Consultation Programme

17. It is proposed to continue the Authority's tried and tested approach of undertaking comprehensive consultation to ensure that the public, staff and stakeholders are able to contribute their views and help to shape plans. This approach also enables the organisation to promote key safety messages and raise general awareness of the Service.

18. Consultation activity will centre on the new or amended proposals, as well as the proposed 1.99% increase in the precept for 2022-2023. There will also be engagement on broader issues regarding public satisfaction with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, which has been undertaken on a periodic basis to inform future planning. This information will help to inform the development of the new full IRMP.
19. It is proposed to run a 13-week consultation from 4 October 2021 until 7 January 2022, to take into account bank holidays around the Christmas period. Underpinning the consultation process is an electronic survey, which will be used to gauge views on a number of subjects and help to inform future planning regarding the delivery of services to the community. There will also be extensive use made of the website and the Service's social media channels, to encourage online feedback.
20. As with previous consultations, there will be three main strands to consultation activity covering public consultation, staff consultation and partner/stakeholder consultation.
21. Public consultation will be directed towards the completion of a standard online and paper survey which will be promoted through a mix of online and physical consultation at publicly accessible venues. Alternative options for survey distribution are being explored should staff be unable to access venues due to Covid restrictions in place.
22. In addition to the survey other methods will be used to solicit feedback on the proposals during the consultation. This will include the use of online Q&A sessions and deliberative workshops to provide narrative responses alongside the data from survey respondents.
23. Consultation with staff will also feature the use of an electronic survey which will be accessible via the Service's intranet, along with a range of briefing events such as staff conferences and team visits to gather feedback.
24. Key external partners will be contacted directly and encouraged to provide any comments. In addition, contact will be made with a range of community networks to encourage responses from under-represented groups.
25. Initial feedback from the consultation will be reported to Members at the Fire Authority meeting on 8 December 2021. A formal report on the outcomes of the consultation will be presented to the Authority at its meeting on 9 February 2022.

Financial Implications

26. There are costs associated with the projects outlined within the draft Annual Action Plan. These have been progressed through existing budget bid and scrutiny processes and, where applicable, built into the Authority's Medium

Term Financial Plan. The cost of consultation activity is being met through existing budgets.

Legal Implications

27. Consulting on the draft Annual Action Plan, including the 2022-2023 precept, will meet the Authority's legal obligations in this regard.

Equality and Diversity Implications

28. The consultation process will aim to maximise opportunities for the Authority to involve and engage with all of Cheshire's communities – including those from vulnerable minority and hard to reach communities.

Environmental Implications

29. None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: