



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

STRATEGIC PLAN PRE-CONSULTATION

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 23 July 2021

Purpose of Report:

To present Members with an update on engagement around the new Strategic Plan and informal consultation being undertaken with communities, staff and stakeholders.

Recommendations:

That Members endorse the approach to consultation being undertaken.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Fire Service National Framework for England states that fire and rescue services must be transparent and accountable to their communities for their decisions and actions and provide help to plan their local service through effective consultation and involvement.
- 1.2 The National Framework also requires Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) to be easily accessible to the public and reflect effective consultation with the community, staff, representative bodies and partners throughout their development (and at all review stages). Additionally, Services must set out the principles and approach they will take on consultation activity.
- 1.3 Where fire and rescue services are considering making material changes to service provision relating to prevention, protection or response then there is a requirement to undertake public consultation on the options available.
- 1.4 Services are required to '*conscientiously consider*' the responses gleaned from public consultation before deciding on any changes that may be made.
- 1.5 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) has a public commitment to ongoing consultation and engagement with members of the public, key stakeholders and employees to help gain understanding and evidence for future decisions.
- 1.6 This report provides Members with a summary of the informal consultation responses, undertaken with staff, communities and stakeholders to inform the development of the new 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Prior to the commencement of consultation, the Corporate Support team liaised with the National Fire Chiefs Council Consultation, Research and Evaluation Network. This facilitated an increase in the internal expertise and a greater understanding in the lessons learned from other fire and rescue services.
- 2.2 Informal, pre-consultation was developed and introduced in order to help inform the development of the new Strategic Plan. The aim of this was to gain insights and perceptions from key stakeholders to help steer the future direction of the Service.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- 2.3 Letters were sent, on behalf of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), to all neighbouring fire and rescue services informing them of the development of the new Strategic Plan. It was requested that the Service be informed of any intended relevant changes which may impact the development of the next Strategic Plan.

- 2.4 From the responses received, it is highlighted that no neighbouring fire and rescue services are currently planning any such changes.
- 2.5 25 partner agencies including the Environment Agency, Public Health England, East Midlands Ambulance Service, Nottinghamshire Police, The Forestry Commission, Borough and District Councils, as well as third sector organisations, were also contacted on behalf of the ACFO to inform them of the development of the new Strategic Plan. The Service requested to be made aware of any significant changes within their remit which may impact upon or affect the new Strategic Plan.
- 2.6 To date, the Service has received two responses from Councils advising on planned increases in housing stock within their area and work relating to a planned simultaneous consultation.
- 2.7 Following feedback from Members at the Community Safety Committee, a total of 152 letters were sent to Parish Councils requesting the same information, as part of the pre-consultation. Unfortunately, the Service has not received any responses so far.
- 2.8 An online survey was also utilised to communicate with the wider communities of Nottinghamshire. The survey ran for six weeks and was heavily promoted on the Service's social media channels and through key community contacts. In total, 78 responses were received.
- 2.9 A summary of findings from the community survey are:
- Public perception is that the Service is providing an effective service and meeting the needs of communities; and
 - Members of the public believe that there should be an increase in schools' interventions and initiatives.
- 2.10 The public pre-consultation was also promoted directly to key members of communities within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire via email. This utilised known Service contacts as well as a collaborative database with Nottinghamshire Police of key community contacts. This communication also asked contacts to share the link to the survey with their communities.
- 2.11 A meeting was convened specifically for the British Deaf Association as an outcome of the equality impact assessment for this work. This virtual meeting took place in May and elicited a narrative of a positive relationship with the Service, but a desire for greater community understanding and continued, regular engagement.
- 2.12 In summary, a total of 183 external stakeholder bodies were contacted directly. This resulted in four responses. The online community survey resulted in 78 responses. All feedback has been reviewed and will be used to help shape IRMP development, including recording those respondents who wish to be further involved in consultations in the future.

STAFF CONSULTATION

- 2.13 Informal, pre-consultation has been undertaken with NFRS employees through several means. Direct engagement with staff has been undertaken through the Service Inclusion Forum, LGBT+ Proud Friends Network, Middle Manager seminars, Watch Manager briefings and Trade Union briefings.
- 2.14 An online staff survey was developed and launched in order to gain insight from the workforce around how employees perceive the Service as well as areas where staff can see areas of good practice and for improvement.
- 2.15 A total of 176 personnel undertook the online survey. The survey highlights employees believe the Service is currently meeting the needs of its communities in relation to Response (77%), Prevention (65%) and Protection (63%). Only a small percentage of respondents believed the Service was not meeting the community's needs. Over 90% of respondents detailed that they could describe how their role contributes to 'creating safer communities' with 75% understanding how success was measured in their team. 96% of respondents agreed that NFRS is an inclusive place to work and 97% reported that they felt that they are well trained to carry out their role.
- 2.16 In response to the survey question "*In what way do you think Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service could improve its service to communities?*", the responses fell in to four main categories:
- Working more closely with community groups;
 - Improved understanding of the needs of members of our communities;
 - Becoming more of a 'data led' organisation; and
 - Improving the mobilising system.
- 2.17 In response to the question "*How do you think Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service could be more representative of Nottinghamshire's communities?*" the responses fell in to three main categories:
- Greater involvement with community groups;
 - Continuation and development of positive action; and
 - Direct engagement with communities to promote working within NFRS.
- 2.18 In response to the question "*In what areas do you feel the skills within the workforce could be improved?*" the responses fell in to three main categories:
- Improved ICT training;
 - Development of communication and presentation skills training; and
 - Greater focus on operational core competencies.

LOOKING AHEAD

- 2.19 Following further development of the new Strategic Plan, formal consultation will be undertaken by an external specialist in consultation with whom the Service has worked with previously. This formal stage of consultation will commence in October 2021 once the Strategic Plan has been developed to a

'draft' stage and approved for consultation by the Fire Authority. The draft Plan will reflect any material changes the Service may be considering in relation to service provision to prevention, protection or response.

- 2.20 The formal consultation phase will see a re-engagement of those community leaders, key stakeholders, agencies and neighbouring Services with whom the Service has engaged with at the informal stage. The formal consultation will also learn lessons from the pre-consultation phase including greater engagement of minority groups.
- 2.21 The period of full consultation will incorporate a greater level of resourcing, in line with the Service's Consultation Framework, which is planned to include targeted community panels, the Service Community BAME Forum, workforce workshops and stakeholder groups.
- 2.22 Outcomes from the Service's planned full consultation will be reported to the Fire Authority in February 2022.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been undertaken in relation to this project and has influenced the approach to consultation. A separate EIA will be undertaken for the period of full consultation for the new Strategic Plan and will adopt lessons-learnt from this pre-consultation phase.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Authority has a statutory responsibility to reflect effective consultation with the community, staff, representative bodies and partners throughout the development of the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- 7.2 When fire and rescue services are considering making material changes to service provision then there is a requirement to undertake public consultation

on the options available and to '*conscientiously consider*' the responses from consultation before deciding on any changes that may be made.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to effectively consult with stakeholders and members of the public presents a risk to the Service in relation to compliance with the Service's adopted Consultation Framework, national best practice, statutory requirements and corporate reputation.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members endorse the approach to consultation being undertaken.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER