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Chris Lowther
Chief Fire Officer
Via email

26th July 2021

TWFRA Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-24

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on the proposed Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-24.

A detailed response on the four proposals for change within the IRMP will be presented by the FBU Brigade committee for Tyne and Wear, however I would like to respond on behalf of the Region covering the North East and in particular to the process and application of the IRMP.

The FBU has always been supportive in principle of the IRMP process and actively participated in identifying risks, with proposals and how to mitigate those risks. It is however appreciated that over the last decade many fire services, if not all, in the UK have been put under immense financial pressure brought about by an ideological austerity program from the government. In our opinion reducing funds based purely on demand does not reduce the risk to the public. The fire service should always plan for all foreseeable emergencies and be prepared to respond when the public requires the fire service.

Climate change has to be taken into account when preparing and planning at both National and local level, the lessons of the widespread flooding and wildfires that have occurred recently for example should be considered and taken into account.

The major incident at Grenfell is another lesson that cannot be ignored, whilst this hopefully will never be repeated it is now foreseeable and until all buildings with all flammable materials removed and all buildings appropriately regulated, that risk will remain.

The incident in London was dealt with by significant assets from London Fire Brigade that could not be replicated elsewhere in the UK, many buildings in the Tyne and Wear area are still a risk and any major response would inevitably require additional resources from other north east fire services, who should be trained, prepared and resourced for that eventuality.

The IRMP process was introduced as a means for mitigating the risks within each fire service area and should span a minimum of 3 years, TWFRAs have for a number of years along with many other services used the process for simply changing the service due to finances. In this and previous IRMPs it is stated at the start that the **IRMP is the approach adopted to make significant changes to the shape of the Fire and Rescue Service.**

The FBU believes this approach does not resemble the original concept of the IRMP when it changed from standards of fire cover which prioritised property to a life based risk management plan. TWFRAs approach of using the IRMP to make significant changes has stopped being a process of risk mitigation to a budget setting tool. An IRMP should be a process that identifies all risks and integrates them into a plan to mitigate and respond to those risks. It should also be easy to understand and accessible to the public.

We believe that the Strategic Community Safety Plan and the IRMP should be incorporated into one plan covering the minimum 3 years that would then be consulted on by the public, partners and stakeholders in a more transparent way than at present.

The proposals that have been put forward by the TWFRAs for consultation are however positive, they will help mitigate the risks of the public and will also enhance the health and safety of firefighters, this is despite, we are led to believe from any increase in funding by central government.

As mentioned earlier a full detailed response will be provide by the FBU brigade committee for Tyne and Wear.

Yours Sincerely

Brian

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