

TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item No. 9

MEETING: 14 JUNE 2021

**SUBJECT: IRMP 2021-24 COMMUNICATION, CONSULTATION, AND
ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK
TO THE AUTHORITY) THE FINANCE DIRECTOR AND THE PERSONNEL
ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report and associated papers set out Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 proposals, public consultation questionnaire and information leaflet.
- 1.2 At the March 2021 Fire Authority meeting the IRMP 2021-2024 proposals were agreed, along with an eight week consultation period. The IRMP 2021-2024 public consultation questionnaire and information leaflet are attached with this paper for Fire Authority comment with public consultation planned to commence within a week of the Fire Authority approval.
- 1.3 The IRMP 2021-2024 proposals represent a significant investment by TWFRS Fire Authority to the communities of Tyne and Wear with the prudent, efficient and effective use of finances by the Fire Authority over many years enabling the funding of the proposals to be both affordable and sustainable.
- 1.4 The Fire Authority has, under previous IRMP proposals from 2014-2017, requested of the Chief Fire Officer that should opportunities present in future years to revisit decisions taken to implement cuts in resource or assets made in previous IRMPs due to budget pressures, that these are brought to the Fire Authority for review. These current proposals are based on community safety, effectiveness and efficiency and also address the previous request of the Fire Authority for the Chief Fire Officer to highlight any opportunities to revisit previous decisions where there is a sound business case for this.
- 1.5 The proposals, if accepted and implemented, will result in continued investment in community safety and effective and efficient deployment of assets and resources to match community risk and demand with the creation of 54 new high quality Firefighter jobs.

- 1.6 The four IRMP proposals are; to primary crew both Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs); to add an additional fire engine into the response fleet; to amend the crewing and staffing working patterns at Rainton Bridge and Birtley Community Fire Stations. These are set out in more detailed in the associated papers.
- 1.7 The IRMP process is the method used to make significant changes to the shape of the Service, ensuring that services are planned, designed and delivered in a way that balances available resources and community risk. The process has been used for more than 15 years to shape and change the Service; reducing costs, driving continuous improvement, and enabling the Service to manage community risk by efficient use of resources.
- 1.8 Communication and meaningful consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, partners and communities is an essential part of the change process associated with IRMP. A communications plan has been prepared by Service officers to ensure that a meaningful consultation is undertaken. Given that the country is still emerging from the covid-19 pandemic, the consultation will make extensive use of online consultation methods over face to face to limit and mitigate potential virus spread. There will be a lesser number of face to face consultations considered however, as noted, extensive use will be made of online platforms.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Public sector organisations must consult when the development of implementation plans are at a formative stage. This allows consultation responses to be taken into account when taking decisions forward.
- 2.2 In 2018, the Government published a set of updated Consultation Principles, replacing previous iterations and the old 2008 Code of Practice, to guide formal consultation exercises by public sector organisations. The IRMP 2012-24 Communication, Consultation and Engagement Plan complies with these principles, aiming to deliver a clear, informative, proportionate and meaningful consultation programme.
- 2.3 The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2018 published by Government requires that Fire and Rescue Services take account of the Framework and must carry out a review of their IRMP which must cover at least a three year period.

3 PROPOSED CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 Stakeholder analysis has been undertaken to identify the priority parties for focus, when undertaking consultation. Communication, consultation, and engagement activities proposed in the Plan have been designed to take into account the different mechanisms that various audiences engage with, and to enable a wide range of opinions to be sought. It also takes into account the current situation and restrictions as a result of COVID-19.

- 3.2 It is proposed the consultation period opens on week commencing 14 June 2021, following Fire Authority meeting where approval to commence will be sought, and runs for a period of 8 weeks, concluding on 9 August.
- 3.3 Analysis of consultation feedback will be undertaken in July and August, with the aim of presenting findings to the Authority in September 2021, along with any recommended changes as a result of consultation.
- 3.4 The proposed consultation questions are attached with this paper which is in the form of an information leaflet and the content will be used to inform the other consultation literature (presentations, web and intranet pages, social media etc.). The source data will also be available to the public on the Service Website should anyone wish to review the source data used to inform the proposals.

4 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The development of the consultation questions has been led by the Area Manager Service Delivery (Strategic Lead for IRMP 2021-24) and developed in continued consultation with Business Improvement, Service Delivery, and Corporate Communications. The questions proposed takes into account previous IRMP consultation exercises, to ensure the proposed course of action is proportionate and meaningful. This also ensures effective use of resources.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 Ineffective or incomplete communication, consultation and engagement in proposed changes to the Service poses several risks, including lack of staff understanding and engagement, reduced motivation amongst staff, reduced public and partner confidence in the Service, and reputational potential damage. The IRMP 2021-24 has been developed with consideration to these risks, and appropriate mitigation, and is captured in the Corporate Risk Register.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report although if accepted there would be a significant financial investment which is both affordable and sustainable.

7 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no equality and fairness implications identified in respect of this report.

8 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Authority is recommended to:

- a) Endorse the contents of this report, the proposed consultation questionnaire and associated information.
- b) Confirm the previous Fire Authority agreement [March 2021 FA meeting] for an eight week public consultation period as set out in the report.
- c) Receive further reports as appropriate following public consultation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

Proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024
15 March Fire Authority Item 8

Proposed Day Crewing Close Call (DCCC) alternative options
15 March Fire Authority Item 9