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RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this report is to agree the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 (Appendix A) prior to it being submitted to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel for their 3rd of October meeting.

That the Strategic Board endorses, or amends as necessary, the proposed Fire and Rescue Plan 2024-2028.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2017 created the fire and rescue authority, under section 4A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, for the areas covered by Southend-on-Sea City Council, Thurrock Council and Essex County Council.

Under this Order the Authority has the duty to set the strategic direction and objectives of the service through the Fire and Rescue Plan, which must have regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England set by the Secretary of State.

The Fire and Rescue Plan is to be prepared and published by the Authority in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Plan sets out the Authority's strategic vision, priorities and objectives, for the period covered by the document, in connection with the discharge of their functions. This Plan may be amended as frequently as considered necessary.



The Commissioner must have regard to both the Fire and Rescue Plan and the Police and Crime Plan when carrying out their functions. While the Fire and Rescue Plan and Police and Crime Plan can be combined, on this occasion the Commissioner has agreed to develop two Plans which are deeply connected rather than a single Plan.

The Chief Fire Officer must, in exercising functions which are delegated to them, have regard to the Fire and Rescue Plan. This includes the development of the Community Risk Management Plan.

In developing the Fire and Rescue Plan, the Authority must make arrangements for obtaining the views of the community.

Before issuing or varying a Fire and Rescue Plan, the Authority must:

- a) Prepare a draft of the plan or variation.
- b) Consult the Chief Fire Officer in preparing the draft plan or variation.
- c) Provide the draft plan or variation to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.
- d) Have regard to any report or recommendations made by the Panel in relation to the draft plan or variation.
- e) Give the Panel a response to any such report or recommendations, and
- f) Publish any such response.

The Authority must ensure that the Police, Fire and Crime Panel has a reasonable amount of time to review the draft plan or variation and to make a report or recommendations to the Authority.

The Authority must consult again with the Chief Fire Officer before issuing or varying a Fire and Rescue Plan if, and to the extent that, the plan or variation is different from the initial draft on which the Chief Fire Officer was consulted.

The Authority must:

- a) Keep the Fire and Rescue Plan under review, and
- b) In particular, review the Fire and Rescue Plan in the light of any report or recommendations made to the Authority by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the Authority's Fire and Rescue Statement and exercise the powers to issue or vary the Fire and Rescue Plan accordingly.

When the Authority issues or varies a Fire and Rescue Plan they must:

- a) Send a copy of the issued plan, or the variation, to the Chief Fire Officer, and
- b) Publish a copy of the issued plan, or the variation.



It is for the Authority to determine the manner in which a response to a report or recommendations is to be published, and a copy of the plan or variation is to be published.

The Fire and Rescue Plan should inform the Community Risk Management Plan, which should in turn outline how the Authority's priorities will be met.

Current Work and Performance

The Fire and Rescue Plan within our scrutiny programme

Under the constitution the Strategic Board is to provide governance and oversight of delivery of the Fire and Rescue Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). It is also responsible for agreeing the Fire and Rescue Plan to be recommended to the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel and agreeing in principle the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), prior to formal approval by the Commissioner.

The Performance and Resource Board's role is to scrutinise, support and challenge the overall performance of the fire and rescue service including against the priorities agreed within the Fire and Rescue Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan.

All financial plans developed by the authority must also have regard to the delivery of the Fire and Rescue Plan.

Needs Analysis and Evidence Base

The Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 has been based primarily on the manifesto commitments on which the Commissioner campaigned on and won re-election to the office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in May 2024. The content of the Plan will also be informed by:

- Various internal documents, including the Closure Report 2021/24, Fire and Rescue Statement for 2023/24 and the results of the ongoing independent public perception survey jointly commissioned by the Commissioner and the Chief Fire Officer.
- The Strategic Assessment of Risk.
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework.
- Input from the Commissioner's scrutiny programme.
- Feedback obtained through the public and stakeholder consultation and engagement activity described in section 6.0 below and within Appendix 3 attached.

Other Interdependencies and Considerations

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As well as the data and intelligence referenced above, information will be gathered from the plans and strategies of key partner organisations and groups (both already existing and in development) to ensure that, where appropriate, plans align, and priorities do not conflict.

In particular, consideration will be given to the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2028 which is being developed over the same period as the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024-2028.

Roles, Responsibilities and Strategic Oversight

The development process has been led and overseen on behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner by their Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, supported by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Moira Bruin, on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer as a key stakeholder.

The development process also included regular engagement with the Commissioner's Senior Management Team (SMT) and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Development of the Plan was also a monthly agenda item at Performance Meetings between the Commissioner and the Chief Fire Officer throughout the development process in order to ensure a regular opportunity for the Chief Fire Officer to input their professional perspective.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

The Commissioner could choose not to take this draft Fire and Rescue Plan forward and instead develop an alternative version, however, given the detailed engagement undertaken throughout the process and the fact it closely reflects the Commissioner's manifesto commitments this is not recommended.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

Statutorily the Commissioner must provide a copy of the Fire and Rescue Plan to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel for review. They must also have regard to any report or recommendations made by the Panel. This may result in changes to the attached Plan. To mitigate this risk a working group has been established with the Panel to share the Plan during its development and to take on the Panel's views as it has been developed.

While this has mitigated the risk, it is still probable that further small changes will be requested by the Panel. The Commissioner has committed to highlighting any changes accepted following this feedback to the version attached to this paper, with the Chief Fire Officer and his team in good time prior to the Plan being publicly launched.

It was also possible that partners or key stakeholders would not adequately buy into the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 - 2028 making its delivery harder. The engagement



approach undertaken throughout the Plan's development was designed specifically to mitigate this risk and feedback throughout has been positive. This indicates that this risk will not be realised. This will also be supported by the planned engagement and consultation around the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) due to be launched following agreement from the Panel around the Fire and Rescue Plan.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

The successful conclusion of this development process will result in a new Fire and Rescue Plan which will form the basis on which the Authority acts over the next four years.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There were some financial implications associated with the development of both the Fire and Rescue Plan and the Police and Crime Plan. As many of the activities undertaken throughout the engagement process related to both Plans these costs are included in total. The costs cover delivery of stakeholder workshops, a public survey and design of the Plan, and are expected to amount to roughly £20,000 for both Plans.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

As set out above the development of a Fire and Rescue Plan is a statutory obligation. The development of the Plan must also be undertaken within the context of the Commissioner's other legal obligation including their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. These factors have been included within the detailed development process.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

The development of the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 required the investment of considerable staff time and resource by both the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Fire Officer.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

It was important to ensure that people from communities across Essex are able to engage and participate in the development process. Guidance from the Consultation Institute made it clear that we should encourage participation throughout the Fire and Rescue Plan development and continue this engagement throughout the Community Risk Management Plan. While both documents are separate from a public perspective, they comprise two halves of the same conversation so the learning and insights development through the engagement process for the Plan should inform and continue through the Community Risk Management Plan.



To aid this continuous assessment and insight a full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and updated at regular points throughout the development process. This is included in Appendix B.

The document itself will be made available in formats that are accessible to all the people of Essex including through an Easy Read version and an accessible version on the Commissioner's website.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no health and safety implications arising directly from this report.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

As set out above, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner was required to make arrangements, after consulting with the Chief Fire Officer, to obtain the views of the people of Essex about matters concerning the provision of the Service and their co-operation with the Service in reducing the risk of harm in the county. Those arrangements included obtaining their views on the Fire and Rescue Plan.

In developing the Fire and Rescue Plan, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner also had statutory duties to consult with the Chief Fire Officer and to have regard to the relative priorities of each responsible authority (including local authorities, the police and Integrated Care Boards). Chief officers of police and local authorities likewise have statutory duties to co-operate with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in the formulation of their Fire and Rescue Plan.

The development process agreed at the Strategic Board in May 2024 included a wide range of engagement activity both with mandated consultees and wider partners and members of the community. This activity is set out in the engagement log attached as Appendix D.

Where possible, existing mechanisms and structures have been used to engage the public and other stakeholders in the development of the Plan. This included key partnership meetings (such as the Essex Criminal Justice Board; the Essex Partners Board, and Safer Essex) as well as the Commissioner's ongoing public engagement programme.

Beyond this, a series of public / partner workshops were delivered with senior members of the Chief Fire Officers team presenting on relevant topics prior to facilitated conversations with stakeholders. These were based on each proposed priority / thematic area of the Plan, along with separate workshops for Council Chief Executives, Council Leaders, and Members of Parliament. A series of audience specific workshops were also undertaken to hear from colleagues working in health environments, representatives from the deaf and blind communities as well as those who were identified as particularly impacted through the Equality Impact Assessment,



including those over 70 and young people. A report on our young people engagement is available at Appendix C.

A public survey was also undertaken with 3000 people engaging with it, providing their views and helping to shape the report. The main outcomes from this survey are listed below with further results included at Appendix E.

The Commissioner also formed a working group with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to inform the development of the Plan ahead of its presentation to the full Panel.

The public and partners have been kept informed of the development of the Fire and Rescue Plan and their opportunities to influence it via:

- The Commissioner's website and social media accounts;
- Local and regional news releases as appropriate, and
- The Commissioner's weekly electronic newsletter

FUTURE PLANS

The Fire and Rescue Plan will help to inform the development of the CRMP. The activities in the Plan will also include a set of performance measures and an associated performance framework developed as part of the overall development process by the Commissioner's Strategic Head of Performance and Resources and the Chief Fire Officer's representative on the working group.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

Appendix A – Fire and Rescue Plan 2024-2028

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Youth Voice Project

Appendix D - Fire and Rescue Plan Engagement Log

Appendix E – Public survey result report

Appendix 5 – Stakeholder engagement list