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Subject:	Fire and Rescue Plan Development		
Type of Report:	Information and update		
Action Point No:	N/A	For Publication:	Yes

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this report is to agree the process through which the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 will be developed.

That the Strategic Board endorses, or amends as necessary, the proposed approach to developing and consulting on the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028, including the proposed approach to stakeholder engagement described in Appendix 2.

Once the overarching approach is agreed, a detailed timeline and a comprehensive consultation and engagement plan will be developed on this basis. This revised timeline will take into account the impact of the recently announced general election. These are likely to remain “live” documents throughout the process, which will be continually updated as additional consultation and engagement opportunities present themselves.

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.

This process is summarised in Appendix 1.

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 will be 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

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 will be led and overseen on behalf of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner by their Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, supported by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Moira Bruin, on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer as a key stakeholder. The Chief Fire Officer also proposes to nominate named SPOCs from the service to support the Commissioner's staff throughout the process in developing each of the themes / priorities within the new Plan.

The detailed timeline will include 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 will also be 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 to undertake the development of the Fire and Rescue Plan in a different way with less engagement and weaker consultation. This is not recommended given the importance of the Plan to the delivery of their manifesto commitments and the future focus and strategic direction of the Service.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

It is recognised by both the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Fire Officer that the development of the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 will be amongst the highest priorities over the coming months. The target timeline will be challenging to achieve, and colleagues in both the PFCC's office and the Service will need to be mindful of this in order to ensure that key planning activities can continue to be delivered throughout the peak holiday / annual leave season, alongside the traditional demands on the force during these months.



There is potential for challenge around the relatively short window of opportunity to conduct a public survey following the initial development work with partners, particularly given the time of year. However, this is mitigated by the wide variety of other opportunities that will be available for members of the public to influence the development of the Plan, most notably through the Commissioner's ongoing public engagement plan and programme of public meetings.

The relationship between the Fire and Rescue Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is one that needs to be explained and contextualised for the public and partners to ensure there is clarity around the different conversations that the authority is having over the next six months. This will feature in elements of both the Fire and Rescue Plan development and the Community Risk Management Plan.

In developing the Fire and Rescue Plan, consideration will also need to be given to the wider partnership landscape and work already underway in pursuit of common goals in order to ensure that the contributions of various groups, as well as of the Service, are complementary as opposed to duplicative.

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 will be some financial implications associated with the development process which are not specifically budgeted for. These cover delivery of stakeholder workshops, a public survey and design of the Plan, and are expected to amount to roughly £10,000.

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 are being included within the detailed development process.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

The development of the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 – 2028 will require 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 will be important to ensure that people from communities across Essex are able to engage and participate in the development process. Learning from similar processes, and the findings of the ongoing independent public perception survey, mean that there will be a particular focus on engaging with young people, people from diverse communities (including faith groups) and those likely to be more impacted by the Fire and Rescue Plan. Engagement events will be held at a range of venues around the county, both online and in person and through partner organisations to facilitate ease of access for participants.

The document itself will be made available in formats that are accessible to all the people of Essex and will meet plain English standards.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been started to help inform the Plan development and this early draft is attached as Annex 2. A final and full EQIA will be submitted alongside the Plan to show how the Authority has met its statutory obligations and contributed to delivering its Public Sector Equality Duty.

Race	x	Religion or Belief	x
Sex	x	Gender Reassignment	
Age	x	Pregnancy & Maternity	
Disability	x	Marriage and Civil Partnership	
Sexual Orientation			

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 is 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 must include arrangements for obtaining their views on the Fire and Rescue Plan.

In developing the Fire and Rescue Plan, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner also has 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 proposed development process allows for wide ranging engagement activity both with mandated consultees and wider partners and members of the community which



will help to foster a sense of purpose and strategic direction among the wider system within the county. Mindful of the limited timeframe available to develop the Fire and Rescue Plan 2024 - 2028 and the considerable other pressures on both the Commissioner and stakeholders, as well as the need for the methodology to best suit the audience, various approaches are proposed for different engagement groups which are set out in more detail in Appendix 3.

Where possible, existing mechanisms and structures will be used to engage the public and other stakeholders in the development of the Plan. This will include key partnership meetings (such as the Essex Criminal Justice Board; the various Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards; local Health and Wellbeing Boards; 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 will be arranged and facilitated, based on each proposed priority / thematic area of the Plan, along with separate workshops for Council Chief Executives, Council Leaders, and Members of Parliament. It is currently anticipated that most of these events will take place after the general election on the 4th of July and beginning of August.

The findings of consultation and engagement activity undertaken by partners during the development period will also be reflected in the Plan where appropriate, in order to minimise duplication and cost to partners as well as consultation fatigue of communities and stakeholders.

It is further proposed that the Police, Fire and Crime Panel be offered the opportunity to form a working group to work with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to inform the development of the Plan ahead of its commendation to the full Panel.

To encourage wider participation, a public survey is proposed as a further opportunity for engagement and discussion. This would supplement the Commissioner's ongoing schedule of face-to-face / online public meetings with an opportunity for members of the public and partners to put their views in writing. This is likely to commence in mid to late July and run for approximately one month, to permit analysis and reflection of the results in the document prior to the presentation of the draft Plan to the Strategic Board in September 2024.

The public and partners will be 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

Delivery of the expected outcomes from the plan will be monitored through 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 1 – Fire and Rescue Plan Development Process

Appendix 2 – Draft EQIA version 1

Appendix 3 – Stakeholder engagement list