

## **Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee**

**13 January 2021**

### **Priority Programme Update**

**Report by Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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### **Summary**

This report provides an overview of the priority programmes of work during Quarter 2 of 2021/2022. This includes progress against the People Action Plan, the Improvement Plan and the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan.

This is a standing item on the Work Programme for the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee.

### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is asked to review the progress reported in relation to the priority programmes, which include the IRMP Action Plan, the Improvement Plan and the People Action Plan and provide any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Reescue.

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### **Proposal**

#### **1 Background and context**

##### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan**

- 1.1 The Inspectorate identified four 'causes of concern', as well as ten additional specific areas for improvement that the Service needed to address.
- 1.2 West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service HMICFRS, round two inspection commenced on Monday 20 September 2021.
- 1.3 The inspection was held over an eight-week period with a mixture of online interviews and in-person meetings. The inspection concluded on 22 November 2021.
- 1.4 The Inspectorate will now collate all the information into the report which we are expecting to see when the inspectorate publishes its findings from the second tranche of inspections.

## **2 Cause of Concern 1 - Preventing Fire and Other Risks**

- 2.1 Recruiting additional volunteers was one of the last outstanding actions. Whilst it forms part of our business as usual activity it was one of the ways that we addressed the Inspectorate's recommendation that the Service "could do more to develop this group and increase its capacity to do prevention work".
- 2.2 All our volunteers have either been shielding or choosing to self-isolate through the pandemic which has proved challenging. A decision was made to delay recruitment until the covid restrictions eased earlier this year. It is vital the volunteers have a meaningful experience and are safe. There had been a lack of community-based activity to undertake and limited station contact due to covid restrictions.
- 2.3 We have now recruited an additional 16 volunteers which has doubled the numbers, bringing the total to 35.
- 2.4 We have also implemented a quality assurance framework to assure that our Safe and Well Visits (SWVs) are of the right quality and standard. Each step of the process is assessed by a desktop review, observed visits, and follow up review. We will aim to quality assure 5% of visits each year.
- 2.5 The mandatory Safeguarding training has also been evaluated and quality assured, concluding that our staff are confident and have the required level of knowledge to identify and take action to support vulnerable people. This is reflected in Core Measure 6 of our performance framework.

## **3 Cause of Concern 2 - Protecting the Public Through Fire Regulation**

- 3.1 All actions have been undertaken with regards to this Cause of Concern and considerable work has been undertaken to enable us to recommence the activity now that there has been a lift in the covid restrictions. Work continues to embed and evaluate these actions and changes to ensure they provide a sustained improvement to performance and risk reduction for the community.

## **4 People Action Plan**

- 4.1 There have been some key areas of focus this quarter relating to annual performance information as well as recruitment activity with associated positive action. Our ambition is to strengthen our ability to provide an excellent service to everyone in our community by diversifying our staff, promoting inclusion, and creating a fair and equal place to work. We recognise that different people bring different experiences, ideas, knowledge, and culture, and that this difference brings great strength and benefits to the fire and rescue service.
- 4.2 For example, our recent job advertisement stated 'we are currently underrepresented by women and people from different cultural backgrounds therefore would particularly welcome applicants from these groups'.
- 4.3 The recruitment campaign is targeted to attract a much broader demographic than is typically attracted to the role of a firefighter. The advertising campaign felt and looked different to the previous one undertaken in 2018.
- 4.4 Due to the easing of covid restrictions, teams have been more able to deliver face to face staff engagement albeit the service is carefully monitoring the covid cases and supporting information to ensure that guidelines are followed.

- 4.5 The annual review of the People Action Plan has been completed and will progress through to Service Executive Board (SEB) in January 2022, as well as the current focus on the impending inspection. This will also consider the future Community Risk management Plan (CRMP) delivery and our supporting plan. The plan will continue our improvement to:
- 4.5.1 Strengthen leadership and line management skills to support organisational cultural change, talent management and service delivery to the public.
  - 4.5.2 Develop our cultural, values and behaviours which make WSFRS a great place to work.
  - 4.5.3 Provide high quality training and development opportunities that respond to the needs of our staff, our desired culture, our service model needs and ensures performance improvement of services to the public.
  - 4.5.4 Strengthen our ability to provide an excellent service by diversifying our staff.
  - 4.5.5 Continue our work on creating a fair and equal place to work.
  - 4.5.6 Continue to support the health, wellbeing and ways of working for all our staff.

## 5 Cause for Concern 3 - Promoting the Right Values and Culture

- 5.1 Our workstreams will be underpinned by our WSFRS core values underpinned by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics was introduced by the NFCC following a national recommendation from HMICFRS in the State of Fire report. Developed in consultation with the sector, the Core Code is designed to help employees of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) act in the best way towards each other and while serving the public.



**Figure 1. NFCC Core Code of Ethics diagram**

- 5.2 The Core Code sets out these ethical principles and helps us continuously improve our organisational culture and workforce diversity and assists us in supporting our community in the best way. It is effective only when we all consistently demonstrate the ethical behaviours. Everyone in every Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) is expected to follow the Core Code. This includes those working with, or on behalf of, the FRS.
- 5.3 The principles should be embedded within everything that FRSs and their employees do. FRSs will ensure that the principles of this Core Code are represented within policies and processes to ensure they are embedded and at the heart of day-to-day activity.
- 5.3.1 **Putting our communities first** - We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.
- 5.3.2 **Integrity** - We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.
- 5.3.3 **Dignity and respect** - We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.
- 5.3.4 **Leadership** - We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
- 5.3.5 **Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** - We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.
- 5.4 Each ethic has now got a lead in the organisation and a gap analysis is being completed against all service activity, which will lead to an action plan and this will be considered in Q4 2021/22.

## **6 Cause for Concern 4 - Ensuring Fairness and Promoting Diversity**

- 6.1 A Diversity & Inclusion Steering Group has reviewed and supported the Diversity & Inclusion Advisor to achieve approval of the adoption of the People Impact Assessment process. This is now in place for all projects and decisions to ensure this lens is applied across all areas of the business.
- 6.2 The Promotions Board has been replaced with Assessment Centres. The service has now undertaken a Station and Area Manager Assessment Centre Process to ensure succession planning is completed in a timely manner and there has been positive feedback to date of the approach by both assessors and candidates.
- 6.3 A Dignity and Respect Framework has been introduced council-wide; this has been aligned to the Service and will be delivered and embedded alongside the Core Code of Ethics mentioned above. This is designed to affirm the expected standards and behaviours of staff, managers and senior leaders across the FRS.
- 6.4 A Shadow Board has been implemented, aimed at improving the connection and engagement between staff and the SEB and its decisions. This has been a great success as those who are part of the Board feel valued and that they are

able to contribute to decision making and more importantly understand the rationale behind decisions and direction of the Service.

## **7 Areas for Improvements updates**

- 7.1 Local risk management plans have progressed well, with some activity having required adaptation due to the current pandemic. Community risk data is being updated monthly to ensure it is current information. As part of the current review, we will be putting forward recommendations that will include engaging with Members in the draft plans for 2022/23. This will be completed in conjunction with our new Community Risk Management Plan.
- 7.2 There has been a considerable amount of work done on closing some of the projects relating to the Areas for improvements. This includes:
  - 7.2.1 Breathing Apparatus (BA) Contract renewal
  - 7.2.2 Operational Assurance Project
  - 7.2.3 Health & Safety Improvement Project

## **8 Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22 (IRMP)**

- 8.1 4Fire Strategic Board leads a series of collaborative projects including one on Incident Command and has more recently approved the commencement of a project relating to Breathing Apparatus procurement and supporting operational alignment which will be led by West Sussex. This project is to commence in Quarter 1 2022/23 following the recruitment of a joint resource to drive delivery.
- 8.2 The Statement of Assurance for the final year of our existing IRMP (Year 4 - 2021/22) has been planned to commence in Quarter 4 to ensure we have internal processes in place for elected member approval in Quarter 2 of 2022/23 as is required statutorily.
- 8.3 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022 development has progressed well. A strategic steering group has been developed to ensure the appropriate momentum is applied to the risk analysis and associated staff and public engagement.
- 8.4 Public Consultation opened on 15 November 2021. This includes forward planning for the required scrutiny and governance for its approval and publication. The consultation is due to end on 21 January 2022 and our new CRMP is proposed to go live in Quarter 1 of 2022/23.

## **9 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 9.1 Updates on priority programmes are agreed through the Work Programme of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee at each meeting.

## **10 Consultation, engagement and advice**

- 10.1 Continuous consultation with staff and members on the work of the Fire and Rescue Service Priority Programmes, including discussion at each meeting of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee.

## **11 Finance**

11.1 Most of WSFRS's £26.8m budget is invested in frontline services including firefighting, rescue operations and community safety activity. This is summarised as the following:

11.1.1 Firefighting and rescue operations: £22,011,154

11.1.2 Community Fire Safety: £4,352,772

11.1.3 Fire Service Emergency Planning and Civil Resilience: £390,071

## **12 Risk implications and mitigations**

12.1 None.

## **13 Policy alignment and compliance**

13.1 This report has positive implications for the community, and it supports the benefits of an effective Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.

13.2 In terms of environmental sustainability, the IRMP makes clear the Authority's commitment to reducing the environmental impact of its operations and provides an indication of work done to date.

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**Chief Fire Officer**

**Appendices:** None

**Background papers:** None