

Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee



19 September 2019

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Making Surrey Safer – Our Plan 2020-2023

Purpose of report:

For the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee to scrutinise the 'Making Surrey Safer' plan and review the feedback from the public consultation, making recommendations to Cabinet.

Introduction:

1. The vision of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is to make Surrey a safer place to live, work, travel and do business. To achieve this in an ever-changing environment, we need to reimagine our service and innovate. This means thinking differently about how we deliver our prevention, protection and response activities and finding better ways of working with partners, residents and businesses. The detail of how we intend to do this is set out in Making Surrey Safer – Our Plan 2020-2023 ("Our Plan"). This is included within this report at Annex 1.
2. There are significant drivers for this change:
 - a) The Government's Fire and Rescue reform agenda sets out how the work of Fire and Rescue Service's needs to change. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of fires across the country (fire incidents have reduced by 45% nationally over the past decade and 30% in Surrey), there is much greater emphasis on prevention and protection activities, and there is a move to a more people centred approach to identifying risk and providing services.

- b) There is a new Community Vision for Surrey in 2030. This puts resident's safety at its core and emphasises the need for prevention activities to improve outcomes.
 - c) Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection has said that our response to incidents is inefficient (Annex 2). We also do not undertake enough prevention and protection activity to reduce the likelihood of emergencies. This means we need to do more of this in the future. We also need to ensure we are providing an efficient, effective, accountable and transparent service that is reflective of the communities we serve.
3. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires that all Fire and Rescue Authorities produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan, which considers all the fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities. This is contained in Our Plan and associated appendices. We want to develop a wide-reaching approach to managing risk, not just in the home and workplace but in every place where we can influence behaviour and encourage a safer attitude and environment, whilst still ensuring we respond to emergencies well.
4. Our Plan was consulted on from 04 March – 26 May 2019 and the feedback was broadly supportive of our proposals. A report on the consultation responses, including the survey data and qualitative comments can be found at Annex 3 to this report. The consultation feedback was shared with the Fire Transformation Working Group on 12 July 2019.

Background:

Making Surrey Safer – Our Plan 2020 - 2023

5. Fire and Rescue services undertake three main functions:
- a. **Community Safety** – focuses effort on education and prevention, including raising awareness amongst the most vulnerable in our communities. The aim is to minimise serious injuries and loss of life across Surrey.

- b. **Business Safety** – focuses effort on prevention of damage to property, heritage, the environment and preventing serious injuries and loss of life across Surrey.
 - c. **Response** - When a call to help is received, fire and rescue crews are sent out to attend and resolve the incident. The range of incidents attended is vast and is changing.
6. Whilst we have always placed a strong emphasis on response activities we have not focused enough on prevention and protection activities (delivered through our Business and Community Safety Teams) to meet the risk profile of Surrey. The proposals set out in Our Plan shifts effort to these activities whilst continuing to provide a strong, effective and more efficient response. This approach is also consistent with the Community Vision 2030.

Underlying Principles

- 7. Our Plan adopts the National Fire Chiefs Council’s Person Centred Approach to managing risks to vulnerable people. We will be sector leaders in doing so. We have also developed a Place Centred Approach.
- 8. The Person Centred Approach considers the factors that affect an individual’s risk profile, based on their lifestyle, location and circumstances. The Place Centred Approach will focus on economic, geographic, social and political factors that impact on the risk present in the location. For example, our road network, rivers, places of assembly and agricultural or rural areas.
- 9. These two core approaches will ensure that our management of risk will be holistic, robust and deliver better outcomes for Surrey residents. We are at the forefront of the development of a Place Centred Approach nationally.

Proposals

- 10. ‘Our Plan’ makes the following proposals:
 - a. To spend more time on prevention and protection activities to reduce the likelihood of emergencies. This means

educating people and businesses about the risks of fire and other emergencies, and how to prevent them. This will realign our resources to meet the risk in Surrey and this will ensure that we deliver public value.

- b. To increase availability of crews at Haslemere and Walton during weekend days, which will improve our resilience for specific risks including water and wildfire.
- c. To maintain the number of fire stations in Surrey and change how some of them are crewed. Changes are proposed in the Banstead, Camberley, Egham, Fordbridge, Guildford, Painshill and Woking areas. Camberley, Fordbridge, Guildford and Woking will have one immediately available fire engine available at night, rather than two. There will be no station based night time response cover provided from Egham, Banstead and Painshill. Night time cover at these locations would come from neighbouring fire stations. The response time for the first appliance, would continue, on average, to be less than 10 minutes
- d. To further increase the number of On-Call firefighters in Surrey. We will do this by improving the attractiveness of the role and by increasing the area we can recruit from. This will further improve our availability to respond.
- e. To charge for some incidents we attend such as false reports of fire (hoax calls and automatic false alarms) and animal rescues so that we can recover our costs. Wherever possible, we will work with partners, business and animal owners (in particular farmers), to avoid the need to respond to these types of incidents in the first place – handing the incident over to the responsible person(s). This will avoid the need for a charge to be made.

Public Consultation

11. Public consultation took place for 12 weeks from 04 March – 26 May 2019 in accordance with the Surrey County Council Consultation framework. During this period we engaged extensively with the public and with partners using a variety of methods. This included meetings with various community groups, District and Borough briefings, online and targeted social media advertising and in print. The consultation documents were also made available in accessible formats. Based on feedback further additional formats were also provided.
12. The consultation received feedback from over 1,800 individuals and groups, through the consultation survey, letters and face to face engagement events. This represents 0.14% of the Surrey population, which is estimated to be 1,185,300 (*The Office for National Statistics (ONS)*).

Summary of the Consultation Responses

13. Feedback from the consultation has been broadly supportive, in most areas of our proposals, with the exception of the proposed changes to night time response cover. A summary of the key findings are as follows:
 - The majority of people agree with adopting a risk-based approach
 - Most people agree with the proposal to spend more time on prevention and protection activities (Business and Community Safety)
 - The majority of people disagree with the proposal to change how some fire stations are crewed
 - Most people agree with recovering costs from some incidents and to re-invest in SFRS. However, charging for animal rescues was less favoured
 - Most people agree with expanding the recruitment area for On-Call firefighters to aid recruitment

For further detail please refer to the Consultation Report at Annex 3 to this report.

Our response to these key findings:

14. Respondents agreed with adopting a risk-based approach and doing more business and community safety activity, but some were concerned that this was at the expense of emergency response cover. Some respondents also reported the changes to be perceived as cost cutting and wanted more information. Our Plan is based on the resources that we need to provide business safety, community safety and emergency response cover to meet the risk set out in the Community Risk Profile (“CRP”) (Annex 4). To meet this risk, we will invest more in business and community safety and less in response. This will align our resources to meet the risks in Surrey and this will ensure that we will deliver public value.

15. Respondents raised perceived concerns about reductions in staff and fire engines. Some respondents were concerned they may be less safe due to waiting longer for fire engines to arrive at night. Our Plan is based on:
 - a. The recent recruitment of whole-time firefighters so that the Service will be at full establishment firefighter staffing levels by April 2020. If the proposed model is agreed there will be an additional cohort of staff who will either transition into Business and Community Safety or remain in Response. We will continue to monitor our establishment levels on an ongoing basis.
 - b. Active recruitment of firefighters and no redundancies. The focus on prevention and protection will mean we will provide our firefighters with additional training to ensure they have the necessary skills to implement Our Plan.
 - c. Five years of evidence about incidents in Surrey. This includes reviewing our calls which drop significantly at night-time. The data has been used to model the impact on emergency response cover and has been independently verified. The changes will result in a more even distribution of cover across Surrey based on the identified risk.
 - d. Our CRP which contains the most recent data about current and forecasted risks within Surrey. This information helps us to understand where the risks associated with places in the

county are, where the most vulnerable people are and when and where the risks are greater.

- e. A minimum of 20 fire engines to be available during the day. Our new configuration will provide 25 fire engines, 22 of which will be crewed by firefighters that will be available to respond immediately. The remaining 3 will be crewed by On-Call firefighters.
 - f. A minimum of 16 fire engines to be available at night. Our new configuration will provide 23 fire engines, 13 of which will be crewed by whole-time firefighters and will be available to respond immediately. The remaining 10 will be crewed by On-Call firefighters.
 - g. Tried and tested plans that make sure we can always deal with emergencies effectively. We continually monitor all our vehicles around the county, using new technology, so that people and equipment are in the right place at the right time.
 - h. The introduction of new technology and new procedures that will improve response times.
 - i. An increase in the availability of crews at Haslemere and Walton during weekend days, which will improve our resilience for specific risks including water and wildfire.
 - j. Making further improvements to On-Call firefighter attraction, recruitment and ways of working. Due to the current recruitment processes that are being carried out there will be improved availability of On-Call fire engines.
16. We will regularly review our CRP and distribution of resources as population numbers and distribution changes over time, to ensure we are providing adequate resources that continue to meet the risk and changing needs of communities. Our Plan will result in a significant increase in activities including safety visits for every Surrey school and much more partnership working with all boroughs and districts. By increasing our safe and well visits we will be able to target all people with mobility issues, other disabilities or other vulnerabilities. We will do much more to help prevent fires and work with residents and businesses to understand what to do when a fire does occur.

17. There was widespread support from respondents for charging for some services, concerns were raised though, in relation to charging for animal rescues, with respondents fearing their animals may be at risk. Our Plan makes a provision for rescuing animals and we will continue to train our firefighters to rescue animals safely and provide the equipment they need to do so. We do not receive any additional funding to allow us to do this. The National Framework for Fire and Rescue in England makes it clear that any additional activity that services undertake should not be at the expense of effective delivery of their statutory core fire functions. Charging for these types of calls will allow us to recoup some of the cost of doing so, however our focus will be on working closely with our communities (such as farmers) to ensure the right person is attending a call for assistance. Should these proposals be put in place a communications plan will ensure all are aware of the changes and within this a schedule of charges will be made publicly available.

Staff Engagement

18. We have engaged with our staff throughout this process and will continue to do so. Our staff have been given the opportunity for a face-to-face discussion led by members of the Service Leadership Team (SLT). These discussions explained the proposals, the rationale and the potential implications.

19. Staff will continue to be engaged with on an ongoing basis to ensure they are given the opportunity to shape the design of the Service.

Employee Relations

20. There was early engagement with trade union representatives and further opportunity for discussion was offered during the consultation period. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has responded formally to the consultation and that response is available on its website. The FBU's submission focused on changes to the response model which it opposes whilst welcoming the approach to business and community safety. There will be ongoing consultation and negotiation, as appropriate with the trade union.

Risk Management and Implications

21. There are associated risks with the implementation of these proposals:

a) Industrial Relations:

Given Our plan will require staff changes and the opposition to elements of it by the FBU, there will be an impact on industrial relations. We will mitigate that impact through on-going dialogue with the trade unions, consulting and negotiating as appropriate.

b) Learning and Development:

The refocus on prevention and protection activities will require upskilling of the workforce in order to deliver it effectively. As a result, there will be a transition period whilst this is embedded which may impact delivery in the short-term. We will mitigate this with a robust transition plan and a programme of training and development activities.

c) Transition of Staff Roles:

The realignment of resources between Response and Business and Community Safety team roles, will require the identification of a number of staff to move from their existing roles. This will impact current shift working patterns. We will mitigate this with a clear selection process for the new roles, allowing preferences and an opportunity to understand impacts from staff personally. Wherever possible, the number of staff moves will be minimised.

d) Public Perception of Response Changes:

The consultation feedback has demonstrated that our communities and partners believe that crews usually respond to incidents from fire stations, and undertake limited other activity when not responding to incidents. We will deliver a proactive communication and engagement plan which clearly describes how our Service operates and what services we offer.

e) Ongoing Capital Investment for Materials:

The increased prevention activities require associated materials to mitigate risks identified in people's homes during Safe and Well Visits, this will require a significant

annual capital investment. We will manage this by robust financial planning and capital business case creation, whilst also looking for opportunities for the sponsorship of these materials.

Equalities and Diversity

22. Valuing and promoting equality and diversity are central to the work of the Service. The ability to protect the public through fire safety advice, fire prevention, fire protection and emergency response depends on understanding the differing needs of our diverse communities and responding appropriately to those needs.

23. In considering Our Plan members must have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups, and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the attached Equalities Impact Assessment “EIA” (Annex 5) which should be read alongside this report. The assessment is based on the proposals for change. If any changes in service delivery are necessary to implement Our Plan, a further, specific equalities impact assessment will be carried out.

24. The following potential positive impacts to different groups in the community were identified:

It is proposed to increase Safe and Well Visits (SAWVs) from 4,500 to 20,000 by 2021. This has the potential to benefit all members of society. The SAWV is a far more holistic and sophisticated product than the Home Fire Safety Visit that Fire Services have been offering for many years. The SAWV looks at all elements of an individual or family’s lifestyle and circumstances and offers meaningful advice and interventions to help ensure that people not only stay safe in their homes but get wider support in their community to enable them to thrive. This is accomplished by broad collaboration with other agencies, including social services, police and community groups. By giving people the tools they need to live safe lifestyles we can build safe, resilient communities. This has the potential to have a far greater long-term impact than the traditional response-led approach that has been the mainstay of Fire and Rescue Services in the past. In the EIA, the groups that have been identified as likely to receive the greatest benefit from this approach were the elderly, people with

disabilities, and males in certain age groups who are at greater risk from drowning incidents.

The proposed system of Lifelong Learning will expand the potential for positive impacts to all age groups. The resultant community outreach work will benefit people from different religions and ethnicities who may not have been reached by our community safety work in the past.

25. The following potential negative impacts were identified:

The reduction in fire and rescue cover at night could have a negative impact. The EIA has identified certain groups that may be more negatively impacted by these changes than others. These include the elderly, particularly people who live alone who may be at greater risk from fire. This also applies to people with certain disabilities, especially those who have reduced mobility and families with children. Young drivers, who are statistically more likely to be involved in road traffic collisions, especially in the areas of Runnymede and Guildford may also be impacted. This is mitigated through a number of measures that include:

- a. the proposed response model which will efficiently deploy resources to the areas and times of greatest need, based on rigorous independently reviewed modelling.
- b. expanding driver safety initiatives (including the award-winning "Safe Drive Stay Alive").
- c. focussing business safety inspections at tertiary learning establishments.
- d. developing embedded community engagement programmes that focus community safety work on groups and individuals identified as most at risk.

26. Changes to crewing patterns from 'days and nights' to 'days only' will have an impact on staff. There may be positive and/or negative impacts to individuals depending on their personal circumstances. No specific issue has been identified at this stage however there is potential for a greater impact to staff with caring responsibilities who are based at stations where day crewing will be implemented. This will be analysed and then addressed in a separate EIA once the patterns of crewing are known. The findings from the internal engagement programme and focus groups will be used to inform this EIA as well as

outputs from the staff consultation process should the proposals be agreed.

Other Implications:

27. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Surrey experiences relatively low numbers of fatalities and injuries from fires. Our challenge is to continue to reduce these small numbers and this means the accurate targeting of those who are most vulnerable. We must also maintain our contribution to the reduction of casualties associated with road traffic collisions and will continue to focus on young drivers. We recognise that we also have an important part to play in improving the life chances for young people, so we deliver a number of other effective prevention activities.
Public Health	Increase integration and meaningful collaboration with other emergency services to assist them to respond to an increasing demand for services, where we can improve community safety and public health, and add value. We continue to educate the public through community safety campaigns and Safe and Well Visits. Our Safe and Well Visit is designed to cover fire safety, road safety, environment safety and by using the One Stop Surrey

	referral process, cover a range of health and social issues that support independent living. We also supply a range of equipment, such as smoke alarms, hard of hearing alarms, fire retardant bedding and advise on TeleCare alarms and sprinklers. We are continuing to work with the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board members, such as Adult Social Care, the NHS, public health and Age UK Surrey, to develop the content of our Safe and Well Visits to reduce risk to the elderly.
Climate change	The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a legal duty on all emergency services to carry out risk assessments in their area. Significant risks are recorded on the Surrey Community Risk Register . We have to assess the risk of major emergency incidents such as flooding, derailments, major spillages, fires, chemical incidents, civil unrest, terrorist attacks and flu pandemics.
Carbon emissions	No significant implications arising from this report.

Recommendations:

- a) That the Select Committee endorse the 'Making Surrey Safer – Our Plan' 2020-23 and recommend the Plan to Cabinet for approval.

Next steps:

- 28. The item will be scheduled for Cabinet on 24 September 2019.
- 29. Once approved, a delivery plan will be implemented, and will take into consideration the actions outlined in the Equality Impact Assessment.

30. Further meetings will be held with the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee to update on progress as required.

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Sources/background papers:

Annex 1 – Draft Making Surrey Safer - Our Plan 2020-2023

Annex 2 – HMICFRS Inspection Report

Annex 3 – Full Consultation Report

Annex 4 – Community Risk Profile

Annex 5 – Equality Impact Assessment

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)