

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND
COMMUNITY SAFETY****DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 2023****LEAD OFFICER: DAN QUIN, CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, SURREY FIRE AND
RESCUE SERVICE****SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE CHARTER FOR FAMILIES BEREAVED
THROUGH PUBLIC TRAGEDY****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Current processes following major incidents can compound and prolong the impact of a tragic event on bereaved families and/or survivors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approves the adoption of The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Signing up to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy will provide additional assurance to our communities should an event happen within Surrey.

DETAILS:**The need for a Charter:**

1. The need for the charter has arisen from Public Inquiries from recent major incidents, for example the Grenfell Tower tragedy and Manchester Arena Bombing, which are consistently suggesting that there is more that could be done to support families following large-scale tragedies or disasters, particularly where there is loss of life, or the distress caused to those affected is severe and likely to have a lifelong impact.
2. The framework that currently exists to investigate the tragic circumstances behind incidents such as the Hillsborough disaster and the Grenfell Tower fire, is complex and will often involve multiple agencies. Families can face an enormous challenge in understanding the roles of various agencies and to participate meaningfully in the numerous legal or investigative procedures. They must do this at the same time as coming to terms with what has happened to them. This is likely to be overwhelming and to add to the suffering of bereaved families and/or survivors.

3. A recurring theme from the feedback received from families during investigations, such as that into the Hillsborough disaster, is that without support and recognition from public sector bodies these processes can compound and prolong the impact of a tragic event.
4. Signing up to the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy will provide additional assurance to our communities should a similar event happen within Surrey and ensures leaders of public bodies deliver the particular changes needed within their organisation to make the behaviours described in the charter a reality in practice.
5. Adoption of the charter will align Surrey Fire and Rescue Service with partner Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) within the 4F group (Kent, East and West Sussex FRSs), The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and other UK Fire and Rescue Services. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are recommending all FRSs across the UK adopt the charter.
6. When an organisation has signed up to the charter, it should declare this fact publicly.

CONSULTATION:

7. The Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy has been shared with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

8. There are no risks or implications associated with the content of this report

Financial and Value for Money Implications

9. There are no financial implications associated with the content of this report

Section 151 Officer Commentary

10. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed Government funding this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding.
11. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority

of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.

12. There are no financial implications associated with adopting the Charter, and as such the Section 151 Officer supports the recommendation.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

13. Whilst there is no legal obligation to sign up to the charter it demonstrates the organisational ambition to act at all times in the public interest.

Equalities and Diversity

14. There are no equality implications associated with the content of this report.

Other Implications:

15. 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	No significant implications arising from this report.
Environmental sustainability	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

16. A signed copy of the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy will be made available on Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's webpages.

Contact Officer:

Tina Thorburn
Business Manager
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Consulted:

Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety

Annexes:

Annex A – Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

Sources/background papers:

Kerslake Arena Review - Progress report on the work of the independent panel –
12th January 2018 <https://www.kerslakearenareview.co.uk/media/1020/kerslake-arena-review-progress-report.pdf>

Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

In adopting this charter we commit to ensuring that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

I commit to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service becoming an organisation which strives to:

- In the event of a public tragedy, activate its emergency plan and deploy its resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
- Place the public interest above our own reputation.
- Approach forms of public scrutiny – including public inquiries and inquests – with candour, in an open, honest and transparent way, making full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts. Our objective is to assist the search for the truth. We accept that we should learn from the findings of external scrutiny and from past mistakes.
- Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
- Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely.
- Recognise that we are accountable and open to challenge. We will ensure that processes are in place to allow the public to hold us to account for the work we do and for the way in which we do it. We do not knowingly mislead the public or the media.

Signed

INSERT E-SIGNATURE

Dan Quin, Chief Fire Officer
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service

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