

## **Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority plan 2013 to 2018**

### **Summary of feedback from consultation**

Below is the feedback we received during consultation on the draft proposals, which were agreed by the Authority on 19 September 2012.

#### Making life safer

##### Proposal 1 – Improving the way we respond to and support incidents

Staff were receptive to having a proposal which focused on improvement at incidents and operational effectiveness. It was mentioned though that the retained sections are coming under increased workloads which is making it difficult to complete the training necessary. This needs to be considered to help improve operational effectiveness.

The majority of consultees felt that the proposal to move the appliances in Southampton made sense. Concerns were raised regarding the training implications to staff in relation to appliance moves, if these were brought in too quickly.

It was also noted that if Redbridge Fire Station loses the small fires vehicle (SFV) it will only have one primary pumping appliance on station along with the special equipment unit (SEU). When the SEU is mobilised it will take the pump with it as a standard attendance, meaning that Redbridge Fire Station would in effect become 'off the run'. Moving another primary appliance to Redbridge would solve this issue, and one suggestion was the St Marys retained pump but, this would need further analysis.

There was agreement from staff that the multi-role vehicle (MRV) was coming to the end of its useful life and staff were raising issues about keeping up training competence. The proposal to amalgamate the MRV with the SEUs into a new vehicle was, in most cases, welcomed. Negativity was raised at some of the current MRV stations that the new vehicle would not be based there. It was also noted that although the idea is a good one, a lot of work is needed to ensure the new vehicle adds value to an incident with its attendance and the equipment it carries.

##### Proposal 2 – Refocusing our efforts to reduce accidental fires in the home

There was isolated negativity from staff about how we approach fires in the home. There was a feeling we do too much community safety work and we should focus on response. Apart from this small group there was general acceptance that this work is vitally important and will be a huge focus for us in the years to come.

Although this work is important some members of staff felt that if we develop our role and approach in home safety to encompass too much that we could

become more like social-workers. It was felt that we should improve our partnership working with agencies such as social services etc. This way we can improve data sharing on vulnerable members of our community and maybe even use visits conducted by other agencies to promote fire safety messages.

It was felt any home safety work needs to be focused on quality, not quantity. Staff would prefer to do a more regular visit to a vulnerable member of the community. This would be a different approach to what we currently do. A slight concern was also raised that our staff lack some skills to be able to deal with the differing situations they come across during home safety work. Staff would like more training on how to deal with different vulnerable groups, which would make the work more effective.

### Proposal 3 – Increasing community safety with sprinklers

Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service also have a similar objective. They have £200,000 set aside and distributed between each of their borough councils to help fund sprinkler systems in high risk premises. They received positive feedback during consultation on the objective and are in the process of implementing this. A number of other Fire Services are also considering a similar approach.

Members of staff and the unions endorsed the fitting of sprinkler systems in properties when all other prevention work has failed. However comments were made that it should not be our responsibility to cover the costs, but that of care homes or social services.

It was felt more work needed to be done to improve links with architects and developers. These relationships could increase the number of new build premises with sprinklers fitted as we would be able to work with these companies to offer design freedoms that sprinkler systems allow, trying to make it cost neutral to the developer.

Staff could see this was going to be a major focus for the Service and the Fire Authority in the future and said for this to be fully implemented it needed a senior manager leading this or a specialist team whose sole responsibility was focusing on the promotion of sprinklers. The Service needs to resource and promote this appropriately, similarly with the smoke alarm campaigns we do.

### Proposal 4 – Improving economic sustainability through effective business support

It was felt that taking a more supportive role rather than enforcement could be a problem. In the current financial climate, businesses may be taking short cuts and not implementing protection measures. Many businesses only want to know what they need to do to be compliant.

Staff gave ideas that we could use the current business support officers we have in the Service to help promote this approach and work more closely with businesses striking up relationships etc. However staff felt that we already have differing approaches to enforcement and support, and they will employ either one depending on the situation. If as a Service we promote our supportive side we would need to ensure perceptions in the business community did not change where they started to believe we had become 'soft'.

It was however felt that as a Service we need to work more closely with the business community. This could be done through a number of existing channels and networks already set-up such as chambers of commerce etc.

#### Proposal 5 – Improving how our communities are able to respond to and support incidents (community resilience)

This approach was discussed in detail with members of staff operating in more rural areas of the county. The views were mostly positive, that it is a good idea, and something which we should definitely be part of. Some issues were raised around whether we have the capacity to take a lead in this, as it should be more of a coordinated approach between the emergency services. The benefit of tackling this on a multiagency level will mean we are not duplicating work we will not be working in isolation and we will be able to share ideas and practice.

It was felt the main difficulty will be that some local communities will be more receptive to this than others. We need to promote this approach better and offer guidance to the communities to help them understand the benefits being prepared for localised incidents. As a Service, or when tackling this collaboratively with the blue-light services, we must be mindful of the networks and support streams which may already be present in local areas.

A number of ways were discussed that the Service can better assist the local communities. If there is a local fire station then this can be used to host community meetings, utilising assets we already have in place. Staff can also be used as volunteers or advocates in their local areas to help assist the local community in creating plans to deal with different incident types.

#### Proposal 6 – Reviewing our role in Road Safety and creating safer road users in Hampshire

The wording of the proposal during consultation stated we felt we were 'best placed to take a lead in road safety education'. The feeling was that we should not be the lead in road safety education, as we do not have the resources to do this. However, staff felt that this should become much more of a focus in the future, as long as workloads were reviewed to accommodate this. It was felt more resources do need to be put in to this, with a review of the current education packages we deliver.

Comments that our current level of partnership working needs to increase, and closer work with the Police and other agencies is key to this. All partners have teams looking at improving road safety in Hampshire and these all need to be linked so that the communities in Hampshire are getting the best service possible.

During a consultation event held with road safety partners duplication of work between the Service, the Constabulary, and Councils was discussed. It was also felt that the Fire Service have a fantastic reputation and image amongst the public in Hampshire and this can be a huge benefit when delivering education in the future to groups who may not be as receptive to other organisations.

### Making our Service stronger

As well as holding consultation events with staff on our more service delivery focused proposals, there were a number of events held to discuss our thinking for ways to take the organisation forward, making us stronger in the future.

This was very useful and allowed staff a first opportunity to comment on priority areas of the organisation. The view that 'People' needed a very prominent place in the future plans was recognised which is why it is now a stand-alone priority; prior to consultation the first draft had 'People' in a combined priority.

Staff felt that the other priority headings gave a decent base for future development, highlighting the key areas we must focus on in the future. There was also a view that we must not lose focus of our commitment to the 'environment' within the organisation. This is not a stand-alone priority as in previous versions of the plan; however it should be embedded in the work we do across all levels.