

HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PLAN 2011 to 2014

CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2010 to 2011

Why do we consult?

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service undertakes consultation on behalf of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority on a range of issues. The Service ensures through this consultation strategy, that all consultation carried out is relevant, inclusive, effective and meaningful, and that the outcomes of consultation are used to inform decision making.

Fire authorities have a duty to consult the public on the provision of their services. The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2008/11 states that authorities are required to ***'demonstrate that they have made changes to service provision, where appropriate, to reflect the needs and views of local communities and to demonstrate that they have considered the needs and views of all communities in making these changes'***.

This Consultation Strategy will establish the views and opinions of stakeholders on all areas within which the Service operates in order to determine levels of service provided, areas of risk and financial efficiency.

The purpose of the consultation outlined in this document is to remove the need for the Service to make assumptions and decisions in order to implement new measures towards improvement in these areas.

Drawing on the widest possible range of data and views available will enable the Service to make informed decisions, requisite in providing the best possible response, and fulfilling the needs of the community which it serves.

Who do we consult?

The Service consults with any person, organisation or stakeholder that has a legitimate interest in the proposed objectives. The service also seeks the views of any persons, organisations or stakeholders that will be affected by any of the proposed objectives.

The Service will ensure that it consults with the following persons, organisations or stakeholders;

- Employees and their representatives
- General public
- Partners
- Businesses and commerce
- Other fire and rescue authorities
- Relevant government departments
- Other emergency services
- Local authorities and other public agencies
- Local councillors and members of parliament

Areas for Consultation

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) provides guidance on the three principal areas on which we should consult our stakeholders. These areas are:

- The draft IRMP (HFRS plan) and Initial Action Plan
- The Annual Action Plans
- Changes in intervention standards and/ or resources not included in our Annual Action Plan.

Consultation methodologies

The Service will employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to fully understand the opinions and requirements of the communities it serves.

- Quantitative Research

Quantitative research involves sample or census surveys to provide numerical measurement of the distribution of opinion in the target populations – using self-completion questionnaires, telephone interviews and/or personal interviews.

This year HFRS will carry out quantitative research in the form of an electronic questionnaire located on the HFRS website.

- Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is used to explore and understand people's assumptions, opinions, standards, expectations and attitudes using in-depth conversations in focus groups or comparable forums.

This year the qualitative research will be implemented through the following means:

Focus Groups

Conversational forums where members of the community and HFRS employees can discuss their views in depth.

The Service examines the link between fires and other emergency incidents with socio-economic variables. This data is drawn upon to identify those specific groups most at risk, with the intention that resources are focused and targeted, to reduce the incidence of fire and other emergency incidents and their impact on our communities.

The draft objectives for the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service plan 2011 to 2014 have been produced using the current/historical data available and will be consulted upon with other agencies and interested parties. This will allow the Service and other agencies to gauge what is required and what can be achieved from a successful inter-agency working partnership.

Discussion will also focus on the resource requirements for the service area, what resources should be deployed, and why, how and when this will take place.

Details of proposed target groups and proposed method of consultation can be found in Appendix C.

Timescale for Consultation

The IRMP Guidance Note 1, final version states that 'Cabinet Office guidelines and good practice suggest a minimum period of twelve weeks should be allowed for written consultation.'

The Cabinet Office Code of Practice has been superseded and now 'stipulates tighter requirements for adhering to the 12 week minimum period for written consultations than those that were set out in the previous Code.'

Risk Assessment

Consultation with the community and other interested parties forms a large part of the Service's planning process and failure to carry out consultation would result in the Service failing to fulfil its legal requirements. Additionally, failure to consult may lead to a service which does not reflect the needs of the community, and it is therefore likely that the perception of the service users would fall. For this reason, it is essential that the Service adopts a flexible and consistent consultation strategy in order to satisfy its obligations.

The Service is acutely aware that effective engagement of our staff is critical for ensuring sustainable improvement. For a number of years the Service has actively engaged with members of staff at the beginning of the planning process to help in the development of proposals and identification of solutions to business needs. This year through 'Project Engage' staff have had the opportunity to shape the Service's objectives

The Service also recognises the need to consult with other stakeholders and strategic partners. Failure to do so could result in political isolation and decisions taken that compromise the Service's best interests. Other potential consequences are the loss of funding, degradation of reputation and our inability to meet our corporate aims. The Service wants to capitalise on current partnerships and build meaningful relationships with other organisations and agencies to further improve our service to our community.

We will ensure that:-

1. The attached scale and methodology of consultation (as outlined in Appendix C), is adopted as the framework for the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service plan consultation in the year 2010 to 2011.
2. All consultation results should be considered fully before proposals for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service plan 2011 to 2014 are implemented.
3. The consultation process (including results and findings) will be open and transparent and be made available to all interested parties via our website.