

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	17 December 2014
OFFICER	Jason Thelwell, Chief Operating Officer/Deputy Chief Fire Officer
LEAD MEMBER	Councillor Catriona Morris
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	2015 -20 Public Safety Plan Consultation: Feedback & Recommendations
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (PSP) was approved for public consultation at the Authority's 24 June 2014 meeting. The consultation was open for a 12 week period from 22 July to 13 October 2014.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present to the Authority the feedback received to the consultation; • the Service managers' responses to that feedback; and, • recommendations from the Chief Operating Officer /Deputy Chief Fire Officer
ACTION	Decision.
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan be adopted subject to the following modification – that the active consideration or pursuit of alternative service delivery models (proposal five at page 20 of the PSP shown at Annex 1) for core services i.e. those required to meet statutory duties, be excluded from the Plan; 2. officers be directed to proceed with the further development of proposals one to four specified at Page 20 of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (Annex 1) having regard to the consultation feedback as they are progressed and undertake further consultations with stakeholders potentially affected by any specific changes arising from their implementation; 3. the Chief Fire Officer be granted discretion to

	determine the sequencing and timing of the work required to further progress the proposals.
RISK MANAGEMENT	The Public Safety Plan sets out Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA)'s strategic approach to the management of future risk in the community. The PSP process seeks to contribute to the management of future corporate risk by aligning resourcing with anticipated demand for fire and rescue services and expected levels of funding.
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	The precise financial implications arising out of the Public Safety Plan (PSP) are to be determined. In particular, there are likely to be further costs associated with follow on work to specify and model changes to our operational 'footprint' in and across the five response 'catchment' areas identified in the PSP and to consult on any recommended changes arising from this. However achieving a better balance between anticipated future demand, contingent risks and the resourcing needed to manage this is expected to yield significant reductions to current operating costs via changes to the structure of the establishment and the equipment and asset bases.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	The approach complies with National Framework requirements by ensuring that consultation is undertaken at appropriate points in the Integrated Risk Management Planning/Public Safety Plan (PSP) development process. The outcomes of the consultation are not binding on the Authority. However it is required to take them into account before reaching decisions associated with the PSP/integrated risk management planning process.
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Any material changes to operational configuration will be subject to appropriate and proportionate assessments of implications for public and staff safety.
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	The selection process for the public focus groups was designed to ensure that a representative sample of the public was consulted. A socio-demographic profile of the public focus group participants is shown at page 12 of Annex 2. This indicates that they were a broad cross section of residents from local areas. Recruitment to the staff focus groups was by open invitation and the participants cannot therefore be certified as being a representative cross section of staff as a whole. However the groups attracted a good mix of operational and support staff and yielded a diverse range of views and opinions. Participation in the online survey was also by open invitation, so again, views expressed via this channel

	<p>cannot be certified as being necessarily representative of the views of the general public or staff as a whole. However, all staff and a wide range of organisations were encouraged to take part in the feedback process which yielded a diverse range of views and opinions.</p>
<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>Communication with Stakeholders</p> <p>BMKFRS staff, representative bodies and a wide range of partner and community organisations and representatives were invited to participate in the consultation process.</p> <p>An individual meeting with the local Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representative was held to provide them with an opportunity to discuss with and question planning staff on the content of the PSP and the process by which it was developed.</p> <p>CFA members have been engaged via a series of workshops as well as in formal Authority meetings.</p> <p>System of internal control</p> <p>All key decisions relating to the development of the PSP have been made in strict conformance with the Authority's established governance processes comprising of scrutiny by relevant internal management board, engagement with the relevant lead member, BMKFA Member scrutiny and approval at Authority meetings.</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Planning</p> <p>The Public Safety Plan (PSP) will be a key input to the development of the next Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>The balance between spending and resources</p> <p>The PSP process seeks to achieve an optimal balance between demand, contingent risks and the resources needed to balance these.</p> <p>The management of the asset base</p> <p>The follow on work arising out of the PSP will inform future asset strategy in relation to the configuration of the Authority's equipment and property assets.</p> <p>Environmental</p> <p>The PSP contains a top level assessment of national, regional and local risks which will inform the Authority's strategic approach to the management of these.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>The consultation sought to obtain the views of a representative cross section of the public and engage a wide range of other stakeholders including staff, representative bodies, community and partner organisations in the consideration of the issues and proposals contained in the Public Safety Plan.</p>

	<p>Consultation programme</p> <p>This comprised a number of elements:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A series of five focus groups with members of the public facilitated by Opinion Research Services (ORS), independent research specialists;• Two staff focus groups facilitated by the Authority's planning staff;• An online questionnaire, hosted by ORS and accessible via the Authority's website, which was open to all staff, members of the public and representatives of partner and community organisations. <p>Awareness of the consultation was raised by targeting a range of community and partner organisations by letter and email. The consultation was also publicised in the Media, notably in articles by Mix 96 and the MK Citizen, and promoted on 'Twitter' by the Authority's communication team generating 6,118 views.</p> <p>Response</p> <p>A total of 49 diverse members of the public participated in the public focus groups.</p> <p>A total of 19 members of staff took part in the staff focus groups (10 operational and 9 support). Additionally, 22 respondents to the online questionnaire declared themselves to be Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) staff members or relatives although the actual level of response may have been higher with some preferring to identify as residents or not to say.</p> <p>A range of organisations also responded to the consultation via the questionnaire or by email or letter. A list of the organisations that responded to the online consultation is shown at page 9 of Annex 4.</p> <p>There were a total of 160 responses to the online questionnaire. A full profile of online respondents is shown at Tables 1 – 6 on pages 7 – 8 of Annex 4.</p> <p>Overview of Findings</p> <p><u>Public Focus Groups (Annex 2)</u></p> <p>Participants were generally accepting of the rationale for the main proposals albeit with some reservations and a degree of realism about the challenges of implementing some of them from a public acceptance perspective e.g. changes that might involve station closures and consequent need for robust evidence to support any changes. The only proposal that was largely disfavoured was the exploration of alternative service delivery models particularly if these resulted in the adoption of a</p>
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	<p>privatised, profit driven business model.</p> <p><u>Staff Focus Groups (Annex 3)</u></p> <p>The reception given to the proposals differed somewhat between the two staff focus groups with the first group (6 support / 2 operational) tending to be more positive and accepting of the rationale for the proposals – this even extended, in contrast with the public, to a willingness to consider alternative business models if they were of the social enterprise – mutual variety. The second group (8 operational and 3 support staff) tended to be more challenging and in some cases sceptical of the basis and rationale for the Plan and raised more concerns about the impact of changes already made which some perceived as detrimental to our ability to maintain an effective operational response in some locations.</p> <p>Both groups felt it was paramount to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness to the public, for example, making optimal use of our assets such as office space that could be better used by sharing with partner agencies, which would not only share the overheads but would also facilitate knowledge sharing across sectors. Furthermore it was suggested that officers be relocated from headquarters to work from Retained Duty System stations where we struggle to provide cover and thus help improve emergency cover.</p> <p><u>Online feedback (Annex 4)</u></p> <p>A summary of the main findings from the online questionnaire is shown at page 6 of Annex 4. As well as a quantitative analysis of the findings, the report also includes analysis of qualitative feedback received in the form of textual comments. These have been analysed to show how often a particular theme or issue was raised. In general the issues raised tended to mirror those arising in the other consultation channels albeit that opinion was more divided in relation to proposals relating to response capacity or making changes involving the location of stations (potential mergers and relocations). As with the Public Focus Groups respondents strongly disfavoured the pursuit of alternative service delivery models (privatisation etc.).</p> <p><u>FBU Response (Annex 5)</u></p> <p>The FBU submitted an extensive response to the consultation. In general the FBU took the view that the proposals were not specific enough to engender meaningful engagement with or responses from stakeholders. They also challenged what they perceived to be selective use of data and statistics and asked the Authority for assurance on a range of issues such as a commitment to further consultation on any changes arising out of follow on work specified in the Plan.</p>
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	<p>Detailed responses to the questions and issues raised by the FBU are shown at Annex 7.</p> <p><u>Other Responses (Annex 6)</u></p> <p>A number of other responses were received by email or letter. These, together with any replies issued are shown at Annex 6.</p> <p>Management Response to consultation Feedback</p> <p>Annex 7 summarises the key issues and suggestions arising out of the consultation and sets out BMKFRS Management's responses and recommendations in relation to these.</p> <p>In general the feedback was found to be constructive and useful in terms of helping to progress with the development of the Service over the next five years. In light of the consultation feedback and the evaluation of this we propose to proceed with the further development of four of the five proposals set out at page 20 the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (PSP). Namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1/ The review of our 'geo-spatial' capacity in each of the five 'catchment' areas identified at page 16 of the PSP. This will begin with the review of the Milton Keynes area as proposed in the PSP. The scheduling of the other catchment area reviews will be set out in our 2015-20 Corporate Plan; 2/ The identification and implementation of the level of capacity we need to respond to major local, regional and national emergencies; 3/ Engaging and working with our staff and other stakeholders to develop the very best resourcing models for both the Service and those we serve and protect; 4/ Continue to develop opportunities to increase the benefits and value that we deliver to the public by using our capacity, resources and assets to meet a wider range of community needs in partnership with others. <p>It is proposed that the feedback from the consultation be used to help with the further development of these proposals, in particular their scope and focus.</p> <p>In light of the consultation feedback, we do not recommend that the consideration of alternative service delivery models (proposal five at page 20 of the 2015-20 PSP) that would affect delivery of core services is prioritised at this point in time although there may be some scope to consider them for specialist or support functions.</p> <p>The PSP was approved for public consultation at the Authority's 24 June 2014 meeting:</p>
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	<p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/7614/0292/6640/PublicSafetyPlan.pdf</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/4514/1320/5765/ITEM_2_24-06-14_DRAFT_MINUTES_FINALv4SMT.pdf</p> <p>The PSP was published for public consultation on 22 July 2014:</p> <p>http://bucksfire.gov.uk/files/8914/1086/7389/2015-20PSPFinal.pdf</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annex 1 – Public Safety Plan Proposals extracted from 2015-20 Public Safety Plan (page 20); 2. Annex 2 – ORS report on outcomes of public focus group consultations; 3. Annex 3 – In-house report on outcomes of staff focus group consultations; 4. Annex 4 – ORS report on outcomes of online consultation feedback 5. Annex 5 – FBU response to PSP consultation 6. Annex 6 – Other Responses by letter or email 7. Annex 7 – Management responses and recommendations to consultation feedback
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