

Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 26 September 2022

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Safety Plan 2020-2024 Update

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP - Integrated Risk Management Plan - IRMP). The publication of the Safety Plan fulfils the legislative obligations as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Panel note the update on the delivery of the plan and make comment as appropriate.

3. Background

- 3.1. The IRMP is a document that each Fire and Rescue Authority in England is required to produce. Whilst there is no specific template that the Authority is required to follow, there is guidance detailed within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018 on the content of the plan. Each plan must:
 - reflect up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
 - demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
 - outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
 - set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat; cover at least a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;

- reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
 - be easily accessible and publicly available.
- 3.2 Following the transfer of governance from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Staffordshire Commissioner, a new Safety Plan 2020-2024 was developed which was published in August 2020.
- 3.3 The four priorities outlined in the current commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan are:
- A flexible and responsive Service
 - Protect people and places
 - Help people most at risk stay safe
 - A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

4. Progress to Date

4.1. A flexible and responsive service

- 4.1.1. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recently completed its second full assessment of fire and rescue services in England, covering effectiveness, efficiency and people. The report rated Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service as 'Good' for its effectiveness in understanding and preventing fires and other risks and responding to major and multi-agency incidents.
- 4.1.2. The report does, however, identify some areas for improvement which the service is addressing. This includes how risk information is gathered and how it engages with seldom-heard groups. The service has reviewed its risk information system and engaged staff in identifying how the process could be improved. It is also developing an approach to increasing community engagement through community networks and looking at alternative ways of communicating with people without access to social media.
- 4.1.3. HMICFRS also highlighted that need for effective systems to reliably understand resource availability. The service is looking at how it can develop and integrate IT systems to reduce the need for manual processes around obtaining and interpreting availability data for whole-time and on-call firefighters. This will also allow the service to assess availability in real time, sharing this information with the Command and Control system to improve the timeliness and consistency of decision-making around the mobilisation of resources.
- 4.1.4. A new Response Performance Management Board has been established and a new Retained Support Officers (RSO) structure completed to provide more flexibility in implementing core skills training

to operational staff. This will ensure that the qualifications required for the operational deployment of firefighters are monitored and maintained.

- 4.1.5. The next steps are an end-to-end review of the recruitment process as part of a new transformation project and to continue exploratory work for the potential to mobilise by numbers, e.g. appliances available with three riders. The Service is looking towards the end of 2022 to review suggested options and to complete any required consultation.
- 4.1.6. A transformation trial of pairing stations is underway in South Staffs, with the intention of increasing the mobility and flexibility of firefighters between stations to increase overall appliance availability. This trial will be reviewed for feasibility towards the end of the year.

4.2. Protect people and places

- 4.2.1. The recent HMICFRS Inspection report rated the service as 'Good' at identifying people in our communities who are most at risk from fire and working with partners to reduce this risk. The inspection noted how the service has responded positively and proactively to learning from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and improved the safety of residents in Staffordshire who live in high-rise buildings through its sprinkler scheme.
- 4.2.2. **Building regulation consultations** (along with Licensing and Planning consultations) are business as usual and represent an incoming demand over which the Service has no control. The time remaining once these have been completed is then used to carry out **fire safety audits**. An increase in buildings regulations consultations will therefore correspond with a decrease in completed fire safety audits. Around 180 fire safety audits were completed between April and June 2022. 182 Building Regulations consultations were received in the same period, 97% of which were responded to within 15 days.
- 4.2.3. As part of the **high-rise inspection programme** (also known as the Building Risk Review Programme) the Service committed to carrying out full fire safety audits at all high-rise buildings. The list provided by the then Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) identified 50 premises with a deadline for inspection of December 2021. Following the fire at Ridware House in Lichfield last November, however, the Service prioritised this piece of work and audits of all 50 high rises identified were completed before the deadline.
- 4.2.4. The service is planning for the implications of the introduction of the **Building Safety Regulator**. The function will be located within the Health and Safety Executive and will:
- Oversee the safety and performance of all buildings.
 - Promote the competence of professionals, tradespeople and building control professionals working on all buildings.

This has two elements:

- Working with industry to promote competence of professionals working on buildings
- Improving the competence of building control inspectors, who assess, inspect, monitor and enforce building regulations across the vast majority of buildings.

This will be a more stringent regime, with the regulator acting as the building control authority for all building work on all premises which meet the definition of 'higher-risk buildings':

- (a) is at least 18 meters in height or has at least 7 storeys, and
- (b) is of a description specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State

The BSR will work with local authorities and fire and rescue authorities in delivering its role as the regulator and building control authority for in-scope buildings. The BSR will be able also to call on the expertise of Approved Inspectors in a support role if necessary. The structure and resource allocated to the Building Safety Regulator is currently being deliberated over by the NFCC and Local Fire & Rescue Services.

4.2.5. The service is also planning for the implications of the **Fire Safety Act 2021** which come into force in January 2023. This clarifies where the Fire Safety Order applies and affirms Fire and Rescue Authorities' role to take enforcement action, where appropriate, against responsible persons who fail to comply with their duties under the Fire Safety Order. It is expected to impact on audit, inspection and enforcement activity, building regulation consultations and the need for comprehensive fire safety information to be handed to the responsible person. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service will need to ensure they have effective policies in place and pathways for collecting, processing and distributing the new information that will be directed to them.

4.2.6. The **Business Support Team** develop new and innovative ideas to support businesses through training, business continuity support and self-help schemes. Training is tailored to need and specific packages and nationally recognised qualifications are available from basic fire safety awareness to a formal level 2 fire safety qualification. 120 people received training in the last quarter. The team has been particularly active following recent incidents at manufacturing facilities, commercial garages and farms, some of which had the potential to be a total loss. Farms are a particularly difficult business sector to reach in terms of fire prevention, business continuity planning and training provision and the service continues to build networks with rural communities, the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce.

4.3. Help people most at risk stay safe

4.3.1. Home fire safety visits have fully resumed following the pandemic.

They are undertaken by operational crews, safe and well technicians and prevent staff and delivered using newly-developed risk profiles been designed to target delivery to the most vulnerable people. The risk profiles are currently targeting people over 80 living alone or living with another. Referrals are also received through partner referral networks and managed through the contact centre. The service is also working with partners on extended safe and well visits using prevent teams. These cases involve a range of complex needs and require significant support to help with matters such as hoarding, mobility, mental health, drug and housing issues. As a result of recent fire fatalities, a number of case conferences are to be held to identify the causes leading up to the fire. This learning is then shared with partners and used to prevent further fires occurring. Case conferences involve representatives from a range of organisations such as fire and rescue, housing, social care and health.

- 4.3.2. The role of **Partnerships and Intervention Managers** is to link in with local authorities, health sectors and agencies to improve outcomes for our communities. Work has been ongoing in the following areas:
- Linking in with Safeguarding boards locally and nationally to develop training programmes ensuring Staffordshire fire and rescue service teams are trained to identify and report safeguarding concerns.
 - Working with local authorities to prepare vulnerable people for winter by improving energy use through the lightbulb exchange program and helping to ensure homes remain heated through the Beat the Cold program.
 - Falls Prevention and Falls Response work with partners to assess how the fire service can provide support.
 - Work with Keele University to assess how the fire and rescue service can assist in the identification of mental ill-health and provision of support.
- 4.3.3. Online delivery of **Safe+Sound** on the Learn Live Channel is going very well and will continue in September 2022 with a weekly programme every Wednesday during term-time and a number of special programmes aimed at other audiences within our community. Between January and July, 103,371 devices tuned in, either live or on demand, an average of 4,307 per week. Special programmes during this period included the Knife Angel visit to Stoke-on-Trent in April and Dementia Action Week in May. A special 'Calling it Out' programme, introduced by Councillor Bryan Jones of Cannock Chase District Council and narrated by local PCSO Suki Mander, was aimed at High School age pupils and was viewed by 3,644 devices. On 3rd August the service attended a Safe+Sound event organised by Bescura Family Hub at Port Vale FC which was attended by 24 Afghan families and 26 local families. Content included fire safety in the home, water safety, staying safe online, healthy eating and what to do in an emergency.
- 4.3.4. The National Fire Chiefs' Council is supporting the service in applying a toolkit to assess its **Early Intervention** offer and how it could improve. This looks at the service's ability to deliver targeted education

programmes designed to help young people to cope with life's challenges and reduce their vulnerability. Work is underway with other agencies locally to investigate what is currently being delivered to identify opportunities to strengthen the fire service offer.

4.4. A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

4.4.1. The requirement for Service Transformation is to ensure that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service "is able to provide a modern, efficient and sustainable level of service to the public which does not compromise the safety of our staff or our communities."

4.4.2. The HMICFRS report published in July 2022 gave a 'Good' rating to how the service ensures affordability now and into the future. The service continuously looks for ways to improve its effectiveness and efficiency and in doing so it needs to ensure it makes the best use of new technologies to transform the way services are provided.

4.4.3. There are a number of topics that are actively being worked upon which all connect under the banner of future transformation of the service. The work is aligned to the Safety Plan 2020-2024 (Service Reform) and the Commissioner's Fire & Rescue Plan 2021-2024 under the two priorities of having a Flexible and Responsive Service as well as a Fire Service for Tomorrow. The work fits into four distinct categories:

- Corporate Reform
- Response and Crewing Reform
- Prevention and Protection Reform
- Estates and Shared Services Reform

4.4.4. Initially 18 topics were identified which consist of a range of short to medium term work streams linked to the Service's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). A Transformation Board was established in February 2022 with a number of representatives from across the service to deliver the work and significant progress has been made to date. The Board meets frequently to ensure progress is discussed on work streams which includes consultation responses, coordination issues, communications and recommendations are made through the appropriate governance structures. A number of the workstreams have already been completed:

- A Corporate restructure
- The change to a Minimum of 4 staff on Wholetime appliances
- The completion of a Retained Support Officers Project
- A review of operational exercises
- A review of Incident Command and Outreach training
- The option to remove Watch Managers from WT Appliances
- A Review of attendance standards

- 4.4.5. There are also a number of projects nearing completion:
- The On-call nine-point plan
 - The productivity review
 - The South Staffordshire roving model for on-call responses
 - The Enhanced Rescue Pump and crewing at Longton
 - The Crewing Policy review
- 4.4.6. More in-depth work is continuing with the mobilisation of On-call crews by numbers, the joint fire/police estates projects and the review of prevention and protection.
- 4.4.7. The Corporate Communications team are supporting the Board with a strategy to reach all of the staff within the Service to keep them updated and allow for their involvement. To date this has been extremely effective with high levels of engagement through face-to-face meetings and other means. All frequently asked questions are responded to by the Service and video and news updates are shared across the Service in addition to the continued consultation with the staff representative bodies.
- 4.4.8. HMICFRS rated the service as 'Good' at getting the right people with the right skills, managing performance and developing leaders as well as looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff. However, there were a number of areas in which the services were rated as 'Requires Improvement'. HMICFRS highlighted IT resilience and accessibility as an area for improvement and progress is being made including development of the Firewatch system to work on a mobile platform and also be used for asset management and health and safety reporting.
- 4.4.9. A number of areas for improvement were highlighted in relation to people, including promoting the right organisational values and culture, succession planning, ensuring fairness and improving diversity and inclusion. Work is ongoing to embed the national Core Code of Ethics alongside a framework covering recruitment, training, promotion and supervisor training. Regular face-to-face briefings now take place to ensure all staff are engaged, messages are consistent and people have the opportunity to raise issues. Alongside this, an independent service, 'Say So', has been implemented to enable staff to raise concerns anonymously. A collaborative approach with Staffordshire Police on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is being introduced with an investment from the Service into a new 'Positive Action' role. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is also a focus of a new Workforce Planning Board. Monthly case reviews have been introduced to oversee grievance management, ensure any trends are quickly identified and dealt with, and provide staff with training and support where required.

4.5. Conclusion

- 4.5.1. The Police, Fire and Crime Panel will continue to receive updates in line with their proposed work plan for the coming year and as requested.

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