CABINET - 19 MARCH 2019

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP) DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2019-20

Report by Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to accept the proposed projects and adopt in the final version of the CRMP Action Plan 2019-20.

Executive Summary

1. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework to which Fire Authorities must have regard when discharging their functions. The 2018 Framework requires each Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a publicly available Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Within Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) we have called this our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to make it more meaningful to the public. In April 2017 OFRS published the CRMP 5year strategy of Oxfordshire, this will cover the period from 2017 to 2022.

2. Each year the fire authority creates an action plan which proposes a number of projects to support the CRMP 5year strategy This report outlines the proposed projects for 2019-20 and the consultation that has been undertaken on those projects.

3. The proposals in this report were presented to the Performance Scrutiny Committee in October 2018.

4. The agreed projects within the 2019-20 action plan, have been subjected to full internal and external consultation for a period of 12 weeks. Cabinet is therefore invited to comment on the proposed action plan for 2019-20, consultation responses and management responses to the consultation responses.

5. Our medium-term financial plan and supporting business strategy underpin the proposals within this year's action plan.

Introduction

6. The Secretary of State published the latest Fire and Rescue National Framework in 2018. The purpose of the Framework was to provide strategic direction from central government whilst ensuring that authorities continue to

make local decisions. The Framework sets out the Government's objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service and what fire and rescue authorities should do to achieve these objectives.

7.   Each Fire and Rescue Authority should ensure that the IRMP:

- Is regularly reviewed and revised and reflects up-to-date risk information and evaluation of service delivery outcomes
- Has regard to the risk analyses completed by Local and Regional Resilience Forums including those reported in external Community Risk Registers (CRRs) and internal risk registers, to ensure that civil and terrorist contingencies are captured in their IRMP
- Reflects effective consultation during its development and at all review stages with representatives of all sections of the community and stakeholders
- Demonstrates how prevention, protection and response activities will be best used to mitigate the impact of risk on communities in a cost-effective way
- Provides details of how Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their objectives and meet the needs of communities through working with partners
- Has undergone an effective equality impact assessment process.

8.   Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service published its strategic CRMP in April 2017 providing the strategic direction for the next five years. This document is subjected to annual review and updated and amended as required.   The current strategic CRMP requires no amendment for the fiscal year 2019-20.

9.   Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service senior management have responded to the comments made during the consultation period and the response summaries are available to Cabinet within this report.

Consultation

10.   For the consultation of the 2019-2020 action plan, we sought the assistance of the County Council's Engagement and Communications teams.

11.   We are working together to increase engagement and participation in the consultation for the action plan on an ongoing basis and utilise this opportunity to encourage further engagement across Oxfordshire.

12.   For the 2019 to 2020 consultation, we set ourselves the following aims and objectives:

- To increase community involvement and feedback from residents to the annual action plan consultation;

- To gain feedback from the public on understanding their views on what the priorities should be for the Fire and Rescue Service over the next 12 months;
- To increase levels of public engagement with the Fire and Rescue Service in general;
- Provide mechanisms to sustain increased levels of participation.

13. The methods we used, focused on OCC''s six key principles of consultation:

- Keep an open mind and run consultations in an open and honest way;
- Be clear about what we are consulting on and what we will do with the findings;
- Give all relevant parties the chance to have their say;
- Provide sufficient time and information to enable people to engage;
- Take views expressed in consultations into account when we make decisions;
- Provide effective and timely consultation feedback.

14. The areas of the focus for the consultation were as follows:

Live consultation on CRMP:

- Online portal questionnaire
- Focus Groups
- Locality briefings
- Hard copy questionnaires

Engagement activities:

15. During the consultation we engaged with all neighbouring fire and rescue services, as well as Thames Valley Police and South-Central Ambulance Service.

- Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service,
- Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service,
- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service.

16. The service held engagement events with 70 Fire and Rescue personnel from all areas of the service.

17. The service attended Locality meeting engaging with the local councillors in Witney, Faringdon and Wantage, Abingdon and Woodstock and the City of Oxford.

18. A formal management meeting has taken place with the representative bodies (FBU) to reply specifically to points raised.

19. The engagement and communication team supported the consultation in the following areas.

- Oxfordshire County Council residents' contacts
- Engagement team contacts
- Voluntary organisations
- Intranet and internet publication and news feeds
- Hard copy distribution to libraries.
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20. Through this approach we have interacted with various stakeholder groups, which has amounted to consultation with in excess of 200 people.

21. As a result of this engagement work we received informal feedback at the events and formal responses from 58 individual's responses.

22. The following section summarises the projects for inclusion in the action plan for the fiscal year 2019-20. This includes a consultation response summary & OFRS senior management response summary. A full consultation response report will be available & published in April 2019.

*Project 1: **Risk profiling local communities***

Precis: We plan to use a 'risk profiling model' to locally identify the impact of changes in the environment, to understand what resources are needed to ensure we can effectively and efficiently carry out our core activities, respond, protect and prevent.

Consultation summary

23. The responses received for this project were positive and supportive of the project going forward. Both from members of the public and internal staff. People were interested in how we will allocate resources for the county and felt that it was a good opportunity for us to review our current model.

24. People were interested to see if the project would give honest findings and be presented in a way that would benefit the population overall. There has been a request to publish the findings externally.

25. People were interested in how we would utilise this to priorities areas of poverty and deprivation and asked if the recommendations would identify gaps with resourcing of the county.

Management response

26. The Service is encouraged by the response to this project and the support from the consultation. The project will help the service to have a greater

understanding of the communities within Oxfordshire, by utilising multiple data-sets of information and linking in with the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). This will enable the service to understand where best to target our resources. We will share relevant findings with communities to help the service to understand local need of those communities.

Project 2: **Prevention review**

Precis: Prevention is made up of many different activities aimed at reducing incidence and impact of fires and other emergencies. These activities include educating the public across many age groups as well as conducting Safe and Well visits in people's homes. This project plans to review these Prevention activities to identify where improvements could be made.

Consultation summary

27. There was a positive response towards this project. However; it was felt that this could be a business as usual activity and not necessarily a CRMP project. There were concerns that a review would reduce the service available for genuine emergencies and that people should still be encouraged to call the emergency services when required. People wanted the service to identify lifestyle groups as well as age groups of how to target our prevention activities and some concerns that groups may be forced to into self-help, when that may not be the most appropriate action.

28. It was encouraging that staff responses agreed with the review and it was felt that activities that are introduced should be evaluated to see if there is a benefit to the community.

Management response:

29. The service will review the prevention activities ensuring that it benefits the most vulnerable in society. It will draw on both national and local best practice as well as discussing with other emergency services as to how they deliver prevention.

30. This project is not about reducing resources to either emergency or prevention activities, it is about understanding the best use of our finite resources to deliver the best service for communities. It is being set out as a CRMP project in order that the service can show transparency during the review to the communities of Oxfordshire. In the future this will become business as usual to ensure that new activities are evaluated appropriately.

Project 3: **On-Call retention review**

Precis: We plan to review the retention of On-Call firefighters in the service. This review will seek to understand the reasons our staff stay with us, and what we can do to keep our staff for longer

Consultation summary:

31. People strongly agreed that this review should be carried out. Responses have given suggestions on ways to increase both retention and diversity in the On-Call service. There were concerns that On-Call staff joined to become Whole time and that this was influencing retention; there was also concern that housing in the area (including rental) was costly and does have an impact on staff staying in the area. It is hoped that this project will deliver ways to encourage staff to stay within the On-Call duty system.

Management response:

32. The service welcomes the feedback on this project and is encouraged by the suggestions and ideas to increase the retention in the On-Call duty system. The service acknowledges the concerns of some staff transitioning from On-Call to wholetime. The service will look at other organisations that utilise volunteer staff, such as the RNLI, to understand how retention works within their services.

33. The service will consider the availability of key worker housing and how this could support our staff.

Project 4: ***To have an active role in improving standards in rented housing***

Precis: This project will seek to protect tenants and prospective tenants from both physical harm and monetary loss when renting a residential property.

Consultation summary:

34. There was a mixed response to the inclusion of this project within the service's CRMP. Respondents were confused as to the inclusion of this project within a fire and rescue CRMP. However, we are encouraged that respondents felt that this was a worthwhile project to tackle the rental market within Oxfordshire, both with landlords and tenants.

Management response:

35. This is the first time the service has included a Trading Standards project in the CRMP. Trading Standards are part of Community Safety Services which report directly to the Chief Fire Officer and is the reason why it has been included. This is a joint project with Fire and Rescue and Trading Standards. Trading Standards will be the lead for the project, as they are the enforcer of the legislation that covers these areas.

36. As a Fire and Rescue service we have a role to play in ensuring the safety of residents in Oxfordshire. The service will support this project with our links into the community and being able to identify unsafe environments within the rented

sector. This will then feed in to the Trading Standards team to enable them to focus their resources to deliver the best for the community.

37. Trading Standards will ensure that it engages with both tenants and landlords across the rental market to support tenants in understanding their rights and encourage landlords to understand their responsibilities.

Project 5: **Establishing Community Safety Advocates or Wardens**

Precis: We aim to attract people who would like to be a part of us and what we do, but not necessarily by fighting fires. Community Safety Advocates or Wardens will be pivotal in the delivery of safe and well activities in their localities.

Consultation summary:

38. The responses generally agreed with the project, stating that this would be good for communities. They felt that it was a worthwhile project that could link to existing providers of similar services and whether this service could be provided by the police. There were questions asked as to once the service is running, who would hold responsibility for maintaining the group; there were reservation around the use of non-professional volunteers carrying out this kind of work.

Management response:

39. This project was started in 2018 and the service is in encouraged by the responses and suggestion in this consultation to support the work already carried out. The service is now working with the wider County Council on ways to expand and deliver on this project. The police are involved in some areas of community work; however, the fire and rescue service leads on the safe and well initiatives and it is felt that we can greater target the communities by using these volunteers.

Project 6: **To increase the diversity of the Workforce to reflect our community**

Precis: Over 2018-19 we have been looking at ways to encourage people from underrepresented groups to take up work within the service. It is proposed for this work to continue through 2019-20

Consultation summary

40. General responses were positive to this project, understanding the need to increase diversity. Some suggestions were in looking at ways to target underrepresented groups and work with schools to encourage more diverse applications. It was felt that the service had already done a significant amount

of work in this area, however the lack of diversity was being impacted by the limited external Whole time recruitment over the past 5 years. People wished to know if the service will set targets on the number of people recruited from diverse backgrounds.

Management responses

41. This is a continuation of the work that has been carried out over 2018 with regards to increasing female applicants towards operational roles. The service is encouraged by the ideas that have been put forwards under this consultation and recognises that for wholetime staff there has been no external recruitment for a considerable period until 2018.

42. The project will look to understand the successes of the work carried out over the last year and understand how to develop those efforts to reach the wider diversity within Oxfordshire. At this stage, the service has not set targets on what it will deliver but would rather see an increased interest in joining us.

General comments

43. There were several general comments from the consultation that the service has responded to below.

   1. Does the numbering indicate the priority of the project, it's a pity that the desire to increase diversity is listed as the last of your 6 priorities. This makes it look a bit like an after-thought, whereas it is, of course, extremely important.
   a. *The numbering of the projects does not indicate the priority of the project, all projects have equal importance and will be give the same level of priority.*

   2. It looks to me that you are reducing the cover given and with so many extra houses being built it is a 2-way reduction. I would like to hear of a new fire station being built.
   a. *There are no intentions to reduce fire cover across the county. The service has increased the number of fire stations in the county with 2018 seeing the opening of Oxfordshire's first new fire station in many years in Carterton.*

   3. No except that I'm not clear on how some of the outcomes are measurable.
   a. *All projects will have measurable outcomes once agreed and will be reported on within the Annual report on completion of the project.*

   4. I believe the fire service in Oxfordshire relies upon on call firefighters too heavily. Fire engine availability must be increased so a review/ upgrade of certain station will be inevitable in the future. This will account for

increased expansion and future risks around the county, including the Grenfell inquiry and the home office inspections.

a. *The availability of fire appliances is continually monitored to ensure cover is provided throughout the county. Project 1 will help us to understand the emerging risks in the county and address resources where required.*

5. And what about training for fighting electric vehicle fires; You'll need that within the timeframe you are looking at.

a. *The service is already well versed and trained on how to fight fires in electrical vehicles. We continue to look at new and future advancements in technology and how this will affect fires and methods of extinguishing.*

6. We are now seeing more people leaving the Wholetime service than ever, I think some questions need asking on why; that first? and maybe the focus shifted?

a. *The service monitors and interviews staff when they leave the service to help us to understand the reasons, which in turn allows us to develop and improve working conditions for existing staff members.*

Financial and Staff Implications

44. Each project will fully recognise the prevailing economic constraints, delivering efficiencies or allowing existing/additional services to be delivered more effectively. If any budgetary pressures result from the implementation of these projects, they will be managed within existing budgets or highlighted to Cabinet through the annual Service Resource and Planning process.

SIMON FURLONG
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February 2019