

Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-25: Consultation Findings

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report presents the findings of the public consultation on the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021 - 25 and requests the Fire Authority to authorise the Chief Fire Officer to amend, where necessary, and finalise the document for publication. An Equality Impact Assessment has also been prepared for consideration and approval.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is recommended to:

- a) note the report from Opinion Research Services setting out the findings of the public consultation on the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report
- b) approve the amended Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-25 and authorise the Chief Fire Officer to publish the document with any further minor amendments as may be necessary; and
- c) approve the Equality Impact Assessment as attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

3 Background

The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is the Authority's overall plan for improving public safety. It provides an overview of fire and rescue related risks and sets out high-level plans for identifying, assessing and mitigating those risks. On 24 June 2020, Members authorised the publication of the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-25 (the IRMP) for public consultation.

It was also noted that the process for preparation and publication of the IRMP has been aligned with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan 2021 – 25, as part of the Strategic Fire Alliance.

Public consultation on the IRMP took place between 6 July 2020 and 30 September 2020. Opinion Research Services (ORS), an independent specialist social research practice, was commissioned to facilitate the consultation. ORS have now prepared their report setting out the main findings, and this is attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

4 Consultation Process

Members will appreciate that the public consultation was carried out during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. To address this, an IRMP Consultation Communication Strategy was developed to help ensure that the consultation was as widely publicised as possible. This included a comprehensive mailshot to key stakeholders, including councillors, parish and town councils, libraries, housing associations and trusts, voluntary organisations, faith and community groups, as well as other fire and rescue services, emergency services and representative bodies.

In addition, the Service presented the IRMP to all the Town and Parish Councils through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) regional 'Zoom' meetings. This presented the key proposals of the IRMP, provided question and answers and encouraged local councils to respond through completing the online questionnaire hosted by ORS.

Council engagement included:

- 27 Parish and Town Councils in Telford and Wrekin
- 153 Parish and Town Councils in Shropshire

Internally, the Service provided staff with extensive coverage on the staff Portal with a bespoke IRMP section that included the IRMP, the risk reviews that underpin it and the PESTLE analysis engagement undertaken with all staff in 2019. This was supplemented by the Service's internal communication bulletins for all staff.

An IRMP consultation page was also set up on the Service website; this provided the IRMP, its key proposals, the risk reviews that informed the IRMP and the links to the questionnaire. The web page included a video presentation by the Chief Fire Officer and an easy to follow animation, both of which were available on the Service's YouTube channel. The consultation was also publicised on the Service's social media sites.

In addition, reminders were sent out via social media and direct email. This occurred at various stages during the consultation period. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer supported this engagement process by helping the Service to identify and communicate with a variety of groups, some under-represented in consultation responses, such as community, faith and disability groups. Partners such as Telford and Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council were encouraged to share the consultation with their staff.

A separate review of the outcomes of the IRMP Communications Strategy will be undertaken as part of the end of project review. This will help the Service to understand best practice and learn any lessons for future consultations.

While an online questionnaire formed the basis of the consultation, three public focus groups were also held with a diverse and broadly representative cross-section of local residents, to enable deliberation of the issues in greater detail. The venues for these sessions were formally risk assessed, and the meetings fully adhered to the Government guidance on public safety during the pandemic.

The online questionnaire included a series of core questions, as well as a section inviting respondents to make further comments. There were a number of demographic profiling questions. The questionnaire was available in paper format and online via a link on the Service website.

Over the 12-week consultation period, 90 questionnaires were completed, 82 were submitted online and eight on paper. Most responses (75) were from individuals, but 15 responses were also received from a number of organisations including ten councils, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, West Mercia Police and the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. In addition, three written submissions were also received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia (the PCC) and the Canal and River Trust.

The three public focus groups were held in Shrewsbury and Telford during August 2020 and were attended by a total of 30 residents. The focus groups represented Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire Council Rural and Shropshire Council Urban areas. ORS are satisfied that the outcomes of the three sessions are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

5 Engagement at a Glance¹



¹ Web site bounce rate: 20% + is considered very positive. This is the % of people who stay on the web site and visit other pages.

6 Main Findings

The ORS report provides a commentary on all feedback on the issues included in the IRMP 2021 - 25 consultation document. As well as summarising the main findings, it also includes full accounts of the views of individuals, organisations, the focus groups and the written submissions.

Overall, the format of the draft IRMP was well received, with most respondents positive about the Service's approach to risk management and planning. This is summarised in the table below.

| The Consultation Document. Questionnaire data. | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">78% of respondents agreed that the document was easy to understand.5% disagreed. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">84% of respondents agreed the document gave them valuable information about Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) works.3% disagreed. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">83% of respondents showed an interest in the future plans of SFRS.7% disagreed. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">84% of respondents agreed that SFRS had correctly identified the main risks facing the community.1% disagreed. | |

7 Key Proposals.

7.1 Work to a revised Response standard

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that the Service wants to show more clearly how its Response standard will affect each community, and were asked to comment on the following proposed aspects of it:

| Response Standard. Questionnaire data. | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Proposed standard | Individuals | Organisations |
| The arrival of the first engine in Urban areas within 10 minutes | 78% agreed 15% disagreed | 12 agreed None disagreed |
| The arrival of the first engine in Town and Fringe areas within 15 minutes | 67% agreed 22% disagreed | 12 agreed None disagreed |
| The arrival of the first engine in Rural areas within 20 minutes | 58% agreed 32% disagreed | 13 agreed None disagreed |
| To achieve this standard on 85% of occasions or more | 61% agreed 32% disagreed | 12 agreed None disagreed |

Response Standard. Focus Group feedback. General Approval.

- “There are bound to be different response times in urban and rural areas”
- “you need targets to be accountable”
- “...standards can protect fire engines and stations”
- “I’m surprised how good the rural response times are- I thought they would be a lot longer!”
- “targets like this increase expectations!”
- “I would change the wording to “approximately” because it could be a rod for your own back”

The principle and specific times of the Service’s Response standards were endorsed clearly. While one group had reservations about whether explicit time standards are necessary or desirable, all the groups readily endorsed the following important points:

- The current Response performance is good (opinion widely held across the three groups)
- The standards as now defined are reasonable and acceptable (unanimous opinion)
- It is important to provide clarity by differentiating rural and urban Response times (unanimous opinion [if there are to be standards at all])
- Overall ‘average times’ are relatively uninformative to the public; and
- The 85% achievement target is satisfactory given that there will be exceptions in different circumstances.

The consultation identified a varied public awareness of the Service’s response resources and capabilities, especially in rural areas. The focus groups were able to question Officers on the response standard and were very supportive of the proposals. However, 32% of questionnaires completed by the public were not supportive of the 20-minute rural response time proposal with about 1 in 20 strongly disagreeing. The Service recognises there will need to be an emphasis on continuing to engage with our communities on this issue during the life of the IRMP. The aim of this dialogue will be to identify if there is an expectation for reduced response times or if increased prevention work will be satisfactory - recognising the integration of the response standard with the proposal to increase targeted prevention in rural areas whilst maintaining the 97% + appliance availability is crucial to managing the rural risk.

7.2 Undertake a resource deployment review

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that the Service wants to review how to allocate resources, like vehicles and crews, more flexibly to cope with variable risks and demand and ensure the right resources are in the right place, at the right time. It does not propose to reduce its emergency services.

| Resource deployment review. Questionnaire data. | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Proposal | Individuals | Organisations |
| Resource deployment review. | 85% agreed 8% disagreed | All 15 agreed None disagreed |

- Resource deployment review. Focus Group feedback. General Approval.**
- “This all makes good sense!”
 - “You do need to move resources to where they’re most needed”
 - “I assumed this was happening already – it should be normal to rationalise the allocation of resources against risk!”

A few people questioned whether the proposal would mean that fire engines would be deployed off-station, like ambulances that move about near the dangerous motorways? Others asked, “Does this mean you could have a floating resource?”

Overall, though, the focus groups were almost unanimous in thinking that the flexible use of resources is obviously important and rational.

7.3 Provide increased Protection team resources

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told about the Protection team’s work with businesses to conduct safety audits, give advice, and provide guidance and enforcement of safety legislation to reduce the risk of deaths and injuries from fires. The Service proposes to increase the Protection team from nine to 12 members of staff.

| Protection resourcing. Questionnaire data. | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Proposal | Individuals | Organisations |
| Increase Protection Team Officers from 9 to 12. | 82% agreed 5% disagreed | 14 agreed None disagreed |

- Protection resourcing. Focus Group feedback. Overwhelming approval.**
- “I had no idea just how much good work you do with businesses!”
 - “It’s good to have more staff for this if you can afford it nowadays.”
 - “We don’t have many high rise, high risk buildings in Shropshire, but it all makes sense!”
 - “There are obvious gains in doing all this.”

Participants in the focus groups were asked whether the Service should continue to expect staff and the public to report premises with higher risks, increasingly target higher risk places for inspections, and increase its specialist Protection personnel from nine to 12 to assist the implementation of post-Grenfell recommendations.

The focus groups found these proposals were popular and that they seemed “obviously good ideas” to the participants.

7.4 Increase Prevention capacity to target the changing rural risk

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants were told that Prevention teams work with the public, using educational campaigns and Safe and Well Visits, to prevent emergencies happening in people’s homes, particularly those who are vulnerable or elderly.

The Service proposes that people in rural areas will have a greater opportunity to access Safe and Well Visits by the Service and obtain more safety information.

| Prevention. Questionnaire data. | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Proposal | Individuals | Organisations |
| People in rural areas will have greater opportunity to access Safe and Well visits by the Service and obtain more safety information. This will be provided using technology and partnerships. | 91% agreed 1% disagreed | All 15 agreed None disagreed |

Participants in the focus groups were asked whether the Service should continue its targeted Safe and Well Visits, particularly focusing on identifying and targeting advice and information toward vulnerable people who are at risk and in need – as well as those in rural areas. The responses about targeting rural areas were very positive, with some suggestions of how the targeting might be done (although some disagreed), including for example the following comments.

| Prevention. Focus Group feedback. Overwhelming approval. |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You could use Zoom groups with carers – you could set up video calls and repeat the process.” • “But vulnerable people don’t usually have the technology or know-how for Zoom.” • “You could use Neighbourhood Watch to distribute information locally.” • “The parish councils could also play a role in informing people in rural areas – if you gave them the information. Parish magazines could be used, too, or visits to parish council meetings.” • “The on-call firefighters should also have a role, with other volunteers, too.” • “You need to avoid impersonation, though, if you go calling on people when not in uniform.” • “The information highlights the wide range of work you do – for example, in care homes – and your roles are very varied – which isn’t well-known to the public!” |

While everyone endorsed the importance of Prevention and the targeting of rural areas, a few people expressed concerns about the potentially wide scope of Safe and Well Visits, which struck some as possibly intrusive and a form of ‘safeguarding’ or ‘paternalism’ – for example:

Prevention. Focus Group feedback. Concerns.

- “Don’t overdo the safeguarding!”
- “There is a fine line in Safe and Well Visits – it’s important not to be too intrusive.”
- “It’s OK if the capacity really is there – but you must not lose your focus on fires. Don’t blur the lines!”
- “Don’t overdo the social work aspect – all agencies have to co-operate to make this work well.”

7.5 Update the Service vision and aims for the next four years

The questionnaire asked for any further comments including whether people agreed or disagreed with the proposed vision and aims of the Service.

Service vision and aims. Questionnaire comments.

- “A very thorough review with clear and appropriate vision and aims.”
- “I totally agree with the vision for SFRS and I think the aims well thought out and achievable.”

8 Written Submissions

The submission from the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia (the PCC) was sent directly to the Service and was not shared with ORS, therefore it does not form part of the ORS report.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) requested an extension to the 30 September consultation deadline. Although this was granted, the final FBU response was received too late to be included in the ORS report.

While neither submission responded directly to the consultation questionnaire, their comments are important and are included in full at Appendices 3 and 4 to the report. During the development of the IRMP equality impact assessments, Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance provided a written response, which has been included along with the written response of the Canal and River Trust in the ORS report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 outlines a Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires public authorities to have regard to equality considerations when exercising their functions. Completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a way of considering the potential impact of policies on equality prior to their implementation.

An EIA has been completed for the IRMP 2021-25 and is attached at Appendix 2 to the report. The format of the EIA follows a template recently drafted by the National Fire Chiefs Council. Members are recommended to consider and approve the EIA.

10 Minor Amendments

In the light of the consultation responses and feedback, subject to approval, the draft IRMP document will be amended and prepared for publication on 1 April 2021. Having assessed the responses, it is expected that any additional amendments will be small and textual. The proposed changes can be viewed in Appendix 7. It is proposed that any minor revisions will be signed off by the Chief Fire Officer prior to publication.

11 Conclusion

This report summarises the findings of the public consultation on the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-25.

The document was well received with a good level of support given to its key proposals. The public and partners were, in general, positive about the identification and analysis of risk and the various Prevention, Protection and Response aims consulted upon.

Taking the consultation feedback into account, it is proposed that the Plan is finalised and approved, including the minor amendments that were approved at the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting held on December 3rd, 2020. (see appendix 7) The IRMP will be published in April 2021.

It is also recommended that Members consider and approve the Equality Impact Assessment, which has been prepared to have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

12 Identified Revenue Funding

Sustainable funding will be required in order to maintain the delivery of high quality services over the term of the IRMP. Over this period, there may be public sector funding pressures that could impact on the delivery levels of services.

13 Capacity

External design and consultation will be acquired to support Communication team capacity and business as usual.

14 Collaboration / Partnership Working

The preparation of the IRMP has involved joint workshops with colleagues at Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service to ensure a common approach to risk identification and management. An extensive programme of local risk workshops has also been conducted with staff in all Service departments. The joint methodology employed in this public consultation will ensure that wider public opinions and perspectives will inform the final IRMP.

15 Community Safety

No issues arising

16 Environmental

No issues arising

17 Equality Impact Assessment

The EQIA is included at Appendix 2 to the report

18 Financial Implications

Further independent risk analysis and modelling to support any areas under consultation will incur further costs.

19 Health and Safety

The IRMP sets out the Authority's overall approach to risk management. Proposed activities to manage risks identified in the IRMP will be assessed and managed through normal departmental planning processes.

20 Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

21 ICT

There is no impact on ICT.

22 Legal Comment

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on the Service to have due regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework in carrying out its functions. The Framework itself provides guidance on integrated risk management planning (IRMP) and that an IRMP should: "Reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies, and partners."

The IRMP is an Alliance project between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The consultation was run in accordance with government guidance and following the principles of good consultation and engagement.

23 Public Value / Service Delivery

The IRMP supports the Service's Strategic Aims 1 -4

24 Reputation

Failing to recognise the changing risk profile of Shropshire would impact negatively on the Service's reputation.

25 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

26 Training

There are no training implications within this report.

27 Appendices

Appendix 1

Opinion Research Services Report of Consultation Findings

Appendix 2

Equality Impact Assessments

Appendix 3

Letter of response from West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion dated 24 September 2020

Appendix 4

Letter of response from Fire Brigades Union dated 26 October 2020

Appendix 5

Index of Partners.

Appendix 6

Equality Impact Assessment Feedback

Appendix 7 (attached to report)

Proposed Amendments to IRMP

Please note that due to the size of the documents attached as appendices they have not been printed to save paper and postage costs.

The full appendices can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/meeting/16-december-2020>

28 Background Papers

IRMP Consultation Document 2021-25