

The Highland Council
Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities
Committee - 26 March 2014

Agenda Item	7ii(b)
Report No	CPE 9/14

Proposed response to the Draft Highland Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2014–2017

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This report advises members of the amendments and process required for approving the first Highland Local Fire and Rescue Plan 2014-17. The draft plan has been considered by members locally and at the meeting of the Adult and Children Services Committee in February 2014. Final approval will be sought at Council in May 2014.

1. Background

- 1.1 It is a requirement of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) must prepare and submit a local fire and rescue plan to the local authority for approval. The draft plan was made available to the Council in January 2014 for initial feedback by 17th February 2013. It was subsequently considered by the Adult and Children's Services Committee on 19th February 2014 given its community safety interest. The local senior officer for SFRS is presenting the revised draft of the local fire and rescue plan to this meeting, taking into account the Council feedback to date. Further recommendations on amendments required to approve the plan are included in this report.
- 1.2 The Council's Programme contains a commitment that we will play a full part in agreeing local plans for police and fire and rescue services in Highlands and that we will monitor performance against these plans. By considering and agreeing this plan we will support the programme commitment.
- 1.3 In considering the Council's response, members are reminded of:
- The requirements for local fire and rescue plans and the role of the Council in approving them as set out in the Police and Fire Reform Act (Scotland) 2012 and summarised in Appendix 1;
 - The Committee approved the feedback the SFRS' first Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016 which focused on the vision, values and aims of the national service in September 2013;
 - The expectations of members on the local fire and rescue plan identified at the member workshop held in December 2013 (reported separately to this Committee meeting);
 - The local consultation through ward forums last year on local priorities for fire and rescue services;
 - The local consultation with members on the earlier draft of the plan through Ward Business Meetings in January and February this year and their feedback that they support the plan and that they feel it reflects the priorities discussed with the local Fire and Rescue Teams

at ward forums; and

- The feedback received through the Citizens' Panel highlighting the top three community safety concerns as road safety, alcohol abuse and antisocial behaviour.

2. The draft local fire and rescue plan

2.1 The plan is well structured and includes national and local assessments, an equality impact assessment and a risk profile for the region. It identifies the trend over 3 years in local fire and rescue activity. It proposes seven priorities. The links across the seven priorities with SFRS strategic aims, the Highland Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), the joint strategic assessment of risk and other relevant plans and legislation are made.

2.2 The seven priorities proposed in the draft local fire and rescue plan are:

Priority 1: Local Risk Management and Preparedness;

Priority 2: Reduction of Accidental Dwelling Fires;

Priority 3: Reduction in Fire Casualties and Fatalities;

Priority 4: Reduction of Deliberate Fire Setting;

Priority 5: Reduction of Fires in Non Domestic Property;

Priority 6: Reduction in Casualties from Non Fire Emergencies;

Priority 7: Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.

2.3 The Local Fire Senior Officer advises that following agreement and adoption of the plan, an annual action plan will be produced, detailing the delivery arrangements and incorporating targets for the reporting year 2014-15.

3. Proposed response from the CPE Committee

3.1 The proposed response takes into account: the changes made to the draft plan from earlier consultation; an assessment of the extent to which the plan content meets statutory requirements; where the plan can be improved to support community planning agreements; and member expectations about the local plan from the workshop in December 2013.

3.2 Acknowledging changes made to the draft plan already

Members should welcome that a number of the comments made last year on the strategic plan have been included in the draft local plan. This includes commitments to local partnership working and local initiatives, the inclusion of local diversionary activities such as the Firesetters programme, clarifying the definition of non-fire emergencies and reference to local emergency planning.

3.3 The Adult and Children's Services Committee has a community safety remit to consider local plans for police and fire in relation to youth justice, alcohol and drugs, adult protection, child protection, offending and re-offending. The main amendments requested by the Committee for the plan were:

- Greater emphasis on targeted action to prevent fires for higher risk groups, notably older people, people with disabilities, vulnerable young people and those living at home alone.
- More emphasis on identifying hazards and minimising risk and around certain activities such as the misuse of alcohol, particularly when coupled with smoking or chip pans or in improving fire safety in bin enclosures for communal areas for flats.

- A request for formal consultation with NHHSH on the draft local plan.

3.4 The current draft plan identifies the importance of partnership working and includes reference to ensuring a fair service through various forums and sharing information including through District Partnerships. This approach to engagement should help to identify high risk groups. It also identifies the ageing profile of the region as a risk factor and the need to target home safety visits to the most vulnerable people in the community and this covers the concerns raised at the Committee for smokers, those misusing alcohol, people with disabilities, older people and areas of deprivation. These changes should be welcomed and there are two areas where the plan could be strengthened further to cover member concerns:

1. To include flatted accommodation, as not all flats are found in areas of deprivation;
2. To include vulnerable young people as a fire risk group. While the revised draft highlights the referral process and closer working with housing officers and social workers and mentions the Adult and Children's Services Committee, it does not appear to have any explicit mention of vulnerable young people as being at risk from dwelling fires or as a fire casualty, other than in the section of the draft plan dealing with reducing deliberate fire setting. The Committee should seek to include vulnerable young people as potential victims of fire risk and not just as potential perpetrators, with them identified as a group under priorities 2 and 3; reducing accidental dwelling fires and reducing fire casualties and fatalities. It is noted that young people are identified as a risk group in road traffic collisions.

3.5 The Local Senior Fire Officer has shared the draft plan with the senior management and Chair of NHHSH for feedback and in partnership groups chaired by NHHSH.

3.6 Members were keen for consideration to be given to integrating sprinkler systems with telecare services and for sprinklers to be installed in all new build social housing and other establishments such as hostels, schools and supported accommodation and if possible as a condition of planning consent. This is more of an action for the Council and partners rather than SFRS.

3.7 Meeting statutory requirements

Appendix 1 describes the requirements for producing local fire and rescue plans. In summary these are about setting out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue services in the Council's area, explaining why they have been selected and how local SFRS arrangements will achieve them and how these relate to community planning outcomes and will be measured.

3.8 The draft local fire and rescue plan does set out priorities, the rationale for them and identifies the fit with national and local priorities. There are two areas however where further information would help to meet the statutory requirements better. These are in relation to:

- The arrangements for meeting priorities in terms of the total resource for fire and rescue services in the Highlands and how that might change over the plan period. This includes staffing (locally based as well as

national resources likely to be called on) and workforce planning, an overview of the budget and any planned changes to physical assets. While members do not have a role in agreeing resources for the plan (that is a matter for the SFRS) it would be useful to have resources clarified in a separate section of the plan so that the Council and partners can be aware of likely impacts on their operations for community safety services delivered in partnership and to identify opportunities for more shared service approaches. It may also provide community assurance on the resource for local fire and rescue services.

- Improving the measurement of progress. While the annual action plan is expected to set out targets for 2014-15, the local plan should at least include those targets stated in the SOA. It is difficult for the Council to approve a local plan that has no quantifiable information on the improvement expected. Also improvement targets are needed for the Council to scrutinise performance. It would also help the Council and its partners know what is expected of the SFRS for those areas of partnership service delivery. Some targets may need to be agreed in partnership where there are dependencies to Council, NHSH and other services.

3.9 Improvement requested to support community planning arrangements

Generally there is strong alignment between the priorities in the draft local plan and the partnership priorities set out for community safety, older people, health inequalities and the environment sections in the Highland Single Outcome Agreement 2013/14–2018/19 (SOA). It would be useful for the SOA to be hyperlinked in the local plan.

- 3.10 Alignment could be stronger if performance information is included, as it is for the SOA on quantifying the reductions in the number of dwelling fires and the number of alcohol related fires, the number of home safety visits to be carried out, the increase in referrals for home safety fire visits, the expected decrease in fire related antisocial behaviour, the number of Firesetters programmes to be delivered and the number of young people supported through that programme and the Youth engagement programme and the national targets relating to road safety.

- 3.11 The draft local fire and rescue plan includes two priorities not identified as partnership priorities in the SOA. These are:

1. The prevention of fires in workplaces and business premises; and
2. The reduction in unwanted fire alarm signals.

They can be welcomed as both will contribute to the more efficient use of the SFRS resource and members have discussed in the Committee their wish to see these activities carried out.

- 3.12 To support partnership working under the environment theme of the SOA the local fire and rescue plan could make reference to how the local service will contribute to reducing regional carbon emissions and as a signatory to the Highland climate change declaration. This could be achieved through asset management, sharing buildings, fleet management and business travel

arrangements. The SFRS already contributes to the partnership Environment Forum and it will have duties under the Climate Change Act.

3.13 Improvement requested to meet member expectations

As reported separately to this committee, in the member workshop in December 2013 members were keen for certain information to be included in local plans. This is replicated below along with a request for improvements to the draft local plan, where relevant.

1. *The need for the experience of vulnerable groups to be reflected in the plans (using equality impact assessment, attending the meetings after CPE Committee and listening to views of the Community Advisory Group set up by the police for example).*

The draft local plan contains good information in equality impacts and it identifies high risk groups in the community. It has been enhanced following consideration at the A&CS committee in February 2014. The only further area to include is vulnerable young people under priorities 2 and 3 as noted in paragraph 3.4 above.

2. *The need for plans to include targets that can be measured, not just high level outcomes.*

The need to strengthen the performance content of the plan is highlighted above, even to include the performance information contained in the SOA, given that an annual action plan is to be produced providing more detail.

3. *The usefulness of reporting to Area Committees on community safety trends and performance.*

The draft local plan acknowledges the intention to report performance against the plan at Area Committees.

4. *Finding positive ways to engage with the public including improving press releases to show what is being achieved and making use of social media.*

The draft plan includes a risk profile and contains helpful information on local fire and rescue activity. The public should be assured by the reducing call for fire and rescue services where incidents and casualty numbers are falling. More awareness of the problems caused by malicious false alarms could be helpful.

5. *The need to share premises and services wherever possible.*

It is proposed above that information is included in the local plan on resources, including staffing and physical assets. It would also help to have a statement confirming the SFRS intention locally to work with community planning partners on joint resourcing where possible.

4. Implications

4.1 Resource implications – there are no new resource implications for the Council arising from this report. The local senior officer has noted an interest in using the Council's Citizens' Panel for future surveys and this is being confirmed with panel members. Any costs arising from partner use of the panel would be met by partners.

Legal implications – the legal duties on the SFRS and the local authority on the production and approval of the local fire and rescue plan are described in the report.

Equalities implications – the report acknowledges the good coverage in the draft local plan on equalities issues and identifies the need for vulnerable young people to be made more explicit.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications – there are no new climate change implications for the Council and the report highlights where the draft local plan could be strengthened to include carbon reduction.

Risk implications – there is a risk to the ability of members in fulfilling its scrutiny role of the SFRS if the performance content of the local plan is not improved by including at least the base-lines and targets set out in the SOA.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note that:

- the current draft local fire and rescue plan has been amended from earlier feedback from the Council and the Adult and Children's Services Committee;
- the current draft aligns strongly to the SOA and partnership working and includes action that members have raised previously;
- NESH is also being consulted; and
- an annual action plan is to be produced providing more detail on targets.

5.2 Members are asked to agree the improvements required for approval to be given to the local fire and rescue plan as set out in section 3 of this report. These relate to: the need for further information on resourcing, a commitment to joint resourcing locally, including vulnerable young people and flatted accommodation in priorities 2 and 3 and for the performance content to be strengthened at least to include the high level performance information included in the SOA. Inclusion of carbon reduction activities would be helpful to partnership working. Promoting the success of the service and raising awareness of the harm caused by malicious false alarms is encouraged.

5.3 Members are asked to note that the conditions for approving the local fire and rescue plan will be raised at the Council meeting in May 2014, as a starred item from the minutes of this Committee.

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Date: 18.3.14

Extract from the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 relating to Local Fire and Rescue Plans and the Local Authority role in approving them.

Part 2, Fire Reform

Section 115 Local fire and rescue plans

41D Provision of local services

- (1) SFRS must ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place for the carrying out of its functions in each local authority area.
- (2) SFRS must involve each local authority in determining priorities and objectives for SFRS in connection with the carrying out in the local authority's area of SFRS's functions.

41E Local fire and rescue plans

- (1) As soon as is reasonably practicable after a strategic plan is approved under section 41A, SFRS must prepare a local fire and rescue plan for each local authority area.
- (2) A local fire and rescue plan is a plan setting out—
 - (a) priorities and objectives for SFRS in connection with the carrying out in the local authority's area of SFRS's functions,
 - (b) the reasons for selecting each of those priorities and objectives,
 - (c) how SFRS proposes to deliver those priorities and objectives,
 - (d) in so far as is reasonably practicable, outcomes by reference to which delivery of those priorities and objectives can be measured,
 - (e) how those priorities and objectives are expected to contribute to the delivery of any other relevant local outcomes which are identified by community planning,
 - (f) such other matters relating to the carrying out of SFRS's functions in the local authority's area as SFRS thinks fit.
- (3) In preparing the local fire and rescue plan, SFRS must—
 - (a) have regard to the framework document and the strategic plan approved under section 41A,
 - (b) consult—
 - (i) such persons as SFRS considers represent employees of SFRS, and
 - (ii) such other persons as SFRS considers appropriate.
- (4) SFRS must submit a plan prepared under subsection (1) for approval to the local authority for the area to which the plan relates.
- (5) If the plan is approved under subsection (4), SFRS must publish it.
- (6) In this section "community planning" means the community planning processes described in Part 2 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (asp 1).

41H Provision of information to local authority

SFRS must give to a local authority such information or reports relating to the carrying out of SFRS's functions in the authority's area (including reports given by reference to any local fire and rescue plan in force for the area) as the authority may reasonably request.

41J Local Senior Officers

(1) After consulting the local authority, SFRS must designate an employee of SFRS as Local Senior Officer for each local authority area for the purpose of carrying out on behalf of SFRS the delegated functions.

2) The delegated functions are—

- (a) SFRS's functions under sections 41E to 41H,
- (b) SFRS's function in relation to the provision of feedback to it under section 41K(1),
- (c) SFRS's functions under section 16(1)(d) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (asp 1) (duty to participate in community planning),
- (d) any other functions of SFRS which SFRS delegates to the Local Senior Officer.

(3) The duty imposed on SFRS by subsection (1) must be carried out by the Chief Officer.

(4) A person may be designated under subsection (1) in relation to more than one local authority area.

(5) Subsection (1) does not affect—

- (a) SFRS's responsibility for the carrying out of the delegated functions,
- (b) SFRS's ability to carry out the delegated functions.

41K Monitoring by local authority

(1) A local authority may monitor and provide feedback to SFRS on the manner in which SFRS carries out its functions in the authority's area and (in particular) may provide to SFRS—

- (a) its views on any matter concerning or connected to the manner in which SFRS carries out those functions in the authority's area,
- (b) any recommendations for improvements in the manner in which SFRS carries out those functions in the authority's area that it thinks fit.

(2) A local authority may provide feedback by reference to any local fire and rescue plan in force for its area.