

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Meeting	Scrutiny and Audit Panel
Date	23 July 2020
Title of Report	Primary Authority Progress Report
By	Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mark Andrews
Lead Officer	Group Manager Andrew Gausden

Background Papers	Business Safety Thematic Plan
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Appendices	None
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Implications

CORPORATE RISK	✓	LEGAL	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	✓
FINANCIAL	✓	POLITICAL	✓
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES	✓	CORE BRIEF	
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT			

PURPOSE OF REPORT	To provide Scrutiny and Audit Panel with an update on the progress of the Primary Authority scheme and how this improves business engagement and business training activities in support of the delivery of the Business Fire Safety Thematic Plan.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	On 1 November 2018 Members of the Policy and Resources Panel supported the recommendations from officers to adopt a Primary Authority scheme as part of the ongoing review and development of the delivery of Business Safety.
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Since approval in November 2018 Primary Authority partnership income has been invoiced at £17,805, including additional income from the partnerships where we act as supporting regulator.

To ensure the continued growth and success of the Service's Primary Authority scheme, in February the Senior Leadership Team approved the appointment of a permanent Primary

Authority manager. A crucial role that now provides consistent oversight and leadership for the partnerships whilst also managing wider business engagement and handling any potential new partnerships. As a Green Book role this post also ensures a development pathway for non-operational Business Safety Inspectors and supports staff retention within the department.

The Primary Authority manager has been able to provide direct expert advice and support to our partners during the Covid 19 pandemic, particular those providing care for our most vulnerable residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

- (i) note the report and support continued engagement with key businesses in further growing and developing the East Sussex Fire Authority (ESFRS) Primary Authority scheme.
 - (ii) support the Services' engagement with the Business Advice and Support Partnership (BAASP) and the promotion of Primary Authority through our local Growth Hubs and the 'Sussex Business Excellence' programme.
 - (iii) note the transfer of the Safer Business training program to the Business Safety support team, which will allow the Primary Authority manager to expand the Business Safety engagement activities to include the "Safer Living & Safer Care" initiatives, currently being developed through the Business Safety Thematic Plan.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 1 November 2018 Members of the Policy and Resources Panel supported the recommendations from officers to adopt Primary Authority as part of the ongoing development of Business Safety. Members also agreed to support the County Council through the BAASP, with the Service being the lead partner for fire safety.
- 1.2 Primary Authority is a key element of the Government's commitment to improve delivery of regulation in line with the statutory principles of *good regulation being good business*. These principles are that regulation should be transparent, accountable, proportionate, consistent and targeted.
- 1.3 The Fire Authority has an obligation under the Regulators Code and under Section 6 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to promote fire safety in its area and provide fire safety advice to prevent fires, death or injuries in relation to premises in its area.
- 1.4 The Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection regime particularly reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of Fire Services and our collaborations with our partners. We have developed our approach to income generation through the Primary Authority scheme which was acknowledged in the recent HMICFRS report.
- 1.5 Business Safety have entered into partnerships with organisations to support them in compliance with fire safety requirements, where there is a link to wider benefits for the Service around, community safety or risk reduction to vulnerable people and firefighters.

2. PRIMARY AUTHORITY DELIVERY

- 2.1 To ensure the continued growth and success of the Service's Primary Authority scheme, in February the Senior Leadership Team approved the appointment of a permanent Primary Authority manager. The Primary Authority manager role is within the existing establishment in the Business Safety support team based at Eastbourne Fire Station.
- 2.2 This leadership is crucial in providing consistent, professional, independent advice to our partners. It is also vital in developing trust and confidence with the partnerships in order to support improvements in the fire safety arrangements within the business often in strategic wide ranging ways that have a much greater and wider benefit to these organisations.
- 2.3 The immediate benefit has been the success of the first year of the scheme in that officers have secured 12 partnerships from a cross section of local sectors which are summarised in table 1 Below. Furthermore this role has ensured consistent engagement with wider business forums locally and nationally which has developed the reputation of ESFRS within the business community and encouraged interest from a range of new 'pipeline partnerships' which are summarised in Table 2 further reinforcing the success of the scheme and the future potential the scheme has to generate new partnerships.

Table 1 – Existing partnerships

	Partnership	Description
1	C Brewer and Sons Limited	Local and national retailer of decorating supplies which is based in Eastbourne along with their Head Office and 177 premises nationwide.
2	Abbeyfield Ferring Society Limited	Local social housing provider including premises providing residential care and supported living.
3	Eastbourne Hospitality Association	The local association which supports over 100 tourism and hospitality businesses in the Eastbourne area, ranging from independent restaurants to large hotels.
4	Chokdee Limited (trading as Giggling Squid)	Local expanding restaurant chain of 34 Thai restaurants which includes staff sleeping accommodation above some premises.
5	Southdowns' Residential Limited	Local social housing provider based in Eastbourne, which specialises in temporary accommodation with a property portfolio including 110 flats and looking to expand business.
6	The Independent Schools Bursars Association (ISBA)	The association supports a total of 980 independent schools in the UK and overseas
7	Veolia ES South Downs Limited	The company manage the 12 household waste recycling centres (HWRC), four waste transfer stations (WTS), an in vessel composting site (IVC) and an energy recover facility (ERF), as part of the waste collection contract in East Sussex.
8	Sussex Housing and Care	Local social housing provider with a large portfolio of residential, sheltered and independent living premises in Sussex.
9	Craft Bakers Association	The craft Bakers Association represent approximately 500 bakery businesses in England and Wales which support 3,000 shops on the high street and 38,500 employees.
10	Ambient Care Limited	Ambient Support Limited is a registered UK charity. They provide care and housing to elderly people, those with a mental health need and people with learning disabilities. They have a range of services, including registered care homes, supported living and domiciliary care.
11	Surefoot Solutions Limited	SureFoot Solutions Limited offer training, auditing and consultancy services to businesses across the UK and Europe predominantly related to food safety, food standards and health and safety.
12	British Metals Recycling Association	The British Metals Recycling Association (BMRA) is the trade association representing the £7 billion UK metal recycling sector – a globally competitive industry supplying environmentally-friendly raw material to metals manufacturers. They represent over 250 organisations working across UK's £7 billion metal recycling sector.

Table 2 – Pipeline Partnerships

	Pipeline Partnership	Description
13	Boparan Restaurant Group	Boparan Restaurant Group also have a Primary Authority partnership with Horsham District Council for Environmental Health and East Sussex County Council for Trading Standards. All Primary Authorities will work together to support Boparan Restaurant Group in regulatory compliance and ensure that all referrals are directed appropriately and dealt with effectively and within statutory time frames.
14	Saxon Weald	Established in 2000, Saxon Weald is a housing association managing approximately 6500 homes across Sussex and Hampshire. They provide affordable rented and shared ownership homes for individuals and families, as well as properties exclusively for the over 55s.

2.4 The hours spent by the Primary Authority manager delivering the scheme, is included within the annual Business Safety returns and therefore provides added value to the overall Business Safety department performance and output.

2.5 The non-operational Primary Authority & Legislation and Enforcement manager role within the Business Safety support team also ensures a development pathway for non-operational Business Safety Inspectors and supports staff retention.

3. PRIMARY AUTHORITY BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

3.1 The Primary Authority scheme enables a direct route to engage with business and we recently held a special partnership event in Eastbourne on 11 November 2019 to celebrate our first twelve months delivering the Primary Authority scheme.

3.2 Attendees were provided updates on key issues including sprinklers, low maintenance fire extinguishers and business resilience.

3.3 The business resilience element was reinforced through the Lewes Castle wall collapse, which occurred during the event and clearly demonstrated the type of unplanned events which can impact businesses

3.4 The Primary Authority manager working with the Hospitality Association and its members delivered a business engagement event 6 February 2020. The event focused on the recent Claremont Hotel fire and covered key areas, such as the commercial and business case for sprinklers and the critical need for business continuity planning.

4. FINANCIAL

4.1 The Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act provides that the Primary Authority may recover reasonable costs for acting as a Primary Authority partner. This enables the Service to generate non-traditional funding for the Service.

4.2 The current cost recovery rate is set at £78 per hour with businesses making a commitment to a minimum of 20 hours support per year. This enables the Service to plan the resources required to deliver the partnership and for business planning

- 4.3 Partnerships may request hours over and above the minimum 20, with a number of partners requesting up to 60 hours during the initial set up period, all additional hours are charged at the same cost recovery rate of £78 per hour, with unused hours currently carried forward.
- 4.4 Since approval in November 2018 the Service has invoiced £17,805 for Primary Authority partnerships, including additional income from the partnerships where we act as supporting regulator.
- 4.5 Where unused partnership hours are carried forward, the financial value of these hours will also be carried forward to the Primary Authority income for the following financial year, this will ensure the Primary Authority partnership income for each year reflects the hours delivered to businesses. From 2020/21 an income target of £19,000 from the Primary Authority Scheme has been included in the Service's revenue budget thereby contributing to the savings necessary to balance the budget. Work to assess the potential for further income growth is underway.
- 4.6 The Primary Authority manager continues to expand the Service Primary Authority Scheme and engage with potential business partners.

5. **ADDED VALUE**

- 5.1 The Primary Authority manager is currently working with our Veolia ES South Downs Limited partners, on the possibility of accessing their community engagement funding with a view to securing financial sponsorship for the Service "Safety in Action" program.
- 5.2 The Primary Authority manager has been able to provide direct expert advice and support to our partners during the Covid 19 pandemic, particular those providing care for our most vulnerable residents. Partners have been kept up to date with regards advice issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and advice on opening up businesses is being produced which is bespoke to each partner.

6. **SAFER BUSINESS TRAINING**

- 6.1 The Safer Business training program is currently managed by the Community Safety department and employs a number of staff on zero hours contracts to deliver the program. Whilst this has proved effective to further develop the program management of the Safer Business Training program will now move to the Business Safety support team.
- 6.2 The transferred to the Business Safety support team will allow the Primary Authority manager to expand the Business Safety engagement activities to include the "Safer Living & Safer Care" initiatives, currently being developed through the Business Safety Thematic Plan.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

7.1 Business Advice and Support Partnership

7.1.1 The Service is currently an active member of BAASP, the partnership shares knowledge, resources and expertise to provide the best support and advice for local businesses.

7.1.2 BAASP has recently been Highly Commended for its collaborative approach to providing business support services at the Regulatory Excellence Awards 2019, organised by OPSS.

7.2 East and West Sussex Growth Hubs & the Chamber of Commerce

7.2.1 The Service supports the East and West Sussex Growth Hubs including the Chamber of Commerce, which enables the Service to access businesses who approach these organisations with regards to entering into Primary Authority partnerships.

7.3 Local Government Association Productivity Experts Program

7.3.1 The Service and ESCC are currently leading an initiative through the Local Government Association (LGA) Productivity Experts Program on behalf BAASP and have secured funding through the LGA, to fund a productivity expert to support the development of BAASP and Primary Authority in East Sussex.

7.3.2 The aim of the programme to support Local Authorities to make efficiency savings against a backdrop of decreasing funding and increasing demand for services.

7.4 Social Media Platform

7.4.1 A Facebook page has recently been set up to promote Business Fire Safety with the aim to engage with businesses on this social media platform.

7.4.2 We regularly publish fire safety advice, initiates, upcoming events and post fire/incident advice. The group is shared with our partners, members of the public and colleagues.

7.4.3 The page can be 'liked' for persons to keep up to date with the content, they can also 'join' the group to be able to add comments and posts, but they have to answer three questions upon request to join to make sure we are receiving the right target audience.

7.5 Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

7.5.1 Officers work closely with colleagues within BEIS in order to help refine good practice and promote the benefits of primary authority and last year officers were invited to speak at a range of events to promote ESFRS and our partnerships. These events were an opportunity not only for ESFRS but also for our partners to showcase some of the benefits they are seeing from the relationship with ESFRS.

- 7.5.2 ESFRS has been asked to host this year's annual Primary Authority seminar which will provide further platform for our partners to raise the profile of the scheme. It will also an opportunity to promote wider business engagement and focus on priority topics for the Service such as sprinklers and protecting the vulnerable from fire.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The HMICFRS inspection regime particularly reviews the efficiency and effectiveness of the Services and our collaborations with our partners. We have developed our approach to income generation through the Primary Authority scheme.
- 8.2 Business Safety continue to enter into partnerships with organisations to support them in compliance with fire safety requirements, where there is a link to wider benefits for the Service around, community safety, risk reduction to vulnerable people and firefighters, as well as businesses where we can demonstrate a link to our corporate or social strategy.
- 8.3 The Primary Authority manager has been able to provide direct expert advice and support to our partners during the Covid 19 pandemic, particular those providing care for our most vulnerable residents.
- 8.4 Since approval in November 2018 the Service has invoiced £18000 for Primary Authority partnerships, including additional income from the partnerships where we act as supporting regulator.
- 8.5 The appointment of a Primary Authority and Legislation & Enforcement manager role delivered by a non-operational Business Safety Inspector, provides a suitable level of detachment to remove the risk of a conflict of interest.
- 8.6 The non-operational Primary Authority & Legislation and Enforcement manager role within the Business Safety support team, ensures a development pathway for non-operational Business Safety Inspectors and supports staff retention.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The overall impact of the scheme aims to reduce the burden on businesses and creates a single point of contact for them to use to obtain advice and assistance as to their legal responsibilities. This will allow the business to obtain consistent advice and operate within the law and therefore reduces the number of service requests the Service will have to respond to.
- 9.2 ESFRS will adhere to its enforcement policy which is available on the website and details of the contract that will exist between the authority and business is a standard template that has been used nationally. Better protected businesses equal better compliance equals safer communities. Reduced risks as local authorities better understand businesses and can target resources in high risk areas.