

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Date	2 September 2021
Title of Report	Communications, Engagement and Consultation Strategy 2021-2024
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Background Papers	<p>Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19 - East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/frs-assessment-2018-19-east-sussex/</p> <p>State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2020 https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2020/</p> <p>Fire and rescue national framework for England https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2</p>
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Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 - Communications, Engagement and Consultation Strategy 2021 – 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Action plan</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Equality Analysis Impact Record (EIA)</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Sustainability Checklist for strategies</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Stakeholder map</p> <p>Appendix 6 – current prevention activities</p>
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Implications

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT This report seeks approval from the Fire Authority for the draft Communications, Engagement and Consultation strategy 2021-24.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The draft Communications, Engagement and Consultation strategy 2021-24 (Appendix 1) has been developed in support of our Purpose and Commitments, Integrated Risk Management Plan and Fire Authority strategies.

The draft strategy has been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team, other senior officers and team leaders and with input from Fire Authority members and the Equality and Inclusion Group.

The deliverables within the draft strategy take into consideration the findings from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – 2019 Inspection and the HMICFRS State of the Fire and Rescue Service Report published in March 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

1. approve the draft Communications, Engagement and Consultation strategy 2021-24; and
 2. approve the additional one-off funding of up to £30,000 required in 2023/24.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The service's purpose to make our communities safer cannot be effectively delivered without a strong and robust communications and engagement strategy which is owned and delivered across the whole of ESFRS. In June 2018, East Sussex Fire Authority approved the Communications and Consultation Strategy 2018-2021. Whilst this in most parts has been successfully delivered, a number of areas will be further developed in the refresh of the strategy including more sophisticated use of our digital channels, increasing feedback and engagement opportunities and working with partners.

1.2 The draft 2021-24 strategy sets out the key drivers and projects including:

- Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Strategic Assessment of Risk and Station Profiles
- Grenfell
- HMICFRS and public survey
- National Fire Chiefs Council – person centred approach and equality of access
- Local Government Association peer review
- Influencing behaviours and behavioural insights
- Financial constraints

1.3 The draft Communications, Engagement and Consultation strategy 2021-24 takes these into account and builds on the previous strategy, with three key themes:

- 1) Internal communications and engagement
- 2) Quality engagement with the community
- 3) Inclusion and Diversity in communications and engagement

2. **Engagement and research**

2.1 A range of engagement sessions and research has taken place in order to develop this strategy.

2.2 Feedback sessions and presentations have taken place at:

- Managers Seminar (January 2021)
- Fire Authority Members Seminar (March 2021)

2.3 The draft has been shared with:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Group Managers
- Professional Service's team leaders
- Staff networks

2.4 The development of community engagement was quickly identified as one of the key themes for development and therefore at this stage we have relied on desk research and reviewing previous engagement to provide evidence for change.

2.4.1 In 2019, HMICFRS commissioned BMG Research to undertake a study of the public's perceptions of local fire and rescue services across England. The study

covers the public's views and experiences of local fire and rescue services' activities.

This can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/public-perceptions-of-fire-and-rescue-services-in-england-2019/>

A key conclusion is that we can do more to help explain our role and the importance of prevention activities.

A list of our current prevention activities can be found at Appendix 6 and the new Safer Communities strategy will set out the future direction of engagement in these areas.

- 2.4.2 The Service commissioned a peer review of communications in 2020 from the Local Government Association, the Peer review stated:

“Partners highly value their relationship with the FRS, but responsibility for engaging with them is currently disparate and in need of better coordination.

Fire Authority members are more engaged than has previously been the case. However, there is much more that could be done to utilise what is currently a relatively untapped resource of trusted advocates.”

These will be progressed within the Theme 2 workstream.

- 2.4.3 The Service has mapped out its stakeholders and this can be found at Appendix E. This will form the foundation of further work.

3. **Finance**

3.1 The strategy has been developed to be delivered with an additional one-off cost to the organisation of up to £30,000. There is also potential within the strategy to achieve savings in the following two areas:

Potential savings

- We will carry out an audit of communications spending across ESFRS to review the existing approach to commissioning campaigns. This may result in more efficient use of our advertising and print budget.
- We will clarify out of hours arrangements in Communications to add more resilience, and explore opportunities for sharing responsibilities with partners. This may result in a reduction in costs for on call communications support.

Potential cost pressures

- There are a number of options to provide media training for Fire Authority members, including delivering this in-house (low cost) to outsourcing (circa £10,000-15,000). It is proposed that basic in house training is provided with the option to provide additional topic-specific outsourced training for key Fire Authority members when the service has to undertake a significant piece of public engagement such as the IRMP. The next IRMP consultation process will begin April 2024 so enhanced training will be delivered in year 3 of the strategy.
- There will be costs associated with the ambitions within the strategy including the potential development of citizen panels, town hall meetings and other routes for sharing ideas and feedback. The costs will be ratified during the scoping phase and a business case built for Senior Leadership Team approval if costs exceed the indicative costs described below.

Type of event	Associated spend	Estimated costs Per event
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		£'000
Citizen panels (face to face) 500-5000 people	Venues, equipment, staffing, incentives, travel expenses, expert facilitation	7-10
Town hall meetings (face to face) 100-150 people	Venues, staffing, incentives, travel expenses, expert facilitation	5-7
Online engagement 50-75 people	Staffing, incentives, expert facilitation	1-3

3.2 A breakdown of the costs by financial year can be seen below:

Year 1 costs = £0 met within current budget

Year 2 costs = £0 met within current budget

Year 3 costs = indicative cost of £30,000

Cost of strategy over 3 years = £30,000

The following table identifies the indicative costs over the three years.

Year 1 2021/22	Year 2 2022/23	Year 3 2023/24 (implementation)	£'000
Costs within current communications budget	Costs within current communications budget	Citizen panels (face to face) 500-5000 people	10
		Town hall meetings (face to face) 100-150 people	7
		Online engagement 50-75 people	3
		Member training for IRMP	10
0	0		30

3.3 Any ongoing change to the Communications budget taking into account the review of spend and any continuing use of the approaches planned in year 3 of the Strategy will feed into the annual budget setting process and the formal review of the Strategy in 2023/24.

4 Legal and Corporate risk

4.1 The strategy will be delivered within various legal frameworks and legislation including but not limited to the following. Failure to meet these requirements constitute a corporate risk.

4.2 Local Government Act 1999 – best value authorities

Best value authorities include fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities, passenger transport authorities and other such bodies. The idea is that best value and local authorities must consult a balanced selection of the individuals, groups, businesses or organisations the authority considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, their actions and functions. The duty is wide ranging and applies to the delivery of services, policy, and decision making. Authorities must not discriminate in the way they inform, consult or involve local people. They must promote equal opportunities for people to engage and get involved.

4.3 **The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004** includes references to promoting fire safety.

Beyond legislating for the duties and powers of fire and rescue authorities, the 2004 Act also introduced the Fire and Rescue National Framework. The national framework sets out Government's expectations and requirements for FRAs in England. The Secretary of State must keep the document under review, and reports to parliament every two years on the extent to which it is being complied with. This framework sets out expectations around Integrated Risk Managements Plans (IRMP). Where the IRMP process leads FRAs to contemplate making material changes to prevention, protection and/or response service provision, there is a requirement to undertake a public consultation on options. FRA members must then 'conscientiously consider' consultation responses before deciding on any changes that will be made

4.4 **The Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act we are required to put in place arrangement to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.

4.5 **Equality Act 2010**

Theme 3 recognises the importance of ensuring Inclusion and diversity is embedded in our communications, engagement and consultation programme.

5 **HR, Environmental, health and safety**

Impacts in these areas are set out in the strategy.