

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	19 OCTOBER 2017	REPORT NO:	CFO/061/17
PRESENTING OFFICER	DCFO PHIL GARRIGAN		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DEB APPLETON	REPORT AUTHOR:	WENDY KENYON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	JANET HENSHAW NICK MERNOCK		
TITLE OF REPORT:	CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	STRPOL012 STAKEHOLDER
	APPENDIX B:	CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY
	APPENDIX C	SERVICE INSTRUCTION 0881
		CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK
		EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Purpose of Report

1. To request that Members approve the new Consultation and Engagement Policy and the Consultation and Engagement Framework Service Instruction.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Approve the Consultation and Engagement Policy STRPOL012, and
 - b. Approve the Consultation and Engagement Framework Service Instruction (SI 0881).

Introduction and Background

3. Although Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority has carried out public consultation in relation to Integrated Risk Management Planning for several years, the consultation on station mergers and closures that has taken place since 2014 introduced a new complexity to the process.
4. A new approach was required to ensure that risks regarding potential legal challenge were minimised whilst encouraging a wide range of representative stakeholders to comment on the Authority's plans. These consultation exercises identified a need for a uniform approach to consultation and this requirement was confirmed by an Internal Audit of our consultation processes.

As a result a new policy (Appendix A) and Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Framework (Appendix B) have been created.

Our Approach to Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

5. This Policy forms part of a wider communications, consultation and engagement approach that sets out how the Authority will engage with stakeholders through communication and consultation. That engagement will be used to inform and influence the Authority's decision making processes, involving stakeholders in the work and future direction of the Authority's provision of services.
6. The Authority's consultation approach will be developed to be accessible to, and targeted at, those people who are affected by our plans, proposals and decisions. This will also include being:
 - Timely and cost effective
 - Interactive and well facilitated
 - Inclusive and accessible
 - Transparent with a fair and responsible interpretation of community views

Equality and Diversity Implications

7. An EIA has been completed which is attached at Appendix C.
8. Consultation will be developed to be accessible to, and targeted at, those people who are affected by our plans, proposals and decisions. Especially members of the community who identify as one or more of the 9 protected characteristics

Staff Implications

9. Staff will be engaged with and/or and consulted on organisational changes through staff briefings from managers and via the consultation process already in place with the representative bodies.

Legal Implications

10. The duty to involve stakeholders when making changes to services is a statutory obligation applying to specified bodies, requiring them to consult and involve individuals, groups, businesses or organisations likely to be affected by their actions. The duty to involve was introduced in the Local Government and Public Health Act 2007s.138. The Localism Act 2011, s.10 provides for consultation before charging for certain services; s.122 for pre planning and Chapter 6 for national infrastructure projects.
11. Guidance for Local Authorities to help interpret the duty is contained in 2008 CLG publication Safe, Strong and Prosperous Communities.

12. Other legislation and guidance also governs the way Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to consult, for example:

- a. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012
- b. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- c. The Equality Act 2010 – Introduction to Public Sector Equality Duties

Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. Funding is available in existing budgets for Integrated Risk Management Planning consultation. Funding for project related consultation (e.g. station closures) is provided from that project's budget.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

14. The Policy and Service Instruction are there to provide guidance on how to conduct Public Consultation and engagement. As this is guidance there are no actual risks involved, but the framework does include recommendations to carry out risk assessments for all venues ahead of any public meeting.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

15. The Policy, Service Instruction and framework has been developed to ensure that any consultation and engagement with the public will always provide the information:

- Timely and cost effective
- Interactive and well facilitated
- Inclusive and accessible
- Transparent with a fair interpretation of community views
- Published information for easy access

16. The information produced will be produced so that members of the community have a clear picture and understanding of what our proposal/recommendations are.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
