



Service Instruction 0881 Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Framework

Document Control

Description and Purpose

This document is intended to give guidance to MFRS personnel with regard to Stakeholder Consultation.

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01.09.17	01.09.18	Wendy Kenyon	Deb Appleton	Sue Coker
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Related Documents

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SI			Portal
			Portal
			Portal
			Portal
			Portal

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Target audience

All MFRS	X	Ops Crews		Fire safety		Community FS			
Principal officers		Senior officers		Non uniformed					

Relevant legislation (if any)

Equality Act 2010
CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 2016 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'

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INTRODUCTION

1 What is this Service instruction for?

This Public Consultation and Engagement Framework explains how we work with our partners and local communities, to ensure that they are kept informed and consulted with regarding any changes to or introduction of Fire and Rescue Service.

The framework is for all Merseyside Fire Rescue Authority (MFRA) staff to use when consulting/engaging with the public and other stakeholders.

Adoption of this approach will ensure the consistency of the consultation process across the organisation through the application of a set of principles and standards that shape the way we engage and consult with our communities.

2 Our Aims

Our consultation exercises will be developed to be accessible to, and targeted at, those people who are affected by our decisions and whom the consultation is intended to reach. We will ensure that consultation exercises use an appropriate range of methods and are designed and targeted accordingly. Where consultation exercises need to reach a diverse audience several approaches may be required.

Our Main aims are to:

- Understand our communities' needs in relation to fire and rescue services, including those who are vulnerable or may experience disadvantage (older people, people who have an illness or disability)
- Involve our communities in identifying issues that are important to them when developing new services or making changes to service provisions
- Work with key stakeholders when we want to speak with or listen to our communities

3 What do we mean by 'Consultation and Engagement'?

The words 'consultation' and 'engagement' can mean different things. To us, engagement is more than simply making information available or gathering opinions and attitudes. We use the views and opinions we receive to help us make decisions on changes to our services, and the development of the Service Delivery Plan or Integrated Risk Management Plan.

In this framework, we define consultation as a process of dialogue with members of the public and stakeholders, which has a defined start and end date, and informs a decision about a new proposal, policy, or service change. Our consultation is designed to:

- Encourage greater public involvement and interest in local democracy.
- Deliver stronger community leadership.
- Plan services and policies based on the needs / views of people.
- Identify priorities and improve strategies.
- Monitor the performance of services over time.

We believe it is important to get our community involved and to keep them informed about proposed changes which may affect them.

It is important that we communicate effectively with a cross representation of our local communities, so that everyone can have their say. It is important that everyone understands how they can have their say regarding any of our consultation, and that they feel able to do so.

4 Who are we consulting with?

Consultation will be undertaken with anyone who is affected by the proposal or procurement process. This will include staff, service users and partner organisations.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority will consult with:

- Partner organisations (e.g. councils, the police, health service)
- Members of the public
- Local businesses
- Stakeholders directly affected by the matter on which we are consulting e.g. for station closure/mergers we consulted with:
 - Community groups and organisations that use the current station facilities and will be affected by the changes.
 - Local residents within the proposed areas for the change, residents in the local area of the new proposed site and,
 - Local businesses
- MFRA Staff
- Representative Bodies e.g. FBU, FOA, Unison, Unite etc. This is in relation to public consultation only, as employment related consultation (restructures, establishment change etc) would be carried out using the existing arrangements managed by People and Organisational Development
- Local groups e.g. resident associations, parish councils
- Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority's Community Forum Members ¹

5 When will we carry out consultation?

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority may need to consult with members of the public and partners for a number of reasons, these could include:

- Changes to service e.g. Station Mergers/Closures
- Procuring services which will affect members of the public as part of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
- Creation and development of key strategic documents such as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and our Service Delivery Plan

¹ The Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Community Forum has been created as a way in which we can engage with people or people who represent members of the public from across the Merseyside region and in particular people from the 9 protected groups, who we may not always engage with through are normal consultation methods.

6 How will we carry out public consultation?

Consultation can be carried out over a 2 – 12 week period depending on the proposal. For changes to services or for a strategic plan such as the Integrated Risk Management plan we would usually carry out public consultation over an 8-12 week period.

Consultation can be carried out using various methods of engagement including:

- On-line surveys
- Paper surveys
- Focus Groups and forums; sometimes facilitated by an independent facilitator
- Public meetings
- Stakeholder/partner meetings
- Direct consultation with service users
- Postal surveys

Advice on suitable methods can be provided by the Diversity and Consultation manager. Once completed, findings from any consultation should be published within 12 weeks, where possible, of the consultation closing.

6 External Facilitators

MFRA currently uses an external facilitator for part of our consultation process. The external facilitator is an independent organisation experienced in consulting with the public as objectively as possible. As a result, they are respected and trusted by the public. By having an external facilitator involved with the project it ensures that MFRS receives feedback from a representative sample of the public regarding a given proposal.

7 Planning consultation

The appendices to this Service instruction provide;

1. A planning template
2. A generic project timeline
3. Guidance on when and how to consult
4. A general consultation planning checklist
5. A consultation venue checklist

An overview of general guidance is given below:

When planning consultation or engagement activity the following should be taken into account:-

- Does the information already exist?
- Has similar recent consultation been undertaken that will give you the information you require?
- There is a need for clear objectives in relation to the consultation activity:-
 - What do you want to find out?
 - Who do you want to find it out from?
 - How will you feedback the results of the consultation?
- Identify a brief and timetable for the consultation process. This can be developed with the Diversity and Consultation Manager as part of the consultation and engagement plan.
- Identify appropriate budget/resources

- Expectations of the consultation outcome
 - Are you prepared for the response?
 - Will it raise expectation to an unacceptable level?

8 Development of the consultation plan

Once the need for consultation has been identified and the scope of what will be consulted on is clear, a meeting should be arranged between the Diversity and Consultation Manager and project lead to:

- Complete the consultation and engagement plan.
- Develop the project timeline, which will include individual tasks, and the key dates in the consultation, e.g. start and finish dates and meeting dates.
- Identify the consultation project team – it is important to ensure that you have enough staff available to help with the planning and to help at the actual meetings. It is always better to have more staff than you think you will need for public meetings as we are unable to predict how many people will actually attend these meetings.
- When working out your consultation plan make sure that you factor in the appropriate length of time at the beginning, to allow for planning (approx. 4 weeks) from the date of approval by the Authority, if required, and allow at least 6 weeks at the end of the consultation before the date that outcome report will be presented to Authority.

Included in the framework are examples of key documents which will help with the planning for public consultation.

- Consultation and engagement plan – which should be completed in conjunction with the Consultation Manager
- Consultation Plan – Project Timeline – this can be a 6, 8 or 12 week plan
- Consultation check list
- Venue facilities check list

9 Reporting and Governance

On completion of the consultation, a report to Authority must be prepared detailing the outcomes of the consultation. This should include the following sections (where appropriate):

- Recommendations
- Summary of outcomes
- Promoting and marketing the consultation
- Media interest
- Consultation events
- Outcomes from the Consultation
 - On line survey
 - Focus Groups and Forums (details of each meeting held)
 - postal surveys
- Meetings
 - Stakeholder/business
 - Public meetings
 - Meetings with other groups

- Correspondence and Requests for Information
- Staff consultation
- Petitions
- E&D Impacts
- Staff implications
- Legal implications
- Financial implications/value for money
 - Include all costs
- Risk Management/health & safety and environmental

Please allow at least 6 weeks' timescale for the drafting of the Consultation Outcomes report from the end of the consultation to the committee date.

10 Evaluation Debrief

Following the completion of the consultation period it is always helpful to arrange a debrief meeting with the project team to discuss the process and the reporting process.

11 Communication of consultation outcomes

On completion of the outcome report, arrange a meeting with the Corporate Communications team to discuss how the findings are to be published. The outcomes should not be circulated until the report has been approved by Authority.

For further help and assistance:

Diversity and Consultation Manager

wendykenyon@merseyfire.gov.uk
0151 296 4474 4422

Appendix 1

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Consultation and Engagement Plan

This document should be completed by the Diversity and Consultation Manager and the lead officer for the project.

Project Title:		
What is the consultation connected with?		
Lead department/function:		
Lead officer for the project:		
Contact details:		
Which of the Authority's Aims does the Consultation relate to?		
What are you consulting on? (please state)		
Development of strategic plans		
Change or removal to services		
Procurement of services		
Is this project/work stream included in the IRMP/Service Delivery plan?		
Yes (please specify which document)		
No		
Aims & Objectives of the Consultation (Specific options which are to be consulted on)		
Option 1		
Option 2		
Option 3		
Target Audience (please tick all that apply)		
Public		
Staff		
Police		
Other Fire & Rescue Services		
NHS		
Other businesses, service users. Please specify:		

Method of Engagements (Please tick all that apply)			
Public meetings			
Forums			
Focus groups			
Stakeholder/partner meetings			
Survey			
Consultation document			
Posters/flyers			
One to one meetings			
Communication Requirements			
	Yes	No	Responsible person
Questionnaire			
Consultation document			
Promotional material			
Press releases/social media			
Brief for an external facilitator			
Information for stakeholders			
Information for service users			
Information for staff			
Information for partners			
Information for businesses			
Principal Office briefing			
Other (Please specify)			
Risks associated with the consultation			
There are a number of potential risks to consider when planning for consultation			
Does the Consultation run:			
		Yes	No
a	During an election period and incur restrictions on councillors/MP's (purdah)?		
b	Is funding available?		
c	Are staff resources available for the period required?		
d	Does the consultation run during holiday periods?		
e	Does the consultation involve any other key dates e.g. major local or national sporting events?		
f	Are there likely to be any issues with the availability of suitable public venues?		
g	Other risks: (please specify)		

Time period for the consultation		
(please tick)		Start Date End Date
6 Weeks		
8 Weeks		
12 Weeks		
Other:		
Justification:		
Report of findings (please state committee and date)		
N.B. please allow at least 6 weeks from the end of the consultation to the committee date.		

Appendix 2

Project timeline

Authority approval estimated

Working Group –

Events in bold may be facilitated by an external facilitator

	Preparation & Marketing	Consultation	Communication				Consultation													Reporting	
Type	Produce documentation for publication. Agree and organise media coverage/advertising.	Present to Council & other politicians	Marketing of consultation events	Staff communication			Online surveys	Rep body consultation	Station users consultation	Public Focus Group	Public Focus Group	Public Focus Group	Public Meeting	Public Meeting	Public Meeting	Joint Stakeholder Business Breakfast	Joint Forum (using members of the existing IRMP forums)	Staff meeting - Station 1 and Station 2	Staff Meeting - other station in the council area		Reporting
Plan Date	4 weeks prior to start of consultation	Wk 1	Weeks 1-5	Week 1-4			Week 1 - 12	Week 1 - 12	Week 1-12	Week 8	Week 8	Week 8	Week 9	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 11	Week 8	week 9-11	Week 12	End date
Actual Date																					
Officer responsible or representing MFRS		Principal Officer		TBC	TBC	TBC			TBC	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	TBC	TBC		
External Facilitator (where applicable)									TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC				
Actions																					

Appendix 3

Guidance on when and how to consult

When embarking on consultation it is important to clarify the type of engagement that is to take place, whether it is providing information/communication or consultation. If changes are going to affect service users then consultation should take place at a formative stage and before any decisions are made. If decisions have been made, then information should be provided but any potential mitigation needs to be identified. Always be prepared to change the course of action as a result of the consultation.

The table below gives information about the different stages of consultation and the methods that may be appropriate. Further advice can be provided by the Diversity and Consultation manager:-

	Information giving	Consultation	Participation
Purpose	To provide people with information to assist their understanding	To collect information about attitudes, opinions and preferences that will assist understanding and therefore decision making. To obtain feedback on specific policies or proposals	To involve people actively at all stages to ensure their concerns are understood and considered, and to give them some influence and ownership of decisions
Expectation	That information given will be accurate, balanced and updated as necessary	That information gathered will be treated and used responsibly and reported honestly. That feedback will be taken seriously, decisions will be influenced, and people will be informed of the influence they have had.	That people will be able to shape the process, that it will be transparent throughout, and that they will have some influence over decisions
Examples	Fact Sheets Websites Exhibitions	Surveys Questionnaires Focus Groups Consultation documents Public meetings	Deliberative workshops Stakeholder dialogue processes

When is it appropriate to inform?

- When you want to tell the public what has been decided or what is planned.
- At the start of the consultation exercise to raise awareness and promote involvement.
- To inform who will be affected by cuts or proposed changes to the service
- To support the consultation process by providing clear, accessible and sufficient information and options to allow an informed response.
- To keep the public informed and updated
- To provide information on alternative services.

When is it appropriate to Consult?

- When there is scope for the public to offer feedback that can be taken into consideration when making decisions (i.e. reducing or re-designing a service)
- When there might be options they can exercise a view on (e.g. response times, variable staffing systems and station mergers).
- Where there are established mechanisms in place to have an on-going dialogue with people who will be affected (for example groups or networks who use the facilities on station regularly). These can be used for continued engagement.

When is it appropriate to use Participation?

- When we wish stakeholders to take part in decision-making, even if the actual decision-taking is ultimately done by others.
- When we wish participants to have some influence over the process through shaping the agendas of meetings, for example, or deciding what background information is required before subjects can be sensibly discussed.

Appendix 4

Consultation Check list

1. Consultation period confirmed (number of weeks and start date).
2. Start to complete a risk assessment for the consultation events – seek advice from Health and Safety.
3. Complete the Consultation Timetable with the dates. Ensure that you include the end date of the consultation.
4. Check dates for bank holidays, elections, school holidays, this may affect attendance and staff availability.
5. Identify when during your consultation period you want to hold any meetings (focus groups, forums, public meetings and stakeholder meetings) - update the timetable
6. Speak to external facilitator for provisional dates for focus group and forums. (These are normally held in the evening)
7. Request Principal/Senior Officers' availability, include the provisional dates and the weeks which have been identified for all of the meetings.
8. Once dates are confirmed, start to complete the Meeting Planning document.
9. Speak to Systems Support Team for the postcodes and council wards within the station areas if members of the public are going to be invited to meetings or sent postal surveys.
10. Check council websites to ensure council meetings are not planned for the same dates as MFRS consultation (where ward councillors may wish to attend).
11. Identify the ward councillors for each of the wards and make a list of all their email and telephone numbers.
12. Start to identify and provisionally book venues. Make sure that each venue is accessible and has the correct facilities (see Venues Facilities Check List)
13. Contact Local Chambers of Commerce for assistance with contacting their members for the Stakeholders Business Breakfast (if one is taking place)
14. Arrange for venues to be checked for suitability, and that the AV system is compatible with the MFRS Laptop that is to be used (where appropriate) – use the venue checklist.
15. Once venues and dates confirmed, circulate the meeting plan to the team and request everyone's availability

16. Send email to external facilitator (where required) with confirmed dates and the meeting venue addresses and times
17. Raise the purchase orders for all of the meetings.
18. Book British Sign Language interpreters for the public meetings (Equality and Diversity have contact details)
19. Once everyone has confirmed availability agree with the consultation team which MFRS staff will be attending each meeting to facilitate.
20. Circulate final MFRS staff attendance list to the team
21. When a quote is received from the external facilitator (when appropriate) send to the budget holder for approval. Then raise a purchase order
22. Send postcodes for station areas to external facilitator for them to start the recruitment process for members of the public to attend the focus group and forum meetings or send out a survey.
23. Create a document for everyone attending with all the meeting details, venue addresses and directions, who is attending from MFRS, meeting and set up times and equipment required.
24. Update risk assessment and submit to Health & Safety
25. Draft letter for sending out to stakeholders regarding the Business Breakfast
26. Identify the best way people can register for the business breakfast, MFRS email/telephone contact or use Eventbrite.
27. Make sure all equipment required is ready ahead of the meeting
 - Tea, Coffee, Juice, Biscuits, Sugar, Milk, Cups, Milk , paper cups, water jugs and flask (Focus group and forum only unless venue can provide)
 - Water jugs and paper cups for public meetings
 - Copies of questionnaires
 - Copies of consultation documents
 - Pens
 - Signs for doors
 - Blue tack
 - Reserved signs for chairs (MFRS Staff or Councillors)
 - Hearing loop
 - Hearing loop sign
 - Tape to fix cables to the floor
 - Scissors
 - Spare pad & pen for notes

Appendix 5**Consultation Venue – Check sheet -**

		Comments
Disabled parking		
Easy access (ramp not steps)		
Disabled toilets		
Lift access – (if required)		
Room size		
Public transport		
Easy to find		
Equipment:		
Tables/chairs		
Access to water		
Tea/coffee (Please delete as appropriate)		Can be ordered/facilities to make own
Audio equipment		
Power supply		
PA system		
Overhead projector		
Screen		
Hearing loop		
Wi-fi		
Laptop compatible with system (please comment if any additional or specialist equipment is required to ensure compatibility)		

Additional Comments

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