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## NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

3 September 2019

### Police Fire and Rescue Committee

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**Title:** Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Consultation on 3 Year Strategic Plan

**Purpose:** To advise the Committee of the consultation response submitted to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on the 3 year strategic plan consultation.

**Recommendation:** That the Committee notes the response to the Consultation.

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#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is preparing its 3 year strategic plan 2019-2022 and sought views of local authorities. The consultation response was to be submitted by 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
- 1.2 The Committee considered a presentation given by the SFRS and the consultation request at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 and instructed the Senior Manager, Legal Services to remit a response to the SFRS, after consultation with the Chair of the Committee, and submit a copy of the final response to the next Committee. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix 1.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is preparing its 3 year strategic plan for 2019-2022 and sought the views of local authorities.
- 2.2 The Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019, considered a presentation given by representatives of SFRS and considered the consultation request. The Committee agreed that it be remitted to the Senior Manager of Legal Services, in consultation with the Chair, to prepare a final response and submit it to the SFRS by 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019.
- 2.3 The response was prepared in accordance with the Committee's instructions and submitted to the SFRS on 14th June 2019. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix 1.

#### 3. Proposals

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the response to the Consultation submitted on 14th June 2019.

## **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

### **Financial**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Human Resources**

4.2 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

### **Legal**

4.3 There are no Legal implications arising from this report.

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 The SFRS will assess the outcomes of the consultation exercise for equality, diversity and socio-economic outcomes.

### **Environmental and Sustainability**

4.5 There are no Environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 The response to the consultation contributes to the Council's priorities of developing and promoting Aspiring Communities in North Ayrshire with active and strong communities where residents and communities are safe.

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 There are no Community Wealth Building benefits arising from this report.

## **5. Consultation**

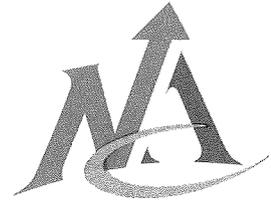
5.1 The SFRS will consult on any actions they propose to take in response to the consultation responses received from members of the public and strategic partners.

Craig Hatton  
Chief Executive

For further information please contact **Aileen Craig, Senior Manager, Legal Services**, on 01294 324322.

## **Background Papers**

Appendix 1



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Consultation  
Draft Strategic Plan 2019-2022  
Response from North Ayrshire Council**

**Background**

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is undertaking a Consultation on the draft Strategic Plan for 2019 - 2022 that outlines proposals for the forthcoming years to deliver a fire and rescue service that serves our communities and meets demand including new and emerging risks.

SFRS needs to be aligned to meet these demands.

**Consultation Request**

SFRS have asked for our views on the proposed strategic plan.

The plan wishes to deliver the following broad outcomes:-

- A collaborative approach and targeted prevention and protection activities to improve community safety and wellbeing and support sustainable economic growth.
- A flexible operational model to respond to diverse community risks
- Invest in ensuring a motivated, skilled and well cared staff who are empowered to deliver services
- Delivery of a high quality and sustainable fire and rescue service

**Response**

The consultation document is at strategic level with few specifics. SFRS gave a presentation to North Ayrshire Council's Police Fire and Rescue Committee which was well received by Members and addressed issues which may have been of concern:-

- Service levels will be maintained
- Fire stations are not being closed or jobs cut
- Recruitment and availability of the workforce
- SFRS are looking to better align to meet local need
- The expansion and consolidation of the SFRS preventative role and assisting other emergency services through collaborative working
- Deliberate fire raising and policies and plans for engagement to counter the problem
- Unwanted fire alarms
- Frequency of fire safety audits
- The effect of climate change on service demand – flooding and wild fires

North Ayrshire Council has an excellent partnership with its local fire and rescue service which is approachable and responsive to need.

The Council recognises that all public services need to ensure that they are fit to serve and meet the needs of local communities in accordance with the principles of the Christie Commission. The Council therefore welcomes the general proposals contained in the consultation document and would make the further following comments:-

- At a high level, there are a number of big issues which the Scottish Government will need to address. It is encouraging that SFRS's overall role is developing to new demands and challenges and that there are elements of diversification in service provision which foster a collaborative approach. However, this leads to the question of whether it is the best use of public finance for SFRS's role to be used to support or replicate the work of other public bodies (as opposed to simply funding those other public bodies). Over the years, while some aspects of SFRS's work has increased, its core role in dealing with fires has reduced. Much of this is due to the exemplary way in which the service has focussed on early intervention and prevention, stopping fires happening in the first place. Has this left surplus capacity which is now being moved elsewhere to support other partners? Against a background where other public services, particularly local government, have reducing resource at a time of increasing demand, should it still be a priority to protect SFRS when their core demand is reducing? Would it not make equal sense to better fund areas under most pressure? The answer in any particular case will probably depend on who is best placed to provide the service. Clearly SFRS require to retain sufficient capacity to respond to incidents (major and minor). It is sensible that such capacity, when not otherwise in use can be deployed for the overall public benefit.
- The contribution of SFRS to Community Planning should continue and resources should be made available to deliver local outcomes and improvement plans.
- The preventative strategy is welcomed to improve outcomes for communities and protect people from harm. It is recognised that this is an increased area of demand with our aging population and the work being done by SFRS in assisting to keep people safe and prevent them from coming to harm is a valuable contributor to public service delivery. Working in collaboration with the other emergency services in this regard makes good sense.
- Recognising the diversity of local areas and the specific needs of communities is vital. In North Ayrshire, this is being demonstrated on Arran and Cumbrae where new response vehicles are being deployed to better meet the needs of the community.
- SFRS should continue to engage with local communities to build confidence in the service and establish and foster relationships with a view to the prevention agenda and supporting communities. The SFRS is a well respected emergency service.
- The objective of early intervention is welcomed as this will not only lead to reduction in demand but will build community capacity and responsibility for individual safety and property
- It is noted that there is an objective of responding appropriately to unwanted fire alarm signals which is welcomed given that there has been a huge increase in the number leading to concerns that this diverts the availability of services from other areas of potential need. The council would welcome an action plan to tackle this issue

- The contribution of SFRS as an employer in the local area makes a difference in the local economy and community as a whole and the continued availability and retention of quality local jobs should be a priority as a contributor to the area.
- The people strategy is welcomed. The valued role of the firefighter should be recognised through fair terms and conditions and access to excellent training in preparation for their expanded roles. Members of the North Ayrshire Council Fire & Rescue Committee visited the specialist national training centre at Cambuslang last year where the expertise of specialised officers is utilised to train firefighters. The Committee was impressed at the facility and the approach taken to training firefighters for their varied roles. It is noted that improving the diversity of the workforce is identified as a priority which is welcomed.
- Governance and accountability should form a key part of monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan to ensure that outcomes are met.
- The investment in IT and digital solutions is recognised as key in developing a modern fire and rescue service which is fit for purpose.

#### Comments on current service provision

The involvement of the Service in early interventionist multi-agency work in North Ayrshire has been excellent through involvement at the multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Committee helping to work on approaches to reduce harm to vulnerable adults.

Partnership and Engagement have been put on a formal footing since the introduction of the 2012 Act. We have an excellent working relationship with the Local Area Commander and his officers both at strategic and operational level. The positive level of engagement of SFRS at the Police Fire and Rescue Committee has been most welcome.

The approach of localism is vital with local commanders being empowered to deliver services according to local needs and demands. In North Ayrshire we have excellent working relationships with SFRS which delivers well for our communities.



Aileen Craig  
Senior Manager Legal Services  
North Ayrshire Council