

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

20 FEBRUARY 2017

1. PUBLIC CONSULTATION (IRMP) OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority note the results of the recent public consultation have been considered as part of the preparation of The Plan 2017 – 2020.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the high level results from the public consultation exercise carried out during December 2016 to January 2017, and how they support The Plan 2017-2020.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In support of the organisation's commitment to open and transparent engagement, coupled with the ever fast moving external landscape and our legal requirement to consult upon our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) every three years, the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (The Authority), together with the Consultation Institute, engaged in a six week public consultation exercise from 1 December 2016 to 10 January 2017.
- 3.2 The purpose of this exercise was to engage with local communities, partners and businesses to understand their views and opinions about how The Authority currently provides its services, as well as how this could continue within The Authority's three year (rolling) planning period, 2017-2020. Questions were asked about three key areas:
 - a) IRMP
 - b) Governance
 - c) Finance

- 3.3 The public consultation survey is included at Appendix 1. The questions from the consultation also enabled us to determine if our strategic approach is understood by our communities, partners and businesses. The outcomes of the survey provide The Authority, the Chief Fire Officer and the Strategic Enabling Team with meaningful responses which can be used when considering the content of our three year rolling Corporate Strategy, The Plan 2017–2020.

4. **HEADLINE RESULTS**

The consultation process collected 5,768 responses of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, which amounts to over 3,500 more responses than our previous consultation exercise in 2013.

4.1 **IRMP questions and responses**

Three questions were asked which focused on our IRMP and the delivery of our priorities of Prevention, Protection and Response.

- 4.1.1 Q1: We know that getting to people, homes and businesses in 5 minutes means they are more likely to survive serious incidents. Do you agree we should continue to protect our 5-minute target?

Of those that responded:

96% said 'yes',
2% said 'no' and
2% said 'I don't know'

- 4.1.2 Q2: Our plans include a 1.99% increase in council tax which amounts to £1.11 to an average band 'D' property per year. Would you support consideration of a further increase of up to £5 per year in order to protect our 5-target target?

Of those that responded:

82% said 'yes',
10% said 'no'
8% said 'I don't know'

The responses to these two questions show a considerable support and understanding to our 5 minute response target, even when asked to pay £5 more per year.

- 4.1.3 Q3: Do you agree that our Prevention, Protection and Response work will make the communities and businesses of the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier?

91% said 'yes'

2% said 'no'

7% said 'I don't know'

The responses to this question strongly support how our priorities as set out in The Plan, namely Prevention (Safer and Healthier Communities), Protection (Stronger Business Communities) and Response (Dealing Effectively with Emergencies), are being provided now and over the next (rolling) three year planning period.

4.2 **Governance questions and responses**

Two questions were asked which focused on the future governance of West Midlands Fire Service and how this could support the future delivery of our services to local communities.

- 4.2.1 Q1: What do you think are the most important things to consider when it comes to how we are governed?

- 1) Safety
- 2) Provides Value for Money
- 3) Working with other organisations
- 4) More Transparency
- 5) More Accountability
- 6) More Scrutiny

The results from this question identified that the outcomes of 'public safety', 'value for money' and 'working with other organisations' were priorities for our communities, partners and businesses. With the latter options of 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'scrutiny' being much less a priority.

4.2.2 Q2: Which of these (governance) options would best support the delivery with our partners of our Prevention, Protection and Response services to you?

- a) A Reformed Fire Authority
- b) A Police and Crime Commissioner
- c) West Midlands Combined Authority and Mayor
- d) A combination of regional Fire and Rescue Authorities

The response to this question showed the highest strength of feeling towards a 'Reformed Fire Authority', secondly a 'combination' with other Fire and Rescue Services, thirdly an association with the 'elected Mayor and Combined Authority' and lastly to fall under the governance of the 'Police and Crime Commissioner'.

4.3 **Finance questions and responses**

4.3.1 Two questions were asked which focused on how the Authority continues to fund the delivery of our priorities of Prevention, Protection and Response.

4.3.2 Q1: Considering we already get a Government grant and money from Council Tax, should we continue to look at alternative ways of bringing in money?

81% said 'yes'

12% said 'no'

7% said 'I don't know'

The response to this question demonstrates the support from our communities in looking at alternative approaches to funding to support our key priorities in The Plan, in order to maintain our Service Delivery Model

4.3.3 Q2: Do you think your Fire Service's funding should be linked to the business rates collected by the West Midlands' seven councils, or come from a completely new Government grant which has no link to local business rates collections?

36% said 'business rates'

41% said 'Government grant'

23% said 'I don't know'

The responses to this question do not show a strong view for either funding option. The funding option for the Fire Service beyond, 2019/20 has not been determined and will be clarified as the Government determines proposed changes to the Local Government finance system.

4.4 The outcomes of this public consultation provide The Authority with a clear understanding of the opinions of our communities, partners and businesses in relation to the delivery of our services, our IRMP, our funding and the future governance of West Midlands Fire Service.

These outcomes have influenced the development of:

- The Plan 2017-2020, which is contained in the same titled Authority paper.
- Considerations concerning the future governance of West Midlands Fire Service, which are contained in the 'Route Map to Mayoral Governance' Authority paper.

The outcomes of the public consultation governance questions also support the conclusions of the Future Governance Working Group, contained in the 'Outcomes of the Future Governance Working Group', Authority paper.

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The public consultation of an IRMP is a legal requirement (as per The National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services England 2012), every three years and the recent exercise undertaken during December 2016 and January 2017 complies with this requirement.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications as an outcome of the proposals in this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy Planning Forum presentations 7 November 2016 & 16 January 2017

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