

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 10 December 2020

(NOTE: This meeting was held as a remote meeting in accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020).

PRESENT: Councillors Ben Curran (Chair), Tim Huggan (Deputy Chair), Sue Auckland, Penny Baker, Dawn Dale, Adam Hurst, Karen McGowan, Anne Murphy, Andrew Sangar, Richard Shaw and Douglas Johnson (Substitute Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Tony Damms, Member of the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Kaltum Rivers, Councillor Douglas Johnson attended as her substitute.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

5. FIRE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

5.1 Councillor Sue Auckland queried why the Integrated Risk Management Plan for South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) had not been brought before a meeting of full Council. She asked whether an invitation to attend this Scrutiny Committee had been extended to all Councillors for their input. Councillor Auckland also stated that due to the fact that the consultation period had come to end, would any feedback from this meeting be taken on board. Councillor Tony Damms stated that the item was of great importance and felt it would not have been possible to discuss the item thoroughly at a meeting of full Council. Councillor Damms said that any feedback from this meeting would be fed back to the Fire Authority.

5.2 Councillor Ben Curran apologised and said that there were no excuses, but the

item had not been considered during the consultation period due to him being ill. He said that he had had discussions with the Fire Authority prior to the meeting and it had been agreed that any feedback given would be taken on board.

5.3 The Committee received a report and presentation setting out the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021 to 2024 which was an up-to-date analysis of local risk and described how the Service would effectively coordinate its prevention and protection response, and resilience work to improve public safety and save lives.

5.4 Present for this item were Chris Kirby (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue) and Stuart Booth (Director of Support Services, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue).

5.5 Chris Kirby outlined some context around the design and development of an IRMP. Fire and Rescue Services have had to produce these plans since 2004. They should identify how a Fire and Rescue Service assesses risk within its local area and how it then delivers its services to best reduce the risks identified. He highlighted the key strategies that the Service must deliver to protect the local communities, including its prevention strategy, aimed at raising awareness of the risks people face from fire and other types of emergency, focusing on the most vulnerable. He referred to the promotion and enforcement of fire safety arrangements in buildings, to ensure that the buildings and its occupants were as safe as possible, that is delivered through the Service's protection strategy. In order to deliver an effective response strategy, Chris Kirby said that SYFR trained its staff to ensure that they were ready and able to respond to emergency situations and were equipped with the best vehicles and equipment to do their job as effectively as possible. Finally, he referred to the Service's resilience strategy in relation to how the Service deals with major emergencies that demand significant resources or require the support from other services or agencies both regionally and nationally. Mr. Kirby said that the key responsibilities were firefighting, attending road traffic collisions and ensuring fire safety, but they also attended civil emergencies such as flooding, so that services like Fire and Rescue were more prepared to respond to such incidents and that training, equipment and resilience arrangements locally, regionally and nationally support the Service's ability to do this. He stated that in England there was no legal requirement for the fire service to attend floods, but they do so as a "blue light service". He outlined how the Service assesses risk across the county and how an analysis of local and national data highlights how areas of deprivation tend to experience more fires. There has been a 50% decrease in house fires over the past 20 years, as many homes have been fitted with smoke alarms and home safety checks carried out in the homes of people believed to be most at risk of fire. Finally, Chris Kirby stated that Call Handling (or Control) Staff were able to determine the location of an incident within one to two minutes of the call being received, with the aim of getting to the emergency as quickly as possible.

5.6 Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, and responses were given as follows:-

- Consideration was given to emerging risks in new housing or business

developments, although new builds were much safer. The Fire Service looked at road and rail networks around new properties and how they would be able to respond to an emergency through access to the premises and the provision of an effective water supply.

- With regard to the Grenfell Tower fire, firefighters were aware of the risk and of the potential need to evacuate people from high rise buildings which were not designed for large scale evacuations in the UK. The design of such buildings was for them to contain a fire within a flat and the Grenfell Tower building had had a lot of renovation works carried out to it over many years, including the retrofitting of the cladding system that caused much of the fire spread.
- With regard to those buildings in Sheffield that still have unsuitable cladding on them, SYFR is investing in its building safety work to support those building owners in order for them to comply with their responsibilities under the relevant fire safety regulations. The initial works was only limited to certain premises over a specific height. The challenge for Fire and Rescue Services is that they have limited powers and can issue enforcement notices that require improvements to be made, and could prohibit the use or occupancy of part of or all of a building if it is deemed unsafe and individual Fire and Rescue Services have to consider that certain notices may result in residents in those blocks being made temporarily homeless until improvements were put in place.
- SYFR were always looking at new risks, for example older people becoming more at risk when their circumstances change. There had been specific challenges for the Service during Covid due to firefighters not being able to cross thresholds where vulnerable people had been identified, due to the concern about potentially spreading the virus. As such, many visits had to be delayed unless the risk of fire was so high that a physical visit had to be undertaken. This still happened in the most high risk cases.
- Other risks identified were environmental challenges, such as moorland fires, over capacity of waste at recycling centres, flooding etc. These risks were reviewed regularly, working with partners including local and national government to understand changes which could affect South Yorkshire and make sure resources were in place to reduce such risks.
- SYFR encourages green travel schemes and welcomes the installation of traffic lanes. All drivers have to “drive to arrive” as effectively as possible. Chris Kirby confirmed that cycle lanes do not cause any issues for SYFR.
- In the final draft of the Integrated Risk Management Plan, 10 priorities were identified and priority nine on that list was to improve the level of equipment to be able to deal with moorland fires.
- The welfare of firefighters was a priority and was constantly reviewed.
- There was a challenge where English was not the first language for

members of the public. Leaflets were available and advice was given about the use of google translate. On occasions when giving fire safety advice, translators were used.

5.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Chris Kirby, Stuart Booth and Councillor Tony Damms for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the report and presentation and answers to the questions raised; and
- (c) requests that reference to cycles lanes in Sheffield be removed from the final draft of the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer on the Work Programme for the Committee.

6.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee (a) approves the contents of the Work Programme for 2020/21, (b) notes that Youth Services is being covered by the Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee at its February meeting, and (c) requests that priority be given to the item on the Community Safety Partnership.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 7th January 2021 at 5.00 p.m.