

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 9 DECEMBER 2021

CONSULTATION RESPONSE: FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 Communities Committee is requested to consider and comment on the Aberdeenshire Council response to the Scottish Government's consultation on its Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider, comment on and approve the Council response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland attached as Appendix 1 to this Report;**
2.2 Note that the response deadline is 22 December 2021.

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Scottish Ministers are required by Section 40 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 to prepare a Framework document that sets out priorities and objectives that Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) must have regard to in carrying out its functions. The draft framework must undergo consultation to seek views from SFRS, COSLA and other public bodies. The [consultation](#) was published on the Scottish Government website on 29 September 2021 and closes on 22 December 2021.
- 3.2 The Framework aligns to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and National Outcomes, as well as its commitment to Public Service Reform. A decade after the Christie Commission report, the Scottish Government considers it important that the SFRS continue to embrace the principles of continuous improvement, asset-based working, co-production and community empowerment.
- 3.3 Aberdeenshire Council's response to this consultation was led by officers from the Corporate Policy and Community Planning team, based on awareness of Aberdeenshire Council's partnership work with SFRS. Officers from the Health and Social Care Partnership were also consulted and provided feedback.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The Framework sets out Scottish Ministers' expectations of SFRS. The consultation focuses on the seven strategic priorities proposed:

1. Prevention and Protection

Summary: Preventing fires and reducing their human, social and economic impact. SFRS should use an evidence-based approach to target groups and individuals to improve fire and wider community safety.

2. Response

Summary: Ensure that SFRS’ assets, staff and technology enable it to respond to incidents across Scotland. Adopt a flexible, innovative approach to service delivery and resilience planning.

3. Innovation and Modernisation

Summary: continually improve and modernise the service and the role of firefighters, using sound evidence to use SFRS resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

4. Climate Change

Summary: Support action to address the climate emergency, by reducing SFRS’s own greenhouse gas emissions and working to protect Scotland’s communities from the effects of extreme weather events like increased wildfires and flooding.

5. Effective Governance and Performance

Summary: Carry out a robust approach to performance management which is based on data gathering and sharing, scrutiny, continuous improvement and collaboration with local partners.

6. People

Summary: Continue to be a Fair Work employer that promotes the equality, safety and health of its staff, providing learning opportunities and effective workforce and succession planning.

7. Partnership

Summary: Collaborate with blue light emergency services, public, private and voluntary organisations and Scotland’s communities, beyond the important joint work with Community Planning Partnerships.

4.2 Overall, the draft council response considers that all seven priorities are appropriate. There is a high importance placed on the SFRS core functions of protecting communities and responding to relevant emergencies, while still recognising the need for continuous improvement in the context of the pressures faced by public bodies and the impacts of climate change.

4.3 In the final consultation question, the response requests more detail on the workstreams and specific projects that SFRS will carry out to deliver the strategy. It also asked for more detail on the Scottish Government’s suggestion that SFRS should use the findings from fire investigations or false alarm attendances to improve outcomes.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps deliver on the pillars of Our People and Our Environment, particularly the Resilient Communities priority.

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is (are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			x
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			x
Climate Change and Sustainability			x
Health and Wellbeing			x
Town Centre First			x

5.3 The screening section of the Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out, and it was determined that there will be no differential impacts as a result of the report. An IIA is not required because the report is related to the Council's response to a consultation.

5.4 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

ACORP005 Working with other organisations

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section D.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to approval of a Council response to an external consultation on the topic of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Ritchie Johnson, Director Of Business Services

Report prepared by Irina Bonavino, Policy Officer

Date: 18 November 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Aberdeenshire Council response

**Respondent Information Form****Next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland**

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

Do not publish response

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 1** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Prevention and Protection**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Aberdeenshire Council agrees with the placing of Prevention and Protection as the first priority of the SFRS, to meet its core duties of keeping communities safe.

Educating communities (particularly deprived areas) in fire safety is an important element of prevention, and Aberdeenshire Council would continue to contribute to this goal as one of SFRS's partners. Partnership work and data-based prioritisation is also appropriate when identifying and supporting groups who are most likely to experience unintentional harm.

2. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 2** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Response**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

It is appropriate for "Response" to be a high strategic priority, after Prevention and Protection.

The text recognises various new challenges and the context of financial pressures in public sector budgets. Aberdeenshire Council also shares concern regarding these challenges in our area, particularly an aging population and the potential impacts of climate change (e.g. flooding).

The SFRS's involvement in responses to terrorism, climate or other types of emergencies should first be clearly scoped in partnership with other response organisations and rolled out to its staff through robust training, to maximise resource efficiency and safety. We would encourage the Framework to allow the SFRS to remain focused on responding to fire-related emergencies as its core role, but accept that other emergencies will benefit from partnership awareness and collaboration.

3. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 3** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Innovation and Modernisation**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Innovation and modernisation are increasingly important as public bodies deal with reduced resources and rapidly changing demands. We have all gained significant learning and experience through the Covid-19 pandemic, which has demonstrated the ability of workforces, in very challenging circumstances, to change, adapt and work differently. Supporting and embedding a culture of continuous improvement will be key to the success of the SFRS Long-Term Vision.

4. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 4** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Climate Change**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Aberdeenshire Council strongly supports the approach in Strategic Priority 4 – Climate Change (which aligns with the Council’s own carbon reduction agenda) and welcomes the opportunity to work with SFRS and other public sector partners and communities to address the climate emergency.

5. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 5** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Effective Governance and Performance**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Aberdeenshire Council supports the use of performance management to pursue continuous improvement, transparent reporting and a data-based approach to service delivery as a public body.

6. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 6** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **People**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Aberdeenshire Council strongly supports the principles of this strategy, many of which align with our own Workforce Strategy – enabling innovation and change, the learning organisation and being more representative of the people and communities we serve. As public sector employers it is important that we continue to be Fair Work employers.

It is encouraging to note the inclusion of succession and workforce planning and health, wellbeing and safety, and equalities again, fundamentals in the Council’s workforce strategy.

The Council would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with SFRS to maximise learning and sharing of best practice etc and looks forward to further discussion on this.

7. Do you agree with the text set out in the section for **Strategic Priority 7** of the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland in relation to **Partnership**? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Strategic Priority 7 appropriately recognises the SFRS statutory duty to work with other organisations. At a local area level, the engagement and collaboration between SFRS and Aberdeenshire Council is valuable. We are pleased to see specific mention of key collaboration areas like the Community Planning Partnership, health and care, and community justice. The Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership is also committed to working closely with SFRS when required to meet the shared responsibilities in delivering services to our communities.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the essential role of SFRS in supporting council services to deal with emergencies such as flood events, Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) and other winter related emergencies as well as Home Safety Checks and Falls Prevention. We would welcome the continued collaboration outlined in the Framework to ensure an effective joint local response to emergencies.

It is also helpful that Priority 7 goes beyond the status quo and suggests improvements to partnership working in line with future requirements. One instance of this is the challenges of data collation, analysis and sharing, which are felt across the public sector. Aberdeenshire Council welcomes the Framework's stated effort to overcome them jointly. Data sharing among partners is important to pool resources, reduce duplication and, most importantly, improve the way services are delivered and activity is targeted. This approach will be beneficial for delivering joint plans such as the Local Outcome Improvement Plans and the Locality Plans, which require the ongoing input and monitoring of quantitative and qualitative data by all CPP partners to tackle complex issues such as inequality and poor health.

8. Do you think these are the right 7 priorities to be included in the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

Aberdeenshire Council and the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership welcome the SFRS Long-Term Vision. We share in the commitment to delivering high performing, quality services that meet the needs of our residents. Improvement and innovation will help ensure that we

work together seamlessly to deliver the best possible services that focus on improving outcomes for people within our communities. Maintaining the SFRS commitment towards community engagement and partnership working is welcomed and it is how they work as an organisation currently.

9. Do you think there is anything that is missing from the next Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland that should be included? (Please provide comments in the space provided)

Yes No

It would be helpful to have more information on the following points, either as part of the Strategy or in supplementary documents if that is more appropriate:

- The workstreams and specific projects that SFRS will be working through to enable the strategy to take place and produce positive outcomes. This would also allow links to be made to enable good multi-agency working, sharing good practice amongst agencies, and supporting effective use of resources.
- With regard to Priority 1: It would be helpful to see more practical detail on how SFRS is advised to use the findings from fire investigations or false alarm attendances to improve outcomes. However, it is understood that this may be more relevant to operational documents.