



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSCPC/11/1
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	13 JANUARY 2011
SUBJECT OF REPORT	FUTURE COMMUNITY SAFETY (PREVENTION AND PROTECTION) STRATEGY PRINCIPLES
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO TREVOR STRATFORD (Director of Service Support)
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the report be noted.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Following on from internal reviews of prevention and protection activity the opportunity now exists to re-define the DSFRS strategy in these two areas of Service Delivery. The proposals set out within this report seek to establish a targeted and intelligence lead approach to activity in order to ensure that DSFRS is directing its resources to where risk is within the community in order to minimise the both the occurrence and impact of incidents .
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Nil
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Draft text for inclusion in the Corporate Plan consultation - for information purposes only.
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	None

1 **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members will be aware from previous meetings and presentations of the need for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) to ensure it is allocating its resources to where the risk is in the Community and to ensure it is effectively reaching the most vulnerable in society. Sadly, incidents such as the Ellacombe Church Road tragedy amongst others constantly reinforce this principle.
- 1.2 The DSFRS Community Safety (CS) team has been reviewing the Services Prevention and Protection strategies to ensure the principles above are delivered as effectively as possible whilst at the same time ensuring the Service is better equipped to deliver the draft DSFRS 2010-14 Corporate Plans, the “Big Society” agenda and improving public safety as a whole.
- 1.3 Elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting is a separate report dealing with the Corporate Plan 2011/12 to 2013/14 which contains eight specific proposals for service improvements. Two of the eight improvement proposals address Community Safety Prevention and Protection activities and further details of the proposed strategies to better target the resources in these areas are set out within this paper as below, together with recommendations for consideration. This report now provides more detailed background information in relation to the two specific service improvements contained within the Corporate Plan Consultation document.

2. **PROPOSED PREVENTION STRATEGY**

- 2.1 Historically, as Members are aware, DSFRS has operated a “one size fits all” approach to its prevention activities. In effect this has meant that whilst the Service has had considerable success in what it has achieved in terms of the numbers of smoke alarms fitted, the number of schools visited etc, it has not always been possible to ensure resources are being utilised to target the most at risk members of our community. A significant reason for this historical approach has been that information and data from key partners as well as internal targeting systems have not been developed to the extent required to deliver a more sophisticated and targeted solution.
- 2.2 As a result of review work, improving technology, improving working relationships with partners and importantly, the establishment of an “in house” Targeting team, the Service is in a position to be more sophisticated in the use of its prevention resources to ensure that they are directed to where the greatest need exists. Significantly, if a far more targeted approach is adopted as an overarching strategy, it will release staff to focus on the most vulnerable in society as well as the Service being able to deliver more Fire Safety (FS) Checks as set out in section 3 below.
- 2.3 In effect this strategy will mean that, in the activity area of Home Safety Visits (HSV) for example, DSFRS will no longer offer and carry out free visits for all (its estimated that to date, less than 20% of the historical visits have been at premises occupied by defined “vulnerable” groups) but will offer visits only to those who fall within our vulnerable criteria and are referred to us via partner/other agencies. Those members of our community who are not within the most vulnerable groups but wish advice will be sent a self assessment toolkit containing advice on home safety, types of smoke detector, placing of detectors etc. It is estimated this approach will see a reduction in HSV of in the region of 50%, but importantly, DSFRS efforts will be targeted more effectively.

- 2.4 At the same time, the Service proposes to increase its efforts to engage with local communities, the voluntary/community sector, local town/parish councils etc in order to “share” both the challenge and responsibility for vulnerable people. Opportunities also exist for different delivery options to be implemented - through commissioning and other models. These will be explored at the same time. All of the above principles are considered to support the “Big Society” agenda
- 2.5 This targeted/intelligence led approach will be applied to all prevention related activities.
- 2.6 Appendix A (section1) is an initial draft of how the above proposals will be presented for public consultation.

3. PROPOSED PROTECTION STRATEGY

- 3.1 Very much along the lines above, the opportunity now exists to clarify and add value to the DSFRS overarching Fire Protection Strategy. DSFRS has operated a risk based approach to its enforcement activities in recent years by conducting Fire Safety Audits (detailed/complex visits) on premises considered to be a higher risk. Members will be aware of the intent to introduce “lighter touch” Fire Safety Checks across the Service area. Part of the rationale for the introduction of the Fire Safety Checks was, amongst other things, to meet the needs of changing legislation resulting from Sir Philip Hampton’s 2005 review - ‘Reducing administrative burdens: effective inspection and enforcement’. This review considered how to reduce unnecessary administration for businesses, without compromising the UK’s well regarded regulatory regime.
- 3.2 In essence, the outcomes of the Hampton review were a set of consulted/agreed principles, that are now enshrined in law that oblige all regulators (both national and local) to have regard to:
- Using a comprehensive risk assessment (targeting process) to concentrate resources on the areas that need them most;
 - Regulators should be accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of their activities, while remaining independent in the decisions they take;
 - No inspection should take place without a reason;
 - Businesses should not have to give unnecessary information, nor give the same piece of information twice;
 - The few businesses that persistently break regulations should be identified quickly;
 - Regulators should provide authoritative, accessible advice easily and cheaply; and Regulators should recognise that a key element of their activity will be to allow, or even encourage, economic progress and only to intervene when there is a clear case for protection.
- 3.3 The review work identified that DSFRS can better meet the Hampton principles (currently monitored by the Better Regulation Executive (BRE)).

3.4 In short, to facilitate this improvement it is proposed that DSFRS adopt the following principles:

- Complex Fire Safety Audits are only carried out:
 - After a fire
 - After a complaint/partner/agency referral
- Following serious defects reported after a Fire Safety CheckThe number of lighter touch Fire Safety Checks will be increased across the Service area using the capacity realised from the adoption of the proposals in section 2 above.
- Fire Safety Checks will be targeted to risk using the newly developed targeting tools referred to in section 2 above
- The number of business “compliance/education/awareness” events will be increased and will again be directed at the higher risk sectors within the community.
- Full advantage will taken of opportunities to market and promote both good and poor practice within the community.

3.5 Adoption of this strategy is expected to bring the following benefits:

- Consistency of application across DSFRS Service area
- Highly trained (and expensive) staff will be carrying out in depth and more time consuming Fire Safety Audits where the risk is known
- Fire Fighter safety will be significantly increased as response crews will be carrying out more Fire Safety Checks than previously- this will bring them into contact with far more premises within their station area
- There will be a more visible presence within the community of the Service checking fire safety measures- word will spread
- Higher numbers of businesses will be engaged with- both through the lighter touch targeted Fire Safety Checks and the increased number of targeted compliance events.

3.6 Appendix A (section 2) is an initial draft of how the above proposals will be presented for public consultation.

4. SUMMARY

4.1 The service is currently adopting a new vision statement:

“By 2014, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) will be saving lives and limiting the number of injuries from preventable fires and accidents because people and communities in Devon and Somerset will be making better informed decisions about their own safety and living in, working in and visiting safer buildings”.

4.2 In order for this vision to be achieved going forwards it is believed necessary to adopt and implement the strategy options set out above over the coming 2 years. By doing so, the Authority will be able to demonstrate:

- It is being effective in its use of resources by “doing more with the same”
- Effective use of resources by directing those resources to where risk in the community is
- It is contributing to the Big Society agenda by working with others and working to ensure communities are encouraged to take responsibility for risk where appropriate.

5. AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS

5.1 Member will be aware DSFRS has a policy for responding to alerts from automatic fire detection equipment that seeks to determine the validity of the fire alarm before mobilising fire appliances. This policy incorporates an escalation process that can result in not attending repeated false alarms. Despite this policy in approximately 25% of the calls DSFRS attends are from false alarms from automatic detection equipment. This costs significant sums of money and prevents our emergency response crews from doing other work including responding to genuine emergencies, training, prevention and protection activities.

5.2 The Localism Bill 2010 (published Dec 2010) potentially introduces the ability for fire and rescue services to charge for responding to false reports of fire at non-domestic premises. Should this Bill become law DSFRS will be able to adopt the powers contained within it and charge accordingly.

5.3 Members will be kept up to date with progress as required.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the report be noted.

ACFO TREVOR STRATFORD
Director of Service Support

SECTION 1- PREVENTION STRATEGY CONSULTATION - DRAFT

PROVIDING MORE TARGETED PREVENTION SERVICES AND ADVICE

What are prevention services?

DSFRS works actively within the community and with partner organisations to prevent emergency incidents occurring. This is achieved by ensuring that members of the community have access to, and are provided with, information that will help prevent an emergency and minimise injury if an incident does occur. To effectively and efficiently promote community safety we work in partnership with agencies and organisations who represent the vulnerable groups in the community most at risk from an emergency. The range of community safety services offered is divided between proactive and reactive prevention services.

Our proactive services work towards stopping a new incident from occurring and reducing the impact of incidents. Examples of these types of service include: schools fire safety education, home fire safety visits, junior life skills and young people training

Our reactive services work to prevent repeat incidents occurring from the same origin and the impact from these incidents. Examples of these types of service include: arson reduction programmes, Phoenix youth inclusion programmes and junior firesetters.

Current arrangement

DSFRS fully recognise that prevention is better than cure and has invested a lot of time and effort to reduce incidents of fire, road traffic accidents, deaths and injuries. Our approach has been to try and engage with all members of the community and deliver our prevention message to as many as possible. This approach is no longer effective or efficient as the victims of fire very often have certain characteristics such as being heavy drug/alcohol users, mobility and ill health problems and may suffer from living in deprived neighbourhoods. As such, many of these people are also those most likely to be already known to other agencies. By better sharing information and spending longer targeting those who are least likely to look after themselves, we can aim to reduce lives lost through fire and other emergencies.

New proposal

Whilst our current arrangement have been successful we believe that we will achieve a better outcome for the community by delivering a more targeted service to those most vulnerable and at risk.

This will mean that we will directly deliver our prevention services to fewer people but we will spend more time and effort in identifying those members of community who will benefit most from receiving our prevention service. An example is that we will be delivering fewer home fire safety visits but those that we do will be aimed at the most vulnerable. We cannot do this alone and will be working with our key partners to ensure that we do this effectively. Although our prevention services will be more targeted we will continue to provide accessible community safety information to all those who are looking to make their homes and community safer.

Benefits

- Money potentially available for re-investment into community safety is in the region of £100,000.
- The time and money saved will:
 - help investment in new areas of prevention work such as the following contributory factors to fires and other emergency incidents: drugs and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and abuse and mental health issues
 - be re-invested into delivering improved fire protection services.
- By adopting this new approach the community directly benefits as a whole through reduced demand on public services such as: fire and rescue, police, health and social services.

Risks

- Key partners not sharing critical information on those people most at risk in the community.

SECTION 2 PROTECTION STRATEGY CONSULTATION - DRAFT

PROVIDING MORE TARGETED PROTECTION SERVICES AND ADVICE

What are protection services?

Fire and Rescue Services have a role in enforcing the law so that members of the public and local employees are protected from the risk of death and injury caused by fire. The work of community safety protection is focused on ensuring that the non-domestic buildings in which people work, visit and enjoy leisure time have safe means of escape in the event of fire.

The fire protection services we provide include: responding to building regulation consultations; undertaking fire safety checks and audits; working with businesses to improve their fire safety arrangements; providing advice and assistance; enforcing fire safety legislation by stopping or restricting the use of buildings if the condition of a building means that there is a serious risk of death or serious injury to persons; and in exceptional circumstances prosecutions when the situation risks life and there is no other option left.

Fire and Rescue Services are required to undertake statutory consultations required by other organisations on fire safety issues and ensure that the 'responsible person' of each non-domestic property meets their enforcement duties as required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The level of compliance will be assessed using the national audit process developed by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). This process ensures consistent, auditable and transparent enforcement that is replicated across England and Wales.

Current arrangement

DSFRS currently targets its protection services through undertaking fire safety audits (a full fire risk inspection) on a wide range of businesses within the community. This approach is time consuming on both businesses and the fire and rescue service. We also deliver a small number of events throughout the year. These events are where we help explain to the business community their obligations under fire safety legislation.

New proposal

We plan to expand a system of fire safety checks (currently being piloted) which are less time consuming for both the fire service and the business community than a full fire safety audit. We propose to only carry out a full fire safety audit where: a fire has occurred, following a complaint from a member of the public or a partner agency, or as a result of a need identified in a fire safety check. We will better target those premises where fire safety checks will be carried out through improved data analysis and sharing of information with partners.

Firefighters will mainly be responsible for undertaking fire safety checks.

We plan to hold more compliance events in order to help the business community better understand their legal obligations under fire safety legislation..

Benefits

- More businesses (factories, shops, hotels etc) will receive fire safety checks which will help to make buildings in Devon and Somerset safer for visitors and members of our community.
- Businesses will be less affected by resource intensive fire safety audits that take up their time and resources.
- Specialist fire safety officers will be spending their time focused on applying their skills and knowledge in higher risk premises.
- The local knowledge of business premises gained by our firefighters whilst conducting fire safety checks will their improve their safety.
- The knowledge of fire safety matters and responsibility will improve amongst those responsible for business premises through more compliance events being held.

Risks

- The proposal relies upon the effective targeting of risk premises. A targeting model is currently being developed to help reduce this risk.