

Planning for a Safer Cheshire

Cheshire Fire Authority is the democratically accountable body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to the residents and businesses of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

Ensuring the community continues to be protected by a first class fire and rescue service during the most significant cuts in its history is the biggest challenge the Authority has ever faced.

The previous four year strategy, published in 2011, enabled the Service to make savings of nearly £7m while maintaining a reduction in the number of fires and emergency incidents. The total number of incidents attended has fallen by 43% over the last decade.

The challenge over the next five years will be even harder, as it becomes more difficult to maintain improvements in community safety as the need to make financial savings increases.

The new draft strategy clarifies some of the choices facing the Authority and outlines the principles and approach it will adopt to ensure it does not compromise on its commitment to protecting local

communities, reducing risk and maintaining firefighters' safety.

Consultation and feedback

This summary highlights the key areas covered by the draft strategy and links into the consultation, which will capture feedback around these important themes.

Individuals and partners who want to share their views should visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk where they can access the survey, or email consultation@cheshirefire.gov.uk.

The consultation period will run until 27th March 2015, with a revised strategy to be considered by the Fire Authority on 17th June 2015.

Focusing on Cheshire

The strategy proposes that the Authority's frontline services should continue to be provided on its current Cheshire footprint rather than exploring options to merge with other fire and rescue services.

This means that the organisation will retain its strong and recognisable brand and reputation, which enables us to access vulnerable people or establish relationships and



partnerships with other local agencies.

The Authority also believes that this footprint provides the best way of engaging with communities and providing local accountability.

Working with partners

While the strategy reaffirms the Cheshire 'footprint' for delivering frontline services, it outlines a number of options for delivering back-office services in collaboration with others.

In particular, it highlights the potential for the Authority to deliver and integrate many of its support services with Cheshire Police.

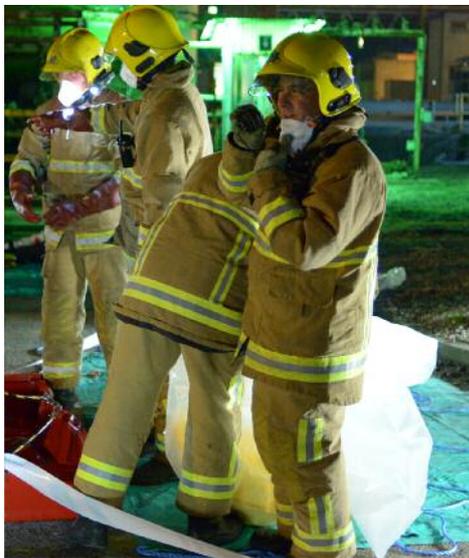


While the programme will initially focus on transactional services, it will also explore the potential to share other services, as well the development of more shared sites, like the joint police, fire and ambulance station at Poynton.

The Authority will also consider extending the current co-responding arrangements with the North West Ambulance Service, at Nantwich Fire Station, into other areas. The aim of the scheme is to cut the time taken for a patient to receive initial treatment when firefighters may be closer to an incident than an ambulance.

Protecting communities

The Authority uses its hugely successful programme of Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) to target its safety messages to those households which are most vulnerable.



In the future this approach will be supplemented by the building of a dedicated safety and life skills centre at Lymm, which will provide a base for the Authority's preventative services.

The centre provides a foundation for demonstrating the added value the fire and rescue service can bring to reducing the future demand on public services. The organisation will also look to be commissioned to deliver programmes that will improve the safety of vulnerable residents, including promoting key health messages, youth engagement initiatives and working with partners to improve road safety.

Reviewing our Service

A key element of the previous strategy involved a fundamental review of emergency response services. That was completed and work is well underway on the subsequent programme, which includes building four new fire stations.

As part of this new strategy, a further detailed review will be undertaken to consider a range of issues to ensure emergency response arrangements remain fit for purpose, including changes in risk levels, the sustainability of low-activity stations and matching resources to meet variations in demand i.e. between daytime and night time.

Future funding

The Authority continues to model its medium term financial plan on ongoing annual reductions of 8% in its Government funding and a maximum 1.99% annual increase in its Council Tax. To achieve a balanced budget, this requires savings of £2m a year up to 2020.

The Authority is confident that the strategy provides a sound basis to deliver these savings. However, if financial pressures increase more than expected the Authority will consider asking residents for an additional Council Tax increase if it feels the alternatives would increase local risk to unacceptable levels.

