

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Planning Committee

Meeting to be held on Monday 2 February 2025

Consultation Strategy – Annual Review

(Appendix 1 refers)

Contact for further information – Stephanie Collinson, Assistant Director of Communications and Engagement, Tel: 01772 866787

Executive Summary

The Authority has a consultation strategy which provides a framework through which it can seek public opinion on matters such as its services, council tax precept, and proposals for changes that impact on communities.

The strategy (attached as appendix 1) has been reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet statutory requirements; incorporates good practice; and provides the public and stakeholders with timely opportunity to influence development of their fire and rescue service.

This year's review concludes that the strategy continues to be legally compliant and in line with good practice.

Recommendation

The planning committee is asked to note and endorse the consultation strategy and to approve the proposal to create a five-year strategy next year, aligned with the next community risk management plan.

Information

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service undertakes public consultation on a range of issues on behalf of the Authority to ensure that the views of communities, partners, and stakeholders are used to inform decision-making. The planning committee considers and grants permission for any requests to consult with the public and grants permission to consult.

The Authority's consultation strategy (attached as appendix 1) provides a framework for consulting effectively. It has been reviewed and continues to be legally compliant and in line with good practice.

The following amendments have been made:

- Section 4 has been added to explicitly state the legal principles which govern consultation.
- In section 5, a paragraph has been added to provide further clarity about the approach to determining whether consultation will take place.
- In section 7, service users / those most at risk of fires and other emergencies have been added as a distinct stakeholder in the list of potential stakeholders.

- In section 8, reference has been made to the information provided in consultations being available, accessible, and interpretable for consultees.

The planning committee has previously reviewed the strategy every year to assure continued compliance with guidance or legislation and to incorporate learning from any public consultation exercises undertaken. It is proposed that next year, the strategy is aligned with the new community risk management plan which will cover the period 2027-2032 and is only brought back for review within that five-year period if a material change is required.

Business risk

The consultation strategy provides the necessary framework to help the Authority ensure that the Service provides relevant stakeholders with the opportunity to influence decisions, policies and services. Effective consultation gives the Service better understanding of the needs and expectations of its communities and stakeholders, and helps to create services that are more closely aligned to those needs. The Service is at risk of failing to meet community needs if it does not consult effectively.

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The strategy sets out that equality impact assessments should be undertaken for all consultations. These assessments inform stakeholder analysis of who to involve and how; describe the positive and reasonable adjustments that may be made to reach groups of people with protected characteristics; and understand the barriers that may be encountered when trying to involve them.

Data Protection (GDPR)

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? No

HR implications

None.

Financial implications

None.

Legal implications

Legal implications are set out in Section 4: Legal principles and Section 9: Data use and subjects and transparency obligations.

A consultation can be challenged if it was unfair, if the process was flawed or the consultation gave rise to misleading expectations. The recourse for those who feel they have been unfairly served is judicial review. This is the legal instrument in place as a check to make sure public bodies carry out their duties fairly. In a judicial review, a judge will use the Gunning Principles (Section 4) to determine whether the consultation is lawful.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

Paper: Consultation Strategy

Date: 3 February 2025

Contact: Steve Healey, Deputy Chief Fire Officer