

## **Progress in Implementing the Authority's Primary Strategies**

### **FOCUS ON YOUR SAFETY STRATEGY**

1. This strategy is about helping people to prevent emergencies when they are at home or travelling in Kent or Medway. It focused on prevention from three types of emergency:

- Fires in the home or outside;
- Road traffic collisions;
- Flooding in the home or across broad areas, and incidents involving water.

It highlighted the success the Authority has had in terms of prevention and the contribution this has made to reducing both the overall level of incidents to which the Authority responds, as well as the number of fatalities and casualties across Kent and Medway.

### **Projects Delivered**

2. The restructure of the delivery of community safety activity has now been completed. A commissioning and marketing unit has been created, with the products produced then used by the delivery team in Community Safety. Fundamental to this new approach is more focus on social marketing to understand what leads to risk or risky behaviours in the first place, and how best to deliver safety messages, for which a project has been created.

### **Projects in Flight**

3. Members will be aware of the review of community safety being led by the Kent Community Safety Partnership. Once this review is complete, it is planned to look more closely at what activity could potentially be shared between the Authority and Kent Police in the field of community safety. However it was felt that this work needed to be put on hold whilst the county-wide review was completed.
4. Work on the Road Safety Experience is progressing well, and a number of 'meet the neighbour' events have been held, allowing the local community to see the plans for the Road Safety Experience as well as the new fire station at Rochester. Feedback has been largely positive. The build of both facilities is expected to be complete by late autumn 2015.
5. Members may be aware that Kent County Council is leading work to refresh the agreement under which local authorities securely share data. Once this work is complete, the Authority will review its own processes within its customer databases, which securely hold client details for home safety visits. This will ensure that data is

not held for longer than necessary, and can be used to support closer working with public health agencies. In turn this will create a more seamless service for users, as the long term aim is that data only needs to be entered into one system, and then be transferred to the organisation that needs it, stored securely, and then deleted when redundant.

## **FOCUS ON BUSINESS STRATEGY**

6. This strategy describes how the Authority aims to work with businesspeople, and support them, in starting and maintaining a successful business in Kent or Medway. Fire safety work in commercial buildings contributes to a prosperous economy in Kent and Medway. The strategy outlines what the Authority wants to achieve over the next five years, and what that means to businesses in Kent and Medway.

## **Projects Delivered**

7. The business engagement team has now been set up and is providing a one stop shop of business safety advice to clients from across Kent and Medway, and allows for closer working between technical fire safety, community safety and operational staff. Stations have been provided with a single point of contact on operational issues in regulated premises and the development will also provide a more flexible response on post-incident and risk reduction work. Service delivery teams have also been aligned to each of the five geographically-based group offices. Service delivery teams will be responsible for business engagement, premises audits and risk reduction.
8. There are also two specialist central teams which will have their own references but will also work alongside the service delivery teams to provide the most appropriate service to support local businesses, focusing on education, engagement and enforcement.
9. As well as the new teams, another role has been created to coordinate the Authority's primary authority scheme partnership as part of a government-led scheme to ensure consistent regulation. The Authority is working with Shepherd Neame Brewery under this scheme. A primary authority scheme allows a company trading nationwide to draw advice from a single local authority, which gives them consistent advice applicable to any trading outlet they use. Shepherd Neame is a well-known, family run, Kent-based company, and this was one of the reasons the Authority selected it as a partner.

## **Projects in Flight**

10. Members have previously received updates on the Authority's approach to premises risk management (PRM). This is a mechanism whereby the risk information held by the various departments of the Authority can be made available in real time to

operational firefighters, via mobile data terminals in fire engines. Recently a new contractor has been appointed to support the project, and by the time of the meeting, a significant proportion of the system-testing for the operational information element of the project will have been completed. This is a significant milestone. Aligned to the PRM project is the need to review the business processes used in technical fire safety to ensure that they are as efficient as possible. Once testing of the operational module has been completed, this work will be commissioned, and then reflected in the technical fire safety workflow for PRM. It is anticipated that the final product will be rolled out during 2015/16.

## **RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES STRATEGY**

11. This strategy deals with all elements of operational response, from pre-planning, operational intervention, and post-incident recovery and learning. It is the broadest strategy, and therefore has a large number of projects arising from it.

### **Projects Delivered**

12. A new contract for work at the Channel Tunnel has been successfully agreed in line with Members' wishes. Members of Planning and Performance Committee will recall previous briefings on the Operational Policy Framework, and will be pleased to hear that such has been the interest in the work led by Kent that it is being adopted nationally as best practice, in support of the ways of working and national operational guidance projects. In line with the outcomes of the Safety Plan, height vehicles are now located at Canterbury, Maidstone and Ashford, and three replacement vehicles are due in service before the end of 2014/15. The on-call fire engine based at Medway fire station was removed in summer 2014.
13. A new multi-agency team set up to improve our response to emergencies and disasters has successfully completed the first phase of a three-year plan. The Kent Resilience Team was formed in April this year and is made up of staff from the Authority, Kent County Council and Kent Police. NHS England and the Environment Agency have started to get involved and it is hoped other partners including South East Coast Ambulance and Medway Council will also become part of the team. The 16-strong team offers a new model for delivering statutory responsibilities on behalf of partners in Kent. Its main function is to oversee and co-ordinate the duties of planning, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters and emergencies. Members of the Planning and Performance Committee will receive a more detailed progress report at their meeting being held on 6 November 2014.
14. Ash-cum-Ridley fire station was officially opened by the Chairman in June 2014. It held its first community open day on 30 August which was well attended by the local community.

15. A pilot project to seek a partner willing to release staff to work as on-call firefighters during their working day was run in Medway, but sadly was not successful. The project has therefore been closed.

### **Projects in Flight**

16. **Station rebuild programme:** The rebuilding of Medway fire station and the construction of the new fire station at Rochester continues, with both due to be handed over to the Authority in autumn 2015, and firefighting operations planned to begin from those locations in January 2016. The replacement of Ramsgate fire station is progressing. The Authority has recently exchanged contracts for purchase of the new site, and planning permission will be sought from Thanet District Council shortly. Although replacing Herne Bay fire station is still important to the Authority, it is proposed to return to the issue of cover in the Herne Bay/Whitstable area as part of the second review of emergency cover. No start date has been placed against this project.
17. **Review of emergency response:** The second review of emergency cover has now begun, and will form a fundamental part of the Safety Plan to be published in autumn 2015. Whilst the last review focused on risk, demand and isolation, this review will have to focus more on the cost of provision. This is inescapable in the current financial climate. It is too early to say what any potential outcomes might be, but it is difficult to foresee anything other than further significant change to the service delivered to the public. Members of the Planning and Performance Committee will receive a presentation on how the review will be conducted at the beginning of the meeting to be held on 6 November 2014
18. **Operational capability:** Risk assessments and training to allow the Authority to use crews with fewer than four firefighters are being developed. Members will be assured that every step is being taken to make sure the system implemented includes all necessary safeguards and arrangements for immediate back up by another crew if required, and there is no rush to implement this project. Orders for new equipment and fire engines are also about to be placed to meet the outcomes of the review of operational capability, as signposted in the Safety Plan agreed by the Authority in February 2014.
19. **Control:** As well as the update contained in the covering report, a further project will begin after a period of system stability to provide additional planned enhancements to the new command and control system.
20. **Collaboration:** As well as “practical on the ground” working with the ambulance service, a new suite of collaboration projects with Kent Police has been agreed, following the report to the Authority in June 2014. These are in areas such as sharing premises, use of fuel and demand reduction. It is important to note that all these projects focus on improving service delivery to the public, and governance issues are

entirely out of scope for this work. More details on progress being made will be brought to a future meeting.

## **CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

21. This strategy focuses on how the Authority manages its estate and assets, and how it minimises its impact on the environment when it attends operational incidents.

### **Projects Delivered**

22. By the time of this meeting, it is anticipated that the Authority's new website will have been launched, which has the capability to reduce 'avoidable contact' and therefore business mileage by promoting online self service. The Authority has also recently signed up to a 'Channel Shift' multi-agency programme which aims to enable people to more easily access services online, thereby reducing the amount of administration needed. One of the first areas which will be focused on is the recruitment of on-call firefighters.
23. The Authority's internal document management system has also been completely renewed which will lead to an improved process of document retention, clearer disposal processes for redundant documentation, and less paper used across the organisation. Both of these projects contribute to the planned reduction in the Authority's carbon footprint.
24. New fuel tanks have been installed at ten locations across the county. These have fuel monitoring meters fitted which log who has filled up, when and with how much fuel. This will assist in keeping fuel losses to a minimum and reduce the risk of any fraud although this has not been identified as an issue to date. The fuel tanks are also above ground making any leakage easier to deal with, should it occur. The final four tanks are due to be installed by the end of 2014.

### **Projects in Flight**

25. Work to replace the Authority's financial management and procurement systems has commenced, with a view to reducing paper usage, and promote e-Systems, in line with the caring for the environment strategy. Work is also being progressed to roll-out the installation of solar panels at 15 fire stations in 2014/15. More details on this work will be reported to General Purposes Committee on 18 November 2014.

## **WORKFORCE STRATEGY**

26. The workforce strategy sets out how the Authority will develop its staff, Members and volunteers, making sure each group has the skills to maximise their potential. It also focuses on making sure the Authority remains a good employer, which cares about work-life balance and provides flexibility in its recruitment practices to meet business needs.

## **Projects Delivered**

27. Changes to the day-crewed duty system outlined in the Safety Plan have been rolled out to an initial three fire stations, and results from this pilot have shown the system works well. What was particularly pleasing was the reduction in sickness absence on those stations that have converted to self-rostering. The remaining six stations are due to convert on 1 January 2015, although some may go earlier by local agreement. Self-rostering will also be applied to the new stations at Medway and Rochester when they are opened, also as a pilot to see how the system could be implemented longer-term across the whole-time shift workforce.

## **Projects in Flight**

28. Self-rostering is also being considered for the Channel Tunnel fire station. It is possible it may also be applied to the on-call workforce, but that is some way off being considered. What is currently happening is a further review of the on-call system to ensure that availability is maximised at the times when cover is required. Additionally, through the application of 'Lean' techniques<sup>1</sup>, work to make the recruitment process as efficient as possible, both for the Authority and for applicants has been undertaken and this has indicated a number of changes which could be implemented quickly and which would significantly improve the process.
29. Members will also recall from the Safety Plan the concept of the 'Fifth Watch'. This team of highly skilled and peripatetic firefighters is being developed now, predominantly to fill short-term establishment gaps caused by sickness and training on full-time shift stations, and long-term sickness on day-crewed stations. It is currently predicted that the Fifth Watch will go live on 1 May 2015.
30. The Authority's new human resources and payroll system is due to go live in March 2015.

## **SUMMARY**

31. Overall, there is good progress being made in implementing the Authority's primary strategies, although there remains an ambitious programme of work for the coming three years of the life of the five strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Lean' is a technique which seeks to improve the business processes used by an organisation, working with those that use them on a day to day basis, to eliminate waste and unnecessary bureaucracy. It can lead to savings being generated, but more importantly can also release time for other, potentially more critical, work.