

# East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service FiReControl / Firelink Programme

## Communications Strategy

### Introduction

This communications strategy has been developed to ensure that all relevant stakeholders, both internal to East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS) and external, are kept well informed of the project progress. It will enable ESFRS to continue to develop and deliver its key objectives whilst allowing stakeholders to understand the significant changes and impact the project will have to the organisation, the communities within East Sussex and to individuals.

### Objectives

This communications strategy will –

- define clear communication targets
- identify communications media including required levels of detail
- provide an initial action plan allowing subsequent updates
- provide means for stakeholders to address concerns / expectations
- assist ESFRS in business continuity planning and also maintaining and improving service provision
- establish evaluation and review requirements to ensure stakeholder needs are being met

### Principles

All communications will be based on the following principles –

- plain english will be used with all terms used clearly explained
- the communications media used will ensure that all stakeholders have easy access to information relevant to them
- all communication messages will be delivered in a consistent manner without contradictions
- all information provided will be factual and will not intentionally mislead or make unachievable promises
- ESFRS will take appropriate account of information and communications from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as the national project team
- all communications to be delivered to target audiences using an appropriate method
- there will be no duplication of effort and more effective collaboration with our partners will be encouraged
- all communications will be presented in the ESFRS corporate style
- all communications will be recorded

## Target audience

The target audience / stakeholders can be grouped as follows –

### Internal

Fire Authority members  
Principal Officers  
Senior management  
Middle management  
Station personnel  
M & CC personnel  
Support staff  
Other project teams  
Representative bodies

### External

Councillors  
Community groups  
General public  
Other emergency services  
Partners e.g District councils  
Council taxpayers  
Suppliers / contractors  
Media  
Regional Management Board

## Methods of communications

Various methods of communications will be used and this will be dependent on the target audience and the level of detail required. The following example list is not exhaustive and actual methods used will be captured on the action plan –

Items in ESFRS Service brief  
Updates to Intranet and Internet pages  
Email updates  
Project contact email address and telephone numbers advertising  
Newsletters  
Briefing notes / updates  
Briefings / seminars  
Leaflets / newsletters available at stations / by CFS and at events  
Leaflets / newsletters included in council tax bill envelopes  
Vehicle advertising  
Statements issued via 3<sup>rd</sup> party media consultants

## Communicators

It will be necessary for all of the ESFRS Project Teams under the FiReControl / Firelink Programme to initiate communications. This will be co-ordinated and, if necessary, assistance given by a member of the Special Projects team. Any such communications must be consistent and in line with any ESFRS strategies relating to the overall programme e.g. HR strategies.

It will be necessary to determine the correct management level to deliver or authorise certain messages e.g.

Strategic level	-	sensitive issues which may also involve the representative bodies e.g. redundancy / redeployment announcements
Local Management level	-	overall project updates

It may also be necessary to involve both the Regional and National project teams.

## **Plan**

See appendix 1.

The plan will be held within ESFRS Special Projects but an overview will be made available to all stakeholders on the intranet and internet.

It will be updated regularly as communication activities are developed and undertaken. This will involve all Project Teams within the programme and will necessitate proactive preparation and regular monitoring of external information sources e.g. projected milestones, DCLG FiReControl website, meeting schedules etc.

Clear identification of those stakeholders to be included in both reactive and proactive communications must be made including how this is to be achieved using the chosen method i.e. individually or as a group. Account should be taken of those personnel who may be on leave, sickness absence, seconded into another department etc. to ensure they receive the information.

All Project Teams will complete a monthly return confirming the previous months activities and planned activities for the coming month. See appendix 2.

## **Evaluation**

It is essential that all communication and evaluation activities will be recorded as in appendix 1.

A Frequently Asked Questions database will be created to monitor whether similar issues / points are being raised. Communications can then be targeted more effectively to address common queries. The database will also be available on the intranet and internet to all stakeholders.

An equality assessed sample survey should be undertaken internally within ESFRS prior to implementation of this strategy at different levels of the organisation. Subsequent surveys should be undertaken at decreasing intervals as the projects near completion.

In addition to this an evaluation sheet should be completed by all recipients of communications throughout the term of the projects to gauge effectiveness.