



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service

**MAKING
SHROPSHIRE
SAFER**

Communications Strategy

2021 2025



**DELIBERATELY DEVELOPMENTAL,
INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE.
INTENTIONALLY INNOVATIVE.**



Contents

1	
Purpose	3
2	
Foreword	4
3	
Strategic Aims	5
4	
Introduction	6
5	
Key Themes	8
6	
Implementing a Framework for Development	10
7	
Stakeholders	12
8	
Engaging Effectively	14
9	
External Stakeholders & Partners	15
10	
Internal Communications	16
11	
Action Plans	17

Contact
Communications@Shropshirefire.gov.uk



1 Purpose

This is the second communications strategy for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and provides a comprehensive picture of how the Service plans to provide and develop its communications to support the communities it serves.

It also reflects the Service's aims and values and considers findings from the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, staff survey feedback and specialist communications reports.

This, in turn, will provide the basis for the various ways in which communications will also support the business needs of the Fire Authority.





2 Foreword

The primary purpose of communications is simple, to pass meaningful information from one person to another and to facilitate understanding. The right information should reach the right person, at the right time through the right channel.

While responding to emergencies is still at the heart of the Service, increasingly, a modern fire and rescue service must also deliver against a much broader wellbeing and safeguarding agenda that aims to make communities safer and better places to live, work and do business.

Information must flow continuously from top to bottom and vice versa with internal and external stakeholders at all levels. This will keep people informed about organisational objectives, developments and aligned with opportunities for two-way engagement.

To achieve this, the bedrock of Service values and communications practices needs to be clear, providing a common interest and uniformed approach, making everyone feel as though they are a part of a greater whole.

Not only does this give deeper meaning to the work, but also helps unify everyone into a team that is organised, focused, and working together to contribute to the vision.

Coupled with this is the functionality to deliver and measure results. This strategy will start to shape a more digital approach to developing engagement with audiences and providing a measure of success in making Shropshire safer supporting and enhancing the work already being carried out by teams on the ground.



3 Strategic Aims

This Order supports:

Strategic Aim 1 - To be there when you need us in an emergency with a professional and well equipped team

Strategic Aim 2 - To reduce the number of fires in our community

Strategic Aim 3 - To reduce the number of fire related deaths and serious injuries

Strategic Aim 4 - To deliver a fire and rescue service, which provides value for money for our community now and into the future





4 Introduction

The increasing take-up of faster fixed and mobile data services is extending people's choice over how, where and when they communicate with others, watch or listen to content, engage services, seek information, shop and participate in the digital world.

In addition, the media and communication sectors have become ever more diverse and dynamic and overall, people expect to be connected everywhere and at any time through a plethora of devices.

At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic had also caused a shift in the way digital media is consumed with video being the biggest beneficiary during the crisis.

Within the Service, the culture varies between office and station-based staff.

Office, or green book staff, access the SharePoint portal regularly for news and recognise the benefits of working from a central hub with teams increasingly developing their own sites.





At the other end of the scale are on-call staff who are time poor when it comes to online working and as roles are more practical in nature are understandably less active in the SharePoint directory.

These differences mean that any digital shift in communications will need to be carefully monitored to ensure staff can firstly access information and that other methods are also used in conjunction with digital messaging including face to face to ensure key information is delivered in a timely way.

Mobile video consumption rises by 100% every year and is here to stay.

It is a medium that will actively be adopted where possible to help generate more sharing of information and promoting collaboration.

SFRS must remain committed to evolving how it communicates, ensuring it continues to adapt to the way stakeholders expect to be communicated with for maximum efficiency.

Our engaged stakeholders will help create a democratic environment, sharing thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and support the prevention and protection agendas by delivering advice to reduce risk to the public from fire and other emergencies.

The need for measurable, clear, responsive, and flexible communications is greater than ever and will allow us to raise awareness and keep staff, partners, communities, and wider stakeholders informed of our progress. It will also ensure the Service is bringing about education around fire safety along with quantifiable outcomes.

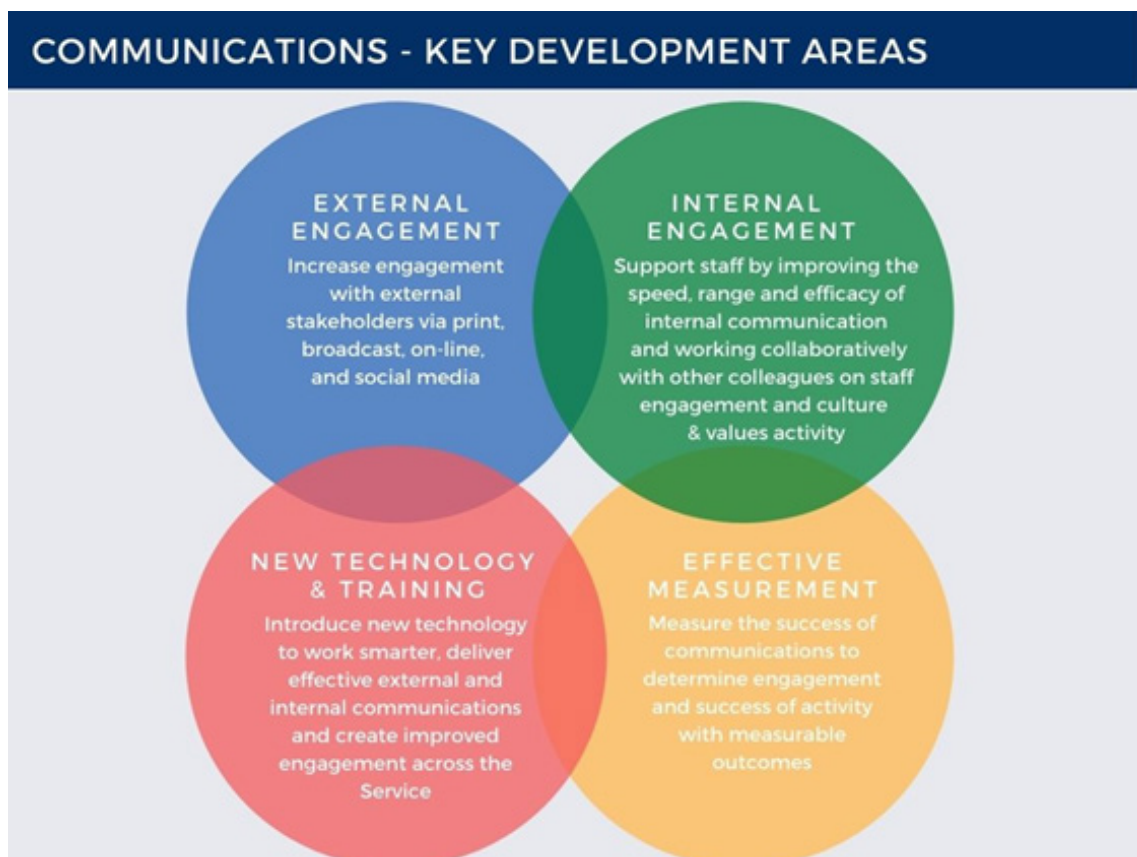




5 Key themes and aims

Four key developmental areas have been identified for the communications department and are outlined below.

The themes support the organisational aims and each priority includes a summary of intent followed by SMART objectives and associated action plans in Appendix A.



Good communications should support strong leadership and articulate the ambition for the Service, helping to engage residents, partners and staff.

The foundations of the communications department including new technology and training, need be developed in order to fully support the organisation to move forward with a uniformed approach and direction with all its stakeholders.



This strategy covers external communications, stakeholders, and public engagement, including social marketing and safety campaigns, as well as internal communications and partnerships.

We will demonstrate the effectiveness of the communications strategy by:

- Setting out an annual communications action plan and key objectives.
- Review the annual communications plan to measure success – and report performance in a published annual report
- Establish and develop key performance indicators
- Employ specialist communication measurement services to provide independent verification of communications / engagement impact





6 Implementing a framework for development

SFRS' communications has remained consistent in its approach to communications with departments taking responsibility and developing unique methodologies and not utilising the many new digital tools available.

The key to maintaining an effective communications function is to ensure a consistent and efficient approach across the service.

Teams should have access to continuing professional development (CPD) and access to resources and equipment – both hardware and software.

As well as more formal training programmes of learning for the whole organisation, developing resources will help build a positive and confident team culture and importantly – effective campaigns that help deliver on the priorities in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

This will allow the organisation as a whole to engage in communications and be better equipped to deliver professional campaigns with

measurable outcomes.

Further considerations include HMI findings including:

- The service is not using external communication mechanisms to full advantage.
- Better use of social media will help promote campaigns and share safety messages.
- The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.

Corporate communications will initially focus on creating strong foundations for the organisation to build upon.

Examples of this include developing the internal portal as a central hub for communications support and guidance, implementing new technologies to provide uniformed approaches to database management and analytics, developing photography and video functionality along with staff training needs for communications functions such as radio interviews and using social media.



Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity (EDI), Response, Prevention and Protection are the three distinct areas where close collaboration will take place to support strategies for effective campaigns for specific stakeholders.

Unique plans will be produced in conjunction with teams for key initiatives and campaigns to include aims and objectives, key messages, target audiences and measuring and evaluation tools for local and national levels.

Communication works best if it takes place in the right place at the right time. That could be online for someone in the office, a poster at a station for on-call staff or in a instant messaging group for an officer involved with an emergency flooding event.

The long-term aim for Service communications is to ensure stakeholders are part of a multi-platform content strategy, placing Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service right in the (virtual or physical) pocket of all it's key audiences.





7 Stakeholders

The way in which we communicate is crucial to how the Service is perceived by stakeholders and plays a lead role in developing its public profile of SFRS and its services.

It is important to use a variety of communication channels to raise public awareness of how SFRS contributes to safer communities along five main themes including:

- What we do
- The services we provide
- How and where we provide them
- How they can be accessed and
- How they benefit individuals, local communities

We will tailor messaging to meet the needs of the strategic aims and use a variety of methods to target key stakeholder groups with relevant information.

The channels will be adopted to meet communication requirements of target audiences and be selected as appropriate to specific communication plans.

These will include:

- Traditional media – newspapers, radio, TV, trade press etc.
- Social media – Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channels
- SFRS Website
- Printed and electronic materials
- Outdoor advertising and promotional materials
- Written correspondence
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Public meetings and consultations
- Interactive events
- Events, exhibitions, open days and road shows
- Committee meetings (agendas, reports and minutes)

We should think of our stakeholders according to the share they have in SFRS and delivery of our outcomes and success:

- Advocacy - those who share our aims, values and ambitions and who are most likely to speak or act in our support; for example, SFRS employees, the Fire Authority (FA).
- Reputational - those who stake their reputation (in full or part on our performance; for example, eg government ministers.



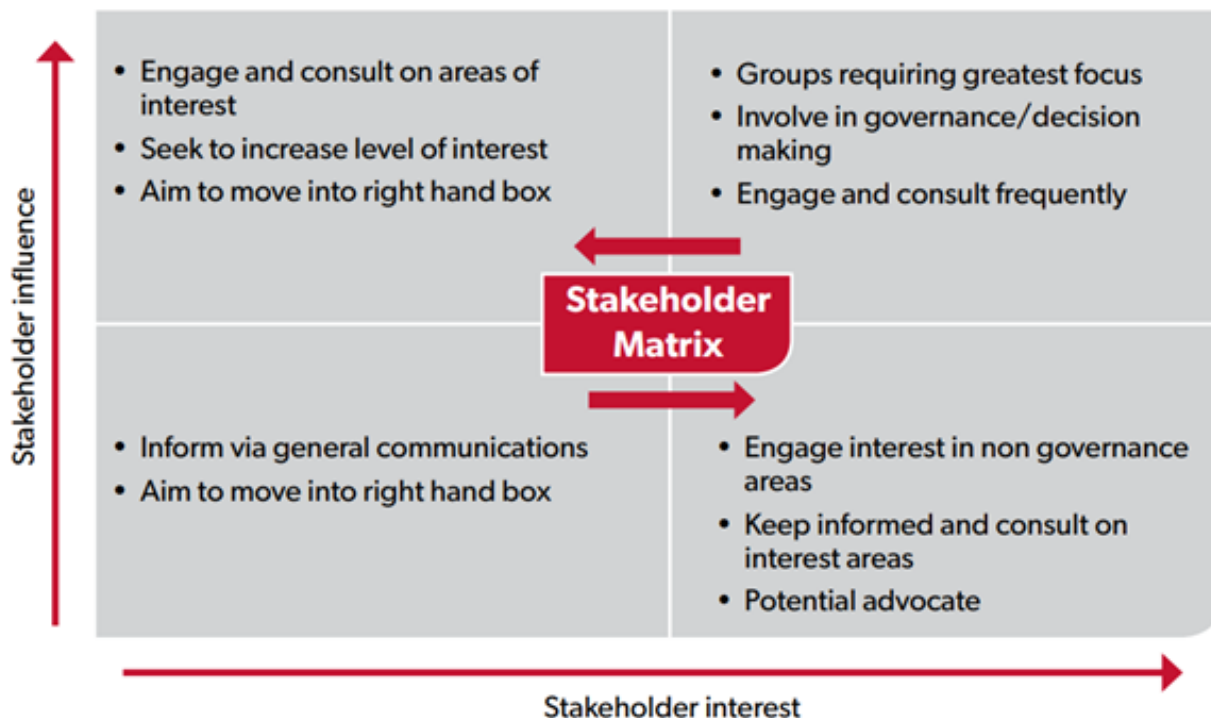
- Delivery - those on whom we depend to deliver our strategy; for example, the public who rely on and experience our services, and SFRS employees
- Influencers - those who influence others to act in our favour; for example, the public, HMI, FBU, Local Government

We will adopt stakeholder mapping to align our activity with the differing levels of stakeholder interaction, communication and engagement needs.

This will allow activity to be aligned with the differing levels of interaction.

This mapping allows us to develop an activity matrix – applied to identify the communications and engagement activity in support of key issues and organisational projects.

The purpose is to align our messaging, frequency, and delivery channels against the identified needs of our stakeholder groups.





8 Engaging Effectively

SFRS has a diverse range of stakeholders with varying needs, each of which is affected by organisational actions, objectives, and policies.

Communications must reflect their entitlement to different considerations.

We will increase awareness of SFRS activities, prevention and protection safety campaigns and the specialist services provided within the diverse local communities we serve, whilst maintaining a unified brand across all SFRS activity and ensure core values are represented.

These activities will promote the success of SFRS and its contribution to Making Shropshire Safer, enhancing its reputation both internally and externally.

It will also ensure people understand what we do, the services we provide and how they can access them.



9 External stakeholders and partners

The external communication function plays a lead role in developing the public profile of SFRS. The opportunity to publicise SFRS's work is optimised through interpersonal and online relationships.

Each of these interactions should strive to be positive and seen as an opportunity to reiterate key messages.

It also promotes messages that educate and help people make decisions to protect themselves from fire.

Campaigns that follow a specific sequences at the right frequency and platform will enable people to move towards more desirable actions for example driving more carefully in the winter conditions.

Broadcast is one-way – engagement is two and depends on sharing interesting and useful information that people read, click-thru, and react to.

It is this engagement that will provide the Service with a measure of success and inform future engagement with audiences, ultimately delivering successful campaigns.

A variety of communication channels will be utilised to ensure SFRS reaches as many external audiences and stakeholder groups achievable with limited resources.

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) includes public awareness, and warning and informing, as two distinct legal duties for first responders (which include fire and rescue services), advising the public of risks before an emergency and maintaining arrangements to warn and keep them informed in the event of an emergency. This priority will also form key messaging.

The Service will endeavour to not lose sight of its commitment to engage with those harder to reach, disadvantaged groups. As a key public service provider, the Service can have a beneficial impact on their lives.



10 Internal Communications

SFRS is committed to building a positive relationship with all employees.

Through open and timely two-way communications that are focussed on corporate aims, objectives the Service will more advanced technology to help deliver key messages.

Communications generally falls into three categories push, pull and interactive.

Push – This is used to send information to stakeholders and is useful for time sensitive information and when you expect to get feedback. It is a kind of broadcast the sender controls it, determines which stakeholders receive it, and at what time.

Pull – Here, stakeholders pull the information as per their requirements after information which is usually general in nature has been uploaded into a centrally available place.

Interactive - When a quick resolution is needed or if a tough negotiation is required, interactive is the most effective form of communications and ensures that every stakeholder receives the correct information and understands it.

A review will be undertaken to ensure there are sufficient methods of communications across the Service to articulate key messages and develop any new measures as required.

The continuing development of the Portal (Intranet) will focus on delivering and presenting information that is up to date, relevant and easily accessible, enabling good communications practice and resources.



Appendix A - Action Plan 1 - Review, update and implement communication methods across the Service

Work Plan	Timescale	Measure	Costs One off	Costs Annual
Implement Gov Delivery	September 2021	Implementation of system Setup & Configuration Online Training Monthly department reports	£2,352	£5,880
Digital Pink	January 2022	Digital version of the Pink produced and distributed through Gov delivery with engagement stats available for quarterly SMT report	NA	NA
Video Conferencing at stations. Develop the role of video messaging with the introduction of Chief's update, video conferencing facilities at stations.	Ongoing	Support and develop the roll out of video conferencing at on-call stations	NA	(Combined investment with ICT)
Explore the establishment of new or develop existing messaging platforms	January 2022	Support the roll out of Teams training	NA	NA
Review existing platforms (Including website)	March 2022	A review of existing platforms will take place to ensure there is sufficient push/pull/interactive platforms and recommendations made for new methods as required.		Costs will be identified when recommendations are complete



Appendix B - Action Plan 2 Developing Service-wide communications

Work Plan	Timescale	Measure	Costs One off	Costs Annual
Review Documentation	March 2021	Update and sign off social media brigade order	NA	NA
Review Documentation	March 2021	Update and sign off branding guidelines	NA	NA
Review Documentation		Refresh service logo	NA	£250
Identify Social media management tool	August 2021	Identify and compare suitable options for example Orlo/ others?		Potentially up to £3k p annum (this is an example of the costs associated with Orlo -one of the more expensive options/
Identify communications (Gov Delivery) and social media training		Identify training requirements for P&P - report on no completed. Officer social media training report compiled with Developmental officer.		Officer training costs already budgeted for. Social media training could potentially be delivered in-house - budget £150 p day for trainer and two days for P&P teams.
Continued development of the service image library	March 2021	Sharepoint page plan and improved SharePoint analytics for internal communications key campaigns and messages	NA	Longer term the Service may wish to consider another paid for service. Regular photography costs should be allocated to projects - general budget £700 p year.
Creation of a portal with useful info for staff around comms. i.e. work request template – design, events, photography etc	March 2021	This is an ongoing piece of work where new pages are added to support staff in communications work. Number of pages created will provide the measure along with user figures.	NA	NA



Appendix C - Action Plan 3 - Social Media

Work Plan	Timescale	Measure	Costs One off	Costs Annual
Carry out social media audit	August 2021	Audit record identifying all accounts, holders and passwords	NA	NA
Identify & develop social media champions at stations	August 2021	A record of all current social media champions at stations - either station managers or supporting firefighters	NA	There will be some additional costs, particularly for on-call to complete training packages
Develop LEO Module to support users	September 2021	Completion of module and record of candidates that complete the course	NA	NA
Develop induction training for new on-call staff	March 2021	Continually review and refresh of the PowerPoint presentation to suit changing communications needs.	NA	
Increase the number of followers on social media, visitors to the website, and positive coverage in relevant print and on-line media	Ongoing	This figures will tie into the quarterly report produced for SMT	NA	The costs associated with producing these figures are captured by the Gov Delivery programme.
Develop reporting for engagement on social media	Ongoing	Quarterly production of report for SMT	NA	NA



Appendix D - Action Plan 4 - Develop Annual Communications Priorities

Work Plan	Timescale	Measure	Costs One off	Costs Annual
Supporting SFRS to employ and retain more on-call firefighters by implementing an effective recruitment advertising campaign.	Ongoing	Comms will support area command and HR with campaigns to support recruitment needs with attraction and campaign materials. Reports will be produced at the end of campaigns to demonstrate effectiveness and identify where further support is needed.	Costs allocated to project	
Develop public mailshot – Service plan	Annual - plan to be bottomed out June 2021	Produce an annual campaign based around the annual plan. There will be costings associated depending on the campaign approach.		£2,000
Increase awareness of the SFRS and promote its role locally, regionally, and nationally	Immediate	Purchasing the professional version of Canva will ensure the comms team has access to a database of images and graphics for in the production of graphics and artwork.		£107.88
Website		Redevelop the website to provide more comprehensive information	£15,000	
Develop Annual communications calendar	March 2021	Service-wide access to the calendar through the portal	NA	NA



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service

**MAKING
SHROPSHIRE
SAFER**



**DELIBERATELY DEVELOPMENTAL,
INCLUSIVE & DIVERSE.
INTENTIONALLY INNOVATIVE.**

