

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

15 JANUARY 2024

1. COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION – DIGITAL, DATA AND INNOVATION

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Members:

- 1.1 Note the ongoing organisational commitment to digital Collaboration and Transformation.
- 1.2 Note our progress on Legacy Systems Transformation (UKG) & Operational Mobile Device Projects.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide an update around the ongoing digital transformation enabled through the West Midlands Fire Service Digital, Data and Innovation Strategy.
- 2.2 To provide updates on our key transformation projects and how these give value to our communities and introduce early considerations for projects that will shape and support the service into the future.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Digital Collaboration

- 3.1.1 We continue our focus to delivering digital services and widening our collaboration with other services as evident through recent sharing of key applications with Kent Fire Service. We are increasing opportunities to widen our partnerships and pursue opportunities for shared procurement. These fire sector collaborations provide economies of scale; reduce costs for all

involved and maximise public sector funding whilst allowing sharing of good practice.

- 3.1.2 We continue to provide services to the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC).

3.2 **Digital Incident Command (Unblur)**

- 3.2.1 We continue to deploy and train on the new Incident Command Software (Unblur). This trial is currently focused on the Birmingham area following a previous trial in the Coventry & Solihull area. Unblur has been used at incidents and exercises allowing us to utilise the latest technologies to provide our crews with access to key information as well as improving safety.

- 3.2.2 As part of this trial, we have issued personal devices that can be used by crews to improve communication on the incident ground and provide key information about hazards and risks. They enhance incident ground connectivity working in conjunction with the tablets already installed in our fire appliances.

- 3.2.3 The outcomes and evidence from the Birmingham trial will allow us to consider and shape the full rollout across the service.

3.3 **Legacy Systems Transformation (UKG)**

- 3.3.1 We have made significant progress testing and training on our new time and attendance system UKG, which is due for release in March / April 2024. This will help improve both efficiency and effectiveness as we replace several legacy systems that are no longer fit for purpose.

- 3.3.2 As with any new, large delivery project communication, engagement and training is paramount. We have a dedicated project team working closely with staff across the service focusing on training and implementation plans that will help our staff make the transition to the new system.

- 3.3.3 The ongoing cyber landscape means that we need to move away from other legacy systems, specifically those that manage our Fleet, Assets and Water Systems. Planning for the sequencing of closing these legacy systems is underway.

3.3.4 We continue to invest in and improve trust through improved reporting and enabling our teams to see the information they need.

3.4 **Command & Control & ICCS**

- 3.4.1 We have now reached a point where we need to invest in our critical mobilising systems (Command & Control). This system is fundamental to the service as it enables calls to be received by fire control and then resources to be mobilised. The service will take the opportunity to combine this project with the ongoing review of fire control working practices and we are currently in the early stages of project initiation.
- 3.4.2 Aligned to our digital strategy, this system will open new ways of working and reduce risks to our communities as well as streamline our support. It will link systems from initial 999 calls to our resources, equipping our crews with more information before arriving to scene in support of Firefighter safety.
- 3.4.3 As the project plan develops there will be greater clarity on timescales and business benefits, but we are expecting delivering of the full system within 18 months.

3.5 **Next Steps**

- 3.5.1 Our next key investments will be to replace the remaining legacy systems, enhance cyber protection and increase our capabilities to extract, understand and forecast data. Another key focus will be our continued journey into using mainstream artificial intelligence (AI) to support our day-to-day work.
- 3.5.2 The Digital, Data and Innovation strategy continues to be embedded into Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and annual priorities. This is enabling us to deliver solutions that reduce costs while delivering more for our communities. This strategy will be refreshed aligned to the delivery of a refreshed strategy and CRMP documents in 2024.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been conducted.
- 4.2 Our progress in digital technology should be considered as having a positive effect on our neurodiverse staff. We continue to provide assistive technology for staff with needs such as dyslexia and are

expanding this to include literacy assistance into Oracle aligned to feedback from our teams.

- 4.3 We continue to work closely with our networking groups to ensure that our digital systems are easily understood and effective for all. We maintain our focus on training to ensure our teams are skilled in the use of the systems they need.
- 4.4 The use of digital technology continues to provide opportunities to engage people that do not have English as their first language. This continues to be a key feature of any area when we deliver services to the public.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. It is recognised that each individual project will require investment and individual funding requirements for the projects (including approvals) will be considered in full as they develop.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There has been a positive shift towards our environmental policy due to digital investments and this has transformed ways of working. Staff are now able to work in a hybrid way so they can maintain their effectiveness regardless of whether they are in the office or working remotely.
- 7.2 Ongoing digital delivery, modernisation and targeted cloud investment continues to provide options for our estate and how we use it. Ongoing transformation and movement of key functions as well as collaboration is enhanced by digital technology.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

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