

Collaboration and Transformation Committee

7 October 2019

Present: Councillors Barlow, Dehar (Chair), Edwards, Hogarth, Iqbal, Walsh and Young

Prof. Simon Brake

1/19 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2/19 Declarations of Interests in Contracts or other Matters

There were no Declarations of Interest on this occasion.

3/19 Collaboration and Transformation Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee received the draft Terms of Reference of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee.

The establishment of the Committee was approved at the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in June 2019, to ensure the appropriate consideration and oversight of new and developing areas of strategic collaborations. The Terms of Reference had been changed from those submitted to the Fire Authority at the Annual General Meeting on the 24 June 2019. If approved the Terms of Reference would need to be submitted to the Authority for approval.

The Authority's commitment to collaboration was set out in its three-year rolling Strategy, Our Plan, and has been an accepted way of working for the Fire Service in delivering joint community outcomes.

The Terms of Reference set out the role of the committee in 'the strategic development and assurance of transformational collaborative working agreement (up to implementation) aligned to

the 'Duty to Collaborate' (Policing and Crime Act 2017) and/or the delivery of the Authority's Strategy.

The Authority's review of future governance and outcomes of the Future Governance Working Group clearly highlighted the benefits of wider collaboration in services delivered for local communities. The Members of the Committee considered the following points in the review and enhancement of the current terms of reference:

- The role of the committee in championing digital transformation across the Service as a core consideration for collaboration;
- The role of the committee in enabling the Service to improve and evolve new and existing areas of collaboration through providing clear strategic direction, aligned to the Authority's strategy, Our Plan
- Member involvement in supporting collaborative relationships through links within respect local authorities.

Members were asked to consider making additions to the Terms of Reference.

Members felt that the new Terms of Reference were very useful

Resolved:

1. that the changes to the terms of reference for the Committee be approved
2. that the changes be submitted to the next meeting of the Fire Authority.

4/19 Strategic Collaborations – An Overview

Members of the Committee noted the ongoing areas of Strategic Collaboration across the Authority and Service with other public service and blue light service providers.

The three-year rolling strategy "Our Plan" is the accepted way of working for the Fire Service in delivering joint community outcomes. This approach to joint working has been legislated through the Policing and Crime Act.

The Act sets out a ‘duty to collaborate’ with other blue light services stating that ‘the three emergency services should consider opportunities to collaborate with other services. If it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of at least one of the parties to collaborate, then the relevant service (i.e. the service that originally considers the opportunity) must notify the other service of the proposed collaboration.”

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 doesn’t exclude other collaborations.

A broad range of examples of current collaborative activity were provided in an Appendix to the report examples of which were:

- National Fire Chiefs Council Support Hub
- West Midlands Police – sharing of estates
- West Midlands Combined Authority – Road Safety Strategy, Digital, Portfolio and Project Management
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service – Share Fire Control
- Local Resilience Forum
- Digital – Shropshire, Staffordshire and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services
- Primary Authority Scheme – Fire Safety
- High Rise Training Oldbury – FRSs
- Health Consensus Statement
- Emergency Services Working Group
- National Procurement Framework

In 2017 for every £1 spent with the Fire Service, West Midlands communities receive £5 of ‘social value’.

The Chair of the Committee suggested that income could be made by using empty office space or empty properties could be used for the homeless.

The Treasurer stated that there were limited opportunities but options that could be looked at. The matter had been raised at the Audit and Risk Committee and a further report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee. It was suggested that members of the Committee may wish to attend the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee scheduled for the 11 November and prior to the Collaboration and Transformation Committee.

One Member suggested collaboration with Councils/Combined Authority and the Fire Service in respect of road safety as councils were cutting back on signage, white lining and decluttering of the roads from sandbags, banners and redirection signs that we no longer needed or applicable.

Another Members stated that this was the first meeting of the Committee and requested that an hour was set aside for training on the purpose of the Committee and its Terms of Reference.

The Clerk confirmed that this could be arranged, however, the following report set out the key factors which contribute to collaborative working across the Service to enable the Committee to determine a definition for Collaboration for the Authority.

5/19 Collaboration – Developing Strategic Collaboration Definition

The Committee considered the key factors which contribute to collaborative working across the Service and discussed the definition for collaboration for the Authority which will support the Service in considering future strategic direction.

The Committee had received details of the Services collaborative working and details of the 'Duty to Collaborate' as set out the Police and Crime Act 2017, which required them to look for transformational ways to enhance public safety and/or efficiency with other blue light services. It was noted that collaboration was not restricted to blue light organisations.

In developing the definition there should be an alignment of purpose for the respective organisations and purpose of those we want to collaborate with.

The collaboration should also meet with the Authority's priorities as set out in "Our Plan".

The Duty to Collaborate aims to strengthen and deepen cross-emergency service collaboration opportunities.

- Keeping Communities safer
- Increasing collaborative momentum
- Developing a wider understanding of good collaborations
- Value for Money

The Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group is a cross blue light service group which report to government and provides an example of how the sector is meeting the duty to collaborate.

The duty does not set out a specific definition on but seeks to enable it and provide a few high level provisions and in particular the development of a collaborative agreement.

The dictionary definition of collaboration was set out as:

“the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing”.

The dictionary definition of transformation is:

“a change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved.

In developing the definition it was suggested that there should be alignment of purpose for the respective organisation in the collaboration and preferably in wider organisational values, strategy and process.

There were several considerations that ultimately ensure communities receive the most effective and efficient service and these include:

- People resources
- Financial resources
- Agreement on risk
- Internal communications
- Clear perspective

An example of a collaborative agreement was the Shared Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire and West Midland Fire Service Fire Control.

Collaboration for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority could be seen as where:

“two or more public service organisations agree to work together to deliver something of public value (public safety, efficient and/or effectiveness), which supports the priorities of the organisations and community outcomes”

“collaborations will use the IRMP to forecast risk and future capability and will meet digital expectations as set out the Service’s Digital Declaration”.

In recommending the definition for the Authority, Members would be enabling the strategic direction for collaboration to be determined by the Authority, in alignment with the approval of strategic priorities and outcome and the Authority budget setting meeting in February 2020.

Officers will work within this framework to develop and engage in structured collaborative relationships in line with the delegations set out in the Authority’s constitution.

The Committee agreed to further explore the definition of Collaboration at its meeting scheduled for 11 November 2019.

A member expressed a word of caution in respect of collaboration and past experiences where a lot of work, time and effort had been put into projects that had not subsequently come to fruition. There were also risks associated with working with some partners.

The Clerk stated that these points would be set out in a report to the next meeting.

Members discussed previous collaborations that had been successful or unsuccessful to varying degrees. A discussion took place on the possible negative outcomes of collaboration with certain organisations and resistance experienced previously and felt that the Authority should be cautious.

Members wanted the community to benefit from the effects of collaborative working.

The co-opted member joined the meeting at this point and apologised for being late.

The co-opted member stated that during his 18 months on the Authority he has been impressed that the Fire and Rescue Service is doing a good job. It was suggested that the Fire Service could spread its skills and abilities across the communities. He informed the Committee of his experience when visiting the New York Fire Service and their work with paramedics. He said that if a 911 call is received for a person with a cardiac arrest in New York, the fire service attended first and then hand over to paramedics and they

have worked in this way for 20 years. The prompt for this way of working was due to the loss of fire stations and adding value to the community.

One member felt this way of working would be difficult following the recent experience with falls response.

The co-opted member stated that firefighters exhibited care for the community and the response times were impressive and the attendance times can make a significant difference to saving lives. In New York it was about sharing capacity and not changing roles.

Other Members noted that the co-responding approach had historically been used for example with the Birmingham City Fire and Ambulance Service.

It was also noted that this type of work is already undertaken in some rural areas by other fire and rescue services and the NJC have stated nationally that the Fire Brigades Union do not have a problem with their members responding to cardiac arrest. There had also been a trial undertaken in Manchester and a detailed report had been published.

This type of work would require funding and national agreement, as well as agreement between the fire and ambulance service and it was felt that in rural areas, retained firefighters are more community based and are keen to do this type of work because of the rural atmosphere. However, this is a sensitive area of work.

If anyone were to fall outside of the fire station, firefighters would instinctively assist.

The contents of the report were considered and the Committee decided to further discuss the definition of Collaboration, to support the development of future strategy, for recommendation to the Fire Authority, as its next meeting scheduled to take place on the 11th November.