

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2019

1. **COLLABORATION – DEVELOPING STRATEGIC COLLABORATION DEFINITION**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Members consider the contents of this report and approve the definition of Collaboration, to support the development of future strategy, for recommendation to the Fire Authority.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To enable Members to consider the key factors which contribute to collaborative working across the Service and to determine a definition for Collaboration for the Authority, which will support the Service in considering future strategic direction.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Collaboration is a crucial approach to delivering efficient and effective services to local communities and this is recognised in the Authority's Plan 2019 – 2022. The value of working in collaboration to West Midlands Fire Service and its communities can be demonstrated through the detail provided in the previous Overview paper.

3.2 The 'Duty to Collaborate', as set out in the Policing and Crime Act 2017, requires all blue light services to look for transformational ways to enhance public safety and efficiency through collaboration with other blue light services but does not restrict wider collaboration with other public service organisations.

Ref. C&T/2019/Oct/12409194

- 3.3 The duty does not specify how services should collaborate but does seek to enable it and provides a few 'high level provisions' and in particular the development of a 'collaboration agreement', setting out how the parties that sign up to it will work together in discharging their functions.
- 3.4 The Duty to Collaborate aims to strengthen and deepen cross-emergency service collaboration opportunities, providing a wide range of benefits, both for the services themselves and for the public.
- Keeping Communities safer
 - Increasing collaborative momentum
 - Developing a wider understanding of good collaborations
 - Value for money
- 3.5 The Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group is a cross blue light service group, which reports into government and provides an example of how the sector is focusing on embedding the principles of collaboration, as well as enabling the delivery of the legislation itself in a collaborative way.
- 3.6 The Duty to Collaborate does not provide a specific definition for collaboration but indicates that it exists between two or more blue light services providers. The Overview paper provides examples of different approaches to collaboration that exist across the Service. Our commitment to collaborations exists both across and outside of blue light services.
- 3.7 The (dictionary) definition of collaboration is:
"the situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing".
- 3.8 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".

- 3.9 In developing our definition there should be alignment of purpose for the respective organisations in the collaboration and preferably in wider organisational values, strategy and process. Understanding of resource implications is critical to implementation and risk management. Collaboration often enables all parties involved to diversify the use of its resources (people, finance and assets) to deliver services with common aims and outcomes. Shared resources can often facilitate closer dialogue and better working relationships between the partner organisations, generating increased efficiencies in ways of working and service delivery.
- 3.10 Whilst achieving financial or cost savings can be a benefit of collaboration, this is not the one goal. Rather it is part of several considerations that ultimately ensures communities receive the most effective service, delivered in the most effective and efficient way. Some of these considerations include:
- The level of investment and commitment required by each party and how value will be delivered and shared equitably in light of investment;
 - The most effective approach to dedicating resources to the transformation process, to ensure that outcomes are provided on time and that all parties are co-ordinated in their approach;
 - Agreement on how risk will be apportioned between the parties to achieve best value for all;
 - The management of internal communications in a sensitive and pro-active way
 - It is important to have a clear perspective on who the potential collaborative partner(s) might be. In this the strategic priorities of the Service should be a primary factor.
- 3.11 The use of shared resources to achieve joint priorities with more efficient and effective community outcomes forms an approach across a number of the Service's collaborative partnerships. This provides a basis for the transformational delivery of the Service's priorities as often collaborations are focused on the delivery of core activity and dedicated resources, ensuring achievement of our priorities as well as the ability to influence the direction of the collaboration.

3.12 Considering the collaborations that exist across the Service, the commitment of the Service for public sector wide collaboration aligned to the delivery of The Plan and the aim of the duty to collaborate, collaboration for WMFRA 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 in the Service’s Digital Declaration’.

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

3.13 Officers will, in line with the delegations set out in the Authority’s constitution, work within this framework to develop and engage in structured collaborative relationships, which support the strategic direction for collaboration and the priorities set out in the rolling 3 year strategy, Our Plan.

3.14 The agreement of a definition of collaboration for the Authority will enable further exploration for the committee in its November meeting, to determine future approach for strategic collaborations, including how resources will be used to support these.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The detail in this report enables the Authority to ensure alignment to the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities 2018 and the Duty to Collaborate as set out in the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Policing and Crime Act 2017

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