

Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee

11 November 2019

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

6/19 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Iqbal and Walsh and Prof Simon Brake

7/19 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

8/19 **Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 7 October 2019**

The minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on the 7 October 2019 were approved.

9/19 **Collaboration and Transformation - Developing Strategic Direction**

The Committee received a report setting out the framework to support the development of future collaborations for recommendation to the Fire Authority.

The Committee considered the revised definition for Transformation and Collaboration as considered at the meeting of the Committee on the 7 October 2019.

At the first meeting of the Committee, Members had considered a wide range of collaborative partnerships that the Service was currently engaged in that demonstrated alignment to the achievement of priorities and outcomes as set out in Our Plan.

In Developing Strategic Direction, the Committee considered the feedback from their previous meeting, the importance of focused community benefits and the 'Duty to Collaborate' as part of the Police and Crime Act 2017 and the work of the Emergency

Services Working Group (ESWG). A revised definition was proposed as follows”

“West Midlands Fire Service will collaborate with other organisations to enable the transformational delivery of value-based services to local communities in a way which supports the priorities of each partner”.

The Duty to Collaborate is a feature of the ESWG, Chaired by Mr Eric Carter, the Chair of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authority, where there are many conversations and opportunities to foster collaboration.

Delivering Transformation in Services is less structured and it was suggested that this should be likened to the transformation that is being looked at nationally particularly in broadening the role of firefighters.

The priorities of the Service aim to ensure the most vulnerable communities are targeted in the most effective way to mitigate and where possible, remove risk of fire related incidents. A critical aspect of this is how the skills of the workforce are developed to respond to this and the changing nature of risk.

The Committee would need to consider risks so that the Authority did not find itself in a similar position as in previous years and running into blockages.

The HMCIFRS report referred to this area in its recent report within the ‘people’ pillar and cites The Service recognises that the role of a firefighter has changed considerably. Through effective training of staff, the Service was able to deliver transformation in its services. There was also clear evidence, captured in the HMCIFRS report of where transformation and change had continued to result in improved outcomes for communities and this is a key consideration for members in the definition of collaboration set out in paragraph 3.4.

A framework for collaboration and transformation was set out and the considerations could be adopted in a flexible way ensuring that they enable rather than restrict. They recognise the discreet functions and identities of the Service and partner organisations whilst encouraging a positive culture of seeking opportunities to work more closely together to transform services to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The Framework - a joint assessment and understanding of risk and vulnerability included the following areas:

- Community outcomes
- Shared Vision
- Transformational use of resources and information
- Digital Transformation
- Shared decision making and commitment
- Communication
- Trust
- Realistic timeline and delivery pathway
- Corporate Governance Architecture
- Organisation identity
- Evaluation

In agreeing both the definition and framework set out in the report, officers would, in line with the delegations set out in the Authority's Constitution, develop and engage in structured collaborative relationships, which would support the transformational delivery of services aligned to risk as set out in the IRMP, and Strategic priorities as set out in the rolling 3 year strategy, Our Plan.

One Member felt this was a good direction to take and stated that previously the Authority had worked with the Ambulance Service and hoped that this may be a possibility in the future where the joint use of sites had been used to save on finances.

Another member felt this was a good example of collaboration at low level and following the Election of a new Chair of the Ambulance Trust, a new conversation could be started.

Members felt that the public seem happier for the Fire Service and Ambulance to collaborate. It was noted that Officers had been in discussions with the Police regarding the delivery of procurement and collaboration on estates. Members expressed caution with the shared use of facilities with the Police with a preference for the softer side of policing only on Fire Service premises, eg. Police officers writing reports and dealing with paperwork or to park in unfavourable weather conditions. Members did not want Fire Service premises used for the hard edge of policing.

DCFO Wayne Brown stated that London Fire Brigade had worked with the Police Community Safety Officers and Neighbourhood officers in Safety Enablers Teams and this had worked well on fire stations and was good example of collaborative working

A Members stated that due to financial cuts there were no such teams in the West Midlands and would not be for a long time, although this idea would be ideal and asked how it was managed in London.

DCFO Brown confirmed that a clearly written Memorandum of Understanding included that the team would look at neighbourhood safety only and would not become involved with investigation of crime.

A Member stated that transformation of the Fire Service had been discussed nationally for the last three years and the Service should be prepared for the future and needed to understand local communities and their needs, in order to be prepared for the possible future opportunities when additional funding may become available.

The Chief Fire Officer stated that he was an Adviser to the National Joint Council and at a recent Policy Planning Forum the Chair had given a broad but detailed description of where the Fire Service was at nationally.

Local support would be required so that the Service is prepared to collaborate in future.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that as Vice Chair of the National Fire Chief Councils there was a live conversation with the Local Government Association's Fire Services Management Committee about Broadening the Role, but there was little traction. A more evidenced based approach was required. The Service had clarified how it would be developing its capabilities to be prepared for the future.

It was noted that the national pay claim would need to be finalised and the problem recently experienced had been a local issue related to income generation and the Service did not wish to go against the national FBU stance and the government needed to make changes to resolve the issues nationally.

The Chair of the Authority was optimistic that the national pay settlement would be agreed.

One Member stated that following the General Election there may be a change of government and Service needed to be prepared to move in whatever direction it could.

Resolved that the framework to support the development of future collaborations for recommendation to the Fire Authority be approved.

Resolved that the revised definition for Transformation and Collaboration be approved.

The meeting finished at 1415 hours.

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