

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

11 NOVEMBER 2019

1. **COLLABORATION & TRANSFORMATION – DEVELOPING STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT Members consider the contents of this report and approve the framework as set out in section 3.22 to support the development of future collaborations for recommendation to the Fire Authority.
- 1.2 THAT Members approve the revised definition for Transformation and Collaboration as considered and contributed to at the Committee's meeting on 7 October 2019.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 To enable Members to agree the proposed framework which will support the determination of strategic direction for transformational collaborative partnerships for the Authority.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **Definition**

On 7 October 2019 (the first meeting of the committee), members considered a sample of the wide range of collaborative partnerships the Service is currently engaged in all of which demonstrate alignment to the achievement of priorities and outcomes as set out in Our Plan and to the transformation of services to communities.

Ref. C&T/2019/Nov/22810192

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The committee also discussed the proposed definition of collaboration, aligned to a dictionary definition of both transformation and collaboration. This sought to identify what a transformational collaborative partnership would look like for the Service based against its 3-year rolling Strategy, Our Plan.

The definition proposed to members on 7 October 2019 is set out below:

‘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, importantly, 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 considering this definition, members cited the importance of the community benefitting from the effects of collaborative working. It was also recognised the Service could spread its skills and abilities across communities, using co-responding with the Ambulance as an example of a service delivered across some Fire Services in the UK. In addition, some members expressed caution that collaborative partnerships should ensure risks to implementation were explored. This latter consideration will form part of the framework set out later in this report.

Taking into account member feedback, the expectations set out in the ‘Duty to Collaborate’ as part of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the work of the Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG) as cited in the (background) paper to the committee on 7 October 2019, a revised definition is set out below:

‘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 Service’s commitment to providing community outcomes through collaborative partnerships is set out in Our Plan 2019-2022.

The Duty to Collaborate, as set out in the Policing and Crime Act 2017, sets out the expectation that all blue light services will look for innovative ways to enhance public safety and efficiency through collaboration with public service organisations.

A framework for collaborative partnerships should enable alignment of purpose for the respective organisations in the collaboration and preferably in wider organisational values, strategy and process.

Whilst achieving financial or cost savings can be a benefit of collaboration, this should not be the primary goal. Rather, it is part of several considerations that ultimately ensures communities receive value-based services, delivered in the most transformational way.

3.2 **Delivering Transformation in Services**

Our Plan recognises that *'all staff play a major part in helping people live safer, healthier lives and supporting the West Midlands economy. They do it at a time of continuous change and significant challenge.'*

This is achieved through a flexible and diverse approach to the use of resources, particularly through the way in which the workforce is engaged in collaboration and the way this is enabled in the development of skills and provision of services. These more innovative approaches support the Service to adapt.

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 to this is how the skills of the workforce are developed to respond to this and the changing nature of risk.

This is reinforced by the Service's HMICFRS Inspection which cited within the 'people' pillar that: *'a Fire and Rescue Service that looks after its people should be able to provide an effective service to its community. It should offer a range of services to make its communities safer. This will include developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse'*.

The HMICFRS report also cited that: *'The Service recognises that the role of a firefighter has changed considerably'* and that:

'The Service wants to create a more flexible and productive workforce. It is choosing to move away from having dedicated specialist staff and teams and is broadening the skills of existing staff instead. For example, it is training operational crews to give basic fire safety advice to businesses.'

There is clear evidence, which is captured in the HMICFRS report, of where transformation and change has and continues to result in improved outcomes for communities; this being a key consideration for members in the definition of collaboration as cited in paragraph 3.4.

Examples of this are detailed in the 'effectiveness' pillar in recognition of the Service's outstanding grading for its approach to responding to incidents where smaller response vehicles and changed shift patterns have been introduced to ensure resources are appropriately allocated to the highest risks.

Digital transformation aligned to the development of skills and knowledge of staff can be seen through the implementation of 999eye, the use of mobile tablets for crews and the Dynamic Cover Tool. These digital solutions provide value-based outcomes for communities by providing staff with tools which enable the delivery of more efficient and effective services.

The 'efficiency' pillar recognised that it was *'good to see the Service is using Control Room staff to operate the safe and well booking system during quieter times and operational crews to carry out low-level business safety checks (safe and strong visits).'*

3.3 Developing a strategic framework

A proposed framework for collaboration will need to consider how the Service can ensure its workforce and services continue to adapt and change to ensure the Service is well equipped to deal with this changing environment.

A framework for collaboration and transformation is set out below. The considerations within this framework can be adopted in a flexible way ensuring they enable, rather than restrict. They will recognise the importance of the discrete 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.

These considerations take into account developments within the ESWG and, importantly, can provide an evidence-based approach to support external bodies and, in particular, HMICFRS when evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of collaborations within with WMFS.

3.4 **Framework - A joint assessment and understanding of risk and vulnerability**

A shared understanding and joint assessment of risk and vulnerability is essential. This will support a shared vision and objectives to deliver value through collaboration which achieves transformational community outcomes. An evidence-based assessment of risk by each Service will highlight areas where collaboration may be considered.

For example, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Strategy, Our Plan will, aligned to partners' assessment of risk, form the basis of any collaboration for the Service, ensuring alignment to meeting forecasted risk and future capability.

3.5 **Community Outcomes**

A problem-focused collaboration enables an outcome-focused approach. By identifying a problem that the collaboration will address, relevant organisations can be effectively identified and included ensuring a shared vision, plan, approach, and understanding of intended community and organisational value.

3.6 **Shared Vision**

A clear and shared vision will enable the development of mutually agreed objectives to deliver against realistic and timely outcomes. Without a shared vision, effective and sustainable collaboration is unlikely to happen or be supported.

Agreed objectives and outcomes will enable individual organisational priorities to be achieved.

3.7 **Transformational use of resources and information**

The most transformational approach to sharing, dedicating and developing resources (people, finance and assets), as well as the sharing of information, is key for success. This provides a basis for the transformational delivery of Service priorities as often collaborations are focused on the delivery of core activity. This enables influence in its development ensuring outcomes can be achieved in the most effective way and all parties are co-ordinated in their approach.

Shared resources as a principle of collaboration can facilitate closer dialogue and better working relationships between the partner organisations, generating increased efficiencies in ways of working and service delivery.

For example, providing a dedicated resource to the development of the Regional Road Safety Strategy led through WMCA has enabled WMFS to be at the forefront of developing this strategy, leading with knowledge and expertise in addition to enabling the most effective delivery of our legislative role.

3.8 **Digital Transformation**

Digital transformation will be a key principle to enabling collaborative working, ensuring staff can be involved in the most effective way, delivering both internal (organisation) and external (community) value.

For example, digital solutions can ensure that crews can operate more effectively whilst away from station.

3.9 **Shared decision making and commitment**

Organisations within the collaboration should contribute to the decision-making, identifying how value will be delivered and shared equitably in light of investment. This enables a shared vision to be retained and the direction of the collaboration remains in line with this.

Shared decision-making includes the identification and agreement on how **risk** will be apportioned between the parties to achieve best value for all.

3.10 **Communication**

Communication should be regular and proactive, both formal and informal. This can be achieved through use of a shared language (e.g. using JESIP principles).

3.11 **Trust**

Trust is an essential enabler and requires early understanding of different starting points and perspectives of each partner. Each collaboration may have different levels of success/value for each service, setting individual expectations early is essential.

3.12 **Realistic timeline and delivery pathway**

An achievable, realistic and clear project plan incorporating key areas.

3.13 **Corporate Governance Architecture**

Clearly defined strategic functions outlined in an agreed governance infrastructure to ensure the complexity and potential challenge is managed effectively. This will vary between the Service and other partners and will be officer led.

A robust governance structure supported by a collaboration agreement will ensure sustainability of a project through its life cycle.

Within the governance arrangements, where possible independent scrutiny can be applied providing assurance.

3.14 **Organisation Identity**

Retaining the best features of each collaborative partner identity whilst working towards closer collaboration and shared resources is critical.

The effective use of communication platforms and early defined roles in the development of collaboration, linked to individual service objectives, will support service identity.

3.15 **Evaluation**

Evaluation should commence at the outset of a collaboration through the agreed approach and outcomes as set out above. Evaluation and learning should be captured throughout the life of a collaboration, enabling adjustments to be considered and providing the evidence base to determine its ongoing viability.

This approach aligns to the Policing and Crime Act 2019 and its emphasis to keep collaboration arrangements under consideration.

A clear expectation is alignment to the expectations of the sector as set out in legislation in engaging in collaborative partnerships to support the delivery of our statutory duties (Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) as set out in the Duty to Collaborate and ESWG.

An agreement considering the relevant elements from the framework above provides an approach for managing this risk when developing a collaborative partnership.

In agreeing both the definition and framework set out in this paper Officers will, in line with the delegations set out in the Authority's constitution, develop and engage in structured collaborative relationships, which 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.

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.

Ref. C&T/2019/Nov/22810192

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Policing and Crime Act 2017
Collaboration – Strategic Definition – 7th October 2019

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