

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 AUGUST 2015**

**1. PARTNERSHIPS REVIEW UPDATE**

Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Committee notes the update of progress made in the review of the Service's partnership arrangements.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This update is provided to ensure Members remain informed about scrutiny review of partnerships.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Scrutiny Members will recall that in February 2015, they commissioned a review of all aspects of the Service's partnerships arrangements. The scope of the review was agreed and a Member-led partnership working group was established comprising Councillors Tranter, Spence and Hogarth at Scrutiny Committee's meeting in March 2015.

3.2 In leading the review the Members working group has been engaged throughout and has:

- Met all Partnership Officers
- Met a cross section of Community Risk Reduction Officers
- Met regularly with the temporary Community Safety Manager
- Spoken to a limited number of station personnel
- Participated in a home safety check.

3.3 As is common with all reviews, a number of opportunities for improvement have been identified. However, whilst responding to such opportunities will be necessary to secure continuous improvement and value for money, it is perhaps more appropriate at this time to fundamentally re-think what the Service requires of its

partnerships systems, structures and functionality. The scope of the review, quite rightly, looked at the 'as is' in terms of our accepted thinking regarding what Fire Service partnerships have traditionally delivered – generally working with a range of multi-agency partners to deliver improved outcomes and support the delivery of The Plan in making West Midlands safer.

3.4 However, due to the changing political and funding landscape, commissioning (bidding to supply services) has emerged as a viable means of contributing towards balancing our budget whilst improving the lives of the most vulnerable by providing services that have traditionally been provided by public health agencies. Therefore, the Service needs to re-consider its current approach to identifying and supporting partnerships and focus upon the structure, processes and resources required to maximise and sustain a commissioning model. The need for sustainable organisational commissioning expertise will be of primary consideration in developing proposals for change as a result of this review.

3.5 To date the review has examined the partnerships from a strategic perspective right through to the delivery of local partnership activity. As a consequence of this, proposals will be submitted to enable for:-

- consideration and confirmation of the Leadership Team in community safety and the role of this team in reinforcing the importance of partnerships.
- the appropriate role and structure of the HQ Community Safety team to be developed in line with the organisation's commissioning ambitions.
- the establishment of effective governance arrangements both locally and centrally to enable for assurance to be provided that partnerships are provided in line with expectations.
- the role of command partnerships resources to be considered in supporting a commissioned based approach.
- partnership referrals and the role and structure of the Contact Centre (aligned to report of GC McGrath) to be reconfigured if appropriate .
- Evaluation-quantifying and qualifying success methodologies to be developed.

3.6 In recognising the potential proposals for change above, it should be noted that discussions with the Community Safety Team leadership team have yet to be undertaken. Similarly discussions with Operational Commands who have line management responsibility for partnership delivery resources have yet to take place.

- 3.7 However, in light of the evidence to date and following the confirmation of the Risk Owner, the overall risk rating of Corporate Risk 4 relating to partnerships will rise due to the fact that there is no evidenced requirement to strengthen partnership governance arrangements. The Risk Owner, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery, is currently working with risk Control Owners in order to ensure that the appropriate level of risk controls are put in place to effectively manage this risk. Audit Committee will be informed of this rise in the risk rating. The final report findings will be presented to Scrutiny Members in October 2015.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

The contact officer for this report is Jim Whittingham – Strategic Hub, telephone no 0121 380 6683.

CLLR CHRISTOPHER TRANTER  
CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE