

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

27 JUNE 2022

1. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT (3PT)

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the contents of the report be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report provides a Strategic summary of the progression of the delivery of Portfolio Management through 'Our Plan'. The updates provided are based on the continual assessment of Investment and Value release of projects being delivered through the three Programmes of Community Risk Reduction, Enabling Services and People.
- 2.2 To inform Members of the approach taken under Portfolio Management and the resulting outcomes of the workstreams within current Projects and Programmes, which support the effective leadership of the Service in continual improvement.
- 2.3 This report will lead into the subsequent Fire Authority reports that support the delivery of the Strategy in one or more of the Programmes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Based on the Covid-19 pandemic, this is the first Portfolio Management update to Members pre Covid-19.
- 3.2 During the response phase of the pandemic a decision was made to manage the service delivery through a set of Business Continuity (BC) arrangements, with a particular focus put upon managing a set of 'Priority' projects which led the Service into the recovery phase and into business as usual. This then placed a requirement

to reintroduce the normal activity of a set of projects, designed to deliver Programme outcomes set out below.

4. DELIVERABLES

The Brigade Managers are accountable to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), through the programme objectives to deliver the Strategy of the WMFS. The Portfolio is led by the CFO to enable the delivery of the Authority's Strategic priorities, aligned to the CRMP objectives.

The Portfolio is ultimately accountable for the Programmes and will provide assurance that the aims and objectives are being achieved. The Programmes are accountable for Projects.

The deliverables (aims and objectives) of the three Programmes are shown below, supported by recent Programme achievements.

4.1 Community Risk Reduction (CRR) - Highlights

There has been significant work conducted by Community Risk Reduction (CRR) over the last reporting period.

CRR are pleased to announce Karen Gowreesunker, formerly as the Strategic Enabler for Organisational Strategy and Organisation Intelligence, has moved into a new role, supporting one of two roles which oversee our operational response function as Strategic Enabler for Operations South and Fire Control.

CWG Commonwealth Games

As part of the Testing & Exercising (T&E) preparation for the Commonwealth Games, the CWG Team are developing a multi-agency T&E programme in conjunction with the Organising Committee (OC).

The planning team have worked closely with operations exercise leads to integrate Games T&E into the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) exercise schedule. These exercises are essential, allowing our organisation to work closely with our partners to provide assurance against a wide range of risks to ensure readiness and preparedness for the delivery of the Games.

Operations

Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) has been a key focus with extensive work been conducted to ensure our risk information is up to date and regularly reviewed.

In response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations, Fire Control, Response, and our Digital and Data team have developed an app-based solution to support a digital CS10b. A CS10b is used to record and share Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) information at Tall Building incidents between Fire Control and the Incident ground, via a dedicated support appliance. An ongoing CS10B trial has now concluded and considered successful.

Extending our collaborative working with external partner agencies there is ongoing engagement with transport for West Midlands about use of/access to road network CCTV cameras in the Control Room. This would allow Fire Control to utilise cameras to support resourcing incidents. This could provide Fire Control a live feed of incidents as they evolve which can then be communicated to responding appliances supporting the organisation's 5-minute attendance standard.

A Fire Control review is now underway, which seeks to ensure Fire Control is fit for the future. 'Operations Willowbeck' a national Control Room exercise was both organised and completed by our Control Room team.

This involved 37 Fire and Rescue Services from England, Scotland and Wales, attended by the Home Office and NFCC and was a great success.

Suicide awareness training arranged with OH (Occupational Health) is being delivered to all Fire Control personnel as a debrief outcome from recent challenging incidents.

Sutton integration of technical rescue – Sutton go-live date of 1st May leading to additional resource availability to mitigate emerging risks across the West Midlands.

Prevention

Virtual reality level 1 fire investigation training and assessment has now been implemented. This is being well received and recognised by operational crews, indicating the training is the most realistic way of enhancing knowledge and understanding outside of attending a real incident. Vulnerable road users' groups Virtual reality video has been completed and launched.

We have had 7 new entrants been successful following a recruitment and selection process. This includes 4 female and 1 BAME.

SAW (Safe and Well) visits resulting from a referral from a partner organisation continue to provide access to the more vulnerable in the community. During the pandemic, most organisations focused on their response to COVID, but many have now returned to more normal working practices.

Local crews have been re-establishing contact with partner organisations to revitalise existing referral pathways and contacting those organisations that we worked closely with during the pandemic to build longer term relationships. The newly established Integrated Care Systems provide a valuable opportunity for WMFS to be engaged in the development of strategy through the Health Partnership Boards being developed in all 3 areas across the Brigade.

Bookings of face-to-face SPARKs visits into schools have recommenced, schools are being proactive in making themselves available for visits following a break during Covid. During Covid a digital approach was adopted to be able to continue prevention activities. The remote resource used during Covid has evolved and the latest edition is now complete and will enable a blended approach for delivery of SPARKs

Protection

Our FIPs team have continued to be successful, with several successful prosecutions ranging from 12 months to 7 years imprisonment. Some of the successes can be found in the following [Link](#).

Virtual Reality Level 1 FI training is being well received, investing in our supervisory officers, all have had a development plan to support learning and over 30 sessions have already been conducted with a further 70 sessions made available.

Our protection teams are supporting protection activities further afield offering regional support, support is being given to Warwickshire FRS on a current legal case.

This is following a successful recruitment process where 11 new Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIO) have been recruited.

What is on the horizon

CRMP Community workshops and events will be taking place at stations over the next few months giving our crews the opportunity to invite local communities into the station, providing insight into what our Community Risk management plan is and what it means to them.

Tymly, our online portal developed by Digital and Data, has been nominated in this year's Digital Leaders 100 Awards in the Big Data Innovation of the Year category. The category is for a digital product or service that in the last year has had a measurable impact and delivered real outcomes in the field of big data.

The Digital Leaders 100 Awards celebrate the individuals and organisations from the public, private and non-profit sectors who are demonstrating a pioneering and sustainable approach to digital transformation in the UK.

We have several station open days planned over the summer, which started with Sutton Technical Rescue station in early May. The event attracted over 2,000 people throughout the day.

Testing events for the Commonwealth Games are being conducted regularly, these are multi agency events with Fire Service representatives in all event Control Room locations. Test events feature live scenarios testing our policy, procedures and response.

Planning is in full swing for WMFS to host the UKRO Festival of Rescue later in the year which will be on the Smithfield's site in Birmingham.

The event will welcome Fire and Rescue Services from across the UK to compete in a multitude of disciplines to include Road Traffic Collision (RTC), Trauma, Water Rescue, Rope Rescue, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and firefighter fitness.

Engagement is taking place with our staff during the consultation period of 'The launch of the white paper'.

Our teams will be supporting Pride month. June is the month chosen to celebrate PRIDE as it was the month of the stonewall riots, the protests that changed gay rights. It is about people coming together in love and friendship to show how far gay rights have come, even though there is still work to be done. PRIDE flags will be flown on stations during the month of June. WMFS representation will again be supporting the Birmingham Pride Parade.

4.2 Enabling Service Programme (ES) - Highlights

National Operational Guidance (N.O.G.)

National Operational Guidance is the foundation for developing operational policies, procedures, and training to support firefighters to deal with incidents effectively and safely. It is 'industry good practice' for all Fire and Rescue Services to draw on. As of April 2022, WMFS have now implemented all 44 pieces of national guidance and associated training packages in relation to operational procedures.

The project to implement N.O.G. Fire Control procedures has now begun and is likely to run through to June 2023.

Organisational Assurance - Fire Standards

The Fire Standards Board was created to deliver industry standards to the UKFRS which ranges across all areas of FRS functions. WMFS have been involved in the development of a number of these standards in Operational Preparedness, Fire Investigation and Prevention. To date 10 standards have been released and an extensive gap analysis has been completed on 8 of these, with no areas of concerns raised around WMFS compliance.

The further 2 standards in Fire Investigation and Safeguarding have just been released and are going through a gap analysis to identify any areas of focus for the Service. This will likely be completed by the 1st of August 2022.

Further standards covering Leadership, Data and Digital are due to be released in 2022/2023.

Response – DICE Considerations

Various pieces of work being have been undertaken to improve inclusivity in uniformed roles, one of these being WMFS have included within the BA tender specification reference to the desire to see a BA face mask that is compatible with facial hair. The tender for this is due to go out in July.

The review will include our Uniform Policy to provide greater flexibility for the growing of facial hair in uniformed roles not requiring the wearing of BA (due to complete by 1st July).

Grenfell Outcomes

The Service continues to monitor the outcomes of the Grenfell Inquiry and conducting the necessary assurance work against any findings. One area we are currently looking at is access to legacy documents across the Service and ensuring that out of date material, i.e. policy and training, is no longer readily accessible to employees.

This work also extends to unofficial guidance or training that may have been produced locally in teams and stations which needs to undergo a form of assessment to determine if the Service will adopt, adapt, or reject the material.

The outcome of this work will ensure greater governance over material accessible to employees by reducing the likelihood of legacy material being accessed and used by employees.

Digital Transformation Project

This project seeks to deliver and maximise our investment in digital technology infrastructure and systems. Over recent months we have achieved:

- successful delivery of the Oracle Phase 1 Project and making good progress with Phase 2
- improvements in cyber security posture
- delivery of Key Projects for Commonwealth Games
- investment in Digital Technologies to improve WMFS day to day business and enable our vision.

Operations Digital Mobile Devices

This project seeks to move us to individually delivered mobile devices for our frontline teams. This will give them all a voice, allow them to spend more time in the communities they serve, as well as increase their efficiency and effectiveness. It will also look to remove many of the frustrations found during the cultural review, and previous HMICFRS inspection.

Focus and working groups of Station based operations staff have been set up to better understand user requirements. There is a strong desire from our workforce to be able to operate more efficiently and look more professional in the communities we serve.

To support the change, research has been undertaken into how other industries use mobile devices to drive efficiency and effectiveness. This has resulted in 5 "innovation" stations and front-line appliances ready to be part of an initial trial with the devices due to arrive soon.

Based on initial feedback from the focus and working groups indicates that Incident Command Transformation will lead to more effective, assertive, and safe incident management for our crews.

Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP)

This is a government led project that seeks to deliver the updated communications devices that will enable our fire service and our blue light colleagues to communicate more effectively, at a reduced cost into the future, by providing enhanced data capabilities.

Ongoing work is taking place to ensure that we are ready for delivery, with a Go Live date of 2026.

Recent changes to regional structures, has meant our staff will play a bigger role in our regional delivery supporting our regional FRS colleagues.

Sustainability

We have now completed stage 1 of 3 of developing an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework to measure and monitor our sustainability journey.

There is continual work with the NFCC sustainability working group taking place, this is to develop a toolkit to help all FRS form their individual sustainability strategy. This has led to the consultation by the HMICFRS about including sustainability in the inspection criteria.

Networking with external partners and collaboration continue to grow and extend. We currently have a seat on the climate change board with Warwick University and Coventry City Council, also the Emergency Services' Sustainability Working Group, with a potential to support the inclusive growth group which are part of the West Midlands Combined Authority, and Sustainability West Midlands. The strength of our brand is growing and recognised in the sustainability arena.

We also continue to explore new technology in relation to the use of fire blanket technology, this is to support a more timely and effective resolution of incidents involving electric vehicles. We are currently also exploring other technologies for dealing with battery incidents.

Securing funding for "green" initiatives remains problematic and it has been noted that it is nearly impossible for public organisations to attain grants from many of the funding streams available.

Communications and Engagement

A new WMFS website with improved user experience and ability to provide better analytics has been delivered. This has also helped to improve our culture through communication and engagement

channels, specifically through the Middle Managers Engagement Forum (MMEF) and All Staff Engagement Forum (ASEF) based on feedback from staff following changes linked to the Cultural Review and COVID 19 engagement.

We continue to help improve staff understanding of Service priorities through support and delivery of engagement channels, particularly ASEF and MMEFs. We also communicate through MESH, Yammer (specific families have been created) and Teams.

We have a refreshed MESH site which reflects and supports the projects being delivered through the Portfolio and 3 Programmes whilst also helping to embed our transformational journey, i.e. 'Transforming Our Service' MESH pages.

The recent communications have supported both strategically and with delivery of key Service priorities, some of these being Oracle, Commonwealth Games (CWG), United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO), Core Code of Ethics (CCoE) Values/behaviours, Our Plan, CRMP and HMICFRS.

There are multiple Reward and Recognition events being planned following the backlog due to the pandemic, with the first Long Service and Good Conduct (LSGC) awards taking place in May 2022.

Property Asset Plan

The majority of planned programme work was delivered in line with expectations during 2021/22, including the re-opening of the enhanced Coventry hot fire training facility.

HQ Transformation

Work on the pilot area at the rear of the first floor of the HQ building was complete, although until recently occupancy levels were affected by the ongoing impact of COVID. Some initial evaluation has taken place following staff feedback using the area and whilst some potential refinements have been identified, a significant number of responses have indicated a positive experience regarding the new work area.

Planned Procurement

Despite the general supply chain issues being experienced globally, all planned procurement activity was undertaken in line with targeted activity although specific issues required particular focus, most notably the smoke alarm framework contract and delays to our new workwear contract. There were some price increases on certain goods but this was mitigated in the main by reduced volumes e.g, the amount of wood utilised for hot fire training.

Vehicle Replacement Project (VRP)

Preparation work was paused on the replacement of Brigade Response Vehicles in order to wait for the outcome of the Blended Fleet CRMP objective and there was some delay in the delivery of PRLs due to the impact from COVID on vehicle deliveries, but all planned vehicle maintenance and repair was undertaken to ensure appliance availability and a range of other vehicles were procured as part of the VRP.

Funding, Budget Preparation and Monitoring

The Authority's 2020/2021 Statement of accounts received an unqualified opinion from the external auditors. The impact of COVID on staff availability during 2021/22 had a significant impact on the Authority's expenditure in order to maintain an appropriate level of appliance availability to support the Service Delivery Model but despite this, proactive budget management is anticipated to have achieved overall expenditure levels within available funding.

4.3 People Programme – Highlights

Core Code of Ethics and Core Values (CCoE)

The framework has now been translated into refreshed core values which have been designed by the Service for the Service. They are supported by the adoption of the NFCC leadership framework for recruitment and selection activities.

Managing Vacancies

There has been an implementation of a revised approach to managing vacancies which responds to staff feedback and previous Areas for Consideration (AFC) from the HMICFRS. The approach includes an online behavioural assessment and has been designed through a working group with wide representation including representative bodies.

Revised Health and Wellbeing Framework

A further investment has been provided to support staff Health and Wellbeing following the challenges of dealing with the pandemic with a greater focus being given to preventative activity and continuing to enable a positive work environment, this is to allow people to be the best version of themselves.

Emerging Risks

The Go Live of the third Technical Rescue Station at Sutton Coldfield went ahead in May 2022. This helps to enhance the Service's ability to deliver a specialist response capability, whilst retaining the ability to respond to high risk (Category 1) incidents in the area. The project has allowed increased diversity and positive action initiatives to be undertaken.

Oracle HR Helpdesk

An Online HR Helpdesk facility has been launched to support staff in getting the right advice, in the right way at the right time. This will enable PSS Business Partners (BPs) to spend their time in supporting the more complex and high impact areas of the Service.
DICE

The gender pay gap has seen a reduction in figures from 9.8% to 8.9%. The reduced figure looks at diversity ratios and does not impact on pay. We still pay the same salary for the same role.

WMFS were presented with an Employee Award at the first British Sikh awards event, specifically for charity work and ISAR involvements.

Reducing Grievance and Disciplines

Training and development have been provided across the Service, to help reduce the levels of disciplinary and grievance procedures through a proportionate involvement of management; data is shown below.

- Disciplinary Investigations (78 managers and BPs attended)
- Disciplinary Commissioning and Appeals (29 managers and BPs)
- Crucial Conversations training course (68 managers, BPs and Trade Union officials attended)
- The Manager as Mediator training courses (562 attendees this includes BPs)

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report will not lead to a policy change.
- 5.2 Areas of policy changes that are identified in Project(s) are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 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.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Official

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