

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 16 November 2020, at 10.00 am - Virtual Meeting accessible via MS Teams and YouTube (as a live webcast).

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Councillors

N Hennessy (Chairman)
S Blackburn (Vice-Chair)
I Brown
J Eaton
Jane Hugo
M Khan CBE
T Martin
D O'Toole
M Pattison
J Shedwick

Officers

J Johnston, Chief Fire Officer (LFRS)
B Norman, Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer (LFRS)
J Charters, Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (LFRS)
D Brooks, Principal Member Services Officer (LFRS)
Richard Edney, Senior Communications Officer (LFRS)

35/19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman, County Councillor Hennessy, thanked County Councillor Parkinson for his dedication and diligence as the former Chairman of this Committee.

County Councillor Hennessy then welcomed Authority Members and members of the press and public to the virtual committee meeting of the Planning Committee. She advised that in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic the Government had made regulations that enabled virtual meetings. This meeting was accessible for Committee Members via Microsoft Teams and for members of the press and public via a live webcast on YouTube.

The Committee Members individually confirmed their attendance at the start of the meeting.

36/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

37/19 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None received.

38/19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

In relation to page 4, regarding the establishment of a wildfire burn team, County Councillor Eaton wanted to express his thanks to the staff team where their successful interventions at several incidents resulted in prevention of further fire spread and no reported injuries.

In relation to page 5, regarding the tools to improve the appraisal conversation, County Councillor Hennessy queried whether the 360° appraisal tool had been launched. In response, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this had been launched, starting with the senior management and this would be extended throughout the Service over the forthcoming months.

In relation to page 7, regarding collaboration with other public services, County Councillor Hennessy requested an update on site sharing opportunities. In response the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that most of the former, non-covid work had slowed (as detailed later on the agenda) and consideration was currently being given as to whether fire stations could be used in support of the vaccination programme.

In relation to page 9, and County Councillor Shedwick's request at the previous meeting for detail regarding ongoing vacancies across all on-call stations, he confirmed that the information was received immediately and at July there were 43 vacancies across the fleet of 32 on-call pumps. He requested that if there were any significant changes in future that he be advised as a matter of course.

In relation to page 13, County Councillor Hennessy requested a further update on how the Service was preparing for any potential second wave of the pandemic in the winter months, particularly the level of physical and mental wellbeing support provided to staff. In response the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that from a business continuity planning point of view staff absence had been predicted including how best to mitigate this; work continued with representative bodies and health and safety consultation meetings to keep staff absence as low as possible. For example, normal absence rate was around 40 staff at any given time which increased in the winter months due to seasonal flu however, at the moment due to self-isolation this had slightly increased to around 60 staff. He assured Members that the measures that had been put in place ensured pump availability and response to incidents was high. In addition, he confirmed that training for staff on operational fire stations continued where it was safety critical and other training had been reviewed and amended where possible including delivering digital training sessions to new fire safety enforcement staff and the digital delivery of fire safety training in schools. With respect to wellbeing, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the

core support from Occupational Health and Human Resources continued and there were regular staff dial-ins for staff to discuss concerns or key topics with managers. Feedback on this had been strong in relation to wellbeing provision and there was currently a survey open at the moment which should provide further reassurance once it had concluded.

RESOLVED: - That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

39/19 SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY & PLANNING DIRECTORATE LEVEL CHANGES

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report. At the previous meeting Members discussed a high level of detail with regards to the Fire Safety Bill (due Royal Assent in January 2021) and Building Safety Bill (due Royal Assent in 2021/22) and endorsed the proposed internal restructuring necessary to underpin the transformation plan to ensure that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) was well positioned to deliver Fire Protection duties in accordance with the new legislation and associated best practice (resolution 31/19 refers).

This included the introduction of a strategic lead at Head of Department level for Prevention and Protection. It was noted that following an internal and external recruitment and selection process, Group Manager Mark Hutton was successfully appointed to the Area Manager level post and he would commence in role from 1 December 2020. This change enabled the Head of Prevention and Protection sufficient capacity to lead the Prevention and Protection functions in a manner commensurate with the expectations of the Building a Safer Future Report, which would place LFRS in a strong position to deliver the National Fire Chief Council Competency Framework and successfully implement requirements under the new Fire Safety Bill and Building Safety Bill. The Protection Reform related changes provided an opportunity to review the areas of responsibility and associated resources within the Director of Service Delivery and Director of Strategy and Planning portfolios.

It was proposed that the new Area Manager Prevention and Protection would operate within the Director of Service Delivery portfolio which would result in all aspects of Prevention and Protection policy and delivery sitting within the same functional area. This was a change from the current position whereby Protection and Prevention policy was shaped within the Strategy and Planning team and subsequent prevention delivery operated from Service Delivery.

To further strengthen capacity within the Prevention and Protection area it was proposed that LFRS established a new dedicated Group Manager for Protection (with a temporary Protection transformation team) and a repurposing of the Group Manager (GM) (Central Area) to become the GM Prevention, to continue to lead Fire Investigation, Road Safety, Prevention policy plus all Youth Engagement activities.

It was further proposed that the Area Manager, Head of Training and Operational Review be re-aligned to the Director of Strategy and Planning portfolio in order to bring closer alignment between the key areas of training specification, operational

learning and competence, to the operational policy elements delivered by the Response and Emergency Planning team.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that, subject to Committee approval, it was proposed to move to the new structure with effect from 1 January 2021 which would align with the arrival of the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Steve Healey who would have responsibility for this work as Director of Service Delivery. Members considered the diagrams on page 17 and 18 which set out the proposed structure changes and a number of councillors commented that it would have been helpful to have a key to the acronyms used.

In response to a number of queries raised regarding the business risk implications outlined, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised:

- Although there had been a number of changes and innovations to try and recruit colleagues into working in the fire safety environment over a number of years, and there had been significant progress, this had been challenging given it took between 18 months and 2 years for an experienced fire officer to become a competent inspector. This work was now being extended to deal with the wider risk in Lancashire, as detailed in the report at the last meeting and given that work would then be intensified through the new responsibilities under the joint regulation alongside local authority building regulations and the health and safety regulations therefore, the task had become more difficult and the levels of competence and experience had increased hence the challenge was greater.
- There was an increasing demand across the sector for competent fire sector workers (experienced inspectors and support staff) however, most staff (approximately 90% of 44 staff) were in post although the majority were still in development (ie: those who had newly entered or were newly appointed leaders). There were small numbers of transfers across local fire and rescue services with only one in the last 12 months that had left to work in the commercial sector.
- The Service had undertaken a lot of work and created a 3-year plan to respond to the risks posed to the Service from Dame Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report. Work included the anticipation of impacts from the new 2 pieces of legislation and the determination of required structural changes to provide more scrutiny and focus for this work. For example, consideration had been given to the competency framework and workforce development which included work required by staff on wholetime stations to check business premises; increasing the numbers of degree qualified engineers and inspecting officers. Staff had also been signed up to formal qualifications at levels 3, 4 and 5 as appropriate. In its entirety over the time required to fully implement the new framework, and if all the aspects were delivered, all the risks identified would have been addressed to as low a risk as possible.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed that an update on staff competence would be reported at the July meeting next year and it was noted that should the risk remain it would feature on the corporate risk register.

In response to a question from County Councillor Shedwick, the Chief Fire Officer advised that Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

(HMICFRS) would be looking to see the Service was adjusting the way it staffed, considered and delivered against the changing landscape. It was expected that when HMICFRS undertook the inspection the following year they would be able to see the preparatory work done to ensure that by the time the significant legislative changes were enacted that the Service had already adjusted itself to be able to deliver against it.

RESOLVED: - that the Planning Committee noted and endorsed the internal restructuring plan.

40/19 HMICFRS UPDATE

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the report. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) was due to be conducted in April/May 2020. This was suspended due to the recall of staff within HMICFRS returning to their own Fire and Rescue Services to plan and manage the implications of the Covid-19 outbreak.

During this period the Service's Liaison Officer, Charlene Johnston had maintained contact with Service Liaison Lead (SLL), Jo Hayden by having two weekly conversations to update on how the Service was managing the pandemic in Lancashire and to inform her understanding on how the Service operated. Jo Hayden returned to HMICFRS on 29 June this year, however there would be a period of time during which the HMICFRS would continue work to re-populate their inspection teams and a full inspection was not expected to take place until far into 2021.

Covid-19 Thematic Inspection

HMICFRS were legislated to report on Fire and Rescue Services annually and announced, as expected, that they would be conducting a Covid-19 Thematic Inspection of all Fire and Rescue Services. This would be an ungraded sub-diagnostic under the forthcoming but delayed round 2 inspection programme.

The inspection of LFRS took place over two weeks commencing 28 September and involved a data return and self-assessment survey followed by digital interviews with key staff members. The HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead met, via Microsoft Teams, with the Group Manager Prevention and Protection, Group Manager Response and Emergency Planning, Director of People and Development, Director of Corporate Services, Group Manager Training and Operational Review, and Head of Safety, Health and Environment as well as the Chief Fire Officer and Combined Fire Authority Chairman.

The inspection was light touch and looked at how Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service delivered its functions safely and how it worked for the greater good of the community alongside partners.

It was noted that the inspection of other Fire and Rescue Services would conclude in December, at which point the Service would receive a letter from HMICFRS detailing results with a full thematic report covering all Services expected in January 2021.

As yet there were no indications as to when the round two inspections would commence which would depend on the Covid-19 situation nationally.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Hennessy, the Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the data return was similar to those submitted on a biannual basis (in spring and autumn) which focussed on the Service's ability to deliver some of its duties (to understand the impact of the pandemic). Throughout the pandemic the Service had dynamically assessed the consequences of both Government and NHS Public Health guidance to ensure a balance between delivering an effective Service (using different technologies and methods where appropriate) and the protection of staff wellbeing. He confirmed that broadly the data set spanned those topics. Since then the autumn data had been submitted which assessed staffing, types of facilities and services offered and looked to assess the impact of covid over the last 12 months when compared with data submitted the previous year.

In addition, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the data return provided was factual in terms of what the Service had undertaken (including the delivery of thousands of PPE items to care homes and 3,500 vulnerable visits to people in the community who were shielding on behalf of the NHS). He confirmed that the informal feedback received had been positive however, all the data returns were yet to be compared.

The Chief Fire Officer also advised that the difficulty at this time was that HMICFRS would not yet have formed a view on what levels of service were being delivered by any particular Fire and Rescue Service which included: staff wellbeing, links into the Local Resilience Forum to deliver additional activities and whether there were any barriers. He confirmed that the narrative feedback at the end of the inspection and the subsequent report, as expected at the end of the year, would show broadly how the Service had looked after its staff (by keeping staff well engaged and well informed) and how the Service had provided significant additional response to the Lancashire Resilience Forum (which included having over 40 officers detached into the forum to deliver its core structures) well beyond traditional fire and rescue service activity.

RESOLVED: - that the Planning Committee noted the report.

41/19 BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report. The quarterly Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) meetings had largely been placed on hold due to the ongoing support provided by the blue light agencies to Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the increased internal pressures felt by the three blue light organisations in adapting and responding to the ever-changing and demanding operational landscape. It was noted that there were some exceptions in relation to the progression of some long-term pieces of work (including meeting infrequently in relation to fire investigation and the International Standards Organisation for accreditation alongside the National Fire Chiefs Council and National Police Chiefs Council).

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) and partners had entered into an amended working relationship where areas which were not previously highlighted through the BLC had continued to gather pace, evolve and be delivered to support the multi-agency response to Covid-19.

Many areas of delivery that had been supported (or would be supported if requested) were closely linked with the tripartite agreement (NFCC, Employers and FBU) which was constantly evolving.

To date, LFRS had been involved in the preparations for, or delivery of, the following:

- Face fitting for masks to be used by frontline NHS and clinical care staff working with Covid-19 patients;
- Mass casualty transportation (movement of bodies in support of Coroner functions);
- Vulnerable person contacts and visits (delivery of essential items);
- Delivery of PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities;
- Lead agency for collating all PPE requirements through the Joint Intelligence and Planning Group.

In terms of support to the LRF, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer chaired the Response and Containment Group and there were a number of officers embedded within the various LRF sub-groups, delivering leadership and co-ordination to these teams. At present there was an Emergency Planning Watch Manager and Station Manger supporting the county-wide response.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that there were discussions ongoing currently as to whether any second wave would require the Service to: i) support local authorities to distribute PPE as it had previously (with the Training Centre acting as a distribution centre); ii) retrain staff regarding transportation of the deceased; and, iii) support partners in the provision of the vaccination programme which was expected to start for the most vulnerable in the next few weeks and conclude by spring. In addition, early conversations were being held whether staff who were first aid trained could be upskilled to deliver vaccinations.

All activity was being collated within the collaboration log which would provide an overview of outcomes delivered and benefits realised, and would form a definitive evidence base for any future HMICFRS inspections. The evidence also informed some aspects of a collaboration review report being delivered by Shared Architect Services, through which it was expected that further beneficial collaboration opportunities could be identified and explored.

In conjunction with partners the joint collaboration officer post was being reviewed, with steps being made towards reinstating the post to support future collaboration work. The intention remained that BLC meetings would be restarted when capacity across the blue light partners permitted, however on a day-to-day basis, dialogue and consistent collaborative working remained ongoing across numerous areas of work.

County Councillor Pattison asked for clarification of the best contact where a vulnerable person had been identified as needing support. The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that every Local Authority across Lancashire had established community level hubs (which were stood up throughout the whole pandemic and remained currently in place) and these were intensifying their resources through the winter period. He confirmed that the hubs were the point of contact to support a vulnerable person. He advised that the Service would react as required to a request to support local authorities and the work they were doing via the community hubs. Currently there were no specific requests to deliver food or medicines or check on residents.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that if Members had any significant concerns regarding residents' fire safety in the home, the Service continued to provide advice over phone and during the last quarter had made interventions in the home on circa 2,000 occasions where the risk of harm to the individual from fire outweighed the risk to staff of transmission of covid while in the home. He confirmed that these interventions did include onward referrals to local authority hubs teams.

County Councillor Hennessy queried whether there had been an increase in Home Fire Safety Checks with people currently staying in the home. The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the first lockdown period showed a slight shift in call types with an increase in unwanted fire signals in business premises; the quieter roads showed a decrease in road traffic collisions and as more people worked from home there was a slight increase in domestic fires. Referral rates had slowed but those who were at the greatest risk were still being referred at similar rates. The Service continued to undertake door step delivery of equipment ie: replacement smoke alarms for self-installation or as required Prevention colleagues entered premises every day, wearing PPE and keeping socially distanced to place the interventions; thereby reducing the risks from fire and keeping the residents of Lancashire safer.

County Councillor Hennessy queried whether the Service had changed its delivery for those people who had been in hospital and their circumstances had changed. In response, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that these referrals had continued as there were significant risk factors; the Service still visited people who were referred and provided individual support as required.

In response to a question raised by County Councillor Hennessy regarding how the Service was reaching local communities, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the winter period (darker nights, shorter days and colder weather) generally created a challenge for the Service and during this time the winter safety campaign would be intensified.

RESOLVED: - that the Planning Committee noted and endorsed the report.

42/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 8 February 2021 at 10:00 hours – venue to be confirmed.

Further meeting dates were agreed for 12 July 2021 and 15 November 2021.

M NOLAN
Clerk to CFA

LFRS HQ
Fulwood