

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 18 September 2023

Notes of Strategy Group held on Monday, 3 July 2023

Contact for further information:

Diane Brooks, Principal Member Services Officer - Tel No (01772) 866720

Executive Summary

Report on proceedings of Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Strategy Group held at the Service Training Centre, Euxton on Monday, 3 July 2023.

Recommendation

That the Authority note the proceedings as set out in this report.

Present:

Councillors

J Shedwick	J Mein
G Baker	M Pattison
S Clarke	J Rigby
M Dad	P Rigby
N Hennessy	S Serridge
T Hurn	J Singleton
A Kay	D Smith
H Khan	R Woollam
Z Khan	B Yates

Information

1/23	Introduction - National Context
	<p>The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed attendees of the sad passing of the former member of the CFA, County Councillor Keith Iddon, for which everyone stood and observed 1 minute's silence.</p> <p>Members were advised that Strategy meetings provided a good opportunity for Officers and Members to engage and share information.</p> <p>National Update</p> <p>'Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service' White Paper Home Office Response</p> <p>Members were aware that the Home Office public consultation document 'Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service' outlined proposals to reform the fire sector in England across the principal areas of: People, Professionalism and Governance. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided a brief update to Members</p>

and advised that formal consultation outcomes were still awaited from the Government.

Minimum Service Levels (MSL)

The DCFO advised that the Home Office had publicly consulted on the most appropriate approach for delivering minimum service levels for fire and rescue services which, subject to parliamentary approval, may be introduced following the passage of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. The formal consultation outcomes were currently awaited.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

Members were aware that the last inspection by HMICFRS confirmed Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) had performed exceptionally well, scoring 'good' in all three pillars and 10 of the sub diagnostic areas (effectiveness, efficiency and people) and receiving an 'Outstanding' grade in Culture and Values diagnostic.

The DCFO confirmed that the current round of inspections had begun in February 2023 and to date 12 inspections had taken place. It was anticipated that the results from those inspections would be published in the coming weeks in small batches. It was noted that the inspections were no longer carried out in 3 tranches but were now in batches of 3 services out of the 44 Fire and Rescue Services in England. It was estimated that LFRS' full inspection would take place in early 2024, although this could change.

Culture and Values was a big issue nationally with every service facing its own challenges. Whilst the Service had been graded outstanding in the last HMICFRS inspection and had a zero-tolerance attitude towards bullying and harassment we could not become complacent.

Productivity and Efficiency

The DCFO explained that the Fire Minister had requested detailed plans be published that showed how individual fire and rescue authorities' plans aligned with national productivity and efficiency targets set for the current spending period. In response, the Service's Productivity and Efficiency Plan had been published on the website which included: i) Primary Information (budget, reserves, precept, efficiency and productivity); and ii) Secondary Information (collaboration, transformation plans, charging policies, asset management and investment technology, resourcing, procurement and productivity). Full details can be found by following [this link](#) to the website.

2/23

On-Call Challenges

The DCFO provided an overview of the challenges faced by the on-call crewing system which, as the on-call lead for the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), he was very passionate about.

It was noted that in Lancashire 80% of fire stations were crewed either solely by on-call firefighters or jointly by wholetime and on-call firefighters. Since the

	<p>pandemic, the whole fire sector had seen a decline in on-call availability which was a challenge; whilst across England collectively there had been a decline of around 25% of on-call firefighters, across Lancashire there had only been an 11% reduction over a similar period (the last decade or so). However, what was concerning was that collectively our circa 400 on-call firefighters now offered 25% less hour of availability to what was provided by circa 440 on-call firefighters 10 years ago.</p> <p>The DCFO confirmed that many improvement strategies were being considered by the Service to increase on-call availability which included a dedicated On-Call Station Manager who had now taken up post.</p>
3/23	<p>Wildfire Update</p>
	<p>Members were aware of the Climate Change Operational Response Plan which detailed plans to mitigate the impacts of wildfires and flooding within Lancashire. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) advised that he was now the NFCC Deputy Lead for Wildfires supporting Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) Chief Fire Officer, Paul Hedley who was the NFCC Lead Officer until his imminent retirement, when ACFO Jim McNeil of NFRS would succeed him.</p> <p>The ACFO advised that 2022 had been an unprecedented wildfire season across the UK with national figures for England and Wales showing there had been 983 wildfires, an increase of 315% from the 247 recorded in 2021. Therefore, a national Fire and Rescue Service wildfire survey had taken place from December 2022 to February 2023. Fifty Fire and Rescue Services contributed to the survey with 12 FRS, NFCC and external partner agencies coming together to carry out a wildfire debrief and draft a summary report and action plan.</p> <p>NFCC Wildfire Leads were now working to prioritise the areas for improvement contained within the action plan and would develop a more detailed individual delivery plan for each recommendation once lead and delivery officers had been identified and allocated. Annual debriefs would be undertaken each year going forward to build upon the initial benchmarking of the 2022 survey/debrief.</p>
4/23	<p>Emergency Cover Review Update</p>
	<p>The last Emergency Cover Review (ECR) was undertaken in December 2022 where Members agreed 5 key proposals that would; i) maintain all 39 fire stations; ii) maintain outstanding response standards and all 58 appliances; iii) provide efficiency savings; iv) increase the overall firefighter establishment and v) provide more flexible crewing arrangements.</p> <p>The DCFO reminded Members of the alternate option that was considered that would have seen a reduction in fire engines from 58 down to 56.</p> <p>The DCFO provided Members with an update on the implementation of the 5 key proposals:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce more resilient and flexible crewing arrangements – following extensive consultation with staff affected and representative bodies. 2. Optimise emergency cover through dynamic cover software.

	<p>3. Strengthen our response to climate change emergencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in fire appliances with off-road capabilities in areas at risk of wildfires and flooding. - Introduce specialist flood water incident management. <p>4. Strengthen firefighting and rescue capabilities in high-rise and commercial buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce a 45m aerial ladder platform into our fleet, our highest reach aerial capability to date. - Invest in two additional water tower appliances. <p>5. Broaden on-call firefighting capabilities to strengthen operational response.</p> <p>It was noted that the implementation of the ECR would start in January 2024 and would be phased over 2 years (ECR 2022-25).</p>
5/23	Capital Programme
	<p>The Authority had agreed the 5-year capital strategy at its meeting in February where it was noted that the bulk of the expenditure was for buildings with the replacement of Preston Fire station (in tandem with a review of response provision within the Preston area), investment in Service Training Centre props and a project to replace the Service Headquarters building. The Director of Corporate Services and ACFO presented insights on the various project scopes and a proposed timeline including formation of a Member Working Group and advised that a report would thereafter be taken to the CFA meeting in December.</p>
6/23	Governance / Code of Conduct
	<p>The Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority reiterated the protocols and importance of Member interaction with each other and with officers as the Authority was responsible for the best performing Service in England and it had a legal responsibility to ensure resilience. The Members were provided with the Fire Standards Board Code of Ethics Fire Standard implementation tool which set out details of the 10 criteria required to receive overall compliance with the standard. He highlighted that the emphasis was on Member culture and conduct. The need for an outstanding culture in Fire Services was becoming more prevalent and good governance was where it started.</p>

Business Risk

None

Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

HR Implications

None

Financial Implications

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**List of background papers**

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: N/a

**LFRS HQ
Fulwood**

**M Nolan
Clerk to CFA**