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Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on

Notes of Strategy Group held on Monday, 1 July 2024

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Executive Summary

Report on proceedings of Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Strategy Group held at the Service Training Centre, Euxton on Monday, 1 July 2024.

Recommendation

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

Present:

Councillors

U Arif	M Pattison
G Baker	P Rigby
M Clifford	M Salter
F De Molfetta	S Serridge
N Hennessy	J Shedwick
J Hugo	J Singleton
F Jackson	D Smith
Z Khan MBE	R Woollam
D O'Toole	

Information

1/24	CFO Introduction - National Context
	<p>The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) welcomed everyone to the meeting including new Members, returning Member Frank De Molfetta, and independent persons Julie Byrom and Ann Highton.</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>The CFO highlighted that Members were aware that the Home Office 'Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service' agenda had progressed and would lead to a revised Fire and Rescue National Framework which had been out for consultation,</p>

	<p>however, it had been paused around the uncertainties of the new government. The areas of focus of the reform for the fire sector in England were legislation, operational independence, governance, and a review of the NJC.</p> <p>The CFO explained the challenges regarding the budget as the £5 council tax precept had not been agreed for the current year. It was anticipated that the new government would be reminded of the challenges within the fire sector.</p>
2/24	<p>HMICFRS Update</p>
	<p>His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The ACFO confirmed that the Round 3 inspections had begun in February 2023 and to date reports had been published for 15 Fire and Rescue Services. It was noted that a new grade of ‘adequate’ had been added to the grading system and the gradings were now: Outstanding, Good, Adequate, Requires Improvement, and Inadequate. The understanding of the grade ‘adequate’, was for sections that had been inspected and there were areas of that section that needed improvement.</p> <p>The State of Fire and Rescue 2023 report was published on 9 May 2024. This was His Majesty’s Chief Inspector, Andy Cooke’s second annual assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England.</p> <p>In the report, HMCI Andy Cooke requested government to enact several legislative changes to help FRSs gain greater parity with police forces, as this would help to drive improvements in the FRS sector and make communities safer. He stated in the report that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Government should make it a legal requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish a response to the inspection reports; - Fire and rescue authorities should be able to request a commissioned inspection; and - HMICFRS existing inspection powers should be extended, which includes bringing the inspection powers for fire in line with those of policing. <p>The report highlighted the good work being undertaken by services, whilst highlighting the improvements that were required to make the sector more effective, efficient and communities safer.</p> <p>The Positive Practice Portal had been introduced in 2024 to provide details about interventions which had been developed by one or more Fire and Rescue Services to address a particular need, concern or organisational change recognised by the NFCC or HMICFRS as an innovative or positive practice.</p>

	It was anticipated that the LFRS inspection would begin in early 2025.
3/24	Emergency Cover Review Update
	<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 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. 3. Strengthen our response to climate change emergencies: <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. 4. Strengthen firefighting and rescue capabilities in high-rise and commercial buildings: <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. 5. Broaden on-call firefighting capabilities to strengthen operational response. <p>Following consultation with staff, the implementation of the ECR had begun on 01 March 2024.</p>
4/24	Dynamic Cover Tool
	<p>For several years, the Service had used Dynamic Mobilising and North West Fire Control would know where all officers and fire engines were located. Dynamic mobilising was based on Automatic Vehicle Location Systems (AVLS). Dynamic cover was based on risk and demand with the quickest resource being dispatched.</p> <p>The next step would be to use the technology to decide where resources needed to be placed, based on current risk as the Service moved from Dynamic Mobilising using AVLS to the Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT).</p> <p>The DCFO provided Members with an overview of the software. The development of the DCT was based upon robust modelling which sought to ensure that resource decisions (made by North West Fire Control & Flexi Duty Officer's) provided the optimum configuration of resources to ensure that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) could continually meet its published response standards and effectively manage risk on a county-wide basis.</p>

	<p>The tool identified the present risk and likelihood of incidents based on 5 years of critical incident data and where cover was needed based on real-time appliance location rather than the existing static model. Full implementation of the software would begin from October 2024.</p>
5/24	<p>Budget / Capital Programme Update</p> <p>The Director of Corporate Services provided Members with an update on the Budget and Capital Programme.</p> <p>Revenue Funding and Spending 2023/24</p> <p>The Service was funded by Grants, Business Rates, and Council Tax. The Service lobbied for a £5 (6%) Council Tax settlement, as in the previous year which would have provided an extra £2m however, it was agreed at 2.99%.</p> <p>Spending of the budget was on Employee, Premises, Transport, and Supplies & Services/Other.</p> <p>Key Financial Metrics</p> <p>Currently, there was a high level of usable reserves due to the capital reserve (£20m) for the capital projects. The Service had a very low level of borrowing (£2m) and was at the lowest level against other Fire Services.</p> <p>Investment in Assets</p> <p>LFRS were one of the leading Services regarding investment in equipment and vehicles. LFRS spending on buildings was low, however, a large amount of spending would be taking place with the Capital Projects (SHQ & STC props (£80m), Fulwood Fire Station (£5m-£7m), and Preston Fire Station (£10m).</p> <p>Financial Strategy</p> <p>The Service would utilise the Capital Reserve and borrow £31m by 2029. Debt repayment costs the Service £2.5m p.a. Efficiency savings of £2.5m p.a. efficiency savings from 2026.</p> <p>Economy</p> <p>Currently, the economy was quite weak due to the recent recession and high inflation which was now stable. Financial pressure also came from pensions and pay.</p>
6/24	<p>Service Head Quarter / Service Training Centre Masterplan</p> <p>The Authority had agreed the 5-year capital strategy at its meeting in February 2023 where it was noted that the bulk of the expenditure was for buildings with the</p>

	<p>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. In October the Capital Projects Working Group was established and the Authority agreed at its meeting in February 2024, to have a joint SHQ/STC.</p> <p>The Director of Corporate Services presented insights on the various project scopes and work in progress. He advised that once the SHQ/STC Masterplan had been finalised, it would be submitted to Chorley Council for Planning Permission.</p>
7/24	<p>Preston Area Review</p>
	<p>The Authority had agreed the 5-year capital strategy at its meeting in February 2023 where it was noted that the bulk of the expenditure was for buildings which included the replacement of Preston Fire station (in tandem with a review of response provision within the Preston area). In October the Capital Projects Working Group was established.</p> <p>The DCFO explained that Preston Fire Station had been identified for long-term redevelopment and it was intended to create a new, modern station either in the same place or another location that serviced both staff and the local community well.</p> <p>The Service would continue to review emergency cover across the Preston area, conduct a land review and explore options to replace or relocate the station. In the short-term, improvements would be made to the station so it remained fit for purpose and better met the needs of a diverse workforce.</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**