

## Report of Chief Fire Officer

### Manchester Arena Inquiry – Volume 2 Report

#### Purpose of report

1. To provide assurance to the Fire Authority that officers have undertaken an effective review of the outcomes of the Manchester Arena Inquiry and taken steps to address the issues raised by the Inquiry.
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#### Recommendation

***It is recommended that the measures taken within HWFRS to learn from and address the shortcomings in emergency response following the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017 be noted and approved.***

#### Introduction and Background

2. At just after 22:30hrs on Monday 22 May 2017, a suicide bomber detonated an improvised device in an area known as the City Room, which is just outside the Manchester Arena, following a concert. The bomb used was substantial and had a devastating impact. The bomb killed twenty-two people including many children. Over one hundred were physically injured and many more suffered psychological and emotional trauma.
3. The Manchester Arena attack was the deadliest in the UK since the London bombings on 7 July 2005, and the events of 22 May 2017 were something none of those involved had ever encountered before.
4. The Kerslake Review was commissioned shortly after the attack and delivered its full report on 27 March 2018. The review focused on the response to the attack in the nine days that followed it. The report covers many aspects of the response to the attack that went well; however, there are some areas of significant learning in the report directly relating to the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and Local Resilience Forum (LRF) response that Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) have reviewed and implemented in 2018.
5. More recently (November 2022), the Volume 2 Report of the Manchester Arena Inquiry was published, which focussed on the response of the emergency services to the attack.

## Main Findings

6. The Terms of Reference of the Volume 2 Report on the emergency services' response to the Manchester Arena attack assessed the impact of any inadequacies in the planning and preparation by the emergency services, and in the emergency response. The report highlights some areas where responders performed under extraordinary pressure and, at an individual level, many people did their jobs to a high standard and were a positive influence on the outcome; undoubtedly lives were saved by responders as well as members of the public.
7. However unfortunately the Volume 2 Report mainly finds that the emergency response was inadequate and that, when looked at overall, and objectively, the performance of the emergency services was far below the standard it should have been.
8. Of particular interest to HWFRS is the performance of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. The report highlights that, due to command and control failings: 'Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) failed to turn up at the scene at a time when they could provide the greatest assistance', alongside a number of other areas where the Fire and Rescue Service could have performed better on the night in question.
9. HWFRS carried out an extensive review following the publication of the Kerlake Report in 2018 and implemented a number of measures as a result. It was reassuring to find that the issues that were reviewed and addressed in 2018 were reflected in the 2022 Volume 2 Report and that, whilst the Service will carry out a further review following the publication of the Volume 2 Report, it is unlikely that it will highlight any areas that have not already been considered.
10. In broad terms both reports (2018 & 2022) highlight four key areas which have been reviewed:
  - Essential communications and relevant key information passed at an early stage between Police and Fire mobilising functions, as well as communications and understanding between senior officers from all emergency services.
  - The role and location of the specialist Fire and Rescue Counter Terrorism trained National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs) and the use of nationally agreed procedures to predicted scenarios.
  - The ability to effectively mobilise crews and officers to the scene of an incident, and for crews and officers to safely and effectively attend the scene of an incident and render lifesaving assistance at an early stage, where the risk and threat to Firefighters may be unprecedented, unconventional, and is not yet fully understood or determined.
  - How the FRS integrate and support the establishment of wider multi-agency command structures at an early stage, in conjunction with other LRF partners.

11. To address the issues above HWFRS undertook the following actions, note; these are all currently under further review:

- HWFRS Fire Control is now located in the West Mercia Police mobilising centre and both teams routinely work together on a face to face basis. Further work is being undertaken with the replacement Fire Control mobilising systems to implement a digital system to exchange information across all emergency services. Additionally, all HWFRS senior officers have strong relationships with the senior West Mercia Police officers; we train and regularly work together and are co-located with the Police senior officers at Hindlip Hall. There are also good relationships across West Midlands Ambulance Service especially at NILO level, however these could be further strengthened in the future.
- Since 2018 HWFRS has doubled the number of NILOs to usually provide two NILOs on duty at any given time, therefore being able to deploy to the operational scene and to the command centre simultaneously. HWFRS NILOs also work closely with the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) contingent of NILOs providing further resilience to each other. NILOs carry out regular training with other officers in the Service to familiarise them with specialist protocols. This is especially important due to the large geographic span of HWFRS, as it is not reasonable to expect a NILO to be able to attend incidents across both counties quickly; a close working relationship between all other command officers and NILOs is crucial.
- A new policy has been implemented and training has been undertaken by Fire Control staff (together with NILOs), to ensure that they are confident to gather information, carry out a prompt risk assessment and mobilise crews and officers to the scene of incidents where a full range of information is not always available. The fundamental concept is that HWFRS will deploy to an incident wherever possible (unless instructed not to do so by the Police for safety reasons), and where the risks are not clear; they should proceed with caution and provide life saving assistance wherever it is safe to do so.
- HWFRS is a key partner in the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and due to regular flooding events and other emergencies has well-tested and close working relationships with all our partners. This year senior officers undertook multi-agency refresher training led by the LRF and funded by both HWFRS and SFRS, and further training for all command levels is planned for the future. Whilst the staff in all organisations often change and new relationships need to be developed, there is a high degree of assurance that the LRF can, and will, function effectively during any major incident or terrorist related emergency. This was evident in the past few years during two major emergencies within the LRF area.

12. In addition to the findings of the Volume 2 Report the Service has, for some time, invested in a high-quality level of accredited trauma training (a high level of first

aid or immediate care) and has specialist equipment on every fire engine, including comprehensive traumatic injury packs, oxygen and defibrillators. In addition, HWFRS now employs three paramedics to maintain the training and skills of all the front-line staff to ensure that at any incident the Service attends we have the skills and equipment to provide immediate life saving care in a variety of scenarios. Alongside this for incidents where there are mass casualties, and in line with the findings of the Kerslake Review in 2018, the Service also provides additional equipment to treat and assist with the evacuation of large numbers of casualties from high risk areas.

13. Further training is planned and currently underway for all operational and Fire Control staff to further embed the lessons learnt, and skills required, to respond to an incident of this nature. The Service also continues to work closely with the Police and other specialist colleagues in order to carry out a full risk assessment of the Service's current capabilities.

## **Summary**

14. Any unprecedented major incident, especially one such as a terrorist attack, will always highlight significant areas of learning for all emergency responders; however, it is clear that in 2017, in Manchester, significant failings were identified.
15. HWFRS has carefully evaluated the outcomes of the Manchester Arena Inquiry and thanks to the honesty, openness and transparency of all those emergency services involved, we are able to learn from them, and put in place measures to try to avoid those mistakes being repeated in the future.
16. HWFRS will continue to review our operations, planning and policy for all types of major incidents and prepare accordingly, putting in place the training, equipment and procedures which will help us try to provide the best possible service to our communities whenever they need us.

## Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	None, all resource for this is contained within existing budgets
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	This links with the HWFRS core Response strategy and the national strategies that relate to terrorist threats and incidents.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	The policy and approach is in line with the guiding principles of H&S risk assessment.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Not Applicable
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not Applicable

## Supporting Information

None.

## Background papers –

Link [Kerslake Review Report](#)

Link [Manchester Arena Inquiry - Vol 2 Report](#)