

Report of Chief Fire Officer

Invest to Improve Programme

Purpose of report

1. To inform Members on the progress of the Invest to Improve Programme and assure Members of the measures being taken and positive impact of this programme.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note this report

Introduction and Background

2. Members approved a programme of investment mainly from the reallocation of reserve funding in June 2021. In addition to existing allocated revenue and capital funding, the Authority released additional funding to support and drive forward some key areas of investment and improvement for the Service.
3. Outlined below are the key areas that have been included in the Invest to Improve programme:
 - On-Call marketing and recruitment programme.
 - Development of a new digital on-line training platform that is modern, interactive, and compliant with new National Operational Guidance (NOG).
 - Delivery of a Command Training Excellence programme.
 - Implementation of a new digital equipment tracking and testing tool.
 - Development of a new intelligence management and gathering system for the recording and supplying of risk critical 'Intel' and building specific information of known risks.
 - Development of the environmental and sustainability improvement programme.
 - Improvement of organisational communications and development of an improved new digital capability to communicate better with staff and the public.
 - Implementation of body worn camera technology.
 - Delivery of a complex and challenging new building programme.
 - Delivery of a new training facility in North Herefordshire.

- Delivery of a new Fire Control system.

Current Situation

4. Progress has been made in all the areas listed above. In some cases, progress has been slower than hoped, mainly due to staffing and recruitment issues or the inability to recruit or appoint staff with the necessary skillset. Despite this, all projects now have a managed programme delivery schedule and are mainly fully staffed.
5. Key areas of progress to note are:
 - The On-Call marketing and recruitment team are now on the ground across the Service area seeking to promote employment opportunities and recruit new On-Call staff from a range of diverse backgrounds using new data and tools. Support has been contracted to a specialist company to provide data research and digital marketing tools targeting specific areas of businesses and the local communities. It is anticipated that the initial results of this work will be available for analysis in early 2024.
 - The new digital on-line training platform is due to launch its first new National Operation Guidance (NOG compliant) training package in June 2023, with other packages already developed that will be launched later in the year. This project function will become a core part of the Training Centre once the platform and processes are fully tested and stable, and staff feedback has been reviewed.
 - The Command Training Excellence programme was launched in late 2022 when the new Incident Command training facility was opened in Worcester, and improved training and development has been growing ever since. With some staffing issues having been resolved the development programme for operational Commanders will now be extended even further aiming to provide one of the most modern and forward-thinking training programmes for operational Commanders in the UK.
 - A tender for a provider for a new digital tool to test and track over 16,000 pieces of operational equipment will be launched in the very near future.
 - The development of a new digital tool for gathering 'Intel' on all known risk premises within our borders, and in nearby counties, is now completing its research phase and due to move to the development phase in the near future.
 - Members will receive a separate update on progress on the Environment and Sustainability Plan (2021-2026). Whilst progress was initially slow due to lack of staffing, this plan has been revised and is now on track for delivery in key areas. Some success has been achieved with successful

bids for government funding, and a baseline of a carbon footprint has now been established.

- An external company specialising in communications has completed a full staff engagement process and provided a comprehensive report regarding our internal communications systems, which has now been published alongside an action plan. This is now in the process of delivering some key elements to improve how we communicate with staff and the recruitment of a new Communication and Digital Manager is underway. Digital transformation is now key to how we deliver this action plan.
- Body worn cameras are currently being researched and this project is still in the early stages of development.
- Members receive separate and regular updates on progress of the building projects; however it is well acknowledged the fantastic progress that has been made in the last two years towards delivering new fire stations in Broadway, Redditch and Hereford.
- The new Fire Control system project is making good progress with the tender process for a new supplier being completed at the time of writing of this report. This project will be reported through the alliance programme with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and it is worth noting that two other Fire Services in the north of England have also joined this project, led and facilitated by HWFRS staff.

Conclusion / Summary

6. Barriers to progress have primarily been due to staffing and specific skill requirements, however it is pleasing to see significant progress in many areas.
7. A key outcome of this work has been to highlight the need for an improvement and investment in the Service's digital capabilities. Whilst investment in ICT in recent years has undoubtedly been beneficial, and has created a foundation of modern and resilient ICT infrastructure, there now needs to be a significant investment in how the ICT infrastructure is used to unlock the digital tools that will enable improvements across the Service. This is not only reliant on investing and changing some systems, but increasingly reliant on the people and skills to use and develop these digital systems. The Service is exploring all avenues to optimise this from upskilling staff, employing new staff and using specialist and expert external providers and partners.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>This programme has a carefully managed investment plan that is monitored through the project and programme/improvement boards.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)</p>	<p>All areas of this paper link to deliver key improvements in all areas to drive the core strategies and improve Response, Prevention, Protection and deliver improvements in safe and efficient working of all our staff.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>Not applicable to this paper directly</p>
<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>Not applicable to this paper</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>Not applicable to this paper</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>None of the projects directly involve personal data</p>