

Report of Deputy Chief Fire Officer – Director of Prevention and Assets

Strategic Fire Alliance Board Update

Purpose of report

1. To update the Fire Authority on progress against the programme of priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that progress on the programme to date be noted.

Background

2. At the meetings held on 24 September and 17 December 2018, agreement was made to prioritise four projects:
 - i) to review the future requirements for the fire control mobilising command and control function;
 - ii) to develop organisational arrangements for ICT functions;
 - iii) to prepare options for aligning the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) process for Hereford & Worcester FRS and Shropshire FRS;
 - iv) to review procurement strategies within both Services to examine the potential for alignment.
3. This report provides an update on progress on the four key projects, as well as the Communications Strategy.

Programme Update

4. Since the last meeting held in May 2021, both Services have continued to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst resources continue to be directed to support partners and maintain service delivery the new Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) have managed to progress the Alliance projects.
5. Officers previously discussed governance of the four priority projects, and it was agreed that each project once initiated would convene a Project Working Group, as outlined on page 16 of the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022, the most recent meetings being Procurement and ICT.

Communications Strategy

6. At the February 2020 meeting of the Fire Alliance Programme Board, members requested an updated version of the Communications Strategy and the supporting Deliverables Plan. This work has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, however communications teams from across the Alliance have now successfully completed this work.

CRMP

7. The CRMPs for both FRSs were published on 1 April 2021.
8. Next Steps:
 - HWFRS to request permission from the FRA to carry out public consultation on aligning attendance standards to those of Shropshire FRS, as outlined in the CRMP.
 - Standards will feature in both service Corporate Performance Indicators and a future action will be for both FRSs to report back to the Delivery Board to enable comparisons to be made.
 - Formalisation of Protection enforcement future workstream.

Procurement

9. SFRS has taken over as project lead for procurement and the regular liaison meetings continue, most recently on 26 April. Highlights include both FRSs committing resources to supporting the regional Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Breathing Apparatus contract development, joint consideration and evaluation of the national workwear clothing contract, and joint contracts to be developed for the testing and repair of life jackets, pneumatic equipment and hose, and for the purchase of stationery and consumables.
10. Additionally, a number of reviews (including those for vehicles, ladders, smoke hoods and lifejackets) were assessed to ensure that further benefits are achieved. A further 'compatibility' stream will consider ways in which the reserves, parts, servicing, training and operational use of common equipment can be optimised to support the resilience of both Services.
11. Further discussions have been held between the Services to agree a way forward for the procurement workstream, which enables better reporting of the resilience benefits achieved through collaboration. A further update will be provided to the next Strategic Alliance Programme Delivery Board.

ICT

12. Following the last update, an agreed structure has been implemented to enable both Services to progress with the key workstreams within the ICT pillar of the Alliance. The revised structure now includes managers from SFRS and HWFRS.
13. With the role of ICT and Digital Transformation Manager being removed from the structure, SFRS will provide project management and coordination. This structure will remain flexible as we progress and may include any external consultants engaged as part of the delivery within one of the key areas. Since the last update, progress has been made in the following areas:

Wide Area Network (WAN)

14. HWFRS published the tender specification in May 2021, via Crown Commercial, and the tender process closed in July 2021. Tender evaluation has been completed, and contractual negotiations have now commenced with the preferred provider.
15. SFRS has negotiated an offer from their existing supplier, with availability through the YPO framework, to ensure compliance with procurement regulations. Assurance has been provided in relation to the overall objective of creating resilience across both services, through having the ability to link SFRS and HWFRS WANs.

Helpdesk System Project

16. Work continues with on-boarding of the agreed product within both organisations.
17. Both Services are having weekly meetings with the supplier and this has resulted in different approaches to that determined within the original agreement being implemented. It is important to note that no significant concerns have been raised by either ICT team and the projected go live date is October 2021.

Software Analysis

18. The Alliance ICT Project Board will identify hardware and software collaboration opportunities with future reports identifying those areas of priority for consideration and approval. This work will also support the procurement pillar of the Alliance.
19. Discussions at the Project Board have remained around current capacity to deliver on a wide range of largescale software implementations and it is felt at this time that efforts should be prioritised around the time critical aspects of the WAN projects and implementation of the Helpdesk software.

Joint ICT Purchasing

20. Discussions are ongoing with the two heads of ICT to create a list of potential procurement items. This will allow joint specifications to be documented in readiness for joint procurement opportunity. The joint ICT procurement topic is a key agenda item at the Alliance ICT Project Board meetings.

Fire Control

23. Emphasis has moved from strategic options appraisal, to creating specification for a new Command and Control system. HWFRS is producing a joint specification that can be bought online at different times for both Services.
24. Once the user specification is completed, the Programme Board will be asked to agree the business case (including specification, resource plan and project plan) and give permission for the project to be initiated.

Environmental Management

26. Environmental management and the minimisation of environmental impact is a corporate priority within both Services.
27. HWFRS has introduced a new Environmental Sustainability Plan for 2021-25 with a focus on demonstrating best practice and leading their communities by example. Environmentally efficient 'demonstration' buildings form a major part of planned investment with the aim of achieving a number of low carbon sites. There is also a focus on staff engagement and support.
28. SFRS has a long established formal environmental management system to ISO14001, and environmental management is fully integrated within the resources team responsible for property, procurement and asset management. A number of the areas being considered by HWFRS have already been addressed, and this learning can be shared. The SFRS system also addresses a wider range of environmental impacts than the HWFRS strategy focuses on. Within Shropshire, much of the environmental improvement has been achieved through technical actions.
29. There are opportunities to share learning and to develop policies and communications materials together to support both Services in delivering real improvement and increasing staff engagement.

Conclusion

30. Officers continue to make progress on each priority project and initiative, although some delays have been inevitable, given the ongoing impact of COVID-19. The tempo of delivery is increasing in some areas as teams across both Services become more accustomed to the evolving new ways of working.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human	N/A
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resources issues)	
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Government's Fire Reform agenda as embedded in the Fire and Rescue National Framework , other links are to the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan and the Fire Alliance ICT Strategy.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores)	N/A
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	N/A