

Report of Head of Strategic Change and Collaboration

Formalisation of Collaborative Working with Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service

Purpose of report

1. To seek approval to examine formalised collaborative working options with Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service to provide long term capacity and resilience for both organisations

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- i. Members give approval for officers to examine the strategic options for formalised collaborative working with Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service;***
- ii. Officers produce a Strategic Programme Business Case for consideration by both Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire Authorities, to include initial areas of collaborative focus and appropriate governance arrangements; and***
- iii. The Strategic Programme Business Case is made available for the next Full Fire Authority meeting.***

Introduction and Background

2. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 has introduced a statutory duty to collaborate on all three emergency services, to improve their efficiency or effectiveness. This is specifically detailed in sections 2.0, 2.1 and 2.2, and includes the responsibility to selflessly act in the best interests of the public.
3. Duties in relation to collaboration agreements
 - (1) A relevant emergency service in England (“the relevant service”) must keep under consideration whether entering into a collaboration agreement with one or more other relevant emergency services in England could be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of that service and those other services.*
 - (2) If the relevant service considers that entering into a collaboration agreement with one or more other relevant emergency services in England could be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of that service and those other services*
(“the proposed collaboration”), the relevant service must notify those other services of the proposed collaboration.

4. The continued reduction in Fire and Rescue Service budgets has seen Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services receive the two highest reductions in Revenue Support Grant to Metropolitan and Combined Fire Authorities within England, in 2017.
5. Increased closer working could allow both Services to increase capacity and resilience and reduce duplication of effort.

Current Position

6. Both Services have a history of successful adhoc collaboration with each other as well as other agencies such as West Mercia Police and the respective local authorities. (e.g. PCSO/RDS recruitment, Fire Control, co-located emergency planning teams and Safe and Well visits).
7. The collaboration between the Services so far has been primarily centred on operational processes and deployments as well as procurement and training.
8. Officers from both services continue to consider collaborative working opportunities within all planning aspects but these can be limited in their extent due to individual organisational priorities and capacity.

Next Steps

9. In order to facilitate a greater depth of collaboration and develop an agreed set of priorities, Officers propose that the respective Fire Authorities consider a more formal strategic collaborative arrangement.
10. A strategic case will be produced based upon the HM Treasury Five Case model (see appendix 1), to examine the potential gains that can be made from stronger closer working. Notably, increased capacity and sustainable front-line services providing more resilient public safety, and shared planning, resources and expertise, to realise the economies of scale available to larger organisations.
11. The strategic case will be presented via a Programme Business Case (PBC) for approval by both Authorities and will consider the following options:
 - a. Continued adhoc collaborative arrangements;
 - b. The creation of a Strategic Alliance; and
 - c. Consideration of a full merger.
12. The PBC will also propose an appropriate governance structure, with terms of reference. It will also identify key workstreams to deliver the broader and deeper collaborative relationship.

Conclusion/Summary

13. Approval for officers to produce the required Programme Business Case and associated supporting information will be necessary from both Authorities.

14. Reports seeking this approval shall be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority, and the Strategy and Resources Committee of Shropshire & Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority.
15. Should approval be granted, the Programme Business Case shall be produced and available for consideration in time for the next full Fire Authority meetings for both Fire and Rescue Services.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Legal requirement for Governance consideration.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Project Supports to 'Our Strategy' through: The effective use of resources and resourcing for the future.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Risk Assessments will be undertaken as part of any project management processes recommended
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	No public or staff consultation carried out at this time
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of any project management processes recommended

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - HM Treasury Five Case model

Background Papers

None

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HM Treasury Five Case model

