

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 12TH FEBRUARY 2020
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: COLLABORATION STRATEGY

Purpose of the Report

1. To present Members with a Collaboration Strategy for approval.

Recommended: That Members:

- [1] Approve the Collaboration Strategy.

Background

Reasons for collaboration

2. Cheshire Fire Authority and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service have pursued a range of collaborations with a variety of parties.
3. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 contains a statutory duty to consider collaboration with other emergency services where two or more of the emergency services consider it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness to collaborate. A service is not required to collaborate if the service is of the view that the proposed collaboration would have an adverse effect on public safety or have an adverse effect on its efficiency or effectiveness.
4. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018 contains guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions. In paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17, the Framework refers to the statutory duty to consider collaboration and explains that the duty is deliberately broad to allow for local discretion in how it is implemented and recognises that local emergency services are best place to determine how to collaborate for the benefit of their communities.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

5. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) determined that the Service was 'Good' when considering the question, 'How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?' In the section of the Inspection Report concerned with efficiency, HMICFRS commented upon the Service's involvement in collaboration. Extracts from the

Inspection Report that are relevant are contained in Appendix 1 to this report. One of the Areas for Improvement in the Inspection Report was:

“The service should ensure there is effective monitoring, review and evaluation of the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration”

6. Since the HMICFRS Inspection Report was published an Action Plan has been prepared and this was agreed by Performance and Overview Committee in July 2019 and is monitored by that Committee. An extract from the Action Plan that is concerned with this Area for Improvement is contained in Appendix 2 to this report. It makes reference to developing a Collaboration Strategy and has recently been updated.
7. An initial draft Collaboration Strategy was presented to the Governance and Constitution Committee on the 13th November 2019. Members supported the structure and content of the document but asked whether it needed to reference any national collaborative activity. The Director of Governance and Commissioning agreed to further develop the draft Collaboration Strategy and submit it to the Fire Authority for approval.

Information

Collaboration Strategy

8. Given the significant amount of collaborative activity that exists in the fire and rescue sector and following a comprehensive inspection programme there was an expectation that it would be a relatively simple task to find best practice and supporting documentation that could form the basis of a Collaboration Strategy. Unfortunately, the information that was available was rather limited. Officers found a broad range of approaches and styles and although collaboration was widespread, formal strategies were hard to find.
9. The draft Collaboration Strategy contained in Appendix 3 to this report incorporates elements from other fire and rescue services and attempts to draw together a range of matters that are relevant to collaborative activity. This revised version includes information about national collaboration activity, as suggested by the Governance and Constitution Committee.
10. The HMICFRS report stated that the Service needed to improve the way it monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration. The revised draft provides additional information about the ways in which the Service monitors and evaluates collaborations. The method used will depend upon the type of collaboration and these are described in the draft Collaboration Strategy.

11. The Collaboration Strategy will be supplemented by a Collaboration Register, in the format contained in Appendix 4 to this report. This will draw together key information and will be used to record monitoring and review activity.

Financial Implications

12. There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, improved monitoring and review could drive financial benefits.

Legal Implications

13. As described in paragraphs 3 and 4 of this report, the Authority has a statutory duty under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to consider collaboration and it is also a requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018. Beyond this legal obligation there are no other legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity

14. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Report to Governance and Constitution Committee 13th November 2019.