



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

14 JUNE 2019

STRATEGIC PLANNING DAY 3 MAY 2019

REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. This report summarises the areas explored and debated at the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) strategic planning day on 3 May 2019.

BACKGROUND

2. The Authority normally holds a planning day twice a year to consider future strategy, service transformation options, challenges and the opportunities facing County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS). The first event of 2019 was held on 3 May and considered:
 - The medium-term financial plan (MTFP) and reserves strategy;
 - The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020/21 to 2022/23 proposals;
 - Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND RESERVES STRATEGY

3. An update was provided on the MTFP and the reserves strategy. Members discussed the assumptions that underpinned the MTFP and how there was some uncertainty around the robustness of some of these assumptions. Specifically, the level of Government grant was only known until 2019/20, there is fluctuation in interest rates and uncertainty around future pay awards and pension costs. The MTFP predicts a deficit of £1.53M by 2022/23. In order to deliver a balanced budget significant changes to the organisation may be required.
4. The reserves strategy was outlined, and an explanation of the earmarked reserves and their intended use was given. Members were reminded that the level of reserves held was the lowest of any standalone fire authority and this position was compounded by a lack of capital funding from the Government. Members were reminded that the Government were undertaking work to look at how funding is allocated and distributed between local authorities – the Fair Funding Review and this could have an impact on fire authorities.
5. The importance of lobbying Government around funding levels for fire authorities and greater flexibility with council tax was discussed.

THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) 2020/21 TO 2022/23

6. An outline of some of the options that could impact on operational response levels in each of the next three years was provided to members. Members discussed in detail the following for each option:
 - Potential savings;
 - Advantages and disadvantages of the proposed approach;

- The relevant demand and risk data associated with each option;
- Where potential objections may be raised;
- An approach to mitigate any impact on risk and the reputation of the Authority.

2020/21

7. In 2020/21 the following options would be considered:

- Implementing Day Crewing on a permanent basis at Newton Aycliffe and Seaham;
- Implementing the 4&2 model at Durham on a permanent basis;
- Implementing the change to Spennymoor where the Day Crewing appliance becomes a wholetime appliance on a permanent basis;
- Undertake a trial of changing the crewing system at Crook and Barnard Castle from a 2 appliance Retained Duty System (RDS) model to a single appliance and a Targeted Response Vehicle (TRV) model.

8. Members were reminded that the first three options were the subject of an ongoing trial and that a full review of the trials would be undertaken prior to any firm recommendations being made to Members. It was also discussed that negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were ongoing to see if a mutually agreeable alternative model to Day Crewing Plus could be found for Newton Aycliffe and Seaham.

9. The current issues around availability of the second appliances in Crook and Barnard Castle were discussed and the potential benefits of introducing a TRV to these areas was outlined.

10. Members discussed in detail the demand and risk data for Crook and Barnard Castle and reassurance was sought about the consideration that had been given to the levels of deprivation in some wards in Crook and the potential for wildfires in other parts of the station area.

2021/22

11. In 2021/22 the following options would be considered:

- Implementing the amended crewing system at Crook and Barnard Castle from a 2 appliance RDS model to a single appliance and a Targeted Response Vehicle (TRV) model if the trial proves successful;
- Introduce a trial of riding with 4 at some single pump wholetime stations.

12. Members discussed the current practice of riding with four (as a minimum) on 73% of appliances. This option would not impact on response standards and some fire and rescue services (FRS) have already implemented riding with 4 firefighters on all of their appliances. A discussion took place around the geographical spread of stations across the Service and the impact this can have on getting additional appliances to an incident.

13. The importance of robust risk assessments and amended operational training was outlined if this option was to be considered.

2022/23

14. In 2022/23 the following options would be considered:

- Implement the changes of riding with 4 at some single pump wholetime stations if the trial proves successful.

Alternative Options

15. A range of other options not directly linked to operational response levels on stations were considered. The options were:
 - Structure changes;
 - Collaboration;
 - Governance changes.
16. A discussion took place around the possibility of operating with less managers at middle and strategic level. It was outlined that some detailed analysis around the incident command system would be required. The potential impact of the Service to deliver against its ambitions and objectives was considered. The importance of collaboration in supporting this option was outlined.
17. Members discussed the potential opportunities around collaborating with other partners such as neighbouring FRSs, the police and the local authorities. Greater clarity on the fire – fire collaboration should be known ahead of the next strategic planning day in October.
18. Members discussed the appetite for governance changes to the Authority. The financial restrictions of merging with other FRSs was debated. It was pointed out that if a full merger wasn't financially possible, the Authority might want to consider if there was a willingness to share a Chief Fire Officer with another FRS or share an entire leadership team. Members discussed other FRSs that had moved under their respective Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). It was agreed that the PCVC for Durham, Ron Hogg, had indicated that he had no desire to take responsibility for the Service and did not want to request a seat on the Authority, which is an option under the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
19. Members also agreed that it may be pertinent to review the number of Members on the Authority over the next four years. A review of efficiency and effectiveness had been undertaken in 2017 but given the potentially difficult financial situation Members felt that this would show that all options for efficiency were being explored.

HMICFRS

20. Members were shown the Direction of the Inspection video that had been created to help staff understand the inspection process and key facts relating to each diagnostic that would be examined as part of the process.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING SESSION

21. An additional date for the planning session is to be arranged as the original date clashed with the local elections in Darlington and some Members were unable to attend on 3 May.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. Members are asked to:
 - (a) **note and discuss** the outcomes of the 3 May 2019 CFA Strategic Planning Day.