

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 December 2017

Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge 2016 Action Plan Update

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the latest position on progress against the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge 2016 undertaken in Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS).

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This paper advises the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) of progress being taken following the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge in late 2016.
- 1.2 The Fire Peer Challenge is a sector led improvement process overseen by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). All fire and rescue services in the country have undertaken a Peer Challenge over the last five years, and WFRS had an earlier review in November 2013.
- 1.3 The Peer Challenge Team spent four days on site in Warwickshire in November 2016. WFRS submitted an Operational Self-Assessment prior to the Peer Challenge Team visit. During the assessment week, the team met a large cross section of staff and partners and held specific meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, the OSC Chair, and members of the Fire and Rescue Cross Party Working Group.
- 1.4 At the end of the assessment week, feedback was provided to officers and the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, followed by a formal report in January 2017. From the report, an action plan was developed covering a number of key areas (as shown in Appendix 1).

2.0 Progress on the Action Plan

- 2.1 Good progress has been made against the action plan, with the majority of actions now considered complete (as shown in Appendix 1). A small number of outstanding actions are forecast to be completed by April 2018. A summary of progress in key areas is outlined below:

2.1.1 Community Risk Management

The Peer Challenge Team highlighted successes in reducing fire risk in Warwickshire and notable practice regarding the Anti-Social Behaviour Intervention Team. However, it was recognised that WFRS needed to republish a prevention strategy that is driven by local risk profiles, closely integrates Prevention and Response, allows resources to be targeted appropriately and wider health and social care outcomes. WFRS has recently appointed a new Prevention, Policy and Partnership Manager to develop this strategy incorporating health and social care outcomes, and to secure the partnerships and funding streams needed.

2.1.2 Collaboration

There were recommendations around collaboration at three levels - service delivery level, corporately and with other emergency services.

At service delivery level, WFRS is developing business cases to progress work on wider health and social care outcomes, as outlined in its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017-20. WFRS has also developed an exercise programme with partners in the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum to improve resilience planning.

At a corporate level, work is underway to redefine support service requirements, including providing additional temporary capacity in critical areas.

On the emergency services level, a Blue Light Collaboration Joint Advisory Board has been established between Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and the Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) to provide leadership and oversight of all appropriate opportunities. A Strategic Planning Board has also been set up consisting of Chief Officers of the five Police and Fire Services across the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police Alliance to consider and advance operational and organisational collaboration opportunities.

2.1.3 Business Planning

A business planning process is in place to ensure clear priorities for the Service supported by Direction and Context meetings. The Service also has a cultural review underway under its One Service Programme that includes the resources and efforts devoted to internal communication, planning, leadership, and culture. A programme of reviews has also been recently conducted of projects to ensure a 'Plan, Do, Review' cycle.

2.1.4 Organisational Risk Management

Since the Peer Challenge, internal structural changes have provided additional capability in this area. Business continuity plans and the service policy on risk management have been reviewed and updated.

WFRS has procured new software for learning and development to enable new ways of delivering training to Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters. The provision of a new training centre facility in 2019 will also support improvements in this area. WFRS is also improving the capture of feedback from training and operational debriefs to inform changes to future training and operational delivery.

2.1.5 **Governance** – Collaboration and Strategic Direction

This relates to the duty for emergency services to collaborate under the Police and Crime Act 2017. As stated earlier, a Blue Light Collaboration Joint Advisory Board has been set up between WCC and the PCC to provide leadership and oversight, and a Strategic Planning Board is in place consisting of Chief Officers of the Police/Fire Services across the Warwickshire and West Mercia Police Alliance to consider and advance operational and organisational collaboration opportunities.

3. **Future Fire and Rescue Assessment**

- 3.1 A key pillar of the Home Office Fire Reform Programme has been to re-introduce a national Fire Service Inspectorate, namely Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Inspections are due to commence from April 2018. It is not yet clear if some form of Peer Challenge will remain in place as an improvement tool in addition to the new inspection programme.

4.0 **Timescales and next steps**

- 4.1 It is suggested that a final update report on progress is brought to the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 April 2018.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Portfolio Holder for Fire and Community Safety
Chair and Party Spokespersons of the Fire and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee