

Fire Strategic Alliance Board Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton
Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Jan Morris, Head of Transformation and
Collaboration on 01743 260299.

1 Executive Summary

This report updates Members on progress on the programme of priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

3 Background

At its meetings on 24 September 2018 and 17 December 2018, the Fire Strategic Alliance's Programme Delivery Board agreed four priority projects: to review the future requirements for the fire control mobilising command and control function; to develop organisational arrangements for ICT functions; to prepare options for aligning the community/ risk management plan (CRMP) process for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), and to review procurement strategies within both Services to examine the potential for alignment.

This report provides an update on progress on the key projects.

4 Programme Update

Since the last meeting in July 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 (SRO) have managed to progress the alliance projects.

Officers previously discussed governance of the four priority projects, and it was agreed that each Project would convene a Project Working Group as outlined on page 16 of the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022.

Communications Strategy

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. The strategy was shared within the papers of the March meeting (marked 3a).

Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

The CRMPs for both services were published on 1 April 2021.

Next Steps:

- HWFRS to agree the attendance standards of 10 minutes (urban), 15 minutes (town & fringe) and 20 minutes (rural). This will be done through public consultation.
- Standards will feature in both service Corporate Performance Indicators and a future action will be for both Fire and Rescue Services to report back to the Programme Delivery Board to enable comparisons to be made.
- Formalisation of Protection enforcement future workstream.

Procurement

Procurement activity is being monitored using a spreadsheet which was shared with the Programme Delivery Board at their September meeting.

The introduction of Smoke Hoods into both Services is complete with jointly developed training materials used to support. This reduced workload for training teams and ensures commonality in approach at incidents.

Purchase of a new boat for Shrewsbury: The specification and approach to market used by HWFRS has been shared by HWFRS and used by SFRS.

A review of all opportunities has been carried out in accordance with the previously agreed focus on those areas where further collaborative benefits can be achieved, rather than just purchase processes, and the following identified as current priorities:

Breathing apparatus: This could offer benefits in joint working and training, but also has significant challenges associated with the alignment of finances and timescales and works around associated equipment. HWFRS has identified a need for new equipment in advance of Shropshire. Both Services are fully engaged in a regional review of this equipment, which may result in an opportunity for joint purchase, although this is likely to be at different times.

Aerial Ladder Platforms: Shropshire's Operations team are leading on a review of the need for, and capability required for working from vehicles at height. This project is being managed through the Response Capability Board, which includes HWFRS representation, to ensure that any opportunity for sharing resources is considered and that any purchase complements the availability across the Alliance. This joint review of need will drive the specification for any future purchases.

Lifejackets, pneumatic equipment (including airbags) and fire hose:

These have been reviewed and are sufficiently similar to consider joint maintenance contracts. HWFRS will lead on the development of a long-term contract for this work, moving from the short-term contracts used in both Services.

Externally sourced training: There remain opportunities to share the purchase of external training activities. Due to changes in training personnel little progress has been made in this area.

Other projects with fewer collaborative benefits are also being considered:

Fire kit: All fire kit meets similar standards and is available through a range of frameworks. Collaborative benefits are limited, but future maintenance and joint contract management may be achieved. SFRS have a need for early replacement of this equipment and are considering available frameworks for replacement of garments that will become life-expired due to changes in maintenance standards. The SFRS approach and thinking is being shared with HWFRS for their support and input.

Stationery and Janitorial Supplies: Product details have been shared and the Services are considering the best approach to market for these products, based on a joint desire for simplification of ordering, delivery and tracking processes.

Uniform clothing: HWFRS continue to assess the Ballyclare national provision.

ICT

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 an Area Commander and the ICT Manager from HWFRS, with the ICT Manager from SFRS.

With the role of ICT and Digital Transformation Manager being removed from the structure, the SFRS's Planning and Programme Manager will provide project management and coordination.

This structure will remain flexible as work progresses 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) Project

Progress has continued to be made with the WAN workstream and both Services have a confirmed way forward.

SFRS have negotiated an offer from the existing supplier, with availability through the YPO framework, to ensure compliance with procurement regulations.

The product satisfies the requirements of the Service and assurance has been provided in relation to the overall objective of creating resilience across both services, through having the ability to link with H&W FRS.

In terms of the offer, the negotiations have resulted in a 40% saving on current costings, and this results in £114,715 per annum and £573,574.55 over the 5-year contract term. The contract switchover took place in August 2021, with no disruption to existing services encountered.

The relationship with the current supplier is healthy and this approach will result in minimal interruption. During the contract period, it is the intention to gradually migrate to SD WAN technology, once assurances into the stability and maturity of the solution are in place.

HWFRS has awarded a contract to the existing supplier following a tendering process via Crown Commercial. Intelligence gained during the tendering process indicated that there was an increase in costs across the industry.

There are no associated costs attributed to the new contract, however, there will be an additional capital cost attached to the purchase of hardware to support a SD-WAN overlay that forms part of the offer.

This approach will allow for flexibility to meet future demand and there is a 6-month timescale anticipated for full delivery.

The primary objective of the project remains to create resilience and capacity across both Services and the current approach builds in an additional layer of resilience through the potential to have 2 different suppliers, thus negating a full outage or loss of service across both organisations.

Helpdesk System Project

Work has continued with onboarding of the Fresh Serve product within both organisations.

Shropshire went live with the new product on 2 August 2021 and the transfer appears to have not caused any disruption. Initial feedback from the ICT Team is positive and further feedback is now being sought from end users as awareness of the new product increases.

HWFRS are working towards a timeline of the end of September 2021, to implement the new product. Work is continuing with onboarding and asset management, prior to launch.

Asset Management

Following conversations with the Head of Resources, SFRS have been made aware that the current supplier of asset management software (TRACE) will no longer be available.

The Service are seeking a new system that will enable Workshops Technicians to operate in an agile manner and provide a fit for purpose product. During the recent Project Board meeting, it was apparent that colleagues at HWFRS use a system called Tranman and feedback to the group was positive in terms of recent updates and support from an ICT perspective.

SFRS will pursue this avenue of work and will keep both HWFRS and West Mercia Police informed of progress and any benefits realised that could lead to a collaborative opportunity, taking into account the tight deadlines imposed by the existing provider.

Opportunities:

Future mobilising

SFRS has recently established a Project team to look at current arrangements for mobilising on call staff. The purpose of this is to reduce any immediate risk to the Service with regards to ageing station end equipment. The second objective is to identify a fallback arrangement that is as robust and resilient as the primary mobilising method.

Work is being monitored through the SFRS Service Transformation Board, with a proposal due to be presented enabling the replacement of station end equipment and new alerters into the Service.

The long-term aim is to allow the end user to have a choice in terms of the mobilising method they prefer, and it is envisaged that staff will migrate over time to new technology, once confidence and acceptance of new methods is reached.

HWFRS are seeking to procure alerters, whilst looking at new technology. Work is currently underway to identify the benefits of a joint approach to App-based technology trials, to prevent duplication of effort and in the spirit of sharing information and intelligence.

Fire Control Command and Control (C&C) System

The Project Board were updated in relation to the progress of a joint specification being produced for a new Command and Control system across both organisations.

Although this work sits within the Fire Control workstream of the alliance, discussions were based around the requirement and commitment of ICT resources in the future to undertake onboarding and implementing a new system.

Further discussions referred to the need to consider third-party systems that will link with a C&C system such as incident reporting systems (IRS) and crewing / availability software.

Ops Monitoring and Debriefing software

Information was shared across the project team in relation to the procurement of a new Operational Monitoring and debriefing system by SFRS. This system will replace the existing system that was designed previously in-house, with a product that is being cited as best practice within the sector and linked to work undertaken by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

This information has been shared along with contact details of respective Officers to explore any collaborative opportunity.

Alliance ICT Project Board meetings

The SRO for the ICT pillar has now established a Project Board that will meet approximately 2 weeks prior to the Delivery Board. The rationale behind this timeline is to enable the Project Board to carry out appropriate scrutiny and due diligence to any of the workstreams and confirm any items for decision and approval by the Delivery Board.

The Project Board will provide a mechanism to identify priorities and develop well-formed business cases to present to the Delivery Board.

Next Steps

- a) Continue with the implementation of the selected service desk software and obtain feedback from end users.
- b) Work to commence on the alignment of policy and process to ensure the Helpdesk workstream meets the original objective of creating capacity and resilience for both Services.
- c) Continue to progress with WAN workstream with the primary objective being to increase resilience across both services.
- d) Explore opportunity in relation to joint procurement of asset management systems now and into the future.
- e) Develop and share understanding of Service activities and continue to share intelligence and information, including:
 1. Alerter Project
 2. Fire Control C&C
 3. Ops monitoring and debriefing systems

Conclusion/Summary ICT

- A review of the existing structure has concluded and required actions have been implemented.
- Work continues to progress towards agreed outcomes.
- Strategic Alliance Board is requested to note the work undertaken to date and the range of areas being considered now and into the future.

Fire Control

Emphasis has moved from strategic options appraisal, to creating specification for a new Command and Control system.

HWFRS has been working to create a user specification and business case for system replacement (to include risk assessment, identified need, resource plan, user spec and project plan). A meeting was scheduled for 1 October 2021 to share and discuss this with SFRS with a view to agreeing the user specification. The SRO will then ask Programme Delivery Board to discuss the business case and agree recommendations.

Environmental Management

At its meeting on 19 July 2021, the PDB agreed that Environmental improvements should be a task and finish item, with both Services aligning strategic objectives. Having reviewed the assessment, common streams at the heart of improvement are better understanding, measuring and reporting of environmental performance, including energy use, carbon emissions and waste.

These measurements are not simply obtained, for example energy use is affected by user demand and education, building or equipment performance and external temperatures – it rises in cold winters, and the application of degree-day adjustments requires specialist knowledge and data.

It is therefore proposed that the Services jointly seek to appoint support in this area to support the development of improvement action and investment plans.

5 Conclusions

Officers continue to make progress on each priority project, though some delays have been inevitable, given the ongoing impact of COVID-19. The tempo of delivery is increasing as teams across both Service's become more accustomed to the evolving new ways of working.

6 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

The Head of Transformation and Collaboration will continue to explore opportunities both within and outside the Alliance.

7 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

This report sets out factual details of the Alliance. An equality impact assessment has not been completed for this report. These assessments will be conducted as part of the individual projects as has been done for the IRMP.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.