

## Fire Alliance Update Report

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on progress in the priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

### 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

### 3 Background

The alliance with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) (the Fire Alliance) has been in place since 2018. The purpose of the Fire Alliance is to enhance the capacity and resilience of both Services supporting their long-term sustainability. It provides both Services with the strengths of a larger organisation without losing individual identities. Both SFRS and HWFRS remain separate organisations, operating independently, with full control of their own resources.

The Services have identified 4 key areas that are currently being developed. These areas were identified as foundation activities that would also support wider future working.

- Fire Control
- Integrated Risk Management (IRMP)<sup>1</sup>
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Procurement

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<sup>1</sup> HWFRS Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

## 4 Progress

### Project 1: Fire Control

The project was designed to be able to set out a joint vision for Fire Control. This project explores the potential for creating a shared Fire Control function for both Services.

In May 2020, it was agreed that this project be deferred, but kept under review, whilst resources were diverted to support operational activities in relation to COVID-19. In September 2020 the Alliance instigated a review to assess progress to date and propose recommendations on how this project could be progressed.

Since the project commenced there has been significant learning from the tragic events of the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Evening News Arena bomb attack. This learning has informed the project on the critical needs associated with effectively managing major incidents in terms of capacity, use of technology and inter organisation communications and co-ordination.

The following solutions have all been identified as viable, but with varying strengths and weaknesses:

- Continue to operate as two independent control rooms, providing each other fall-back resilience and over-flow capacity – both operating on a single, updated system.
- Pursue a more regional solution with both services partnering with a third party.
- Consolidating resources to a single site and achieving resilience through a third party
- Operating as one control over two sites, possibly, with a primary and secondary control room, that provides mutual resilience and spare capacity.

### Project 2: Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

This involves aligning each Service's processes for preparing their overall strategies for keeping people, their homes, communities and environment safe from fire and other emergencies.

Over the last year, officers from both Services have worked together to develop a shared understanding of risk and have undertaken an assessment of the direct and broader impacts of a wide range of risks on our communities.

A shared agreement on the range of prevention, protection and emergency response activities both Services will be carrying out to manage and reduce risks has been achieved.

Methodology for measuring the impact services are having on reducing risk is currently being examined by officers, this includes, where possible, the standardising of performance indicators and evaluation criteria.

Communication strategies and a shared communication process for carrying out the public consultation was agreed and actioned. This included the joint commissioning of an animation to support community awareness of the IRMP.

The consultation has also been supported by social media, email and Chief Fire Officer letters to partners. The IRMP has also been presented to all the 75+ Town and Parish Councils via ZOOM.

The consultation ended on 30 September 2020 and an independent report on the consultation document will be provided by ORS. This report will be delivered to the Fire Authority at its December meeting.

### **Project 3: Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

The ICT functions form the crucial infrastructure behind the smooth running of a modern fire and rescue service. It is important in enabling good communication and integration between emergency services locally, regionally and nationally.

Since the last update, progress has been made in the following areas:

#### **Fire Alliance ICT Strategy 2020-2025**

The strategy document encompasses the key elements of infrastructure, ICT procedures, procurement and organisational structure. The document has been written and has now been finalised and approved prior to publication.

#### **Wide Area Network (WAN) Project**

The project team have investigated the concept of SD-WAN as an alternative to the current technology deployed and are engaging with experts to determine if the technology is a good fit for the Alliance. COVID-19 restrictions have slowed this engagement process. Virtual meetings have taken place, but they have not been able to fully replicate the effectiveness of workshops and/or face to face meetings.

The project team have been gathering information, such as band speeds, which will form part of any future specification document. This also includes internal information such as future plans for station usage to ensure appropriate bandwidth and capacity is built into the specification requirements.

#### **Helpdesk System Project**

Three solutions have been appraised and tested by both Services' ICT Service Desk teams and a preferred solution has been identified.

## **Software Analysis**

There is currently an exercise taking place to analyse the software used by both Services. This includes input from functional managers and ICT managers to determine if there are opportunities to align software across the Alliance providing financial and functional benefits.

## **Project 4: Procurement**

This project is aimed at achieving efficiencies through aligning contracts, where practical, and jointly procuring goods and services where this makes sense – although it has to be recognised that both services already take considerable advantage of economies of scale through national and regional frameworks wherever possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on procurement with the acquisition of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning resources being the main Service focus. Despite this the Alliance is in the process of making a joint procurement of Fire Hoods.

A formal Alliance Procurement Strategy, together with a Procurement Programme of actions in the short, medium and longer term, has been agreed by both Services. ACFO Pryce of HWFRS is the new Senior Responsible Owner for this project and is currently completing a review of procurement.

## **Communications Strategy.**

At their meeting in February 2020, members of the Alliance Programme Board requested an updated version of the Communications Strategy and supporting Deliverables Plan. Work on this was subsequently delayed, given team members' increased workload with the ongoing COVID-19 situation and prioritisation of the CRMP and IRMP consultations.

At their meeting in August 2020, the Alliance Programme Delivery Board prioritised work on the strategy and a resource has now been identified to carry the work forward. It is proposed that the Communications Strategy should mirror the same format adopted for the new IRMP/CRMP. Work on the Communications Strategy commenced at the end of September 2020.

## **Summary**

The Alliance is progressing at a sustainable pace and is implementing lessons learnt from the HMI Peel Review into Police collaboration. Please see the Appendix to the report for an analysis of the Peel Review and how it relates to the Alliance.

The most important Peel findings are the need for

- clarity of purpose,
- measurement of progress,
- improving public outcomes and not fixating on financial savings.

Progress on the key projects has been challenged by the necessity to redeploy resources to cover the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate this the Alliance continues to explore how best to resource projects in what is a new normal. The Alliance remains focussed on enhancing capacity, resilience and public safety.

## **10 Identified Revenue Funding**

There is no additional revenue funding required at this stage

## **11 Capacity**

No capacity impacts.

## **12 Collaboration / Partnership Working**

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

## **13 Community Safety**

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

## **14 Environmental**

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

## **15 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.

## **16 Financial Implications**

None arising from this report.

## **17 Health and Safety**

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

## **18 Human Rights (including Data Protection)**

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

## **19 ICT**

There is no impact on ICT.

## **20 Legal Comment**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **21 Public Value / Service Delivery**

Strategic Aims 1 -4

## **22 Reputation**

There is a reputational risk if SFRS fails to deliver on Alliance obligations.

## **23 Security**

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

## **24 Training**

There are no training implications within this report.

## **25 Appendix**

SFRS Service Management Team report on Lessons for Collaboration; a review of the HMICFRS Integrated Peel Assessments (IPA)

## **26 Background Papers**

None

# Lessons for Collaboration; a review of the HMICFRS Integrated Peel Assessments (IPA)

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton  
Chief Fire Officer or AM Guy Williams Head of Transformation and Collaboration on  
01743 260299.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report details the learning and best practice that should be adopted in  
Service to Service collaboration. It also provides the opportunity for the  
Alliance to develop existing arrangements.

### 2 Recommendations

SMT is asked to note this report.

### 3 Background

The HMICFRS produced a report that looked specifically at how forces  
collaborate in order to provide better, more efficient services to the public. *The  
Hard Yards: Police to Police Collaboration* is based on findings from  
HMICFRS's Integrated Peel Assessments (IPA) inspections for 2018/19<sup>2</sup>.  
The report has been widely commented on and the key findings are in the  
public domain. The Service has used this report to help identify ways to  
improve collaboration, including the Alliance with Hereford & Worcester Fire  
and Rescue Service (HWFRS).

### 4 Executive Summary

HMICFRS Inspectors found that:

- too many collaborations do not have a clear purpose or objective that is  
understood by all involved;
- some forces are not tracking the benefits of collaboration and fail to think  
beyond financial savings, annual reviews do not provide the ongoing  
scrutiny or appropriate analysis;

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix for links to full report

- complicated and bureaucratic decision-making undermines the effectiveness of many collaborations;
- some forces are failing to put people with the right skills in their collaborations and are not effectively sharing learning.
- A failure to assess or understand the risks and costs of collaboration including termination arrangements.

## 5 Best Practice

From the analysis these are the key areas:

- The Service needs access to the right knowledge and information to improve collaboration, therefore national learning needs to be sought and shared.
- The purpose of the collaboration should allow scope for future evolution as opportunities arise.
- Technology offers opportunities for collaboration but to take full advantage of chosen systems, collaborators need effective methods of monitoring how they use and develop it. This monitoring should be set against the original requirements. ICT needs systems to monitor metrics to evidence this and inform on any shortcomings at an early stage.
- Understand the benefits of collaboration, including where programmes of work are already being implemented, but the benefits are unknown or poorly understood. This understanding also needs to include costs, these costs must be measured against the benefits they have identified. Successful collaboration requires systems that routinely and regularly record savings and other benefits.
- Benefits should not just focus on financial savings but should better understand improvements in efficiency and in the services provided to the public. Benefits should be recorded on a regular basis this would support audit and ensure the purpose of the collaboration is being realised. The benefit recording process should also highlight problems upstream and the suitability of a withdrawing arrangement.
- Delegation and trust will influence the momentum of the collaboration, this can be supported by having the right people in place.

## 6 Findings

The HMI findings fall into four themes:

- purpose;
- benefits and cost analysis;
- leadership and governance; and
- skills and capabilities

The HMI also addresses the challenge of terminating a collaboration.

### Purpose

Collaborations must demonstrate a benefit to the public, it is essential that they have a clear objective.



*Most Police collaborations were implemented to produce cost savings, but it was often unclear how this work was otherwise benefiting the public or improving service.*<sup>3</sup>

The Police learning indicated that exclusively focussing on cost savings lead to challenges. Other consequences both positive and negative were not understood or considered. Good collaboration needs to maintain momentum, motivation and a sense of purpose. To do this the purpose must be clearly communicated with the benefits understood and accepted by staff and the public.

Too many of those involved in the projects had an inconsistent understanding of their purpose. People working within the collaboration often had a different understanding of the aims of their projects. So, programmes took longer to implement and often took time to gain momentum.

When collaborations had a clear purpose, this became a strong motivator for collaborative working. When the purpose and resulting, workflows are supported by those involved, staff are more likely to understand how they can contribute to the success of the programme.

Having a clear purpose that is understood by all those involved will help identify how best to invest and align resources to create improvements. This clarity of purpose should help prevent the collaboration from drifting.

Agreeing on the level of risk that all collaborators are willing to accept, will help form a strong purpose.

### **Benefits and cost analysis**

*Some forces aren't tracking the benefits of collaboration and fail to think beyond savings.*<sup>4</sup>

Successful collaboration needs to understand and evidence the benefits that are achieved. Benefits such as saving money and using resources more effectively can change over time as costs increase or financial contexts change. Tracking benefits is crucial, both in retaining support for the collaboration and to determining where it may be underperforming.

Peel found that whilst many forces review collaborations to see if they are achieving what they originally set out to do, they were not always assessing whether they could evolve further and achieve anything else. When collaborations were set up to achieve a certain amount of savings, some forces started to withdraw and start again once those savings appeared. This was in some cases, carried out without establishing the true cost.

Peel found that forces didn't track benefits effectively and most reviews were conducted annually, providing little feedback to help improve achievements.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/the-hard-yards-police-to-police-collaboration>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/the-hard-yards-police-to-police-collaboration>

An effective review process would help make sure that the programmes stay on course and highlight potential problems at an early stage.

Collaborations should be agile and able to identify further opportunities to evolve. Peel found that having achieved what was originally set out to do shouldn't necessarily be the end point for a collaboration. To avoid this, collaborations should adopt a rigorous review process that considers progress against the original purpose for collaborating, but also actively pursues additional opportunities.

### **Leadership and Governance**

Service collaborations are also collaborations between leaders, many of whom will have competing demands and varying pressures. Peel found that chief officers didn't always have the capacity to be effectively involved, but also some chief officers were reluctant to devolve responsibility to other officers. This increased the effort needed to reach a decision, creating frustration within project teams and increasing the perceived costs of collaboration. Peel identified that a perceived lack of trust at higher levels of management resulted in prolonged debate, which delayed projects and increased costs. Collaboration without or with limited delegation of decision-making risked inertia.

In a good collaboration each service should decide what level of risk it is prepared to take, what is in scope and what is out of scope. The collaboration should have an agreed decision-making structure that ensures tasks are allocated and completed.

Governance:

Peel identified that;

*the current structure of PCC and chief constable, and the legal framework within which they operate, has the potential to conflict with police-to-police collaborative projects. The PCCs are responsible to their electorate. Meanwhile, chief constables must work according to threat, harm and risk factors, and each has a responsibility to meet national priorities and collaborate with other forces. These priorities and responsibilities do not always align.*<sup>5</sup>

This might be replicated in a future fire service governance model. The relationship and trust between all the collaborators is vital. In the event of a PCC take over with in West Mercia this would involve one PCC rather than several PCC's from a variety of political affiliations.

### **Skills and Learning**

Services need to recognise the complex and specialist nature of collaboration. It is a highly skilled change-management process that needs good relationship building, financial management, political skills and creativity. Peel found that collaborations were often staffed by the people who were available, rather than those with the right skills. *"Putting the right people with the right skills in place leads to success and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme."*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Peel Review

<sup>6</sup> Peel Review

## Terminating

Peel has identified the need to have greater detail in withdrawing agreements. They should include cooling off periods, be supported by a business case for withdrawing and be subject to public consultation.

Peel found that;

*Forces need a strong case for entering into collaborations and a more considered approach if they want to withdraw. The generic **template West Mercia and Warwickshire police forces** used to create their collaboration agreement includes references to reasonable costs the withdrawing force is meeting. But the template was not precise enough. This made the costs difficult to assess with any accuracy, particularly when collaborating forces operated under contrasting budgets and faced different funding difficulties.<sup>7</sup>*

A collaboration needs to be able to provide the benefits and costing analysis that will underpin and inform performance and withdrawal arrangements.

## 7 Summary

- Clarity of purpose is key to collaboration and should focus on enhancing public outcomes by improving service delivery. Too often the focus is on cost savings.
- The extent to which decision making is devolved will impact on the momentum of the projects.
- Measuring performance and impact on a regular basis whilst evidencing benefits is essential.
- The risks to each partner from the collaboration need to be understood by all involved.

## 8 Identified Revenue Funding

There is no additional revenue funding required at this stage

## 9 Capacity

No capacity impacts.

## 10 Collaboration / Partnership Working

The Area Manager Transformation and Collaboration will continue to explore opportunities for organisational development.

## 11 Community Safety

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

## 12 Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

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<sup>7</sup> Peel Review

## 13 Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has not been completed for this report.

## 14 Financial Implications

No impact arising from this report.

## 15 Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

## 16 Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

## 17 ICT

There is no impact on ICT.

## 18 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report

## 19 Public Value / Service Delivery

Strategic Aims 1 -4

## 20 Reputation

There is a reputational risk if SFRS fails to adhere to the best practice identified by the HMICFRS and highlighted in this report.

## 21 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

## 22 Training

There are no training implications within this report.

## 23 Appendix

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Wednesday 22 Jul 2020 @ 11:10  
**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**  
[Printable version](#)  
**Failing police collaborations cost forces money, time and effort**

<https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/the-hard-yards-police-to-police-collaboration>

As part of the [annual 2018/19 PEEL assessments](#), HMICFRS inspected the 43 forces in England and Wales. During the reporting process, we identified themes around force to force collaboration, and drew them together in this report. These findings were supplemented by six specific case studies, covering 27 forces.

## **The Collaborations that were studied<sup>8</sup>**

### **1. The Seven Force Strategic Alliance (7F)**

Formed in 2015, this is a complex and ambitious programme to identify opportunities for joint working to support the seven police forces from across the east of England (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk). The 7F is built on three other well-established and successful collaborations within these seven forces that we didn't examine in this report.

### **2. The South West Tri Force and the Major Crime Investigations Team (MCIT)**

These are two collaboration programmes between Avon and Somerset Police, Gloucestershire Constabulary and Wiltshire Police. The Tri Force covers firearms, dogs and traffic, while the MCIT is for the investigation of major crime. The former has now been dissolved.

### **3. The East Midlands Criminal Justice Service (EMCJS)**

This collaboration covers four forces (Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire). It creates and develops an integrated criminal justice service capable of providing operational support in all areas of criminal justice across the East Midlands.

### **4. All Wales**

This programme oversees and develops the progress of new collaborations between Welsh forces (Gwent, South Wales, Dyfed Powys and North Wales). It also provides leadership and management for existing operational arrangements.

### **5. The North West Underwater Marine Unit**

This is a collaboration of six forces (Merseyside Police, Greater Manchester Police, Cheshire Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Lancashire Constabulary and North Wales Police). It provides specialist services, such as recovering dead bodies from water and other difficult situations: for example, badly decomposed bodies from a home or from woodland.

### **6. The North West Motorway Police Group (NWMPG)**

This provides a regionalised policing service for the motorways within the Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester police areas. It was established in June 2008 in partnership with Highways England. Lancashire Police has recently withdrawn from this collaboration.

### **7. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs)**

PCCs have a central role in developing and reviewing collaborations. We don't inspect PCCs, but we did invite all 43 to give their views on collaborations and the scope within which they are operating. Five chose

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<sup>8</sup> Peel spotlight report, The Hard Yards.

to give us their insights and we are grateful for these contributions, which help us to understand the political context in which collaborations are operating.

## **24 Background Papers**

None