

Annex B – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) National and Regional Collaborative Initiatives

Introduction

The purpose of this Annex is to provide Members with an overview of other national and regional collaborative initiatives that fit with the national agenda, which support the Authority's reform agenda and in time will enhance Thames Valley collaborative outcomes.

In recent speeches setting out the Government's Fire Reform agenda, the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service (Brandon Lewis) emphasises the direction of travel expected of Fire and Emergency Services. The Minister's vision outlines 'Three Pillars of Reform': Efficiency and Collaboration, Accountability and Transparency and Operational Integrity.

Our Thames Valley Fire and Police partners are also involved with some of these initiatives and this is predicted to increase over time.

A number of factors are considered when determining the Authority's role in national and regional initiatives.

For example:

- Increasing value for money for the tax payer.
- Increasing capacity, sustainability and resilience.
- Timing is critical – some topics may not be right 'for now' however better suited for future consideration.
- Ways of piloting models across a range of services with various cultures and governance models – to increase the pace of delivering workforce reform.

The initiatives set out in this Annex align with the Three Pillars of Reform.

1. Efficiency and Collaboration

UK Research and Development Function

This project seeks to deliver a research and development capability centrally for UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS). BFRS are members of the implementation board alongside Tyne and Wear and Hampshire FRSs. The aim is have the function established by April 2017.

Resource Management

The BFRS Resource Management Team (RMT) is well established and has attracted significant interest from a number of other services. BFRS are working with Northamptonshire FRS to consider a range of options as they seek to establish a resource management function to enable flexible working for their operational staff.

The aim of this collaboration is to consider options for sharing a resource management function, operating to a single set of policies and procedures to support flexible resourcing. The agreed scope is to identify opportunities to operate initially as two services and potentially as a single resource operating across the two organisations.

Procurement

This organisation is in early discussions with Thames Valley Police regarding options for the provision of professional procurement services in the future.

A joint outsourced Occupational Health service provision is currently being procured with Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire Fire Services. BFRS also support a range of national procurement initiatives including Training frameworks, IT, smoke alarms, PPE and collaborative Estates projects.

South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS)

The Authority already has an effective co-responder scheme established at jointly agreed locations across the county which has seen us attend over 4000 calls since it started in 2014.

BFRS is working with SCAS at a strategic level to identify opportunities for shared resourcing, joint medical training and shared premises. Areas of consideration are:

- BFRS employees being available to SCAS to work shifts as co-responders, drivers etc to assist with peak periods of demand.
- Shared buildings to support a more collaborative approach to operating at all levels of the organisation.
- SCAS are a key partner in the Blue Light Hub in Milton Keynes.
- Access to BFRS sites has been offered to SCAS.
- A joint training programme for firefighters to up skill their medical skills has been agreed and will commence in 2017.

Thames Valley Police (TVP)

BMKFA has a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with TVP for the shared use of premises. This will deliver a more collaborative approach to support joint operating out of single sites and for staff to engage at all levels and for opportunities for future initiatives to be developed through this less formal and more collaborative approach.

TVP are currently working out of our Broughton fire station site and are part of the design for the new blue light hub in Milton Keynes. BFRS is also in discussion with TVP regarding operating out of Newport Pagnell, Gerrards Cross and Princes Risborough fire stations.

2. Accountability and Transparency

Legal and Governance

BMKFA has worked since 2012 with Milton Keynes Council, Luton Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Borough Council to pool arrangements for shared Independent Persons to achieve low cost and effective regulatory compliance. This has enabled the advertising and recruitment processes to undertaken at no cost to BMKFA. The retaining fee is shared amongst the authorities and the Independent Persons maintain their competencies and interest in a wider caseload than would otherwise be the case.

There is an agreement in place with Buckinghamshire County Council for reciprocal deputy monitoring officer arrangements to enable regulatory compliance and resilience.

Incident Recording System (IRS) and Data Analysis

BFRS are involved with a project looking at the capability of collecting IRS data in the mobile environment with Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service. The purpose of this is that IRS data can be collected in the field and automatically synchronised into an IRS system. This will provide faster more accurate IRS data. This data can then be used to refine our Prevention, Protection and Response strategies with the most up to date incident data. The Home office is currently in the process of making a decision in relation to replacing the existing system. The outcome of this decision will dictate the next steps in relation to this initiative.

3. Workforce Reform

Fire Professional Framework (FPF)

The aim of the FPF is to deliver a 'fit for purpose' National Learning and Development Strategy, supported by a framework based on relevant national standards and a 'one stop shop' web portal for all staff employed within the sector to easily access from any device. A cross directorate CFOA Steering Group oversees five focused FPF work streams with BFRS leading on the overall programme.

The majority of the FRSs and the wider fire sector employers actively support the framework through funding and a significant and increasing number provide resources.

The aims of this initiative are:

- Easy access to the tools to translate the relevant standards and qualifications into competency frameworks and training specifications covering current and future roles, skills and attributes required across the FRS sector.
- Provide supporting tools to enable FRSs to embed the FPF in to all aspects of their training, development, organisational design, resourcing, workforce planning and career path management to fit with their risk and demand profiles.
- Support a culture of collaboration, sharing information and notable best practice reducing 'reinvent the wheel' syndrome.
- Provide a 'one-stop-shop', accessible by all employees and from all devices and networks, addressing the development needs and career guidance for all employees. This is increasingly important with a wider and diverse range of duty systems, flexible working arrangements, partnerships and increased menu driven learning.

The FPF is well placed to support any future independent standards body and inspectorate arrangements. The target go live date for the FPF is the 26 January 2017.

Menu driven E-Learning

BFRS have hosted two national E-Learning 'Blue Light Group' meetings through our current learning management supplier. This has led to an increase in the sharing of resources between Services and a project to develop a 'Blue Light' catalogue of E-Learning content for Emergency Services.

A CFOA led national meeting is scheduled for 1 December 2016 to determine how the sector can progress E-learning collaboration to align with the National Operational

Guidance(NOG) programme to optimise procurement options and move towards a 'Do it once' culture.

Apprenticeships

BFRS are members of an employer consortium led by Staffordshire FRS to develop a new firefighter Trailblazer standard for apprenticeships. This will replace the existing framework being phased out. BFRS's approach to recruiting 22 firefighter and 4 support services apprentices has attracted significant interest. BFRS recently presented at the CFOA national apprenticeships workshop in late September and has also hosted a shared learning event for twelve FRSs.

BFRS is now working in collaboration with Police, Health, Ambulance and other Fire and Rescue services to developing an emergency services contact handler trailblazer apprenticeship.

BFRS are also working alongside a small number of Fire Services to find solutions with the Department of Education to minimise the time gap between apprenticeship framework removal and Trailblazer approval for firefighter apprenticeships.

Employment Related Policy

BFRS are part of a national HR group that have agreed to develop new employment related policy templates once. This group includes over two thirds of fire services nationally and members are currently piloting the first two templates which are due for release in December 2016. The next phase of the work programme will support apprenticeships and broader workforce reform topics.

Conditions of Service

Building on the Authority's workforce reform agenda to move to local terms and conditions of employment, an increasing number of fire services have expressed interest in our approach. The recent publication of the Conditions of Service for Fire and Rescue staff published 3 November 2016 covers a range of workforce reform recommendations which the Authority is currently considering. A regional briefing workshop is planned for early in the New Year to share ideas and determine if there are any collaborative options which will jointly increase the pace of workforce reform.