

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

ITEM: 6

MEETING OF : **PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**
DATE : **25 SEPTEMBER 2013**
REPORT OF : **CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**
AUTHOR : **MATTHEW MAGUIRE**

SUBJECT : **REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE AND
PEER TEAM – PROGRESS REPORT**

Summary

- 1 In July 2012 Cheshire Fire Authority was subject to a Peer Review, as part of the new performance and improvement framework established by the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) and the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 2 The Review Team spent four days in Cheshire, speaking to a range of frontline and support staff, as well as Members, partners and stakeholders.
- 3 The team's findings were reported to Members of the Fire Authority at their meeting in February 2013 along with an action plan, which has been populated. This report provides an update on the progress made to date. All of the actions have been undertaken and most fully delivered, with just a small number tied to the delivery of IRMP10, still to complete.

Recommended That:

- [1] the progress outlined in the action plan be noted.

Background

- 4 As part of the Peer Review, the review team was asked to provide a general 'health check' on the Authority's future plans for change, as well as to focus on community risk management, training and development, the Cumbria Project and North West Fire Control, ICT and asset management.
- 5 The team delivered a presentation at the close of its visit, which was followed up by a more detailed presentation setting out the detail of its findings. The key areas identified in the report are outlined below.

6 Positive findings and areas of notable practice

Responding to future challenges

- Fire Authority works collaboratively across political party lines with a strong ethos of 'Team Cheshire' throughout whole organisation – from firefighters to Members

Community Risk Management

- Unitary Performance Groups and data sharing agreements represent notable practice

Fire Control

- There is a clear vision in place the future potential to expand the remit of the shared service and we provide leadership for other services

Training and development

- Embedded approach to Incident Command and excellent facilities with a strong process for identifying training needs for staff and Members
- Excellent Member 'buddy' system and Champions – ties Members firmly into the work of the Service

Community Budgets and partnerships

- Well placed to be a successful partner and already viewed as a community leader with a good track record of delivery

ICT and asset management

- There is clear commitment to improving the ICT infrastructure and developments like Poynton provide a good example of future asset use

7 Challenges

Responding to future challenges

- In taking the organisation forward through the difficult years ahead the Authority needs to show courage and resolve and present a vision/picture for staff and others to aim for
- The Authority needs to ensure sound financial underpinning of future plans and sufficient capacity and skills to deliver the ambition

Community Risk Management

- The organisation and Authority needs to understand the widespread changes to the partnership agenda caused by the introduction of an elected Police & Crime Commissioner and changes to health and other partners etc.

- The consultation on Operational Response Review should be robust and involve Members as a key component (joint enterprise between Service and Authority)

Fire Control

- All staff need to understand the rationale for the changes to control and the resilience of the Control function as the switch-over nears

Community budgets and partnerships

- The Service should consider its approach to partnerships and the impact on partners
- The Authority should also consider all models of service delivery, including out-sourcing, shared services and commissioning others

Asset Management and ICT

- Value for money reviews should be more coordinated with operational changes and tied to the vision of what the future service should look like

Progress

- 8 The Service has made considerable progress against the areas identified by the Review Team in the months since the report was received. Activity to address the challenges identified by the team is captured in the following notes, however, the action plan provides a more in-depth analysis of action undertaken.
- 9 Responding to future challenges
 - Members and officers have developed a comprehensive vision and narrative for the future of the Service, which was promoted throughout the 2012 consultation, upon the launch of IRMP10 and subsequently.
 - The Medium Term Financial Plan is regularly updated and modelled and Members take the opportunity to discuss the financial assumptions underpinning their plans at each Planning Day.
- 10 Community Risk Management
 - Key planning tools such as the PESTELO analysis have explored the impact of Police and Crime Commissioners and other changes to partnership structures.

- The consultation process for IRMP10 was comprehensive, robust and was accredited by the national Consultation Institute as meeting best practice.

11 Fire Control

- Communication to staff, partners and communities included information on the rationale for changing control and mobilising functions. Ongoing communications have been detailed in the project plan and through internal arrangements for implementing the project.

12 Community budgets and partnership

- A partnership sub-group ensures that partnership activity is coordinated across the Service and Service Management Team and Members receive regular updates.
- A Members' working group has been established to fully consider a full range of delivery models that may be appropriate/necessary to further the Authorities interests and/or aims, and new models are actively considered as part of the overarching framework for the Authority's programme of value for money reviews.

13 Asset Management and ICT

- An agreed framework for undertaking and implementing value for money reviews has been agreed and implemented.

14 As with previous Operational Assessments, the attached action plan is being used to ensure that the actions identified above are being actioned by named officers.

15 The reporting of progress against the outcomes of the Peer Review will also be included as part of future Statements of Assurance, which Fire Authorities are required to produce on an annual basis under the terms of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012.

Financial Implications

16 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, any additional requirements introduced through the report may incur additional future costs.

Legal Implications

- 17 It is a requirement of the National Framework 2012 for local fire and rescue services to report on the outcomes of peer and operational assurance reviews in their Annual Statement of Assurance.

Equality & Diversity Implications

- 18 There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications arising from the outcomes of the Review. Any issues that do arise will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE