

Strategic Fire Alliance Update Report

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 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 (HWFRS).

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

3 Background

The alliance with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (the Fire Alliance) has been in place since 2018. The purpose of the Strategic 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)¹
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Procurement

¹ HWFRS Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

4 Programme Update

Members will be aware that both Services continue to be closely involved in dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Inevitably it has been necessary for some key resources assigned to delivering the Alliance projects to be redirected to assist with the ongoing operational response to the pandemic. This has also inevitably impacted on some of the project work being delivered.

Since the last report, there have been several changes in personnel across both Services. As a result, the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) roles for the following projects have been reallocated as follows:

IRMP	ACFO Dan Quinn, Shropshire FRS
Procurement	ACFO Jon Pryce, Hereford & Worcester FRS
ICT	ACFO David Myers (until 31 Dec 2020) and then ACFO Simon Hardiman, Shropshire FRS
Fire Control	T/DCFO Keith Chance, Hereford & Worcester FRS

In addition, officers have discussed governance arrangements for the priority projects and have agreed that each Project would convene a Project Working Group under the terms set out in the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018-22.

5 Progress

5a Project 1: Fire Control

This project explores the potential for creating a shared Fire Control function for both Services. Work is ongoing to finalise the strategic options appraisal of the sixteen options identified for provision of a Fire Control function. The appraisal will then identify a shortlist of options and a preferred choice. The appraisal will take into consideration the significant learning from the tragic events of the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Evening News Arena bomb attack.

The shortlist of options, with a full appraisal of each will be completed by early 2021 after which a preferred option will be agreed by the Delivery Board. The appraisal, with a recommendation, will then be put to the Governance board for consideration prior to developing a full business case for the approval of both Fire and Rescue Authorities; initially aiming for April 2021.

5b 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.

The public consultation stage of the IRMPs is now complete. Responses to the questionnaires, separate submissions and focus group outcomes have been analysed by Opinion Research Services (ORS), and the findings in relation to the IRMP 2021-25 consultation are reported in the IRMP Consultation Report also on this meeting's agenda. An IRMP Equality Impact Assessment has also been prepared and forms part of the report on the consultation findings.

Similarly, findings in relation to the HWFRS CRMP 2021-25 consultation are also being presented to Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority in December 2020.

Following these December meetings, any revisions required for either the IRMP or CRMP will be drafted prior to publication on 1 April 2021.

The updated timetable is shown below.

Action	Timeline
IRMP Consultation launch with ongoing programme of publicity, meetings and press releases	6 July 2020 - complete
Public focus groups	August 2020 – complete
Public consultation reminder	August- September 2020 - complete
Consultation closes	30 September 2020 - complete
Equality Impact Assessments prepared	November 2020 - complete
Process to collate, monitor and report on Performance Indicators to be established	September 2020 – March 2021
Consultation results submitted to respective Fire Authorities	December 2020
IRMPs to be updated	December 2020 – January 2021
IRMP publication date	1 April 2021

5c Project 3: ICT

The Information and Communication Technology (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:

Wide Area Network (WAN) Project

Creating a single Wide Area Network, that combines two ICT infrastructures currently operating under different models, is a challenge. The project team are investigating a variety of different technologies to determine any potential efficiencies such as cost savings and to enable innovation. The aim is to balance costs, resilience and capacity against future expectations for the greater use of technology and increasing community and Blue Light services use.

Once the investigations are complete, the strategic direction will be developed with a proposal being put forward.

Helpdesk System Project

The two Services' ICT Service Desk teams have tested and appraised three possible software applications to identify and select a solution that provides both Services with the opportunity to use a single application to support and work closely together. This is now moving to the implementation phase.

Over the next few months, the team expects to gain approval to implement the service desk software and begin to bring the two ICT departments closer together through the alignment of processes and practices.

Software Analysis

A review of all software currently used across both Services, which included input from many stakeholders at all levels, has been completed. The review is now documented and available for discussion.

Once the software strategy has been published, agreement regarding priorities and budgets will need to be made and a plan of action drawn up. Joint specifications will need to be developed across functional areas of both Services to ensure the scope of work is not restricted, and to ensure there are improved efficiencies, providing resilience and capacity and ensuring a cloud-first approach to solutions is adopted.

5d 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.

Representatives from both Services have now agreed a revised Procurement Plan, encompassing seventeen areas or items. The delivery of this plan will be coordinated by a newly formed board of Alliance stakeholders chaired by the Senior Responsible Owner for Procurement, ACFO Jon Pryce from HWFRS. This board will meet regularly and provide updates on areas of progress or where decisions are required.

It should be noted that if no tangible benefits exist then some areas identified as possible joint procurement will not proceed, however the decision-making process will be recorded and rationale documented, in line with the agreed Alliance Procurement Strategy. The revised Procurement Plan will begin immediately with an aim of being fully delivered by March 2022. The Procurement Plan is flexible and can be adapted as the year progresses in line with new or emerging requirements, or national guidance and frameworks.

The first item in the plan (smokehoods) has already been completed and is currently on order awaiting delivery. The specification for smokehoods recently emerged as a requirement from the findings of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and was jointly agreed in October and orders placed with the supplier. This will ensure that both Services are using the same piece of equipment and will be fully interoperable between operational staff. Other more complex areas, such as ICT related hardware, have begun to be evaluated for commonality, and a plan is being developed to enable future joint procurement.

5e Communications Strategy.

Work on preparing the Communications Strategy has been delayed as team members' have prioritised communications to support the ongoing pandemic response and the delivery of the IRMP and CRMP consultations.

With a resource now identified, it is expected that a draft for consideration will be submitted to the Alliance's Programme Delivery Board at their next meeting.

6 Summary

Despite delays in delivering the programme of projects, progress continues to be made. The extent of future progress remains subject to change as both Services continue to meet the challenges arising from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Updates on progress and any issues arising will continue to be regularly reported to the Alliance's Programme Board and Programme Delivery Board.

Members are recommended to note the overall progress on the projects. Further updates will continue to be brought to future Fire Authority meetings.

7 Identified Revenue Funding

There is no additional revenue funding required at this stage

8 Capacity

Capacity to support the communication strategy will continue to be challenged by the need to prioritise internal pandemic communications.

9. Collaboration / Partnership Working

The Area Manager Transformation and Collaboration will continue to explore opportunities both within and outside the Alliance.

10. Community Safety

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

11. Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

12. 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.

13. Financial Implications

None arising from this report.

14. Health and Safety

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

15. Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

16. ICT

There is no impact on ICT.

17. Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

18. Public Value / Service Delivery

Strategic Aims 1 -4

19. Reputation

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

20. Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

21. Training

There are no training implications within this report.

22. Appendices

None

23. Background Papers

None