

**GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY (GMCA)
CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16 JULY 2019 AT 6.00PM AT GMFRS BURY TRAINING CENTRE**

Present: Councillor Tim Pickstone (Bury) (in the Chair)
Bolton: Councillor Bob Allen
Bury: Councillor Stella Smith
Manchester: Councillor Ben Clay
Oldham: Councillor Colin McLaren
Rochdale: Councillor Raymond Dutton (Substitute)
Salford: Councillor David Jolley
Salford: Councillor Tanya Burch
Stockport: Councillor Dena Ryness
Stockport: Councillor John McGahan
Trafford: Councillor Anne Duffield

In attendance

GMFRS Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer
Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Leon Parkes, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Tony Hunter, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Sarah Scoales, Head of Strategy, Planning and Continuous Improvement
TfGM Dawn Royle, Director of PMO
GMCA Kevin Lee, Director Mayor's Office
Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Jamie Fallon, Governance and Scrutiny Officer

CI11/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Goodwin (Oldham), Kallum Nolan (Rochdale), Teresa Smith (Tameside), Dave Morgan (Trafford), Joanne Marshall (Wigan) and Richard Paver (GMCA Treasurer).

Councillor Stella Smith left the meeting at 6.30pm.

CI12/19 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2019/20

Nominations were invited for the position of Chair of the GMCA Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 Municipal Year. Councillor Stella Smith proposed Councillor Tim Pickstone and Councillor John McGahan seconded the proposal. The Committee agreed that Councillor Tim Pickstone be appointed.

RESOLVED:

It was unanimously agreed that Councillor Tim Pickstone be appointed as Chair for the GMCA Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year.

CI13/19

CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair extended thanks on behalf of the committee to colleagues from GMFRS for hosting the meeting and providing Members with an insightful tour of the excellent facility.

No urgent business was raised.

CI14/19

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

The Chair reminded Members to complete their annual GMCA Register of Interest Form and return this to the Governance and Scrutiny Officer.

CI15/19

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 be approved as a correct record.

CI16/19

WORK PROGRAMME

Joanne Heron, Statutory Scrutiny Officer, introduced the 2019/20 work programme, which had been populated following the discussions at the last meeting. It was acknowledged that the work programme would need to be updated to include further GMFRS items which would become more apparent after the discussions today.

It was suggested that it would be helpful consider two substantive items per meeting to enable effective scrutiny, albeit some additional items could be included for information. It was agreed that the work programme would be updated to reflect this.

The Committee were reminded that there was no meeting in August, but training had been arranged with Richard Paver, GMCA Treasurer to help Members better scrutinise the budget setting process. The training session was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 13th August at 6pm, GMCA Offices.

RESOLVED:

1. That the work programme be updated to include two substantive items per meeting.
2. That the work programme be updated to include appropriate GMFRS items.

CI17/19

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

Tony Hunter, Director of Protection, Service Improvement & Performance, presented a report which provided Members with an outline of the Service's annual performance for 2018/19

against the delivery goals contained within the Corporate and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016/20.

Key areas highlighted were as follows:

- It was advised that local level performance was managed by Borough Managers who work with partners locally to address any trends. Borough Managers would be contacting Members to arrange a meeting to discuss the local level performance and associated challenges.
- During 2018/19 there had been a total of 31,786 incidents (fires, false alarms and special service calls) which was a reduction of 3.61% (1,192 fewer incidents) when compared to 2017/18.
- The average response time for the 1st GMFRS appliance to attend an emergency incident this year was 7 minutes 14 seconds and was comparable to the 7 minutes 6 seconds recorded during 2017/18. It was acknowledged that this was the time taken for the 1st appliance to attend the scene once the alert had been received at the fire station.
- Accidental dwelling fires (ADF's) had decreased by 5% when compared to 2017/18.
- Deliberate fires had decreased by 9% when compared to 2017/18.
- During July 2018, GMFRS were in spate conditions due to the moorland incidents, which took place during the period 25 June 2018 and 18 July 2018. This was the busiest recorded period of operational activity in the history of GMFRS.
- Sadly, during 2018/19, 19 people had died as a result of a fire incident, 16 of which were accidental.
- There had been a total of 14,083 false alarms attended this year, an increase of 1% when compared to 2017/18, 39% of all false alarms originated from an automatic fire alarm (FADA) in a non-domestic property. Members were advised that they would receive further information at a future meeting regarding a pilot which was seeking to reduce the number of false alarms crews attend.
- The prolonged moorland incidents had impacted on the ability for both crews and community safety staff to carry out Safe and Well Visits. A total of 27,191 Safe and Well Visits took place, a decrease of 18% when compared to the number delivered in 2017/18.
- The level of sickness absence had decreased from 4.72% (recorded in 2017/18) to 4.03%.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- A Member queried whether the level of sickness absence could be broken down by operational staff as well as back room staff. It was confirmed that this information was readily available and would be circulated to the Committee.
- Further clarity was sought in relation to the percentage of female firefighters. GMFRS advised that they were actively continuing to encourage under-represented groups to consider a career in the Fire Service, noting that this had been recognised through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- A Member requested that Borough Managers share local level information with Members, in order to understand the specific issues, as opposed to the global picture presented. The request was noted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the 2018/19 annual performance report be approved.

2. That further information on the pilot underway to reduce the number of false alarms (FADA) crews attend be provided to the Committee.
3. That the sickness analysis (broken down by frontline staff and back office staff) be circulated to the Committee.
4. That the committee's request be noted regarding Borough Manager's providing local level performance when making contact with Members.

CI18/19

PROGRAMME FOR CHANGE OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Kevin Lee, Director of Mayor's Office, extended apologies on behalf of the Mayor Andy Burnham who was unable to attend the meeting, noting that he had attended the meeting in March 2019 to set out the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the GMFRS Programme for Change.

Supported by Jim Wallace, Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Dawn Docx, and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Leon Parkes, and Tony Hunter, Members were provided with a presentation (available at Appendix 1) which outlined the facts and the latest position following the end of the consultation on the Programme for Change.

The following key points were raised:

- No final decisions had yet been made and discussions were underway with the trade unions.
- Firefighter numbers would be maintained at or above May 2017 levels for this year.
- The Mayor was determined to avoid compulsory redundancies for support staff.
- To maintain these commitments beyond 2020, GMCA would lobby the Government and request they meet the pensions shortfall and increase funding for fire and rescue services.
- Further information on the response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Members welcomed the presentation.
- Members raised concerns regarding the timing of the consultation which had impacted on the number of opportunities afforded to the Committee to sufficiently scrutinise the proposals. The approach to scrutiny was also questioned, as the Committee had not had the opportunity to scrutinise the issues in any detail, in particularly the impacts/ effects, and the views of others. Following discussion on how best to appropriately scrutinise the proposals, it was proposed that the September meeting would focus on scrutinising the following issues in a deeper way:
 - The proposal to reduce the number of fire fighters on a pump from 5's to 4's (with a focus on the effect)
 - The robustness of the plans, given the exponential rate of growth within the city region in particularly inner city core, and the impact of congestion on response times.
 - What had changed within the proposals and outline business case following the consultation?
 - How the new prevention model would be delivered

- It was agreed that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer would consult with Members over the summer period in order to identify how effective scrutiny could be facilitated, including how the views of others could be captured.
- Kevin Lee accepted that the timing was not ideal, given the election period, but stressed that the proposals needed to be developed and consulted upon, with a view to addressing the budget deficit and to avoid further consequences for GMFRS.
- Concerns were raised regarding the level of engagement on the consultation. It was felt that a communication should have been shared with all GM councillors. Kevin Lee apologised if Members felt they had not had adequate time to comment on the proposals, noting that they were provided with the OBC in March 19, and their comments from this evening would be considered. The challenges in providing the right balance of information was acknowledged.
- Given the concerns raised, would the consultation be reopened? Jim Wallace advised that the consultation was originally scheduled to last for 6 weeks, but was extended twice, and was open for 12 weeks in total, with responses also included after this period. All responses would be factored into the final report which would be submitted to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Beverley Hughes for decision. It was stressed that the programme needed to continue at pace to enable the organisation to meet the savings expected of them. Kevin Lee reiterated that comments were still being taken into account.
- Concerns were raised regarding the proposal to reduce the number of crews from 5's to 4's. Jim Wallace reported that three feasible options had been developed, all of which were financially viable and safe. Kevin Lee added that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had listened to Trade Unions as set out in the Mayor's letter dated 2nd July 2019 (Appendix 2), and had committed to using the reserves to maintain the level of staffing at or above the level at May 2017 throughout 2019/20 (subject to the Government addressing the pension deficit). It was reiterated that in 70% of cases in GM, the first fire engine arrived with a crewing level of 4, noting that no FRS's in the country crewed all fire engines as 5's.
- Further clarity was sought in relation to whether the impact on performance levels was available at a local level. It was confirmed that a two pronged approach had been adopted looking at past performance levels and actual attendance rates across GM. It was agreed that local level data would be circulated to the Committee.
- How could response times for new stations be measured if the sites had not yet been identified? Leon Parkes advised that existing response times were considered, along with where incidents happen, to measure what the response time from the station to the incident might be. It was noted that station could be moved around, and compared against actual data.
- Were response times measured from the point an appliance leaves the station as opposed to when the call was received? It was confirmed that the IRMP does not include the call handling time, however, the 7 minute proposals included the full range; from 999 call to first intervention.
- A Member had been anecdotally informed that a recent two-pump incident had brought the service to the knees. This had supposedly impacted on the attendance time at a fire in Irlam, which took 20 minutes. Had significant incidents such as this, or times when there are large scale events taking place been factored into the average response times? Tony Hunter advised that further information would be circulated to the committee on how average response times were derived. It was emphasised that the instances in question had not brought the service to its knees as the service regularly dealt with two protracted incidents. Tony Hunter reassured the Committee that GMFRS have a well-maintained reserve fleet based at strategic locations to provide support when required.

- Back in 1994/5 response times in Manchester had been under 5 minutes to attend a category one fire, was this correct? It was confirmed that this time would not have included the call handling time.
- A Member highlighted that there was no reference within the presentation to whether GMFRS were exploring opportunities to work with partners such as other blue light services to make better use of existing resources. It was advised that GMFRS had worked on a number of pilots with GMP and NWS over the last five years, however, due to ongoing national discussions regarding firefighters pay, this work has been paused for the moment. The joint arrangements already in place with blue light services were highlighted such as the Wigan Hub. It was noted that it was not implicitly outlined within the OBC as to some degree this was classed as business as usual. Currently discussions were underway with GMCA, along with colleagues from NWS and GMP to consider new site locations, and further opportunities to work collaboratively.
- A Member from Salford highlighted that Salford had a younger than average population in the country, with young males accounting for most of the anti-social behaviour (ASB) within the area. The invaluable support provided by firefighters and the Prince's Trust was emphasised, noting that reducing these interventions would most likely have a detrimental impact to the area. Following discussion, it was agreed that the new prevention model would be considered in further detail at the September meeting.
- Members explored whether the impact of the GMSF been considered, along with the number of housing developments, demographic changes and population projections? It was agreed that the Committee would focus on scrutinising this aspect at its September meeting.
- If the government meet the pension deficit of £5.8m, how will we ensure that we will not fall into deficit again? Kevin Lee emphasised that the issue was a result of Government changes to the pension scheme and was a national issue. It was acknowledged that Government had lost their legal case against HMG so must address the deficit; nevertheless if government support was not received the proposals contained within the OBC would need to be revisited.
- A Member requested clarity regarding the context of the removal second fire engines compared with the new fire engines, which were being introduced. It was confirmed that the new fire engines were being introduced to replace ageing fire engines.
- Further clarity was sought in relation to the statement that the number of firefighters would remain at or above the 1121 in post May 2017. Had new firefighters been recruited since this? It was confirmed that due to the high turnover of staff GMFRS had to continuously recruit.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) be included within the work programme.
3. That the Committee reconsider the following aspects of Outline Business Case in September 2019:
 - The proposal to reduce the number of fire fighters on a pump from 5's to 4's (with a focus on the effect)
 - The robustness of the plans, given the exponential rate of growth within the city region in particularly inner city core, and the impact of congestion on response times.

- What had changed following the consultation?
 - How the new prevention model would be delivered
4. That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer consult with Members and Officers over the summer period on how the discussions should be facilitated to enable effective scrutiny, including how the views of others could be considered.
 5. That the Committee be provided with further information on the methodology used to derive at the 7 minutes average response time and the local level performance levels.

CI19/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 13 August 2019 at 6pm, GMCA Offices – Budget Training Session

Tuesday 17 September 2019 at 6pm, GMCA Offices – Committee meeting

RESOLVED:

That the date of the training session and next meeting be noted.

CI20/19 GMCA REGISTER OF KEY DECISIONS

RESOLVED:

That the Register of Key Decisions be noted.